**Imperial College London**

# Examination Timetabling User Group (ETUG)

14th July 2021

# Welcome

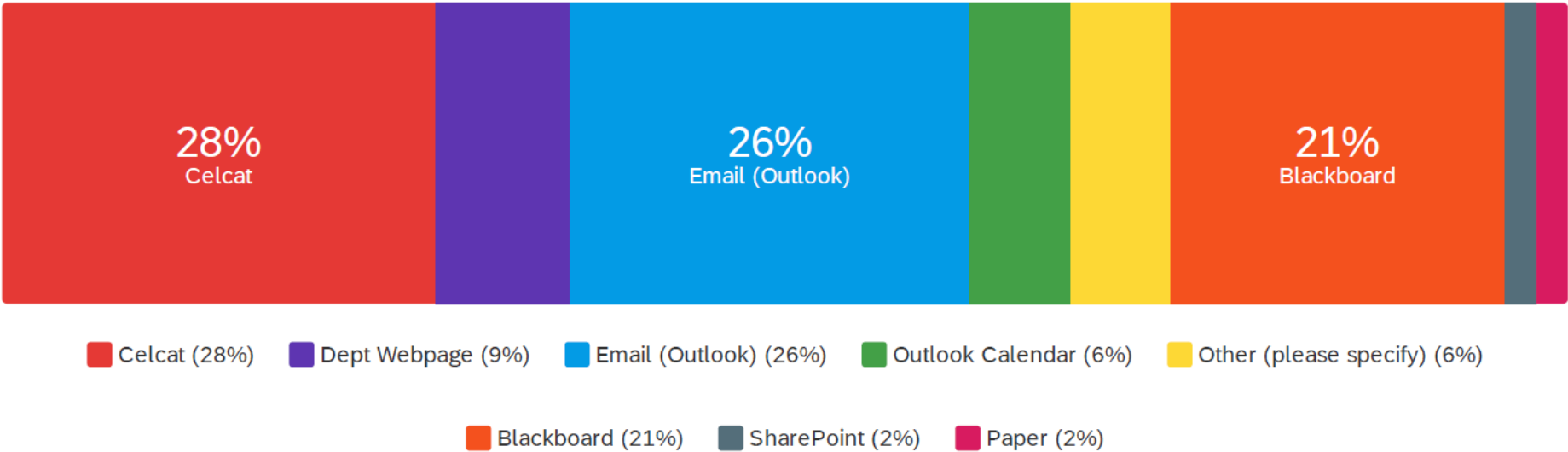- Minutes from the last meeting

- Action Tracker

- Matters Arising

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# Summer 2021 TRAs – Staff Survey (Summary)

Peter Laskey (Head of Exam Timetabling)
July 2021

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## Q2 - How were Summer 2021 exam timetables published to students?



| | |
|---|---|
| ■ Celcat (28%) | ■ Dept Webpage (9%) |
| ■ Email (Outlook) (26%) | ■ Outlook Calendar (6%) |
| ■ Other (please specify) (6%) | |
| ■ Blackboard (21%) | ■ SharePoint (2%) |
| ■ Paper (2%) | |

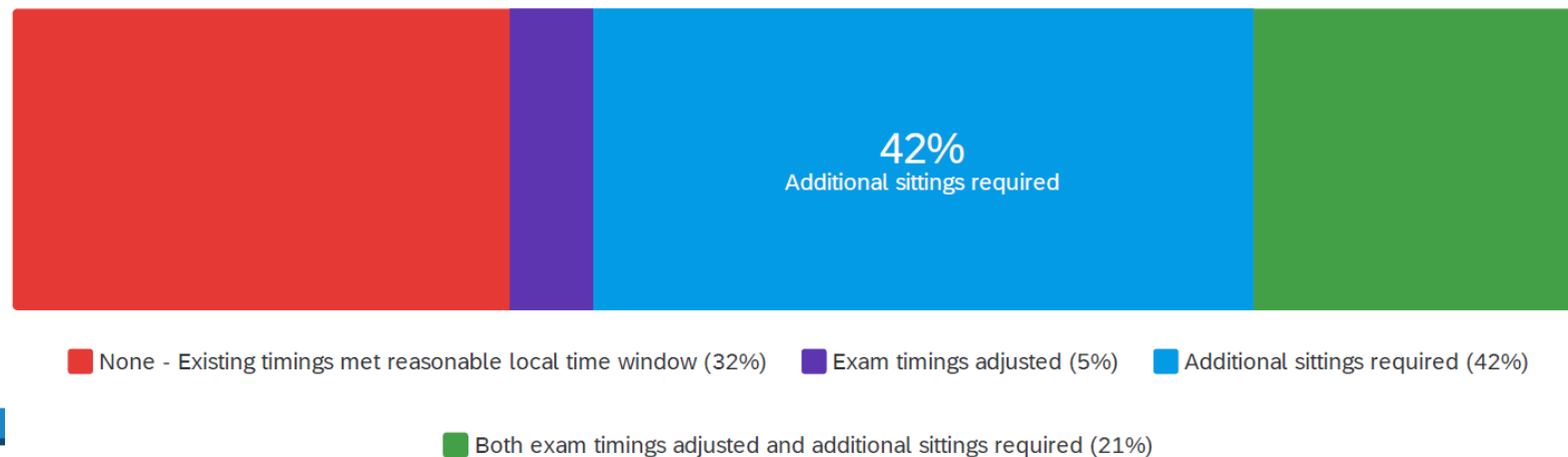Bar chart segments: 28% Celcat, 26% Email (Outlook), 21% Blackboard

**Other (please specify)**

Standard exams via CELCAT and pdf/BB. But Time Zone students and AEA students were emailed and had to record their own exams in their calendars.

Coursera

Insendi Student Hub

Q3 - When was the original Summer 2021 exam timetable published to students?

**68%**
8-10 weeks before first exam

■ 8-10 weeks before first exam (68%)    ■ 6-8 weeks before first exam (11%)    ■ 4-6 weeks before first exam (11%)

■ Less than 4 weeks before first exam (11%)
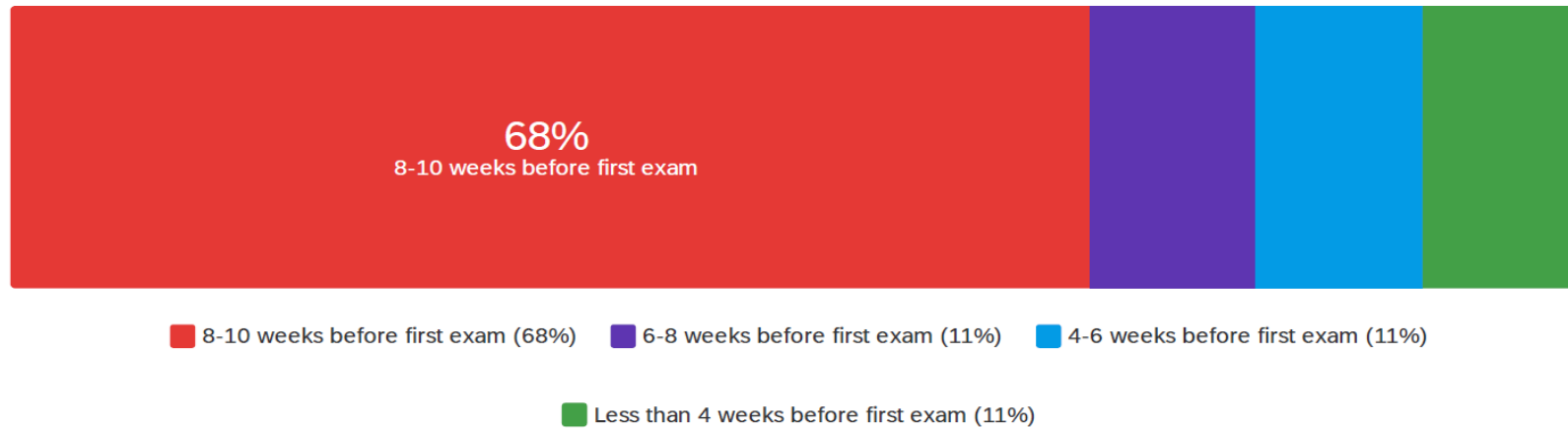
Q4 - Following the additional time zone guidance, were any changes made to the Summer 2021 exam timetable?

