University of ULSTER

BELFAST ■ COLERAINE ■ JORDANSTOWN ■ MAGEE

University of ULSTER

Clare Carruthers, Brenda McCarron, Peter Bolan, Adrian Devine, Una McMahon-Beattie

Sounding out staff and students: perceptions of audio feedback – a more effective mechanism?

University of ULSTER

Background

- NSS - a clear relationship between student satisfaction and feedback (HEFCE, cited by JISC, 2010)
- Increasing HE evidence base re innovation in technology for A&F (Nortcliffe and Middleton, 2007, Rotheram, 2007 and Merry and Orsmond, 2008)
- Increasing move to VLE – Blackboard Learn+ at UU

"new approaches to learning and consequent expectations of the classroom instructor"

(Nugent et al., 2008: 5)

University of ULSTER

▪ *University of Ulster Context:*

- HE Institutions strategies aimed at improving quality of assessment and feedback
- UU Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning;
- Based on the REAP Principles of Good Performance;
- UU Principles endorsed in June 2011 with an implementation programme rolled out to 2012-13

University of ULSTER

1. **Clarify good performance**
   Help to clarify, from the early stages of a programme, what good performance means (goals, criteria, standards);

2. **Encourage time and effort on task**
   Encourage 'time and effort' on challenging learning tasks, which recognise the importance of learning from the tasks, not just demonstrating learning through tasks;

3. **Deliver timely high quality feedback**
   Deliver timely learner-related feedback information that helps students to self-correct and communicates clear, high, expectations and professionalism;

4. **Provide opportunities to act on feedback**
   Provide opportunities for students to act on feedback and close any gap between current and desired performance through complementary and integrated curriculum design and pedagogic practice;

University of ULSTER

5 Encourage positive motivational beliefs

Ensure that all assessment has a beneficial, constructive, impact on student learning, encouraging positive motivational beliefs, confidence and self-esteem;

6 Develop self-assessment and reflection

Facilitate the development of self- and peer-assessment skills and reflection on learning, to enable students to progressively take more responsibility for their own learning, and to inspire a lifelong capacity to learn;

7 Encourage interaction and dialogue

Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning and professional practice (student-student, lecturer-student and lecturer-lecturer) including supporting the development of student learning groups and peer learning communities.

Deliver timely high quality feedback

Provide opportunities to act on feedback

Project Aims

- ***To identify where (level and nature) audio feedback is most effective and why to student learning;***

- ***To evaluate student perceptions of audio feedback, identifying any issues and areas of best practice;***

- ***To evaluate staff perceptions of audio feedback, identifying any issues and areas of best practice.***

Literature

- ***Media Enhanced Assessment and Feedback:***
  - Not an entirely new phenomenon;
  - More recently VLE's enabled media enhance feedback;
  - Blackboard Learn+ - Wimba voice authoring/voice email

Benefits for students - Feedback for Feed-forward

- Evidence suggests that digital audio can promote self-reflection (Nortcliffe and Middleton, 2007) and feed- forward learning (Nortcliffe and Middleton, 2007, Rodway Dyer et al, 2011);

- Other evidence indicates that it can be more detailed, more personalised, clearer, more constructive (Ekinsmyth, 2010);

- That it was timely, recognised as feedback and understood (Rodway Dyer et al, 2011).

University of ULSTER

Benefits for staff - Time efficiencies

- Time efficiencies (Ice et al, 2007, Nortcliffe and Middleton, 2007, Dixon, 2009) and Rotheram, 2009);
- No time efficiencies (King et al., 2008);
- Circumstances where it can be more time consuming – all work double marked (Dixon (2009) and uploading audio files (Horan, no date cited);
- Circumstances where it can be more time efficient – technological competence, talking faster than writing, efficiency in file delivery;

(Rotheram, 2009);

- Evidence that where it is not ***more*** time efficient, it provides richer, higher quality feedback in the same time (Rotheram, 2009, Trimmingham and Simmons, no date cited and Stockwell, no date cited);

- Less time efficient for individual feedback with large cohorts, but more time efficient for general, group and presentation feedback (Horan, no date cited);

- Need for further research into audio in the VLE (Merry and Orsmond, 2008).

