

Students' experiences of study during Covid-19 and hopes for future learning and teaching

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WONKHE

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About the survey and respondents

Background

This research builds on the [Wonkhe/Pearson Expectation Gap survey](#) of students' learning experience conducted in June-July 2020.

In July, students reported wellbeing and practical challenges associated with online learning, and predicted that they would struggle to maintain their focus and engagement in a scenario of limited face to face teaching in the autumn.

Students were consistent in their understanding of high quality online learning: interaction, personal attention from teaching staff, help with accessing technologies, and clear communications about their course. We wanted to see how things had changed since then.

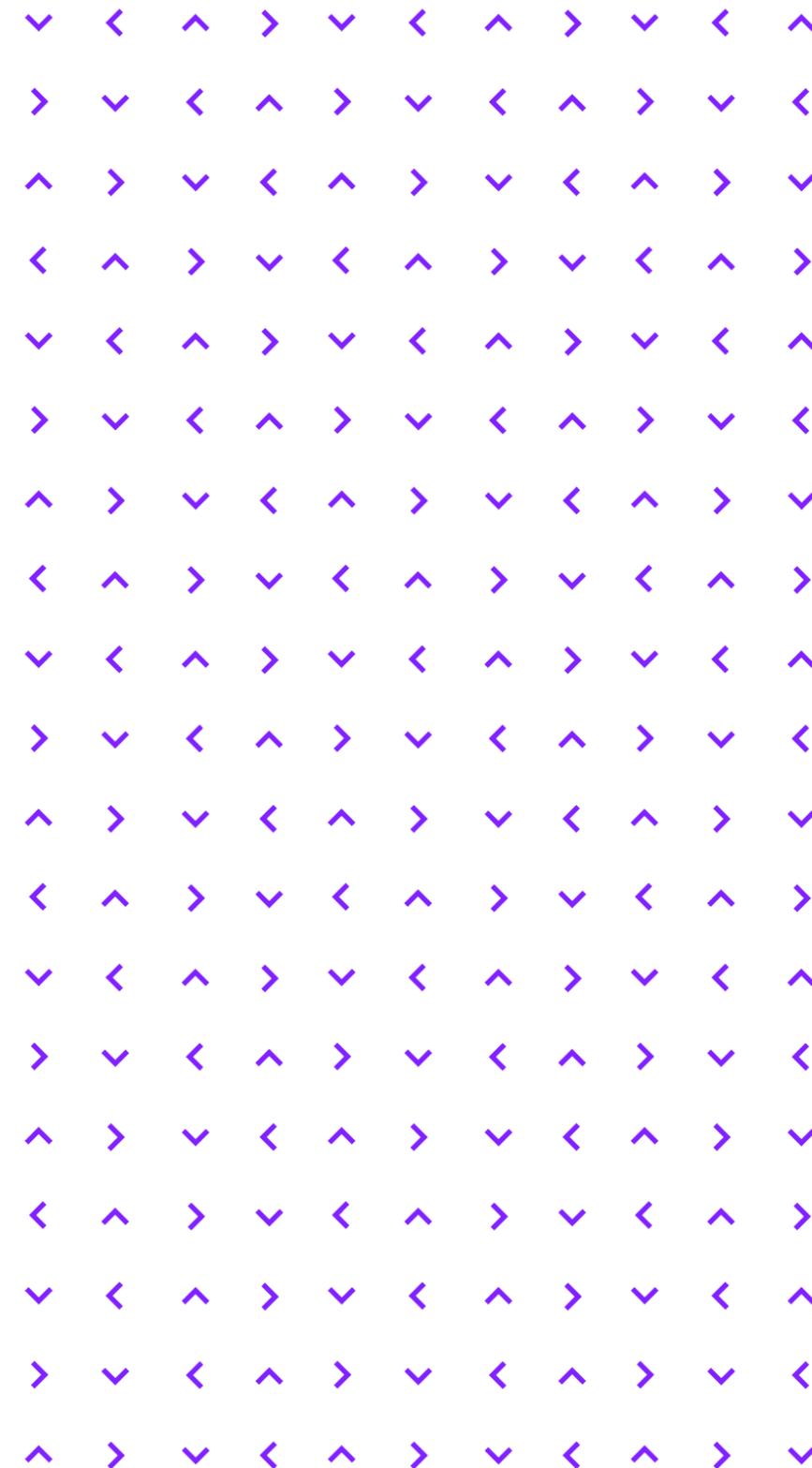
About the survey

Number of respondents: 3,389

Survey open November-December 2020

Promoted via nine students' union subscribers to Wonkhe SUs and via Pearson's student panel.

Of the participating SUs, eight are in England and one in Wales, with a mix of pre- and post-92 institutions



Demographics of respondents

Gender: Female 68% | Male 30% | Prefer to self-describe 1% | Prefer not to say 1%

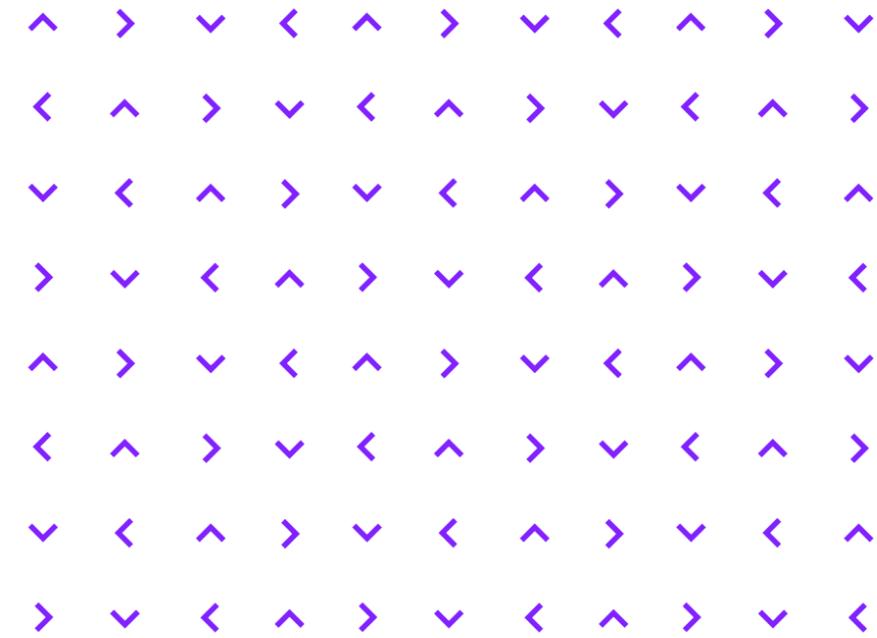
Country of origin: UK 75% | EU 10% | Outside UK and EU 15%

Ethnicity: White 80% | Black 3% | Asian 11% | Mixed 3% | Other 3%

Level of study: Undergraduate 67% | Postgraduate taught 26% | Postgraduate research 5%