**42%**
Additional sittings required

■ None - Existing timings met reasonable local time window (32%)    ■ Exam timings adjusted (5%)    ■ Additional sittings required (42%)

■ Both exam timings adjusted and additional sittings required (21%)

| Please provide any additional comments you have on Exam Timetabling below. |
| --- |
| It was a tight turnaround and quick thinking but we were able to accommodate most students by shifting all exams to start at 9am and then running another sitting at 16:00 for the students in canada and the americas. It all seemed to run well. |
| **I think we need all departments to have a draft exam timetable published before Christmas**. This is the only way we'll fully be able to open up cross-department learning for students when they select electives outside their home department. |
| For IDX/ inter-departmental exams, the departments should aim to keep the original exam time as any movement within 8 weeks of the exams can have a huge impact. There was **not the time/staff resources available to schedule clear individual timetables to timezone or AEA students**. Also many AEAs were identified very late due to a backlog on psychological reviews/reports for students, so there were many last minute changes required for individuals. |
| Doesn't help us with exam timetabling when **decisions are made after timetables have been released** to change policy such as the decision to schedule exams to accommodate students in all time zones better.  The impact on students was minimal (we had 2 out of 650+ affected) and could have and should have been handled via the mitigation process. |
| the 2nd sittings added more workload but did work out ok in the end |
| We asked our students where they were located and only 2 replied to  say that they were in the Americas so we added an extra sitting for those 2 students. However we now have a **substantial number of students saying that they would prefer the later sitting due to their location/jobs/personal issues** meaning the integrity of the exams are now at stake due to the possibility of students buddying up across sittings to share answers/notes so it would have been easier to just change the main exam time to later on in the day (the second sitting starts at 16:00 BST) and have all of the students sit it at that time. This would only be possible for core modules though, if there were any elective exams (as there are for other programmes) then that would be harder. |
| We are planning our assessments for the Autumn term and we have made the decision that pedagogically, on-line assessments are much better than paper assessments. However, our concern is the booking of computer labs to carry out these assessments and their availability, as more and more departments may take up on-line assessments. |
| TRAs (absent the time-zone issues) are easier to schedule as there is no room-dependancy. |

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Q6 - What types of assessment were undertaken during Summer 2021 TRAs?
(select as many as required)

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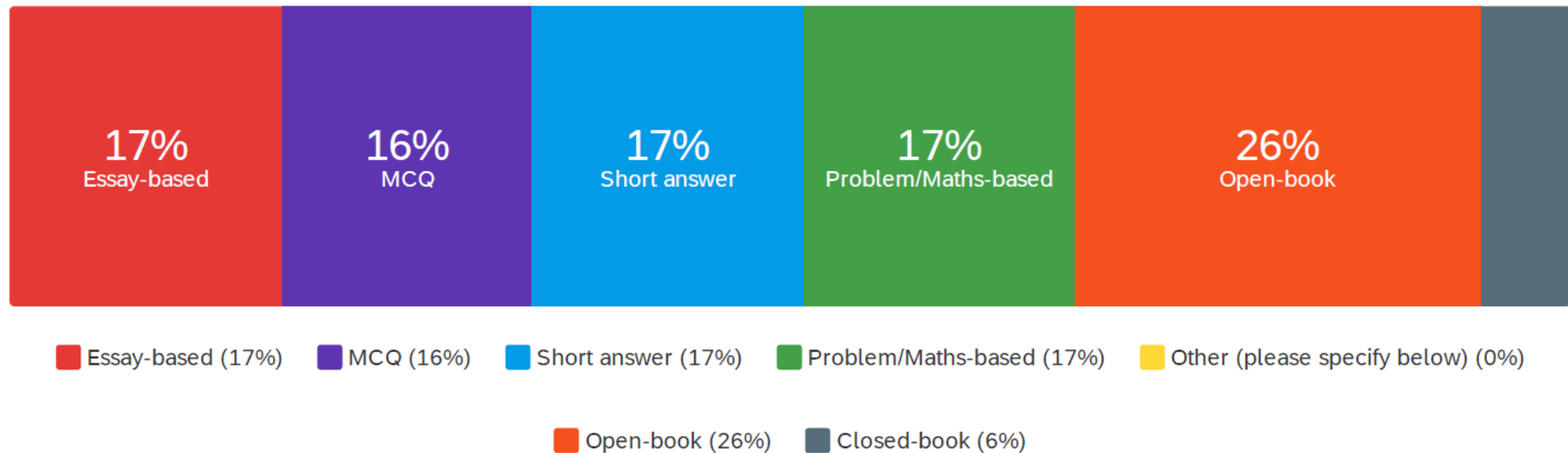
Q7 - Which online platform(s) were used to conduct Summer 2021 TRAs?
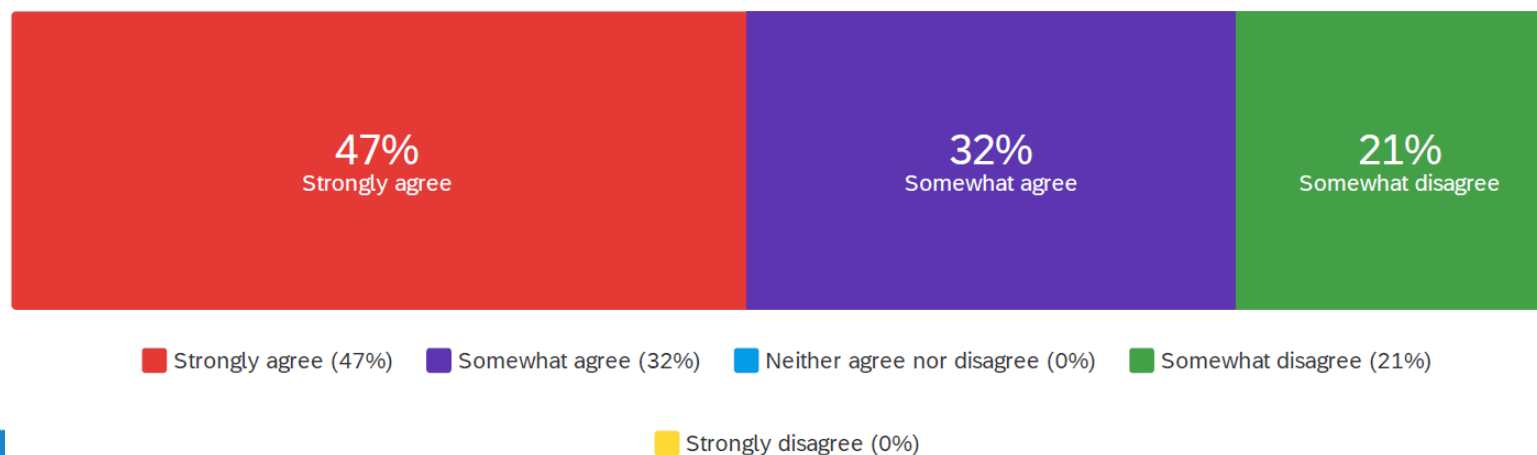(select as many as required)
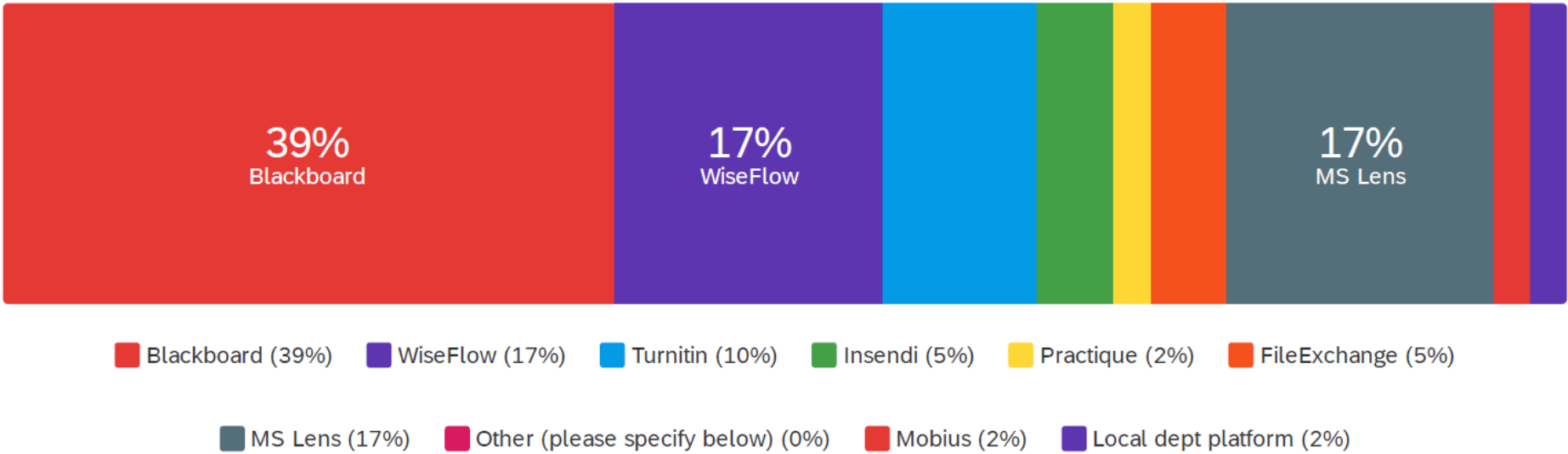
| How was your experience using the online platform(s) selected above? |
|---|
| They were consistent with previous sessions.  the ==issue with uploaded files and checking date and time stamps for anything outside of the systems was still an issue== |
| I find that Blackboard can be difficult to use and doesn't have all the functions we need. When I discuss potential changes with colleagues I have been informed that it does not have the capacity to do the things I suggest. |
| Some problems with Blackboard uploads being slow uploading the scanned pdf. |
| Some small problems, but fine. |
| ==Setting up Blackboard for over 100 TRAs is time-consuming and inflexible== (particularly when needing to accommodate multiple markers/dropboxes) as it is not designed as an exam system. Having a dedicated platform available would make things more straightforward. |
| Blackboard/Turnitin are not set up for Exams - ==we can make them work but its stressful for students and staff== |
| The Student Office are happy with running exams remotely and although a lot of information to remember, is easier than paper based exams scattered across different College buildings. |
| Worked ok for the students, but administratively we are hoping to move long term to Wiseflow. |
| It has been fine and we are used to it now. |
| Fine and robust.  Easy to set up and manage |