Student perceptions

- Greater quality, access an re-access, seeking understanding, pause, rewind, listen again, likely to refer back (Merry and Orsmond, 2008);
- More personalised (Ice et al, 2007, Rotheram, 2007, Merry and Orsmond, 2008, Nortcliffe and Middleteon, 2008, Dixon, 2009, JISC, 2010);
- More detailed (King et al, 2008);
- A useful alternative to (at times illegible) handwriting (JISC, 2010).

University of ULSTER

Methods/Design:

Approach: Action Research and Reflective Practice;

Design: Case Study:

Five case studies – audio feedback in practice:

Summative - Class test, group feedback, individual Essays - levels 4, 5 and 6;

Formative - Final year project supervision – level 6; 163 students.

Techniques:

Survey – summative feedback;

Focus Groups – formative feedback;

Staff Reflective Logs;

Staff Focus Groups.

Findings

- ***Surveys -*** Response rate – 69% (n=112):
  - ***Main Themes:***
  - ***Access and Convenience:***
- 85% of the students accessed their feedback
  - 23% PC;
  - 63% laptop;
  - 2% tablet;
  - 5% s/phone.
  - ***Re-access:***
- 28% of the students re-accessed their feedback
  - 69% would refer to this feedback again

University of ULSTER

Reasons for re-access

"To clarify information"

"To listen again"

"To recap before exam"

"To take in all that was said and review my essay with it."

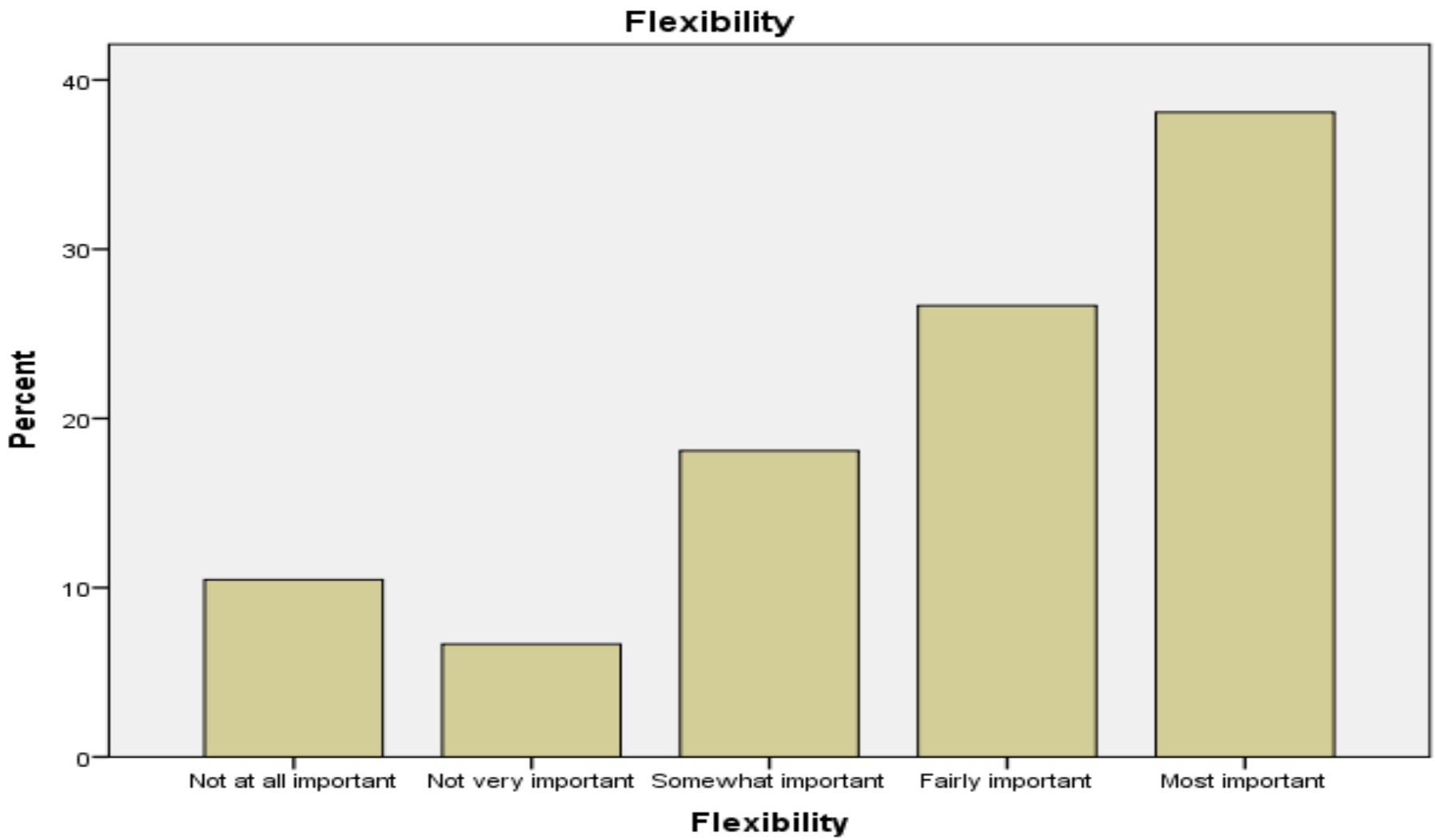
"To help with revision"

