To QP or not to QP: Encouraging Module Leader Engagement in Evaluation Surveys

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Evaluation of teaching

- Evaluation of teaching: quality assurance and quality enhancement agendas

- Introduction of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in the UK - teaching quality and accountability focus
    (teaching on my course, assessment and feedback, and academic support contribute to overall institutional award)

- Generic ('one size fits all') validated or 'institution-approved' questionnaires with little flexibility (banks of questions could be used in some cases)

Evaluation of teaching: challenges

- Reliability of single institutional measures in a context of institutional diversity is being questioned by researchers and academics (Leathwood & Phillips, 2000)

- LJMU module evaluation: 'one design for all' was perceived as a management-driven approach, not addressing staff needs as reflective practitioners

- Some module leaders have been doing own interim and summative evaluations (asking questions that mattered to them)

Blue at LJMU

- Ability to add module specific self-written questions (QP) was an attractive functionality

- Piloted in 2014-15 in one Faculty followed by a thorough evaluation

- Used QP in the pilot (around 40% of module leaders added own questions)

- **Evaluation:** The opportunity to add bank and/or module specific questions was considered a useful feature as it allowed module leaders to tailor the appraisal to their needs and add questions relevant to the module.

How QP is used at LJMU

- Available for all summative evaluations (but not for the mid-semester 'one-minute' evaluation)

- Up to 2 'own' questions (two scales or one scale and one free text) – from Banks or self-written

- Could be written by the module leader, but advised to discuss with the module team