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Q13 - Comparing traditional on-site exam preparation (exam paper production etc) to TRA preparation, which one requires the most time and staff resource?



| 58% Traditional on-site exam preparation | 42% TRAs preparation |

■ Traditional on-site exam preparation ■ TRAs preparation
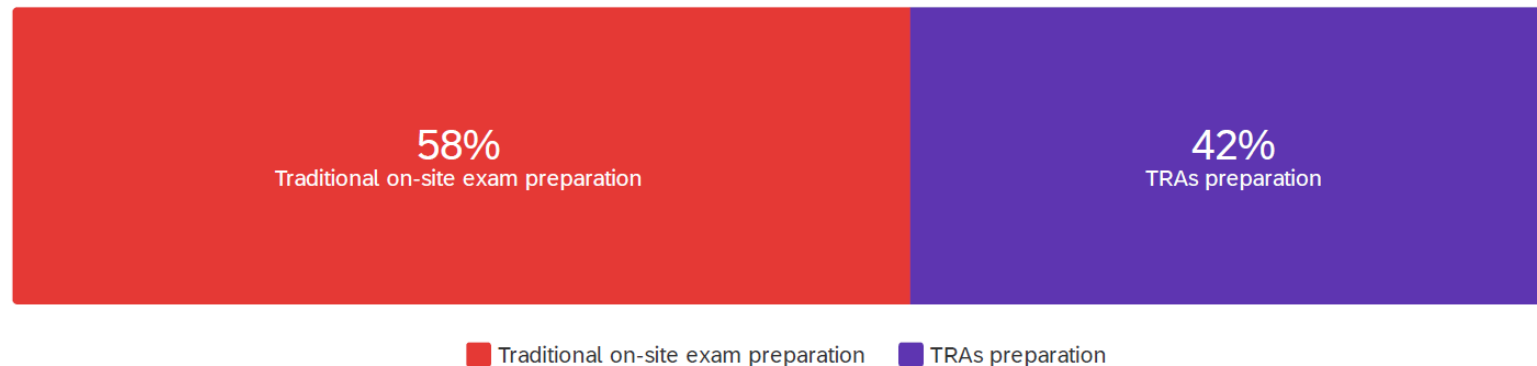
Q14 - Do you feel there was enough local department support in place to prepare Summer 2021 TRAs?



| 47% Strongly agree | 32% Somewhat agree | 21% Somewhat disagree |

■ Strongly agree (47%)  ■ Somewhat agree (32%)  ■ Neither agree nor disagree (0%)  ■ Somewhat disagree (21%)

■ Strongly disagree (0%)