Previous education: Private school 5% | Selective state school 9% | non-selective state school 10% | FE or sixth form college 50% | Adult community college 5% | outside UK 19% | Other 3%

Accommodation type: University halls 17% | Purpose built private accommodation 17% | Parental home 14% | Own residence 8% | Rented accommodation 35% | Not in attendance at provider (ie studying remotely or on a year abroad/industrial placement 5% | Other 4%



HESA data 2018-19

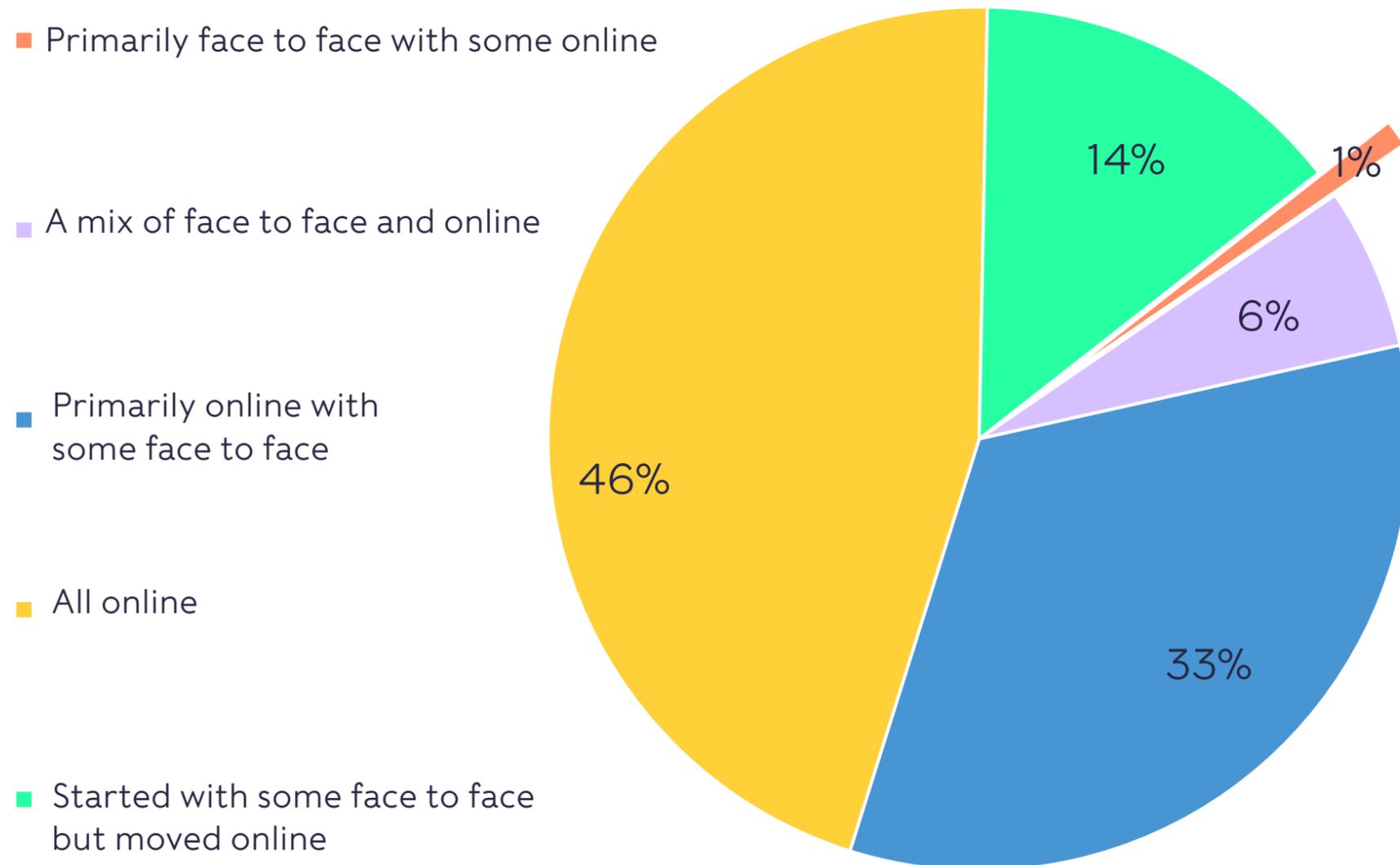
Female 57% | Male 43%

White 76% | Black 7% | Asian 11% |

Mixed 4% | Other 1%

UK 80% | EU 6% | Non-EU 14%

Which of these descriptions best defines how your course has been delivered this semester?



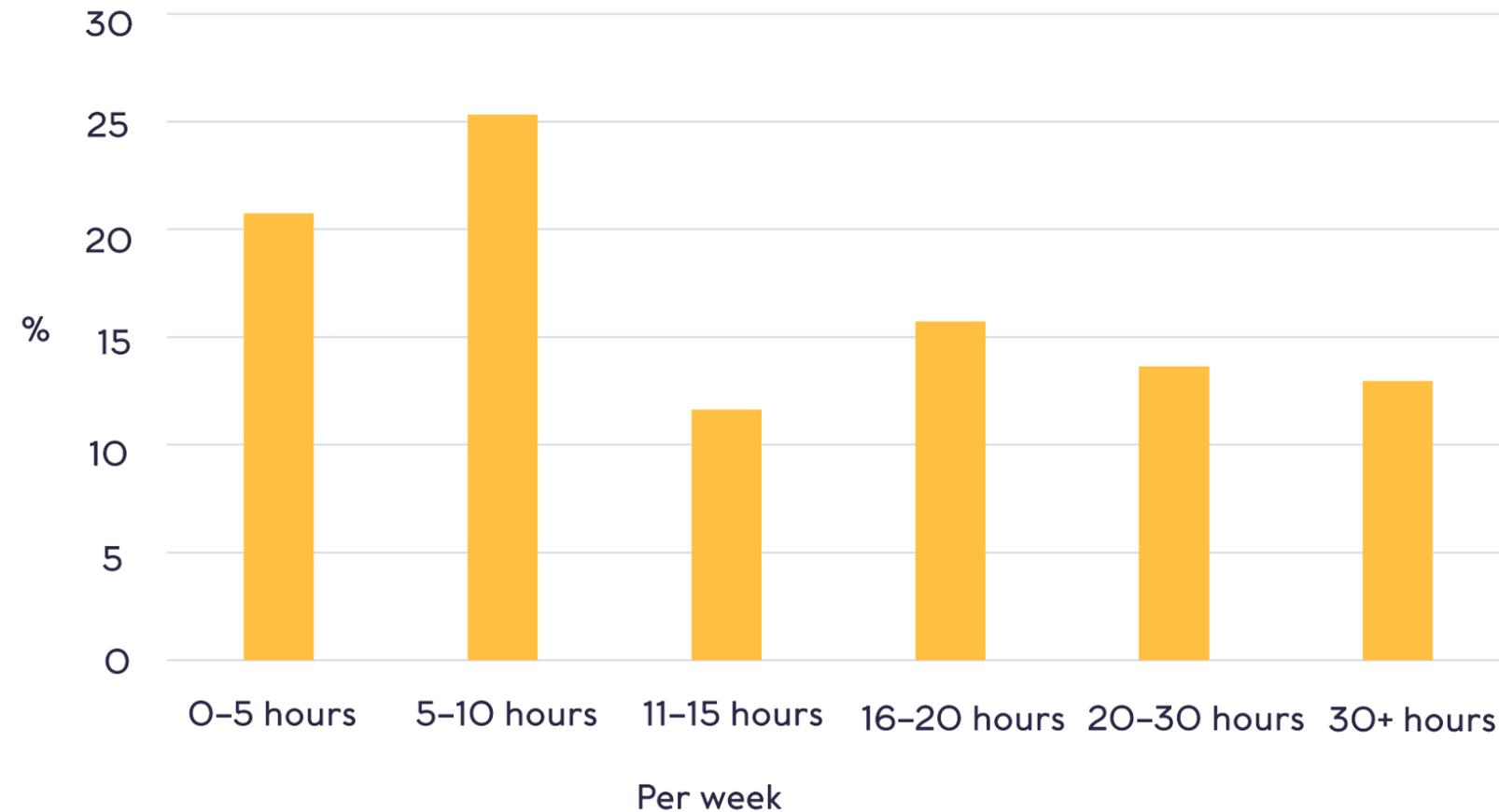
Does your course include practical work such as labs, studio time, field work or placement?