- Results for these questions, although published in the ME report, are not part of the official quality assurance reporting
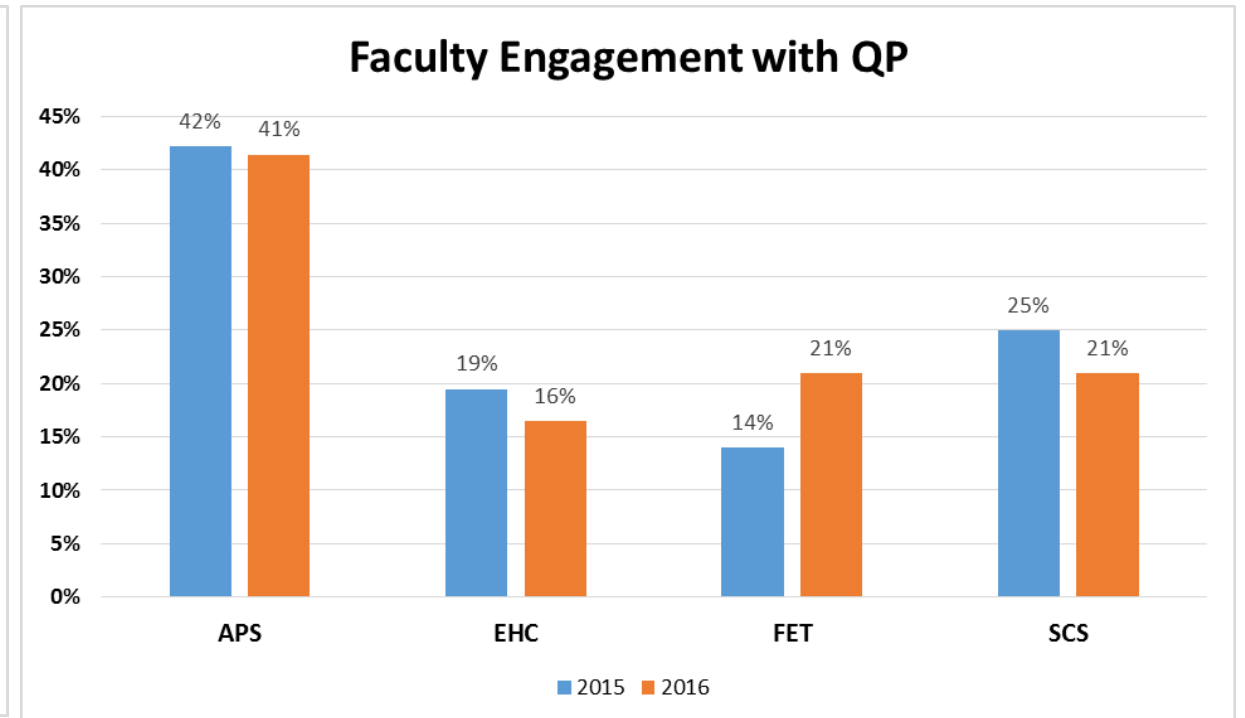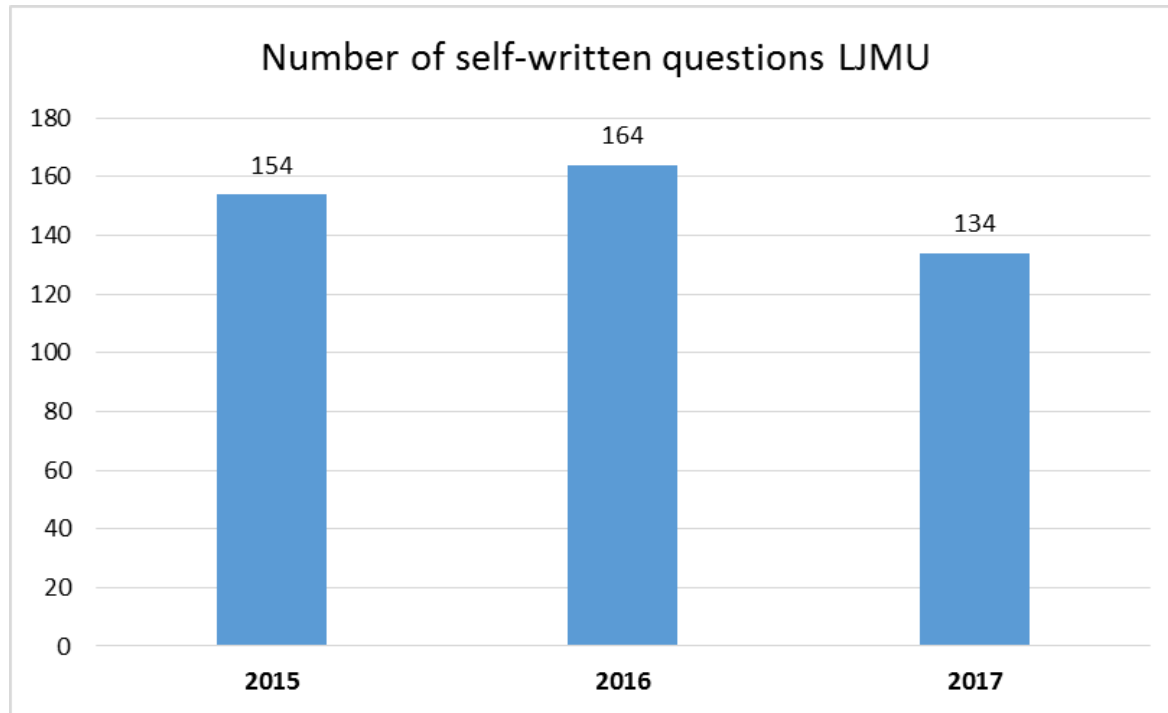
Aims of the research

- Look at the dynamics of QP use over the three years (2015, 2016, 2017 – Semester 1)

- Explore engagement of module leaders across different Faculties/Subjects

- Find out what type of questions are being asked and if they are meeting 'good practice' questioning rules

- Identify questions that might be included in/moved to the question banks

- Explore staff views on QP functionality and how they could be supported further in using it (via focus groups)

Additional topic of exploration: how questions reflect pedagogic priorities of the module leader/team