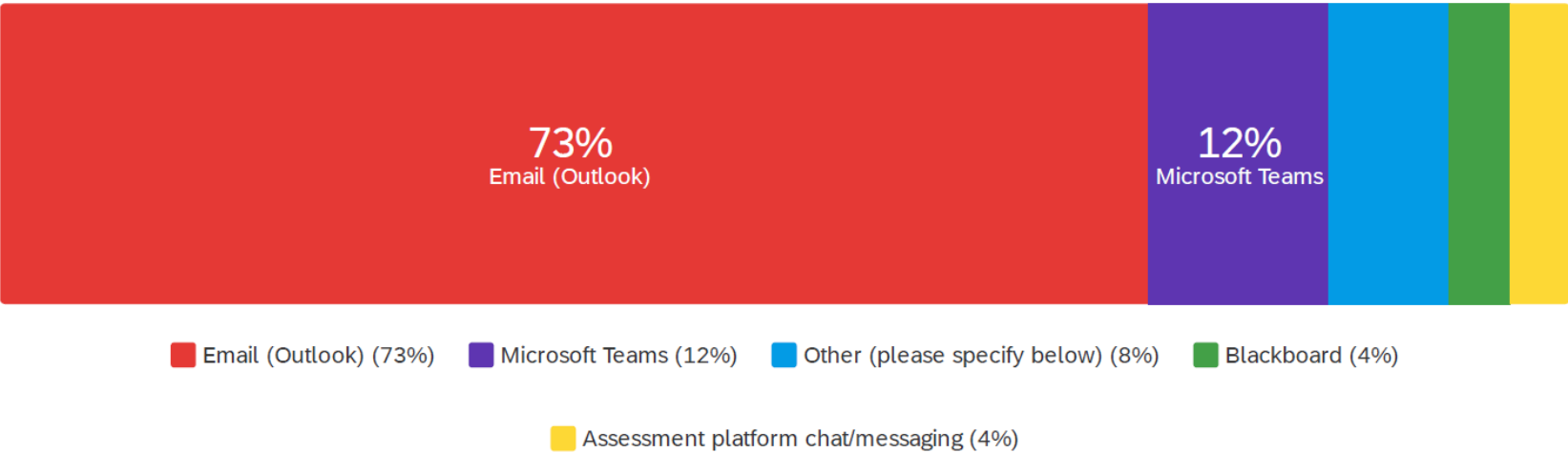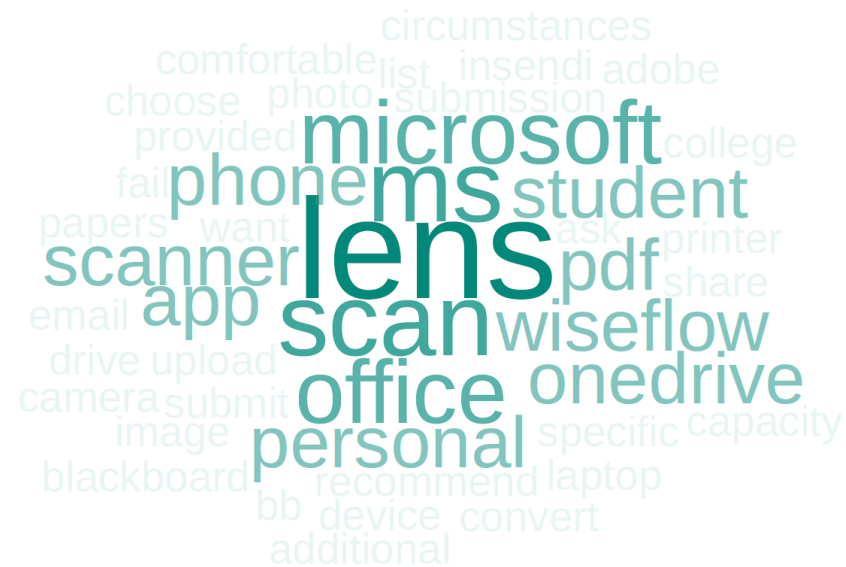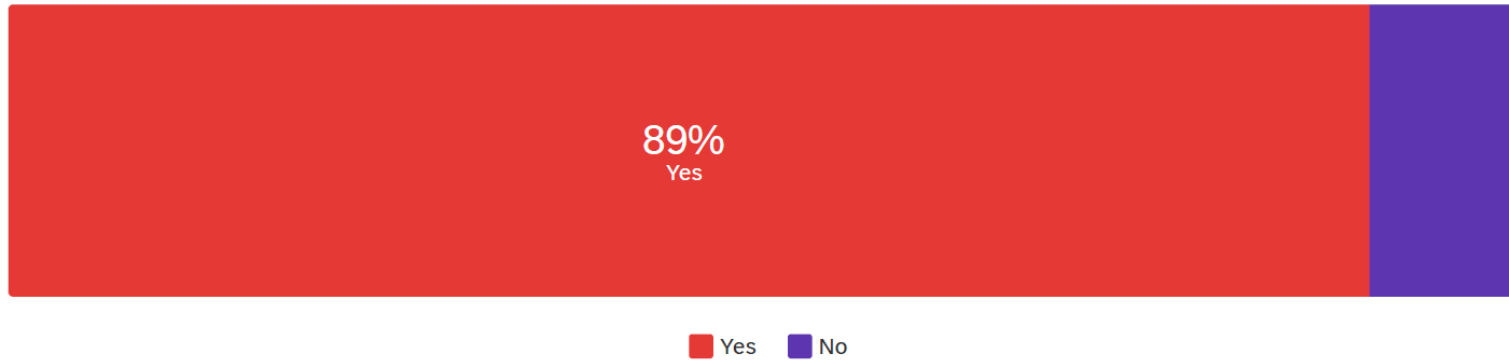| Please provide any additional comments you have on Preparing TRAs below. |
|---|
| Preparing the TRAs is extra work, but this is managable. |
| Okay a lot of checking on the TRA folders but apart from that we could have done with more support on setting up the TRAs for the additional exam setting for one student. |
| <mark>Much more work was required collating and organising the timezone arrangements and late AEAs</mark>. Hard to ensure that students are receivign all of the information and encouraging them to practice the TRA. Also there were a few late/edited exam papers received from academics that put pressure on us - which would not normally happen.  Ensuring the integrity of the exam paper on BB - not releasing early by accident, setting up BB etc was more work. |
| Its <mark>more the monitoring that is a very heavy worked load, as invigilators would have done this in the past</mark>. But now this falls to department administrators, we monitor up to 1hour plus in a teams call when they upload PDF files. |
| Getting students to engage and complete the demos before hand is still an issue.  If we do not get exam papers in good time setting them and completing checks is time consuming. but the preparation time is doable. it's the post exam mop up that takes time and dealing with student queries. |
| <mark>Too much set up for the Admin staff to do on the Blackboard/Turnitin templates - we should send the info and it should be set up centrally</mark>. It is completely open to human error and we have to triple check every TRA set up (including multiple drop boxes in some TRAs). It took a week for 3 people to do this. |
| We give students ample opportunity to practice using the platforms however only a small percentage of them do so meaning we constantly have the same issues relating to uploading answers etc as we did in the earlier exams. Likewise, our students fail to read the instructions on the front of the exam and then submit MCs relating to the fact that they didn't read them, which takes more administrative time to deal with. |
| <mark>A lot of students did utilise the opportunity to practice, so I selected yes BUT there were a large number of students who did not</mark>. I feel there should be another option to select here to say yes and no. We provided multiple practice sessions and I then had to schedule extra ones because students didn't use them. |

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## Q16 - How were exam announcements made during assessments (for all students)?



**46%**
Email (Outlook)

**26%**
Blackboard

■ Email (Outlook)  ■ Microsoft Teams  ■ Other (please specify below)  ■ Blackboard  ■ Assessment platform messaging

## Q17 - How were individual student communications made during assessments?



**73%**
Email (Outlook)

**12%**
Microsoft Teams

■ Email (Outlook) (73%)  ■ Microsoft Teams (12%)  ■ Other (please specify below) (8%)  ■ Blackboard (4%)

■ Assessment platform chat/messaging (4%)

Q18 - Were students required to handwrite and scan any part(s) of their exam script?

Q19 - How much time was allocated for students to submit their assessment (post-exam)?