Yes – 65%

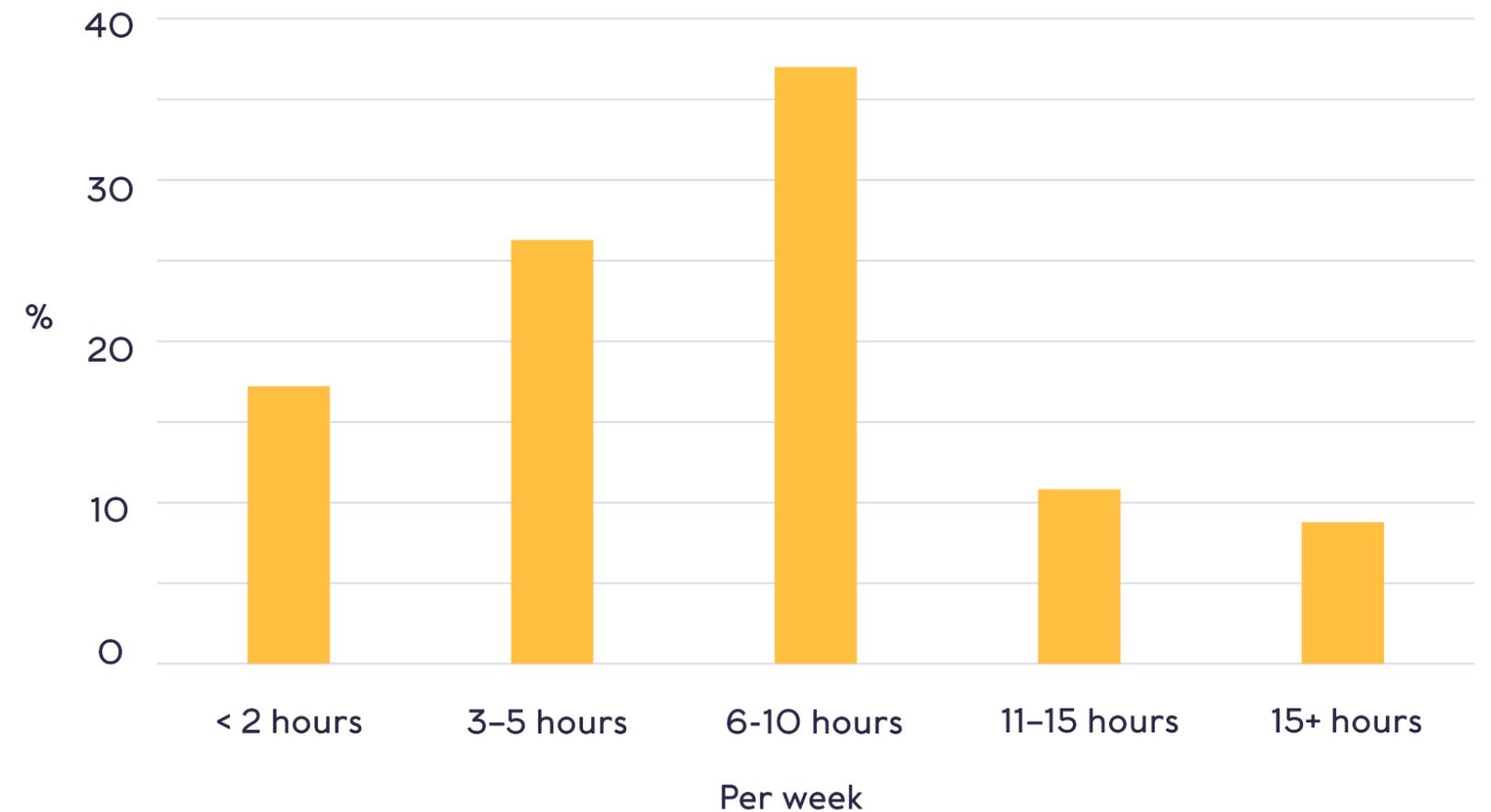
No – 35%

Hours spent per week in timetabled activity and independent learning (refers to the most recent week in which classes were scheduled)