Dynamics of QP use

- Relatively stable institutional numbers

- Faculty engagement shows some variations (e.g. FET increased engagement)

* 2017 – without summer evaluation

Number of self-written questions LJMU
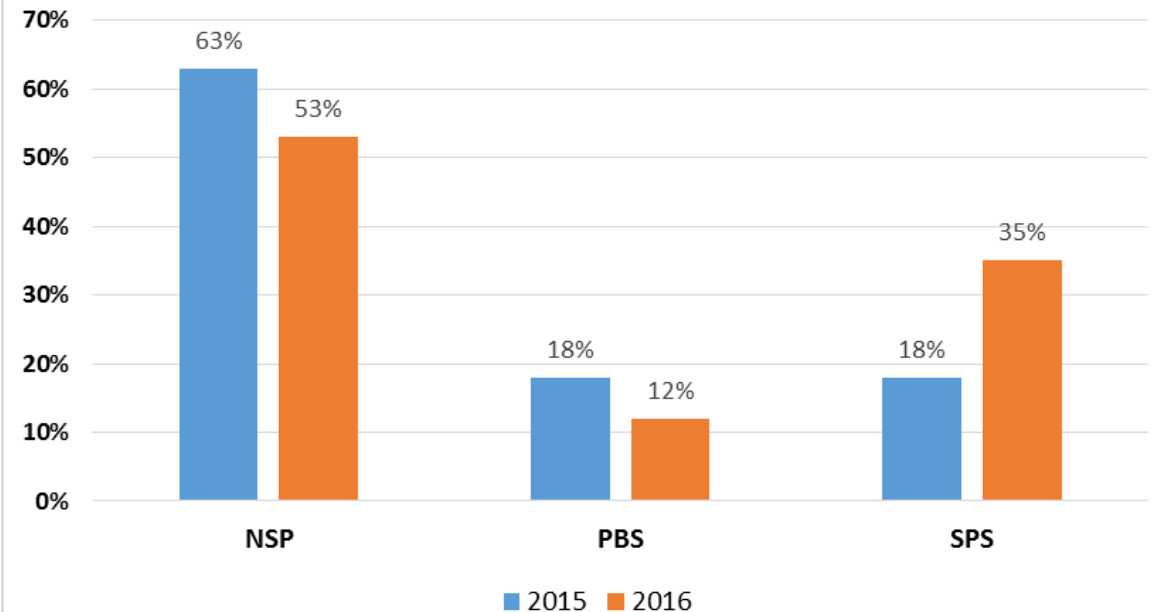
2015: 154
2016: 164
2017: 134