**53%**
15-30 mins

**37%**
30-45 mins
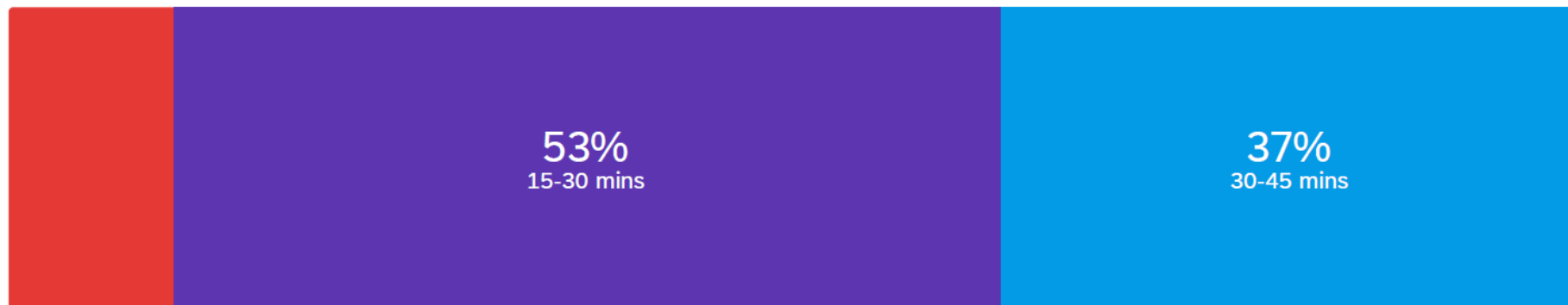
■ Up to 15 mins after end time (11%)  ■ 15-30 mins (53%)  ■ 30-45 mins (37%)  ■ 45+ mins (0%)

| What happens if a student submits beyond the allocated submission time? |
|---|
| We check the date and time staps and metadata. They are reminded that all files will only be accepted if they are all within the exam and TRA time only |
| we did not encounter any cases |
| Students are emailed (if they havent already explained) to ask why and for Mitigating Circs. They are marked as late and each individual case is looked at by a sub committee exam board. |
| They are required **to submit a claim to the Mitigating Circumstances Board for acceptance**. |
| it gets **rejected unless it has a timestamp which clearly says the file was last edited within the submission time**. |
| Submission logged as late on issues log for that exam, log sent for consideration by Senior UG tutor and exam board |
| This is **reported to the exam board who will make a decision** on whether the paper will be accepted. The student is warned that this (and future) submission might not be accepted |
| **Requested confirmation of issue by e-mail - no penalties given** |
| we asked them to **submit an MC form even if they were 1 second late. That's lots of MC forms to read!** However, on the whole the vast majority of students submitted on time. |
| They have to provide evidence of why they were late [eg poor connection] |
| Instructions to students if they have issues are below.  Cases are then forwarded after the exam to the internal exam board as to whether to accept or not and response communicated to student typically that same day or within 24 hours.  All were accepted in the Summer term.  Student Instruction: "If you face any issues that delay your ability to submit your work promptly following the end of the examination, you must inform the examinations team immediately. Remember to collect documentary evidence of that problem to substantiate your claim. For example, record a video that you can share with us, demonstrating the problem and its duration." |

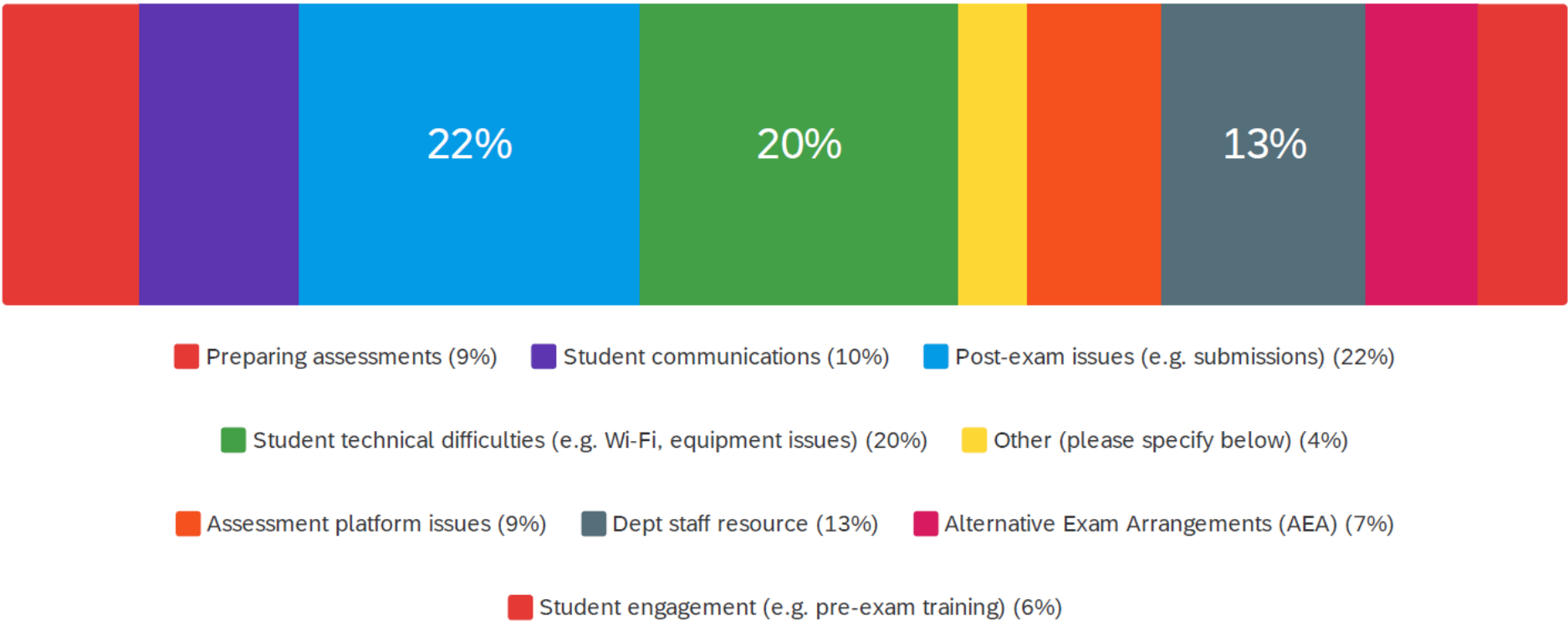Q21 - Did you require ICT Service Desk support during the TRAs?
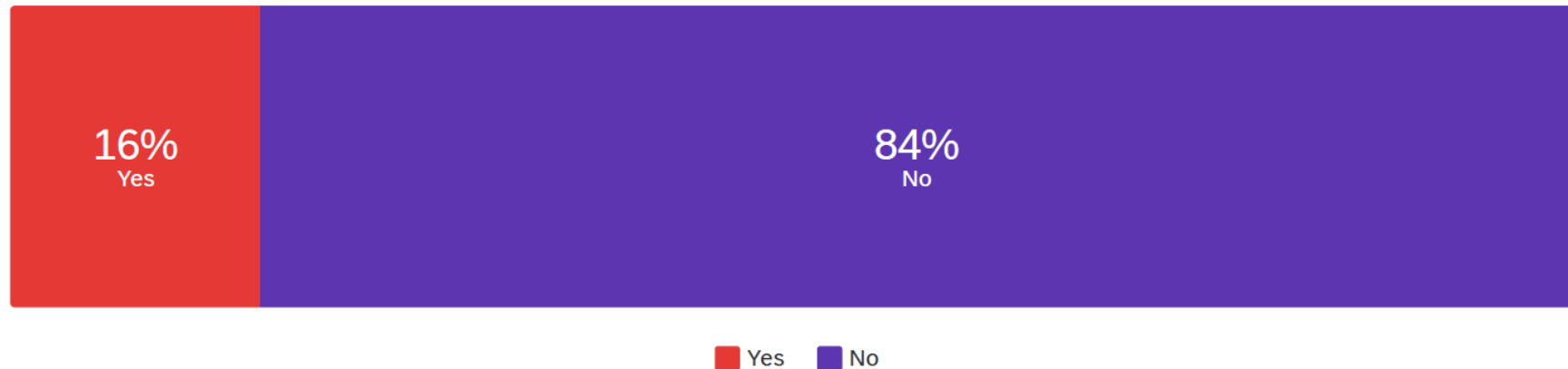
Q22 - If Yes, was this required outside traditional exam hours (9am to 6pm) e.g. to support additional sittings?