Independent learning

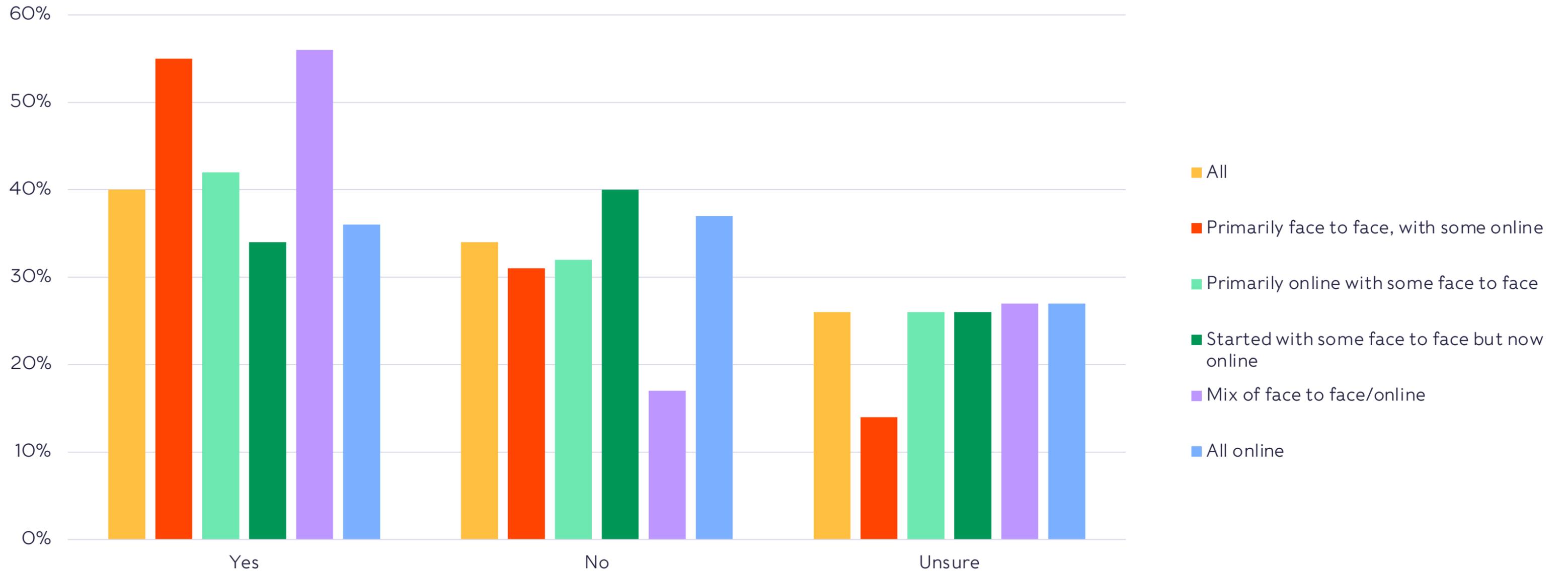


Scheduled classes (either online or face to face)



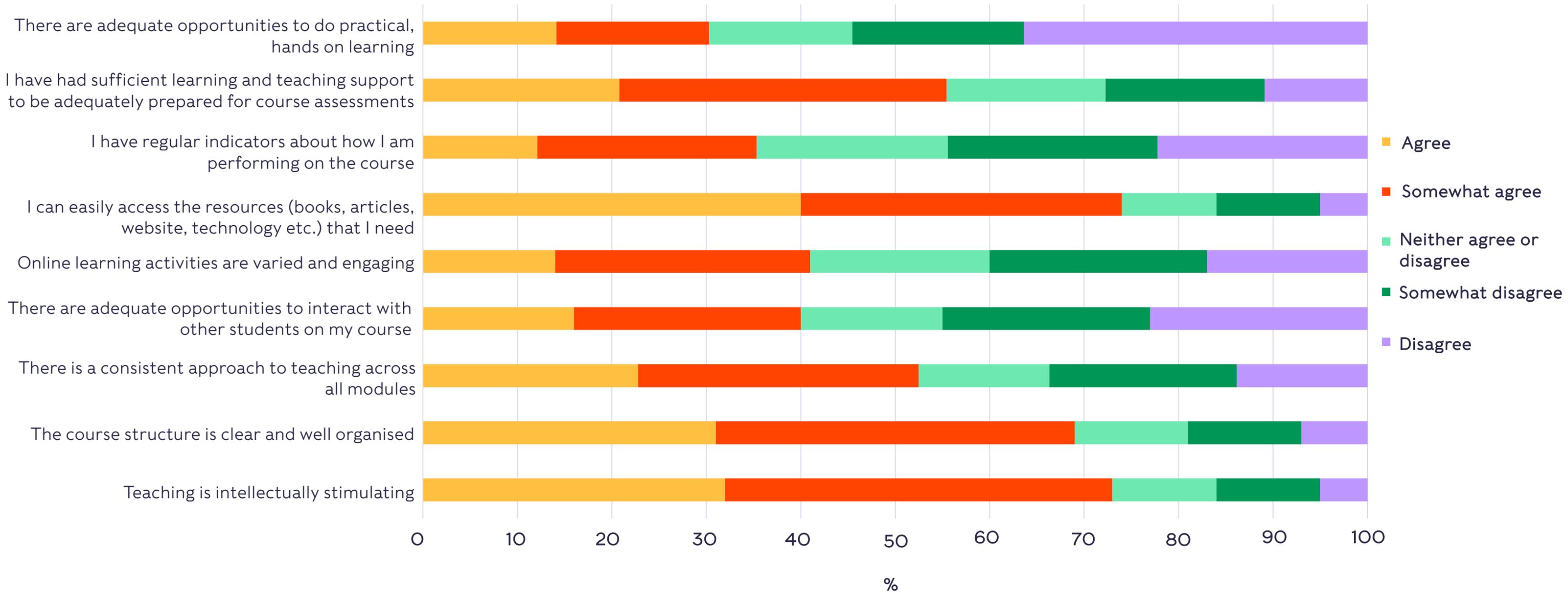
Students' learning experience

Thinking specifically about your learning rather than the wider university experience this semester, do you feel that your academic experience has been of sufficiently good quality overall?