"Just to take notes on what we need to improve"

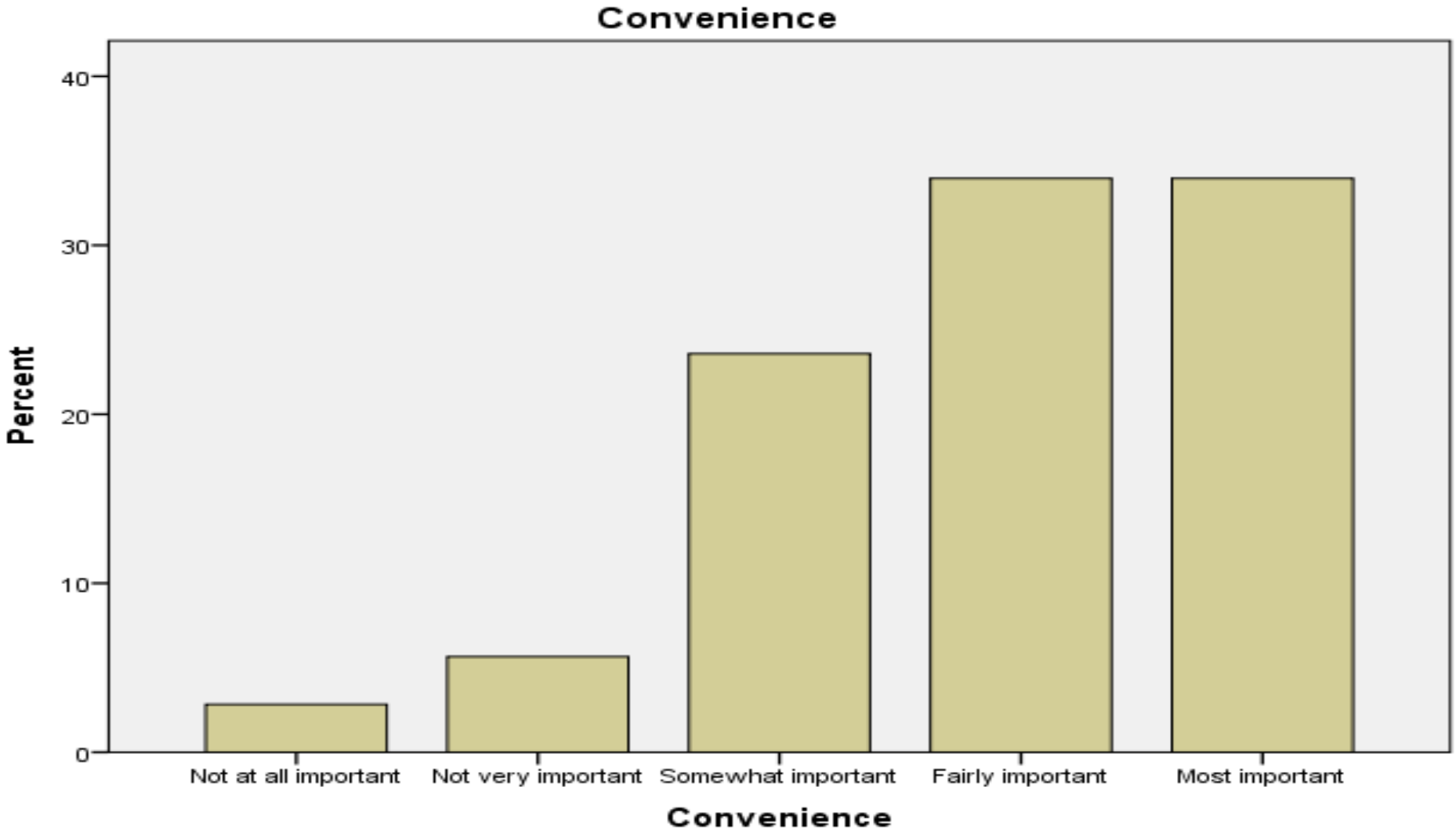
"To take advantage of every advise my lecturer was suggesting me in order to improve"