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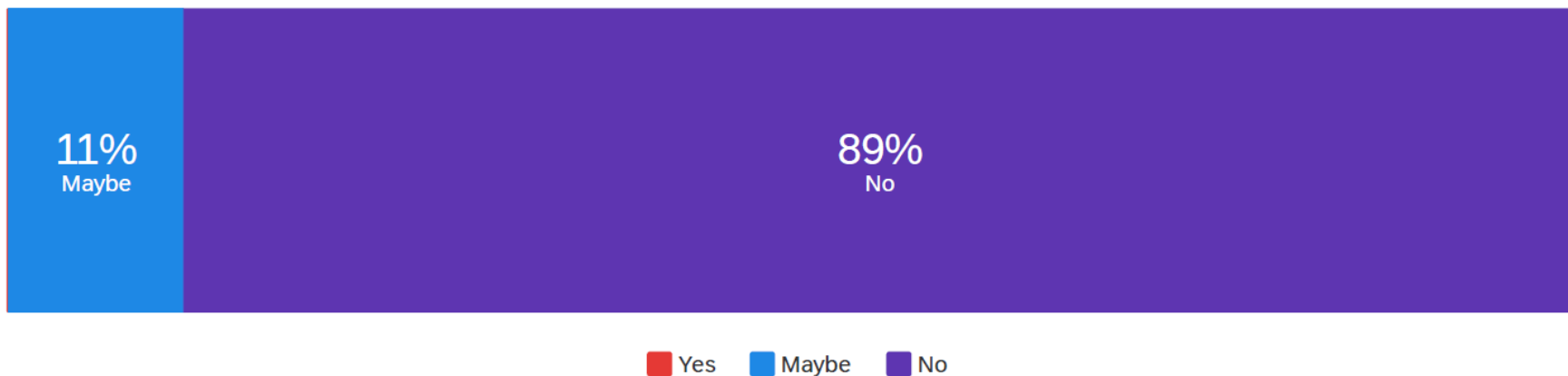
Q23 - What were the most challenging aspects of administrating TRAs overall?(select as many as required)



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ■ Preparing assessments (9%) | ■ Student communications (10%) | ■ Post-exam issues (e.g. submissions) (22%) |
| ■ Student technical difficulties (e.g. Wi-Fi, equipment issues) (20%) | ■ Other (please specify below) (4%) | |
| ■ Assessment platform issues (9%) | ■ Dept staff resource (13%) | ■ Alternative Exam Arrangements (AEA) (7%) |
| ■ Student engagement (e.g. pre-exam training) (6%) | | |

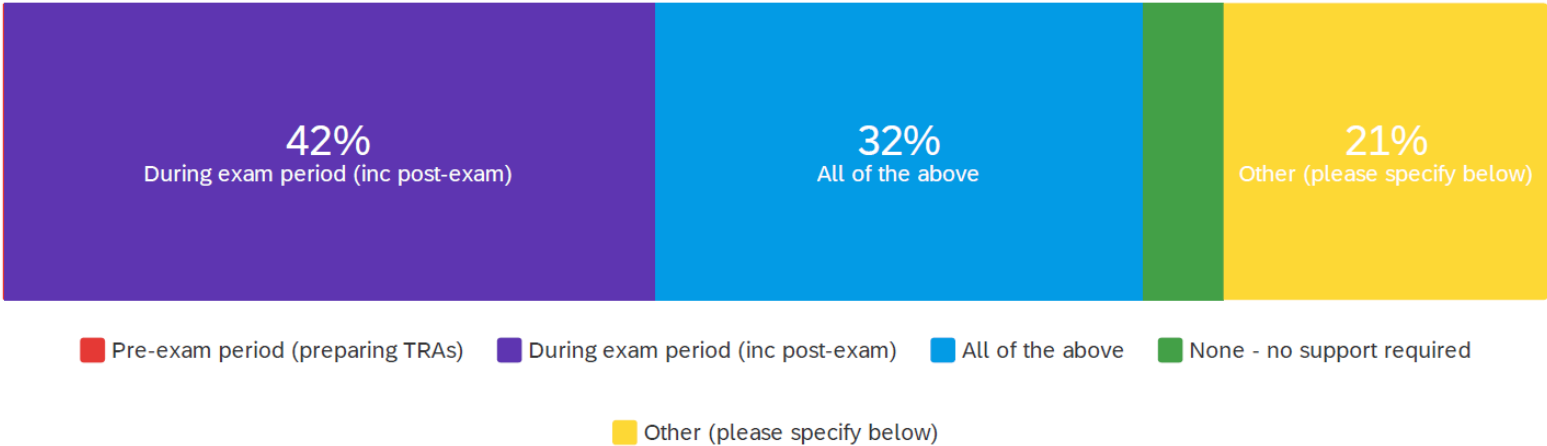| Please provide any additional comments you have on Administrating TRAs below. |
|---|
| **Students submitting late, although a minority, took a lot of time to deal with**. Suspicians of them writing after the exam has finished but no proof. Would be better to have a platform where students have a set amount of time to view and answer the paper and there was no scan/upload. Although this is difficult with the current style of maths-type exam papers. Chasing students to submit close to the deadline when you have 400+ students taking an exam is just not sustainable in terms of workload. |
| Have to be online far too much and can't get anything else done in the working day of a TRA exam |
| It is incredibly resource-heavy and an enormous responsibility.  There are positives and negatives, but the **students in general appear to find the scanning and upload stressful.**  There is **no way of knowing if the students have stopped writing when asked to, or if they have been colluding.**  We suspect both. |
| AEAs when students have rest breaks mean we have to ask them to turn on MS Teams and watch them.<br>Students who are having a panic attack also need to be watch on Teams.<br>We have to try to maintain the integrty of the exam. |
| The length of time exam teams have to spend in front of the computer which is mainly down to accommdating students with additional exam arrangements and having to accommodate the extra exam sitting for ONE student and the change of time for five exams again to accommodate ONE student. |
| There has been a **huge number of plagiarism and collusion cases that we feel would not have occurred if the exams were on site.** We have never seen this many cases and they are causing a huge amount of work. |
| It is impossible to say whether a student actually experienced wifi connection issues or other technical issues, or was simply using more time to complete their exam and then submit late claiming wifi problems. This happened very frequently and there is not much the department can do about that |
| **Administering TRAs was extremely stressful for the departmental staff and our mental health deteriorated** very much during the exam season. The levels of stress, anxiety and extreme frustration were overwhelming |
| Its really **stressfu**l and the team have to work **long hours** to ensure they run smoothly |

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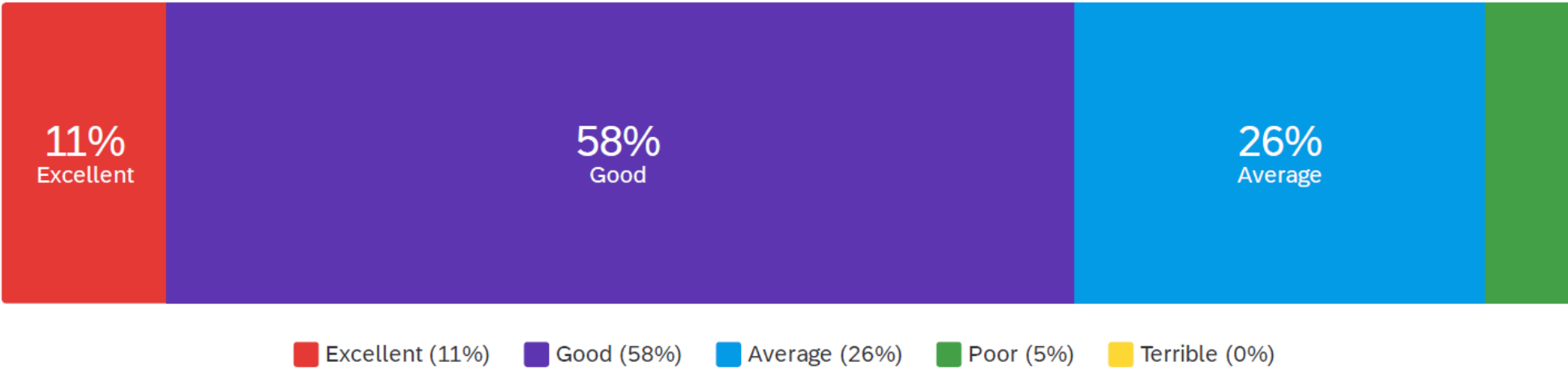
## Q26 - If additional staff were available to support TRAs, where would they be most useful?