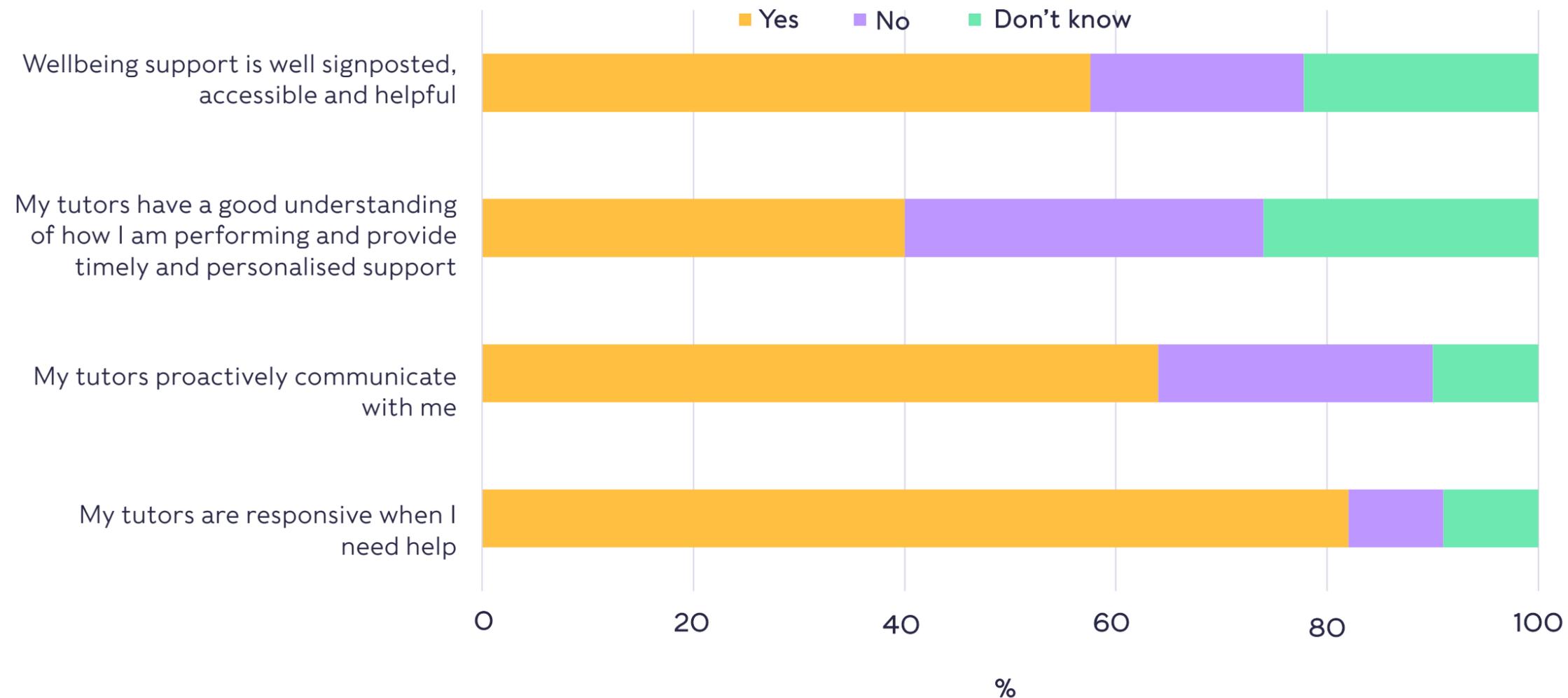


Note: "primarily face to face, with some online" represents only 1% of respondents

Learning and teaching experience during the autumn term



Do you agree with the following statements about the support available from your tutor(s) this semester?



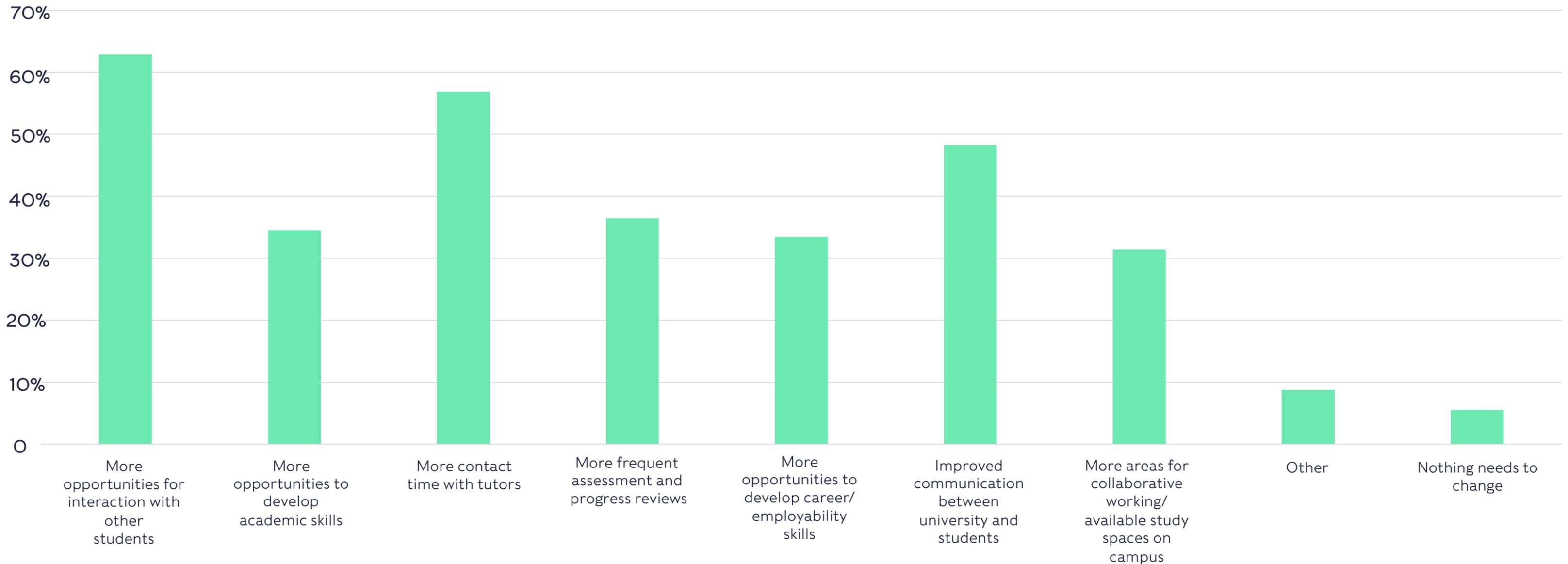
“I am grateful to the individual tutors that have taken time to talk to me online when I needed support.”

“Hard to rank tutors as there are stark contrasts in how tutors engage with students.”

“I’ve had zero personal interaction with tutors, and in fact it is actively discouraged. That has been hugely disappointing.”

“Even when things go back to normal, I think online 1-1 meetings should continue as an option for students to save traveling all the way to university just to meet a specific lecturer at their specific contact times, which 9/10 of the time does not complement your timetable.”

Taking into account the Covid-19 restrictions that your course is currently operating within, what could be done differently that would have a positive impact on your experience?



Open text suggestions for what could be done differently

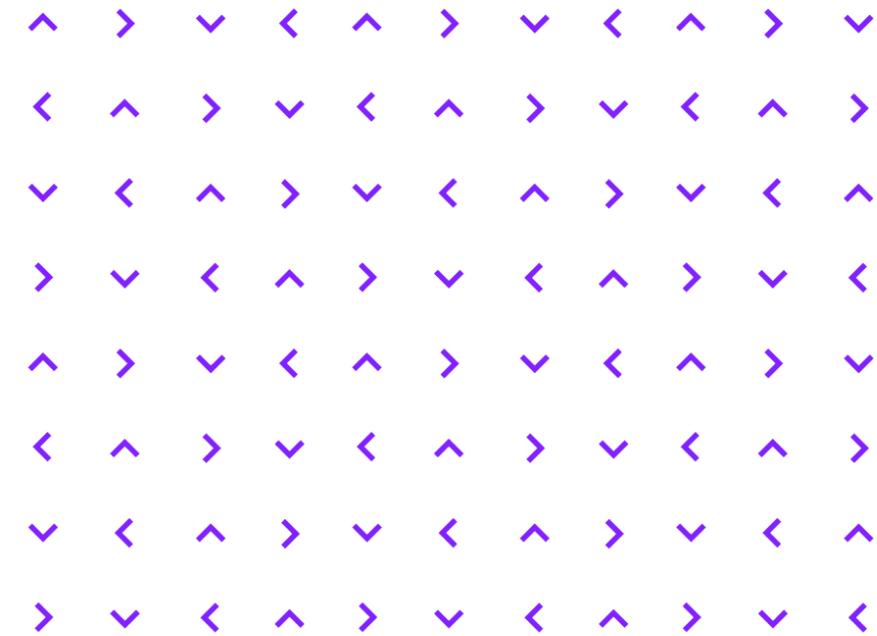
- More lab/fieldwork/practical learning
- Quality and variety of course learning activities
- Access to resources
- More face to face learning
- Pastoral/disability support
- Better organisation/course structure
- Improved assessment structure - extensions, resits
- Improved lecturer technology capability or commitment
- More consistent approach between lecturers, especially on the same module

