

Learning and Teaching Showcase Week

12-18 August 2009

Evaluation Report

15 October 2009

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The Learning and Teaching Showcase Week was part of the Promoting Excellence Initiative, an ALTC funded grant project

Showcase Week 2009 - Evaluation

Executive Summary

The 2009 Learning and Teaching Showcase Week was held in the week 12-18 August 2009. The purpose of the week was to promote engagement with the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching¹ through two keynote speakers, staff sharing examples from their practice, and promotion of the ALTC grants and awards.

The keynote speakers were Dr Kerri-Lee Harris from the University of Melbourne speaking on *Curriculum diversification in Australian Universities and the implications for academic standards*; and Professor Geoff Scott PVC (Quality) from the University of Western Sydney speaking on *The changing nature of the academic role*. Dr Kerri-Lee Harris also ran a workshop on Implementing Peer Review of Teaching and a question and answer session for those interested in following up on issues raised in her keynote address.

16 sessions at which 44 people presented were held across the week. These included a workshop and a student panel discussion. In total (including presenters) 120 people attended on average 1.6 sessions each resulting in 186 individual session attendances (not including the organizer). Highest attendances were recorded at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences session, the Technology for Learning session, and the closing keynote address Professor Geoff Scott.

Total direct costs for the week (excluding staff time) was under \$3000 which included the costs of the keynote speakers, welcome function, morning tea for Kerri-Lee Harris' workshops, and lunch at Geoff Scott's management workshop.

48 attendees responded to a post event survey. The survey deliberately did not focus on the quality of individual presentations and sessions, rather on the overall experience of the week. The main reason people gave for attending was *the presentations stimulated my curiosity* (65%). Many commented on how difficult it was to attend more because of their work commitments. Topic choice emerged as a key issue in the comments related to proposed improvements for next year, with topics that have immediate practical relevance to academics being requested for keynotes and local speakers.

¹ The acronym for the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching was derived from the "Scholarship of Teaching Learning", so is recognized widely as SoTL.

Recommendations

After reflecting on their observations of the event, the survey feedback, and their own experiences as academics, the Faculty PEI Coordinators recommend that the Teaching and Learning Showcase Week be expanded to a month-long event. This would allow for sessions to be distributed more widely and therefore encourage greater attendance, as well as encouraging Schools to include SoTL focused seminars as part of their regular seminar program. Finally, a full month allows for easy tagging of the event e.g. *September is Learning and Teaching Month*.

We believe a formal application process for speakers is required. This will ensure presenters take a serious approach to their presentations. It will also provide clear information on any particular presenter needs, as well as presentation information such as titles, authors and presenters. Abstracts submitted will also assist in documentation of the Showcase.

We also recommend consideration be given in 2010 to including a national SoTL conference in the Learning and Teaching month. This would provide staff with greater encouragement to present as it could be recorded on their CV, provide a first step SoTL goal on the way to developing a paper, and be noted as institutional recognition for the purposes of ALTC citation applications. Such a move would necessitate changing the date to a non-teaching period (September is recommended) to ensure room availability.

Recommendations for 2010

1. Expand the duration of the Learning and Teaching Showcase to a month (September)
2. Include a formal national 2 day SoTL conference within the month
3. Include a function at which Teaching Award winners for the year are recognized
4. Include a series of 1 hour examples from practice sessions in the Learning and Teaching Month, with application to present required
5. Include a keynote speaker with the speaker also offering a substantive workshop (1-2 days) on a practical topic
6. Encourage Schools to include at least one SoTL presentation in their normal seminar program series during the month

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1. Introduction

The 2009 Learning and Teaching Showcase Week was held in the week 12-18 August 2009. The purpose of the week was to promote engagement with the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching (SoTL) through two keynote speakers, staff sharing examples from their practice, and promotion of the ALTC grants and awards.

The dates for the event were selected to encompass the already planned Faculty of Arts and Sciences morning presentation, an event also held in the previous two years. As the week-long event was the first of this type held in many years, goals were modest. We were hoping for moderate attendances at presentations and keynotes, and for the event to provide stimulus for staff to provide input as to their needs in future years.

With 44 presentations over 16 sessions, attended by 120 people (making a total of 186 individual session attendance), participation was about as expected. Attendance varied highly across the range of sessions, with some sessions attracting only 1 or 2 attendees apart from the presenters, and others more than 25. Participant feedback combined with the nature of the poorly attended sessions indicates that staff are looking for sessions with immediate practical benefit.

One significant date clash was encountered which impacted on attendance at the opening keynote and welcome function.

Planning for future years therefore needs to consider:

- Possible date clashes
- Selection of themes to provide staff with immediate practical benefits
- Selection of presentations which are of high quality, interesting, practical, and present material with which staff are not already familiar
- A more streamlined way to document presentations
- Discipline and Faculty needs

2. Evaluation

Evaluation Method

The goal of the Showcase Week was to promote engagement with the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching. As is common with goals that are large and broad, it is almost impossible to measure the contribution of this single event to the larger goal. Instead we must focus on more measurable outcomes. Considered for this evaluation were:

- Staff attendance
- Cost
- Feedback from attendees
- Reflections of the organisers

Staff Attendance

Statistics in Summary

- 16 sessions were held across the week
- 44 people presented (some twice)
- 120 people attended
- 186 individual attendances were recorded (excluding the organizer who attended nearly every session)
- On average each person (excluding the organizer) attended 1.6 sessions

Showcase Attendance (numbers include presenters)