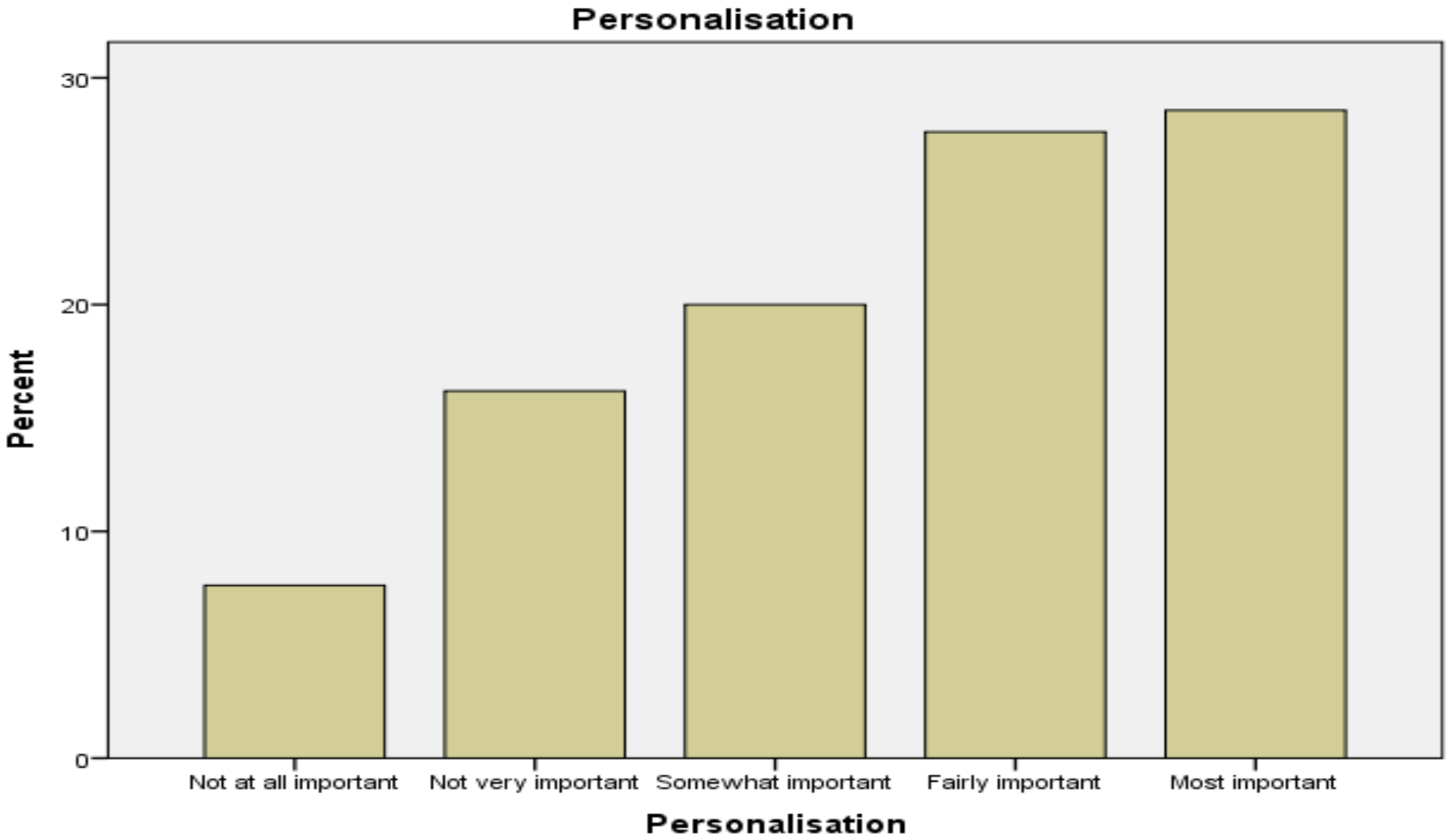
Most like about it?