“More time to be able to speak with my peers as a student nurse it is really crucial that we get to share our experiences.”

“Lectures are moving far too quickly with online teaching. I don't feel like I am getting an opportunity to absorb the information presented before moving on.”

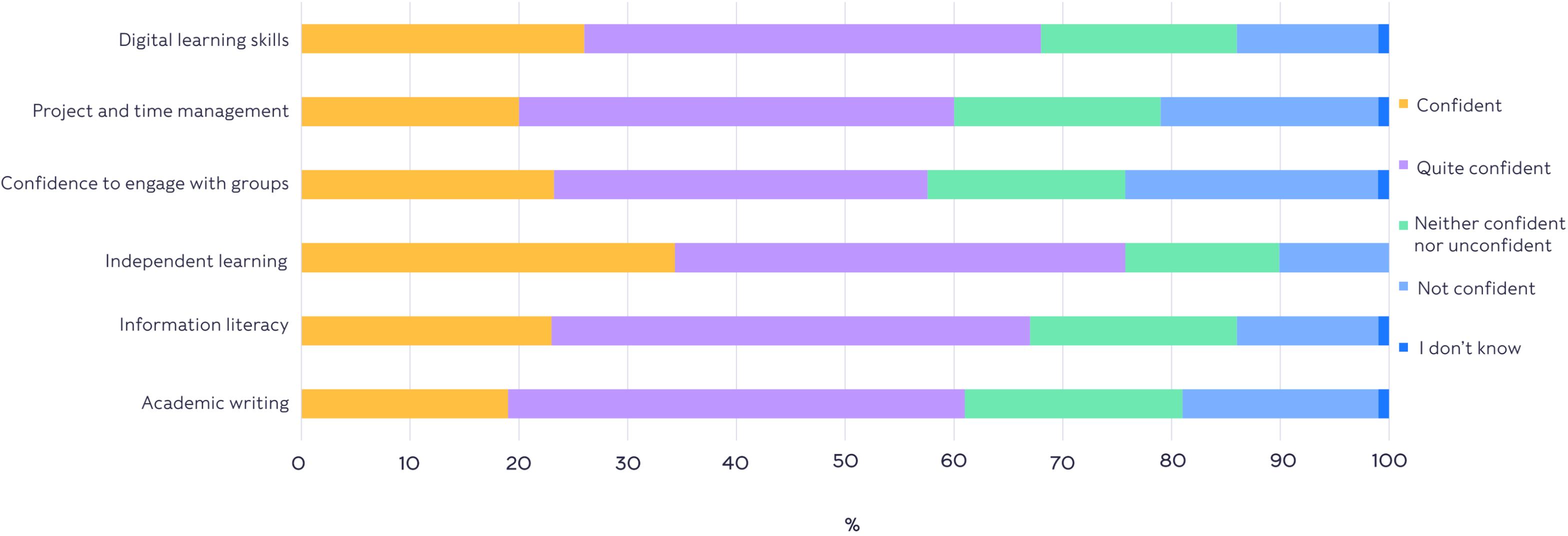
“More guidance about how to do assessments online.”

“Online course content which is actually interactive, rather than just point and click.”

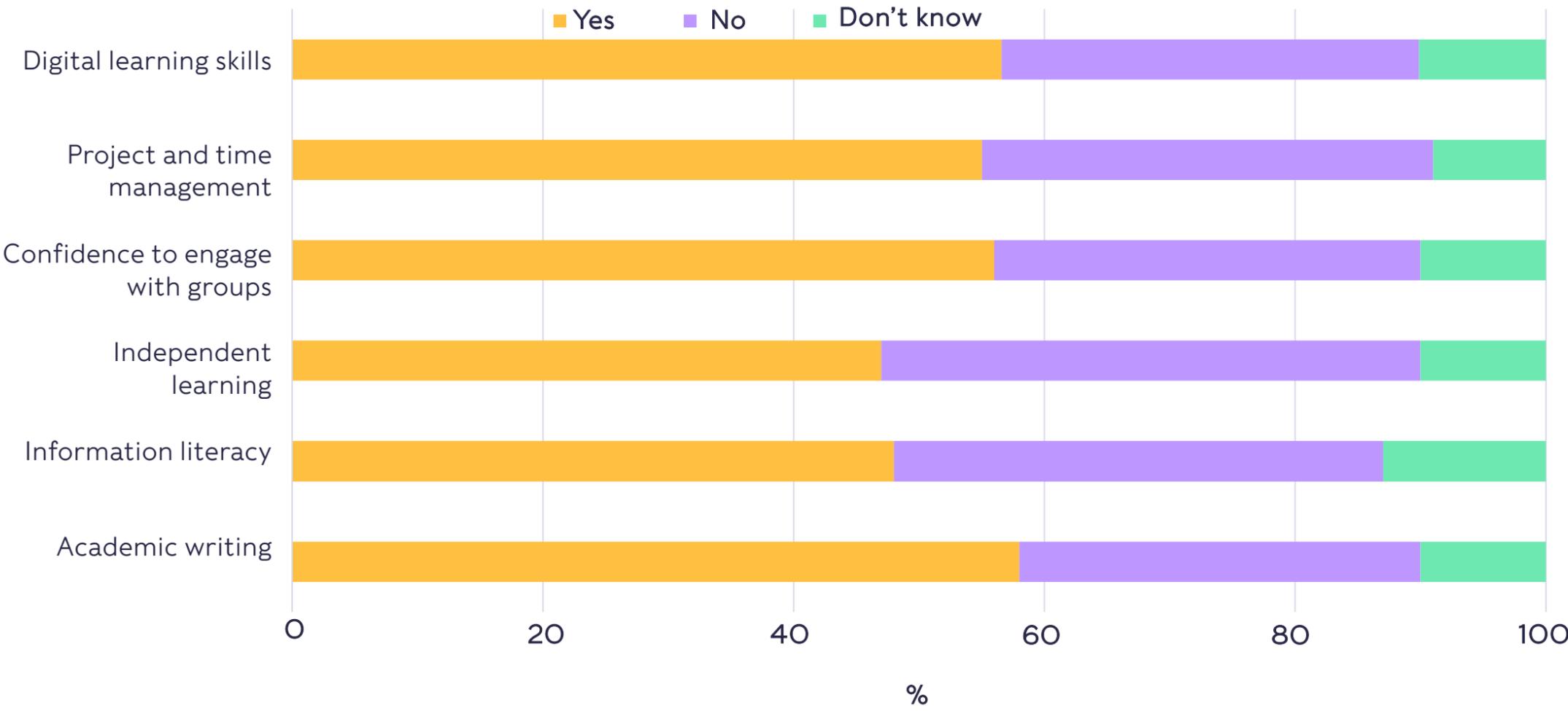


Skills development

How confident do you feel about how you are building the following skills?