Faculty Engagement with QP

	APS	EHC	FET	SCS
2015	42%	19%	14%	25%
2016	41%	16%	21%	21%

Dynamics of QP use

- School level dynamics is variable
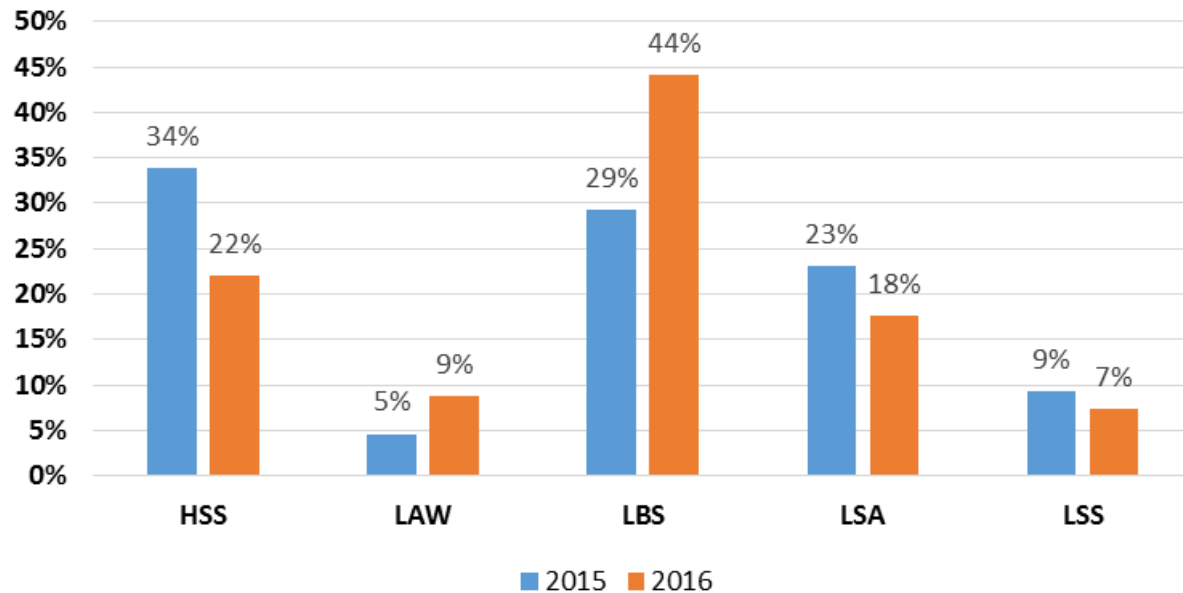
Exploring questions: research methodology

- **Stage 1**

    Questions are independently coded by two researchers – identifying areas of teaching and learning practice they were related to

    'Quality' of the questions explored (wording, bias, clarity)

- **Stage 2**

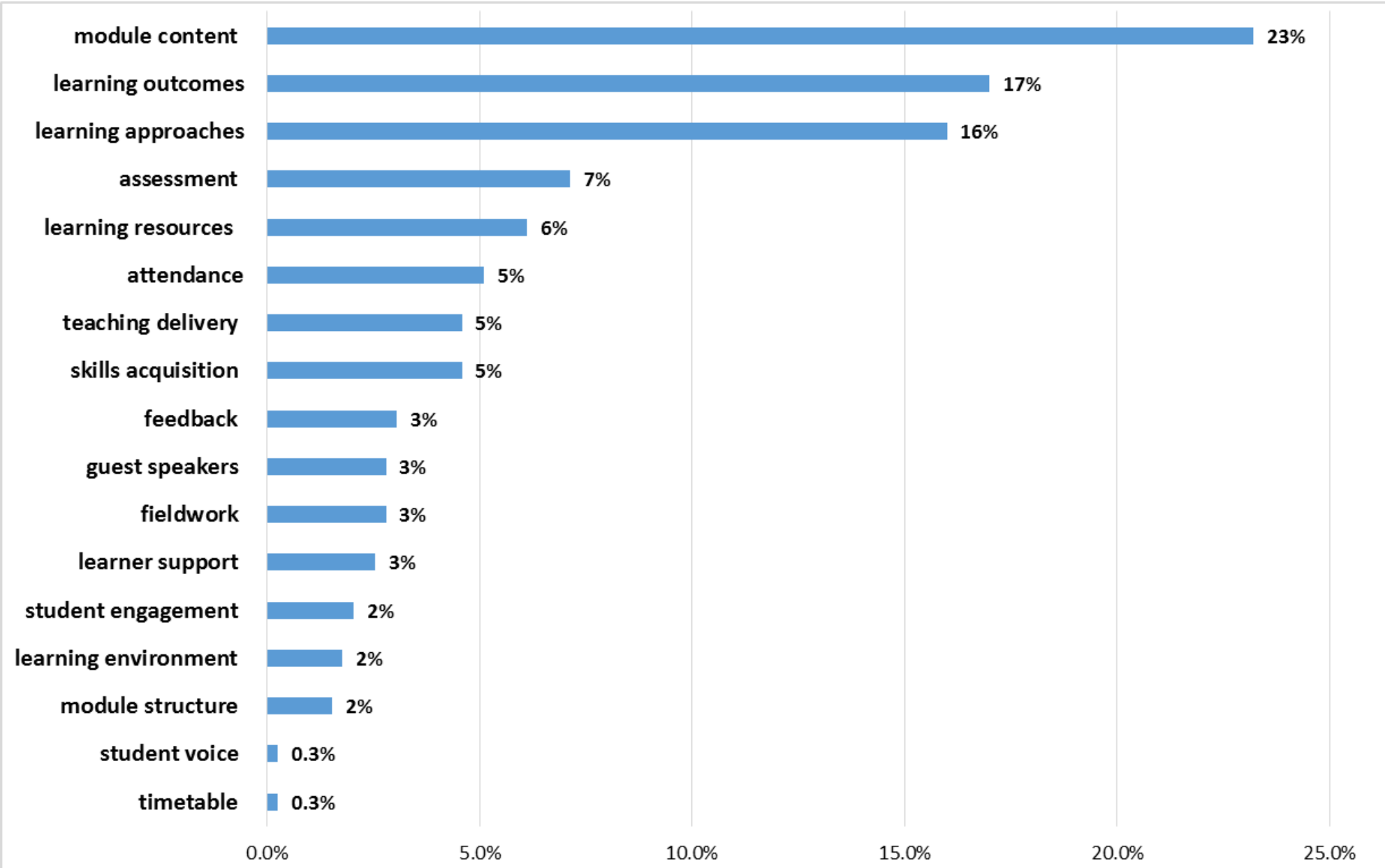   Discussion, deciding on final wording of the categories and subcategories