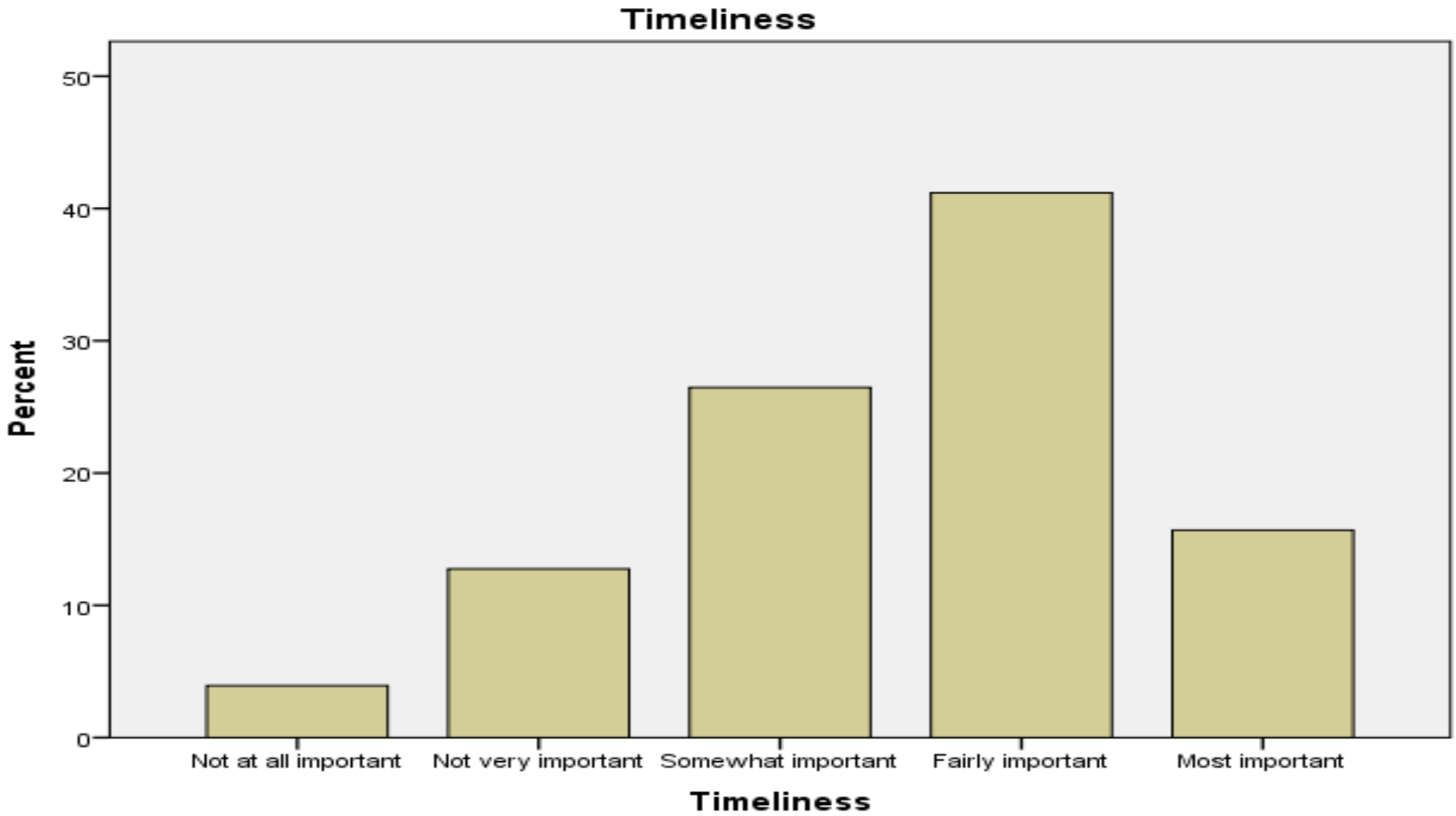
- Rank in order of importance:
  - Flexibility;
  - Convenience;
  - Personalisation;
  - Timeliness;
  - Ability to re-access.
- All were rated highly, with the majority of responses being in the fairly important/most important ranking
- 52% indicted they would like to see more of this type of feedback in other modules across their course