Do you think there is more your university should be doing to support you to develop these skills?



“I’m generally not confident with IT skills and find the whole online learning stressful and difficult.”

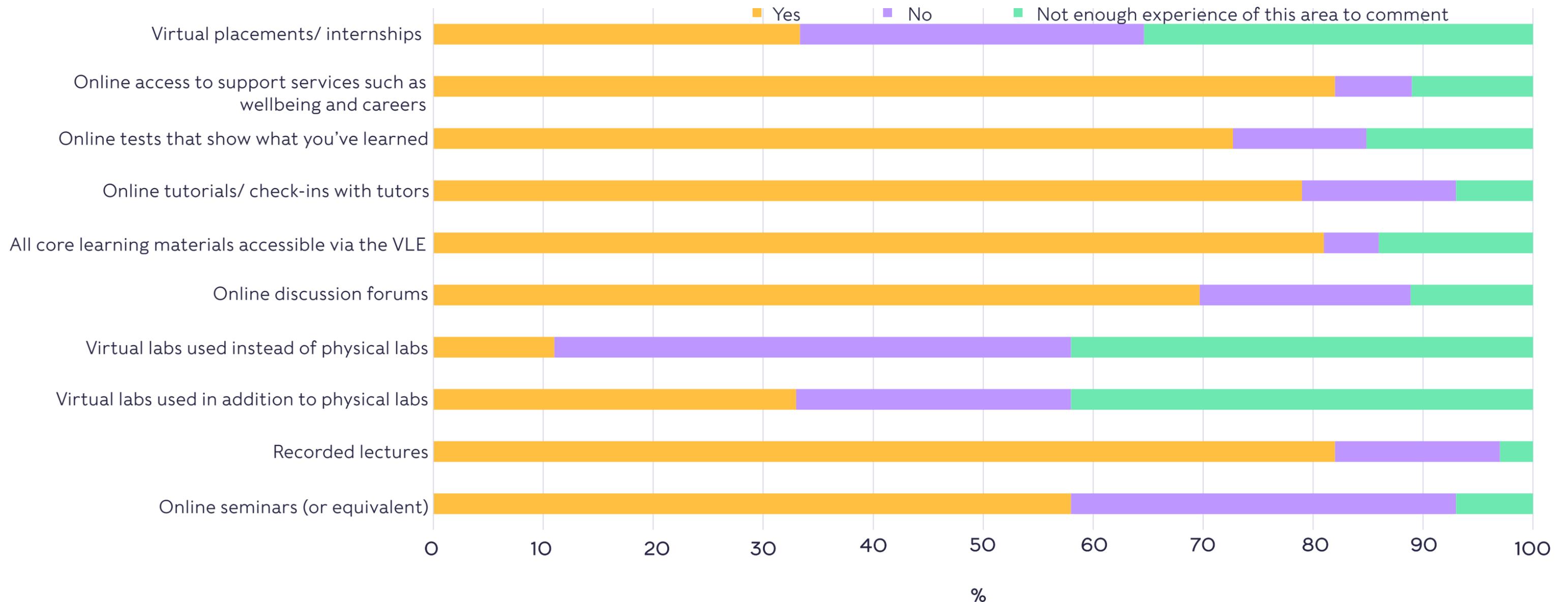
“Being returned to university after a long time of employment, I would have liked to see more organised information on academic writing style and techniques rather than trying to find relevant information online.”

“I experienced some problems with time management and independent study.”

“Required a lot of self motivation. Time management skills were key.”

Elements of online learning and teaching to retain

It is likely that some aspects of online delivery will continue after the pandemic. Please select which of the following you would like to see.



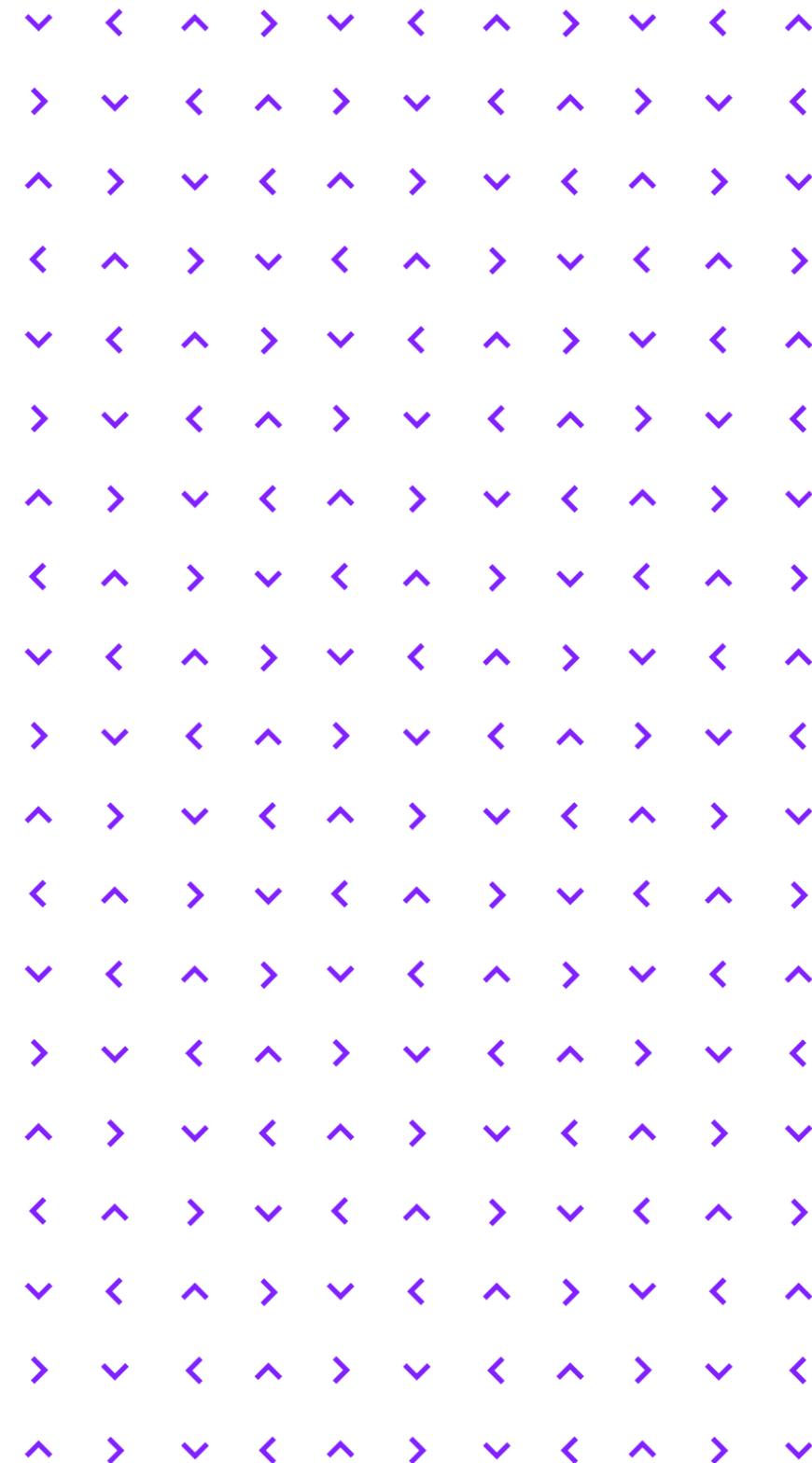
Elements of blended learning and teaching that worked well (631 open responses)