| 42%<br>During exam period (inc post-exam) | 32%<br>All of the above | | 21%<br>Other (please specify below) |

- 🟥 Pre-exam period (preparing TRAs)
- 🟪 During exam period (inc post-exam)
- 🟦 All of the above
- 🟩 None - no support required
- 🟨 Other (please specify below)

| |
|---|
| It would be better to streamline the process and not keep increasing workload for dept admin, rather than doing so and offering support as any support requires knowledge and understanding of the dept. Plus exams are extremely important and we must ensure the integrity of exam by having permanent staff do the work. |
| It is not more staff, it is appropriate systems that are required.  Additional staff may introduce confusion. |
| I understand the difficulties that arise from the current Covid situation and working remotely, but it would be helpful if we are informed of any changes as early as possible so we have time to sort them out. The changes to the Summer exams for students in other time zones came quite late so it was quite a rush to make sure we made the required adjustments on time. If possible, knowing about these things earlier would be great. |
| As the exams are so important and sensitive, it is difficult to imagine that additional staff (if it was temporary support) would be very useful. The TRA process is fairly complicated and very sensitive, so it is unlikely that we would be able to train anyone to simply help. The ability to deliver TRAs is dependent on experience within the department and knowledge of the systems in place. The departmental staff worked long over time hours and had to manage a large workload, meeting very tight deadlines. |

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Q27 - How would you compare incidence(s) of academic misconduct during Summer 2021 TRAS to traditional on-site exams?



| 42%<br>More than on-site exams (with evidence) | 16%<br>About the same | 21%<br>Unknown | |

■ More than on-site exams (with evidence) (42%)   ■ About the same (16%)   ■ Less than on-site exams (0%)   ■ Unknown (21%)

■ More than on-site exams (without evidence) (21%)

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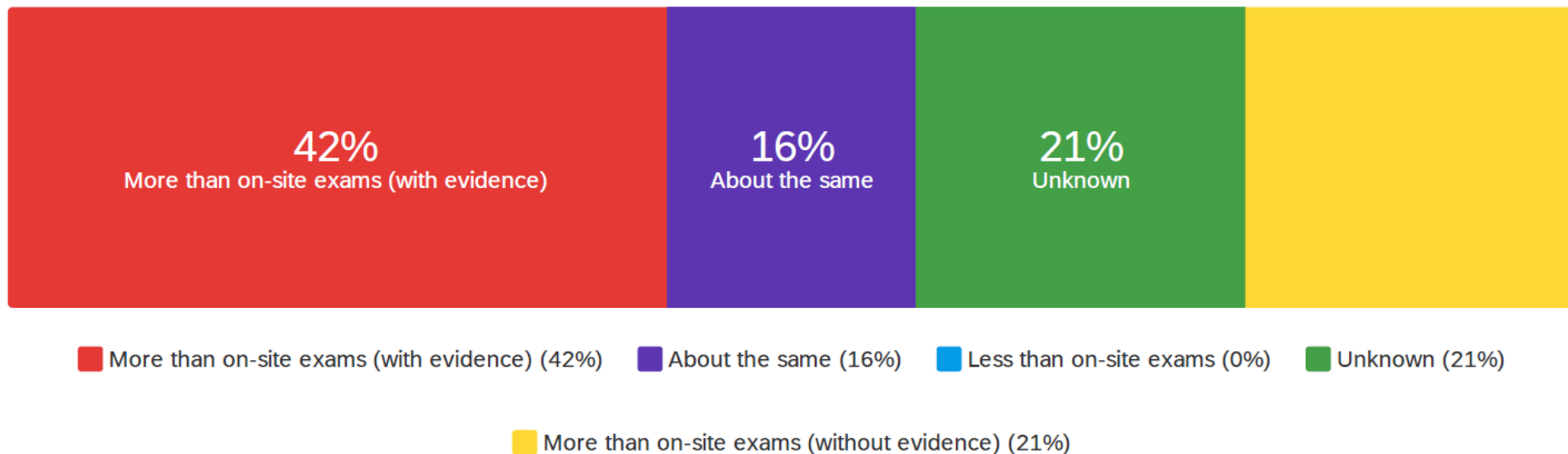
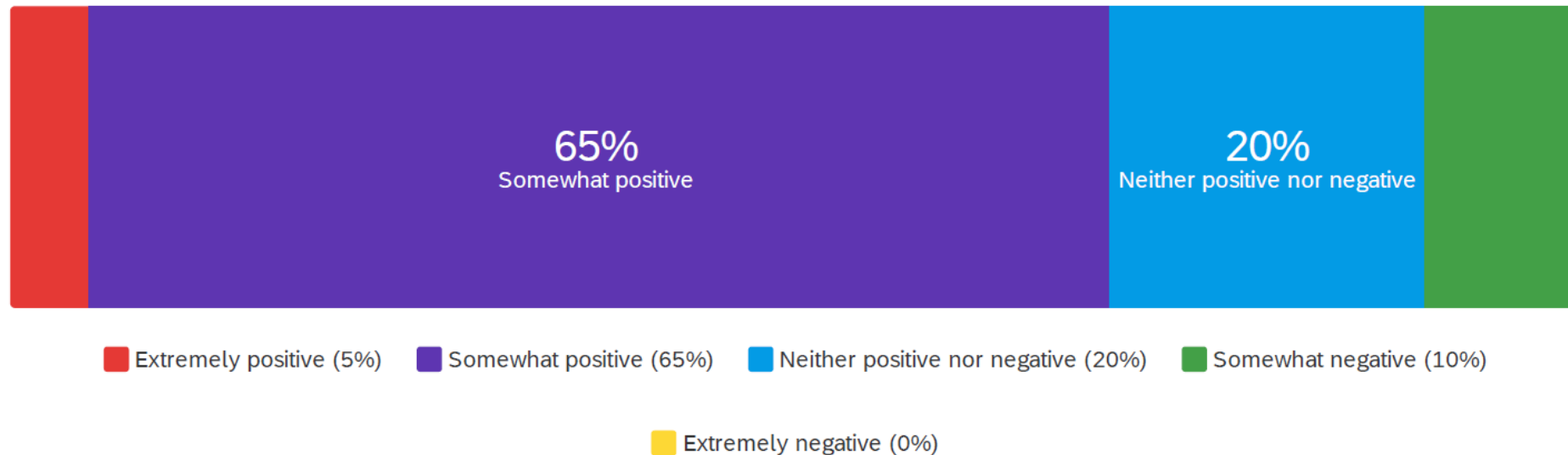| Please provide any further comments on academic misconduct below. |
|---|
| The School selects a ==20% sample to check through turnitin for each exam==. collusion and cheating have been an issue through all TRA's |
| It takes time to look at Turnitin reports and it would be ==good to have adequate software / computer rooms where students can take assessments / exams on-line on computers that are designed for exams== (e.g. no access to internet or personal accounts). |
| The Business School has had a ==rapid increase in proven cheating and a substantial increase in suspected but hard to prove cheating==, including students anonymously emailing we chat/what's app conversations with other students openly admitting to either cheating or planning to collude for certain exams. |
| It is nigh-on impossible to prove - and would require an incredible amount of additional input and resource to investigate and follow up. Not sure how much will there is to open up such a can of worms.  There is also pressure (or the feeling of such) to ensure that students get through in-year. |
| We can say to students not to cheat but some will. If ==some students think that others are cheating, then that causes a problem too==. We have to do something about for any TRAs in future. However, I'm ==against online proctoring== |
| We have received an exceptionally large number of plagiarism/collusion cases. We feel that most of these would not have occurred had they been on site. |
| In most cases impossible to detect or confirm and therefore cannot be dealt with. the level of misconduct reported anonymously by students this year has definitely ==undermined student trust in this institution== and has caused frustration and disappointment to honest students. |

Q30 - Based on student interactions, how would you describe the general student consensus on Summer 2021 TRAs?