    Data analysis (descriptive stats, crosstabs) categories and other variables

- **Literature review** informed framework for the next stage of the analysis (pedagogic priorities of the module leaders/team)

- **Stage 3**

    Analysis of questions based on taxonomy of university teachers' prioriti (Akerlind, 2004)

Assessment	Questions relating to the assessment of the module, either formative or summative	**Learning resources**	Focus on understanding the effectiveness/usefulness of specific learning resources used within a module
Attendance	Questions asking students to reflect on/rate their attendance on the module	**Learner support**	Student opinions on the level, effectiveness or type of support provided during the module
Feedback	Questions relating to aspects of the feedback that lecturers provided to students during the module	**Module content**	Concerned with feedback on the module content, as a whole or separate parts
Fieldwork	Questions asking students' opinion/feedback on a fieldtrip or field work element of the module	**Module structure**	Specific focus on how the module was structured (semester delivery, timing of delivery)
Guest speaker	Any question asking students' opinion of a guest speaker	**Skills acquisition**	Questions aimed at understanding if and what skills students had developed during the module
Learning approaches	Questions asking for feedback on the success or effectiveness of a learning approach or a teaching strategy the module team have devised to support learning	**Student engagement**	Questions asking students to rate their own engagement with the module
Learning environment	Quality of facilities provided where the learning took place including physical environment as well as the timing	**Student voice**	Questions on how the module team responded to student feedback during the running of the module
Learning outcomes	Questions asking students to assess whether they have learnt or achieved either a particular or general intended outcome of the module	**Teaching delivery**	Requests for feedback on an aspect of quality of the teaching delivery, either specific or general

Category	Percentage
module content	23%
learning outcomes	17%
learning approaches	16%
assessment	7%
learning resources	6%
attendance	5%
teaching delivery	5%
skills acquisition	5%
feedback	3%
guest speakers	3%
fieldwork	3%
learner support	3%
student engagement	2%
learning environment	2%
module structure	2%
student voice	0.3%
timetable	0.3%

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Subcategories

Feedback Subcategories
Skills Subcategories
Learning approaches Subcategories
Assessment Subcategories