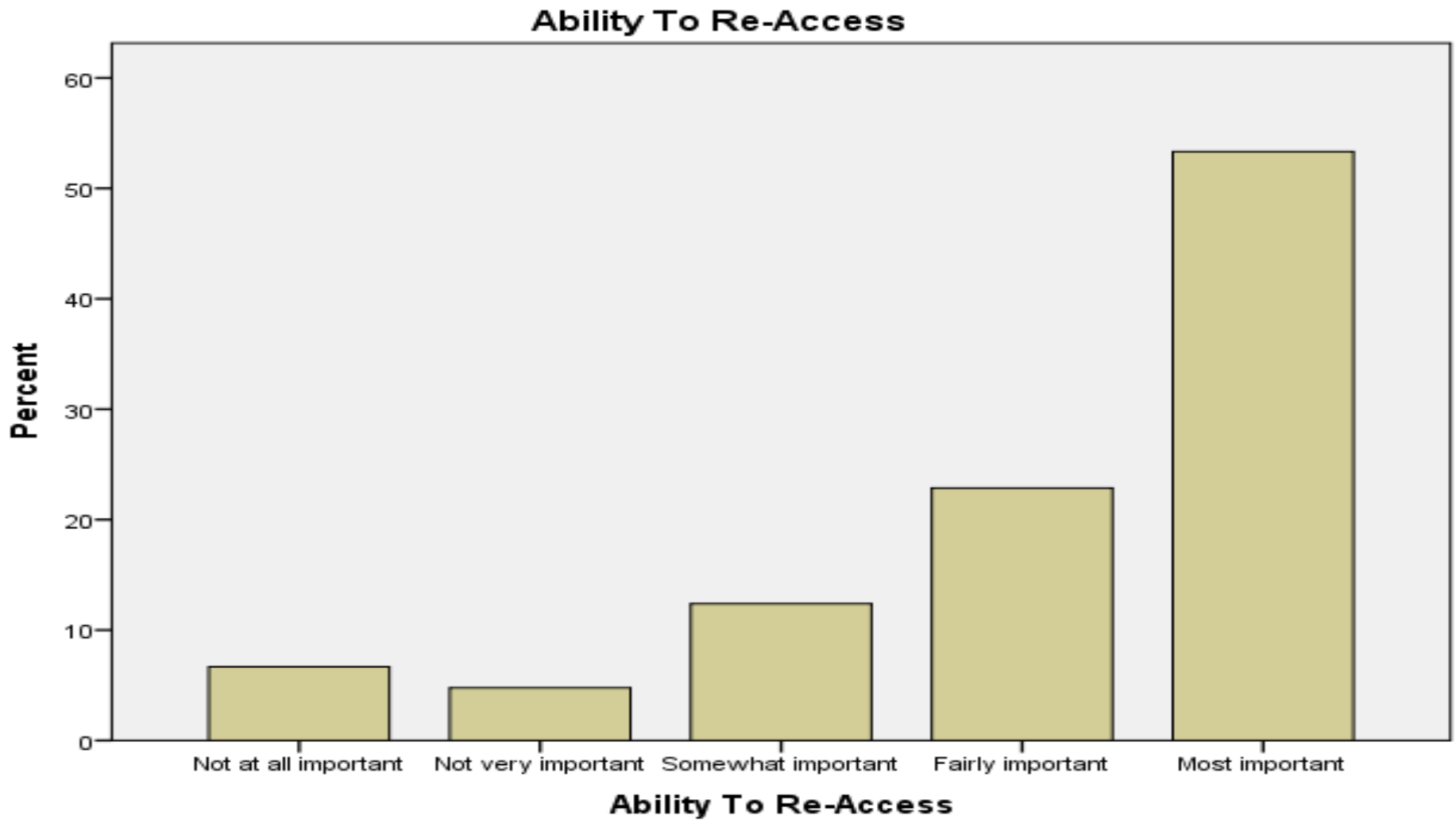

Flexibility
Percent
40
30
20
10
0
Not at all important
Not very important
Somewhat important
Fairly important
Most important
Flexibility

University of ULSTER




Personalisation
30
20
10
0
Percent
Not at all important
Not very important
Somewhat important
Fairly important
Most important
Personalisation


Timeliness
Percent
50
40
30
20
10
0
Not at all important
Not very important
Somewhat important
Fairly important
Most important
Timeliness


Ability To Re-Access
Percent
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Not at all important
Not very important
Somewhat important
Fairly important
Most important
Ability To Re-Access

Least like about it

- Rank in order of importance:
  - No hard copy;
- No opportunity for clarification;
  - No face to face interaction.
- Again these were all rated highly in terms of fairly important and most important.

Technical Issues

- 32% of students experienced technical difficulties;
- These were reported as:
- *Had to download/update the Java plug in;*
- *Browser – no access on some browsers;*
- *Slow to open.*

University of ULSTER

- ***Positive comments (57%)***

"Good, easy to access and could be gone back to whilst improving work."

"Easy to access and could be done in own time, which avoided hassle of finding time to suit both people"

"This is a good method of feedback as it allows you to improve for future exams and it's always there to be listened to again if need be"

"It is less time consuming and better to hear your feedback"

"Satisfied with tools purpose and think it should be used more widely"

"Very good and modern approach to feedback it should be used more"