65%
Somewhat positive

20%
Neither positive nor negative

Extremely positive (5%)  Somewhat positive (65%)  Neither positive nor negative (20%)  Somewhat negative (10%)

Extremely negative (0%)

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| **Q31 - What could improve the TRAs experience for students in future?** |
|---|
| They have fed back that they are anxious ahead of teh first TRA as they ==**dont know if everything will save or work etc**== - stduent engagement in testing thier enironment and equipment would help but they said their isnt a huge amunt we can do to address this |
| perhaps having more choice on the dates to take the assessment, but this is not always viable for Teachers. |
| Students who are not wanting to cheat ==**want reasurrance that  there will be penalties for those cheating**== but staff do not have the power or evidence to control this. |
| Not all students practiced the format |
| ==**More reliable exam platform**== |
| Ensuring that there is more proctoring of online exams so that the students who cheat are caught and only the ones who make a genuine attempt at the exam receive the highest marks. |
| Proper and appropriate systems for delivery and return. The same strict regime as is applied with in-house examinations, where you would not leave the students to themselves, send them a message to stop writing, and to tidy up their own desks and leave 30 minutes after the end of the examination. |
| Hold the exams in person! |
| would need to ask the students but I would guess that there if there was only ==**one system used by all Departments around College it would be easier for them than having to come to grips with multiple systems/instructions.**== |
| Not having TRAs |
| A simpler platform and submissions process, which particularly takes into account poor internet connections. Currently many student queries are related to confusion with the process or with technical problems related to submitting their work. Uploading large scanned documents to Turnitin is particularly difficult for those with poor internet. |

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| **Q32 - What could improve the TRAs experience for staff in future?** |
|---|
| Having a platform that gives students access to the question paper for a limited amount of time and no scan/upload required. This would require a format change for the paper. |
| ==**Additional support**== |
| ==**More help with monitoring and when student are uploading PDF files**== |
| Enhanced ability to proctor exams and also highly engaged students who read instructions/answer emails about their location etc, but this is a constant issue regardless of the platform. |
| The same as for students.  Systems. |
| Platform not to fail eg. Blackboard |
| more staff setting up and checking TRAs on Blackboard, ==**more 'experienced' staff to run exams, don't change policy halfway through the year.**== |
| Tools for preventing student misconduct and abandoning the timezone adjustments |
| Ditto above (since more student queries means more work for staff). A platform that streamlines the setup process and which facilitates the marking of work and extraction of data. |
| the ==**College should invest in an online exams system**== |
| Any changes from College to be advised well in advance. |
| Obviously, the comments above don't really help you! My point is that the ==**workload with TRAs is higher (for both admin and academics), students who have poor IT or Internet suffer**==, as do those that don't have a good location to sit the exam. TRAs make it too easy for students to cheat. |

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# **Conclusion**

**Timetabling**

- Still even split between 3 publishing methods (Celcat, Outlook, Blackboard), majority published in line with Exam TT policy

- Time zone guidance required majority of depts to create and administer additional sittings

- Generally exam timetabling easier for TRAs but late decision on time zone guidance (after Summer exam TT's published) caused severe disruption amongst usual TRA preparations, increased workloads

# Conclusion

**Preparation**

- Small proportion of TRAs being ran as closed-book exams (see COA policy)

- Blackboard continues to be main TRA platform but being 'made to work'. Not designed to deliver exams and leading to inefficient delivery, lesser student/staff experience

- Just over half feel more preparation required for on-site exams against TRA preparations and majority feel enough local dept support in place

- Additional sittings, AEA students and setting up TRAs require most resource during preparations and additional support sought

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## Conclusion

**Administration**

- Majority of individual student communications (in-exam) occur via Outlook email

- TRAs still rely heavily on students handwriting/scanning during submission

- 15-30 mins window employed, slightly mixed processes in handling late submissions (time stamp only, email explanation, exam board informed)

- ICT support (inc out of hours service), generally not required during Summer TRAs

- Dept resource now required to 'monitor' TRAs, roles previously conducted by invigilators

- Additionally, submission issues and potential misconduct require long hours of staff time and difficult to evidence (e.g. Wi-Fi loss or collusion)

# Conclusion

**Staff/Students**

- Most staff feel there's more academic misconduct occurring during TRAs than on-site exams

- TRA platforms and potential misconduct undermining student experience and trust in assessment process

- Long hours and increased stress continue to be associated with running TRAs
- Any additional support would be most useful during and post-exams

# Next steps

- Take feedback to Digital Assessment Working Group
- Discuss exam platform needs with ICT and furthering WiseFlow support
- Review of College exam platforms

**Student Feedback**

- ICU surveying students following Summer 2021 TRAs
- Results/feedback to be circulated (via ETUG) as soon as received

# Library Priority Exam Space

- Bookings between 26th April to 4th June
- 22 students registered/43 bookings made
- Evenly spread over exam period

| Room/Space | Type | No of bookings |
|---|---|---|
| Study Room 1D | Individual | 16 |
| Training Room 1 (with PCs) | Multi | 12 |
| Training Room 2 (with PCs) | Multi | 1 |
| Room 2A (no PCs) | Multi | 6 |
| Room 3A (no PCs) | Multi | 8 |
| | **Total** | **43** |

| Department | Registered Students |
|---|---|
| Medicine | 5 |
| Mechanical Engineering | 3 |
| Physics | 3 |
| Bioengineering | 2 |
| Chemistry | 2 |
| Civil Engineering | 2 |
| Aeronautics | 1 |
| Centre for Environmental Policy | 1 |
| Life Sciences | 1 |
| Mathematics | 1 |
| School of Public Health | 1 |
| **Total** | **22** |

**Feedback**

- Some disturbance in multi desk areas (non-exam students)
- Increased signage required to block-off exam areas
- Target individual/smaller spaces

**Discussion**

- Dept space available/in use?
- Manageable for 2021/22 TRAs e.g. Dec/Jan?

# 2021/22 – Exam Timetabling

**Collate Requirements**

- Draft/final exam timetables (email request to follow)
- Estimated student numbers
- CTSO support available – Exam timetabling or creating Celcat exam events

**Circulate Exam Timetables**

- 10 week publishing window (Exam TT policy)
- ICT resources to support
- Wider College-level awareness

**On-campus exams**

- Rooming process, reserving exam space

## Resits 2021
- Similar resit exam periods as 2020?
- Collate Exam TT's
- ICT support

# 2021/22 ETUG meetings

- Early Oct
- Mid-Feb
- Early April (Pre-Summer)
- July