	%	%	%
feedback (usefulness)	88%		
Learning approaches Subcategories			39%
assessment (learning outcomes)	18%		
feedback (opportunities)	14%	8%	69%
skills acquisition (academic)			
feedback (student engagement)	11%	8%	17% 13%
skills acquisition (generic)			
learning approaches (collaborative learning)			
feedback (marking)	11%	11%	5%
skills acquisition (employability)			
assessment (choice)	11%	11%	3%
skills acquisition (professional skills)			
learning approaches (enjoyment)	7%		3%
assessment (method)			
skills acquisition (transferable)	7%	6%	3%
learning approaches (preparedness)			
assessment (industry links)			
assessment (support)	7%		2%
learning approaches (skills development)			
assessment (authenticity)	4%		2%
learning approaches (comments)			
assessment (enjoyment)	4%		
assessment (fairness)	4%		
assessment (preparedness)	4%		

Differences between subjects

- **Art and Design**: high number of questions on attendance
- **Screen School**: guest speakers
- **Nursing**: specific learning outcomes
- **Built Environment**: usefulness of feedback
- **Engineers**: learning environment (physical)
- **Mechanical Engineers:** module content (career preparedness)
- **Pharmacy and Science**: learning approaches (specific)

Semantic analysis
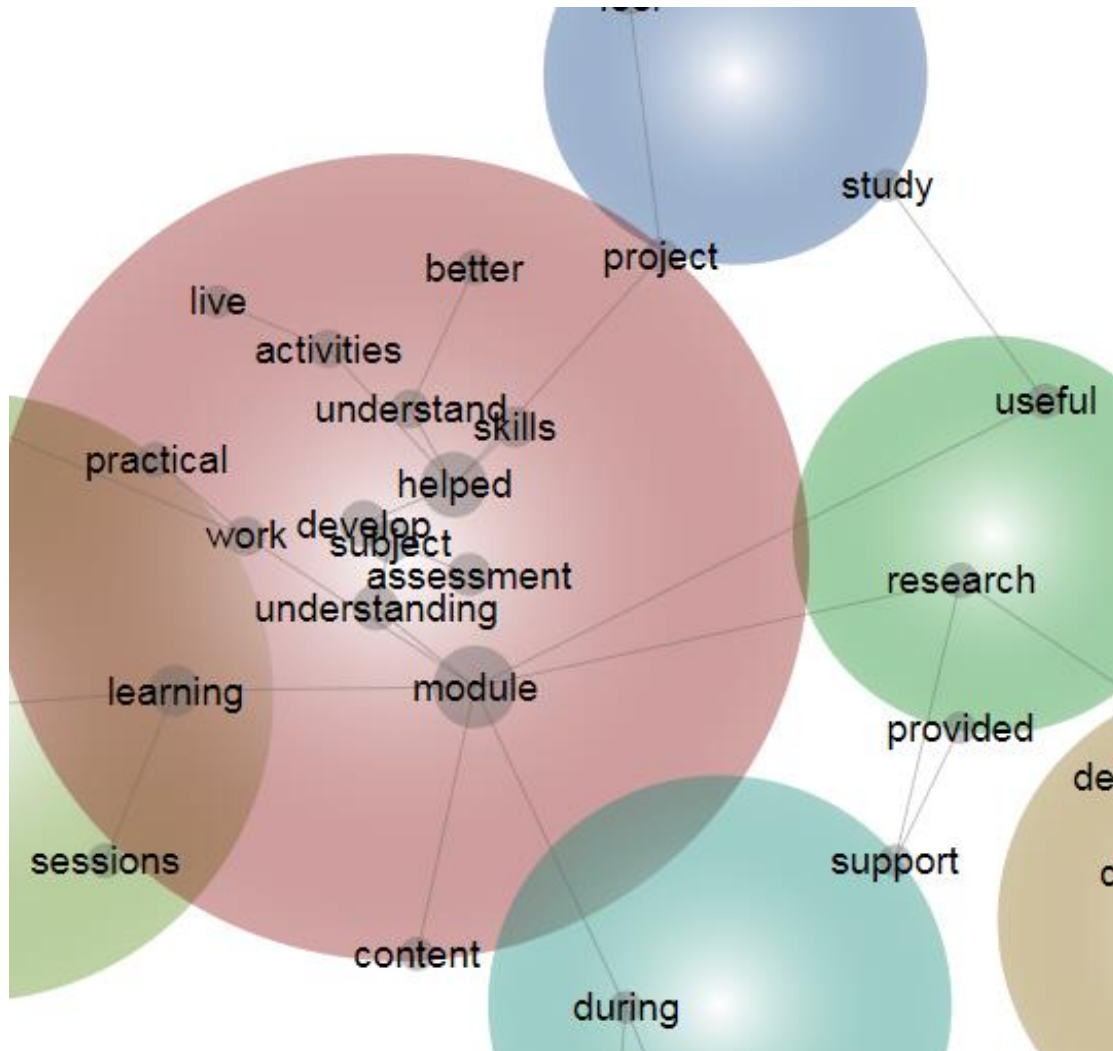
module (219)
helped (112) learning (73)
understanding (49)
attended (34)
develop (35)
work (31)
activities (25) assessment (30)
contributed (26)
lectures (28)
practical (24)
research (24) skills (27)
study (24)
useful (25)
experience (17)
feel (16)
opportunities (17)
prepared (17)
sessions (17)
subject (18) teaching (20)
better (13) challenging (12)
content (13)
employment (13) enhanced (15) excellent (13)
feedback (14)