Delivery of learning and teaching

- Positive response to recorded lectures, especially where broken into shorter parts with tasks interspersed (23%)
- Livestreamed lectures and seminars (6%)
- Online peer collaboration (6%)
- Good availability of online teaching materials (4%)
- Use of breakout rooms in online sessions (3%)
- Interactivity in online lectures (3%)
- Different ways of assessing – online exams, open book, longer to complete, assignment-only (3%)

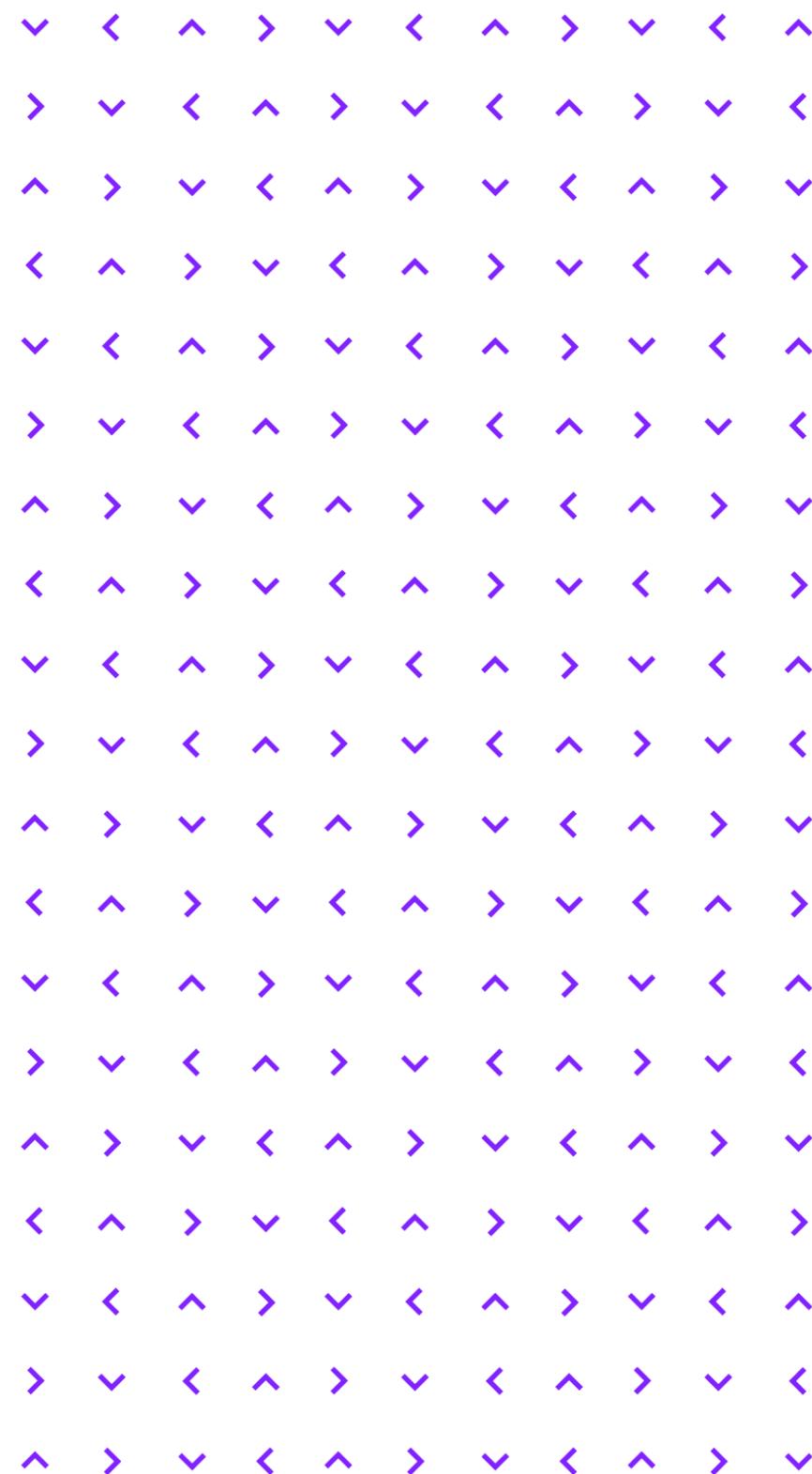
Benefits of flexible delivery

- Good communication with lecturers and university – students liked the flexibility of virtual meetings, and the responsiveness of lecturers (12%)
- Benefits in not having to commute to campus (6%)
- Working at own pace/flexibly (6%)



Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your learning experience this semester (open text)

- **Online learning is a struggle for some** – it’s hard to stay motivated, manage time, and do group projects (11%). Some have found they’re developing new skills due to the change in teaching – time management, confidence in speaking (9%)
- Some want **more or better communication** – including more thought-out comms, more guidance on assessment and university procedures (7%)
- Some students want **more face to face** – but especially in light of feeling it was promised, or their peers having more in-person sessions (6%)
- Some mentioned **accessibility** too, and issues with technology/good wifi (5%)
- Some feel the experience is inconsistent and want better planning (5%)
- Some missed the **social life, pastoral support, and interaction** with course peers and lecturers (4%) – and some said they were experiencing **negative mental impacts** such as loneliness and depression (4%)



Thank you

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