University of ULSTER

- ***Mixed comments (32%)***

"It's a good method but inability to ask questions is not good"

"Good type of feedback but internet access may be restricted and Wimba can be very slow"

"Good method but prefer face to face contact with tutor"

"It is a good method but should have chance to ask where you went wrong"

"It was grand but I don't know if the benefits are worth the time it takes the lecturer to record it."

University of ULSTER

- ***Negative comments (10%)***

"I do not like audio feedback as it is hard to access and sometimes does not work."

"Not helpful due to technical problems"

"Completely unsatisfied – don't like this method of feedback"

"I was not satisfied"

University of ULSTER

Findings – Reflective Logs

- ***Reflective Records*** Invaluable in redesigning activities for the subsequent academic year

- ***Emergent themes:***
  - ***Preparing the students in advance***
  - ***Staff training***
  - ***Learning Curve***
  - ***Technical Problems***
  - ***Opportunities for review and discussion***
  - ***To release marks or not?***

Conclusions

- ***What they liked about it:***
- *Convenience;*
- *Effectiveness;*
- *Constructive for future work;*
- *Personalised;*
- *Flexibility in Accessing;*
- *Ability to re-access;*
- *Ability to listen and read through work simultaneously.*

- ***What they had reservations about***:
- *No immediate opportunity to ask questions/seek clarity on points made;*
- *Would also like to see written annotations on the actual hard copy of coursework.*

University of ULSTER

- ***What we liked about it:***
- *Time efficiencies?*
- *Ability to give more detailed, depth feedback;*
- *Incorporation into the VLE.*