Quality of the questions asked

- **6% of questions were double-barrelled:**

  The Module Handbooks and Powerpoints were well organised.

  I have attended regularly and engaged with this module by interacting and completing required work.

  This module helped me settle into university life by getting to know other students and   developing my essay skills.

Quality of the questions asked

- **A small number of long-winded questions:**

  Rather than all group members automatically receiving the same mark for the group   presentation, the use of WebPA was a fair way to allow marks to be adjusted to take into consideration an individual's contribution to the assessment.

- **Some leading questions:**

  It would be better to have one hour stats workshop provided by an instructor that shows how to use SPSS, and more time of independent online learning.

  Employers seek multi-skilled staff who can work to professional technical standards and this module makes me more likely to meet their requirements.

Focus groups findings

- Overall positive experience of using QP functionality

- A request for more time to engage with QP and bank questions – currently we give 3-4 days.

- Some personalised questions replicated questions included within the optional question bank (lack of time?)

- Module leaders queried whether it would be possible to include a feature to allow them to save personalised questions so that they can be used in subsequent years.

Focus groups findings

- Module leaders from APS and LBS in particular used the personalised questions opportunity to write questions aimed at providing feedback on a specific aspect of the module i.e. a new topic or assessment method.

- SCS and FET module leaders would like the optional questions to include a focus on how the module helps them to prepare for a flexible career path (an important feature of a degree in the subjects in the current environment).

To QP or not to QP?

- **Benefits for the module teams:**

    Gives staff opportunity to reflect on their practice and get more specific feedback which is important to them

    Co-creation of the evaluation instrument

- **Benefits for the institution:**

    Awareness of staff priorities and concerns

    Making sure that core institutional questionnaire reflects staff and student needs.

Recommendations and further development

- Engaging more staff with QPs (considering additional staff development session next academic year)

- Extend Question Banks, moving some of the FAQ to the banks

- Allowing to add more than two self-written questions

- More detailed guidance on how to write questions, including templates

- Explore factors that helped with engagement with QP

- Extend the time window for ML to write their own questions

- Publication of reports with QP (currently in separate reports) - need further discussion/solution.

References

Leathwood, C. and Phillips, D. (2000). Developing curriculum evaluation research in higher education: Process, politics and practicalities. Higher Education, (40), 313-330.

Akerlind, G.S. (2004). A New Dimension to Understanding University Teaching, teaching in Higher Education, 9, pp.363-376