- ***What we had reservations about***:
- *Time efficiencies?*
- *Technical issues*
- *Learning Curve*
- *Should not replace a range of feedback types.*

- ***Implications and practical advice:***
  - ***Significant benefits;***
  - ***Use with a range of feedback types;***
  - ***Brief Students;***
  - ***"Test Student" account;***
  - ***Test in small cohorts;***
  - ***Practicalities – door sign, phone etc.;***
  - ***Personalise;***
  - ***Provide annotated work;***
  - ***Opportunity to discuss;***
  - ***Reflective records very valuable.***

Further Developments

- ***Still "Sounding out staff and students":***
  - ***Focus Groups – formative feedback***
  - ***Reflective Logs – formative feedback***
- ***Faculty project – audio feedback and the incorporation of various technologies across the UBS***

University of ULSTER

References

- Dixon, S. (2009) Now I'm a Person: Feedback by audio and text annotation, Conference Proceedings, *A Word in Your Ear*, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University.

- Ekinsmyth, C. (2010) Reflections on using digital audio to give assessment feedback, *Planet*, 23, 74-77.

- Horan, N. (no date cited) *Use of digital audio to provide feedback for students coursework via the VLE*, A Higher Education Academy Engineering Subject Centre Case Study, HEA, available from, http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/subjects/engineering/use-digital-audio.pdf, accessed 26/09/12

- Ice, P., Curtis., R., Phillips, P. and Wells, J. (2007) Using asynchronous audio feedback to enhance teaching presence and students' sense of community, *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 11 (2), 3-25.

- JISC (2010) Audio Feedback, *Creating New Digital Media,* JISC, available from http://www.jisc.co.uk

- King, D., McGugan, S. and Bunyan, N. (2008) Does it make a difference? Replacing text with audio feedback, *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 3 (2), 145-163.

- Merry, S. and Orsmond, P. (2008) Students' attitudes to and usage of academic feedback provided via audio files, *Bioscience Education*, 11 (3).
- Nortcliffe, A. and Middleton, A. (2007) Audio feedback for the iPod generation. *International Conference on Engineering Education*, Coimbra, Portugal.
- King, D., McGugan, S. and Bunyan, N. (2008) Does it make a difference? Replacing text with audio feedback, *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 3 (2), 145-163.

- Merry, S. and Orsmond, P. (2008) Students' attitudes to and usage of academic feedback provided via audio files, *Bioscience Education*, 11 (3).
- Nortcliffe, A. and Middleton, A. (2007) Audio feedback for the iPod generation. *International Conference on Engineering Education*, Coimbra, Portugal.

- Nortcliffe, A. and Middleton, A. (2008) A three year case study of using audio to blend the engineer's learning environment, *Engineering Education*, 3 (2), 45-57.
- Nugent, J. S., Reardon, R. M., Smith, F. G., Rhodes, J. A., Zander, M. J. and Carter, T. J. (2008) Exploring Faculty learning Communities: Building Connections among Teaching, Learning, and Technology, *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 20 (1), 51-58.

- Rodway-Dyer, S., Knight, J. and Dunne, E. (2011) A case study on audio feedback with geography undergraduates, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 35 (2), 217-231.

- Rotheram, B. (2007) Using a MP3 recorder to give feedback on student assignments, *Educational Developments*, 8 (2), 7-10.

- Rotheram, B. (2009) Sounds Good: using audio to give assessment feedback*, The Assessments, Learning and Teaching Journal*, 7, Winter, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.

- Stockwell, J. (no date cited) *Audio feedback for students,* A Higher Education Academy Engineering Subject Centre Case Study, HEA, available from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/subjects/engineering/audio-feedback-students.pdf, accessed 26/09/12.

- Trimingham, R. and Simmons, P. (no date cited) *Using audio technology for student feedback,* A Higher Education Academy Engineering Subject Centre Case Study, HEA, available from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/subjects/engineering/using-audio-technology-student-feedback.pdf, accessed 26/09/12.

- ***Thank you for listening – Questions?***