Session	Attendance
Keynotes	
Geoff Scott (Presentation)	36
Kerri-Lee Harris (Presentation)	17
K-L Harris (Workshop) - Peer Review	12
K-L Harris (Q&A Session)	9
Presentation Sessions	
Professions - Course Development	10
Professions - Improving Outcomes	9
Professions - Technology for Learning	26
Arts and Sciences - Examples from Practice	41
Directorates	
TLC - Foundation Skills	1
Dixson Library - Developing Digital Literacy	6
ELIS - The ELC at Work	7
Student Assist	6
Other	
ALTC Grant Information	3
ALTC Citation and Teaching Awards	2
Research and Practice Nexus (Workshop)	9
Student Panel Discussion	8

The best attended sessions were Geoff Scott’s keynote address (36) and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences morning session (41), both the subject of an intense email advertising campaign. The Arts and Sciences session was in total 3.5 hours, with most people attending for only a portion of that time. Attendance at any particular time was therefore around 25-30. Sessions presented by the Faculty of The Professions had varied attendance with the most popular being Technology for Learning (26). This would indicate staff preferred to attend sessions that would provide them with immediate practical benefits. This would also explain why presentations from the Directorates were poorly attended.

Cost

Direct costs for the week were funded from the ALTC Management Account with contributions of \$375 from the two Faculties (\$750). The Promoting Excellent Initiative project budget met staff salary costs for organisation, web page development and poster design.

Showcase Week - Direct Costs

Item	Cost
Kerri-Lee Harris (keynote)	1195
Geoff Scott (keynote)	761
Welcome Function	450
Morning Tea (workshops)	85
Poster and Flyer Printing	166
Student Panel Gifts	36
Total Costs	2693

Note that as at 15 October 2009, a few costs such as Cabcharge fares for keynote speakers are not yet available. These costs will be less than \$150 in total, keeping the total direct costs for the week under \$3,000.

Showcase Week – Estimated Staff Time

Item	Time
Cathryn McCormack	6 weeks
PEI Coordinator Faculty of The Professions	
Web site development and poster design	20 hours
Administrative support	15 hours

Feedback from Attendees

All 120 staff who attended were invited to provide feedback on the week, with 48 responding. Given the range of attendance across the week, questions were directed toward the week overall rather than individual sessions. Approximately half of the survey questions asked about the 2009 Showcase Week with the other half addressing preferences for 2010. Full results are at Appendix A.

Reasons for attendance

The main reason selected for choosing to attend sessions was *The presentations stimulated my curiosity* (65%), followed by *The presentations could be applied in my work* (48%) and *I was presenting* (44%). Support for colleagues was shown by *A colleague was presenting* (35%).

Keynotes

11 respondents attended Geoff Scott's presentation with all rating it very good or excellent. One respondent said *This was one of the most stimulating presentations I have heard in a long time at UNE! Geoff's vision for the future, his awareness of students, staff (both academic and general) and community needs, plus his participatory ways of speaking and operating were very encouraging.*

7 respondents attended Kerri-Lee Harris's presentation, with 5 rating it very good or excellent. One respondent said *I attended several sessions with Kerri-Lee and found it all very informative.* As noted in the attendance section, the staff preference for presentations that had a direct impact on their work meant that the broad focus of Kerri-Lee's presentation was likely under appreciated.

Other comments

Several comments were made along the lines of staff wanting to attend more sessions but not having the time *I didn't attend many sessions; if I had unlimited time I would have attended several other sessions; but there are too many conflicting expectations of academics.*

Overall, staff were very positive about the week and appreciated the opportunity to participate and attend. *The L&T Showcase week is a terrific initiative and provides an opportunity for staff to share developments in their work and hopefully pick up tips from each other. I support both the concept itself and the efforts of staff in presenting.*

Respondent suggestions for 2010

Keynotes

Two keynotes appeared to be a popular number for next year, although some suggested these be spread further across the year. Suggestions for possible keynote speakers elicited a single recommendation: Dr Sally Nimon, UniSA *Understanding and Engaging Gen Y - Sally is a really engaging speaker and has done some great research on Gen Y and how they learn and engage with learning.*

Session length and speaker times

Staff indicated a preference for 1 hour sessions (65%) over 1.5 hours (27%) or a full morning (5%). This is in line with staff finding it difficult to find time to attend. A mix of short (10+5) and longer (15+10) sessions were preferred (55%) over all short or all longer (both 23%). Comments indicated support for both lengths: *It felt like the speakers were rushed through* and *Short and to the point.*

Time of year

Respondents indicated that August was a suitable time of year for the 2010 showcase (51%). If an alternative time of year was selected lecture break time was preferred (July or September 28%). It appears that any time of year would suffer from staff being busy *No preference – all times are busy!*

Suggestions for session themes

A list of themes was suggested, from which *Collaborative online tasks* and *Managing large groups online* (42%) were the most popular. These two themes were followed closely in popularity by *Assessment – reducing marking time*, *Collecting and using student feedback*, and *Stimulating online discussion* (all 38%). Some support was indicated for each of the remaining theme suggestions.

Further themes were requested from respondents, with the following suggestions coming forward.

- *I think Assessment is a critical issue and one which could benefit from broader discussions around the amount of assessment, how best to assess in an on-line environment*
- *Something on e-portfolios and desktop conferencing applications*

- *Student support*
- *What other advances may exist in the field of online learning*

Suggestions for workshops and roundtables

Responses to questions regarding more interactive activities such as workshops and roundtables showed a significant level of support. Workshop suggestions included *Turning your teaching into research* (44%), and *Reflecting on your teaching* (25%). Roundtable suggestions included *Issues in your teaching practice* (31%) and *Improving teaching to develop your career* (23%).

One further comment provided useful input to planning the Showcase Week for 2010 and would assist particularly in planning interactive sessions. *Maybe consider a shorter, and more selective, range of sessions based on wider feedback and School-level (Teaching & Learning Committees) preliminary groundwork and liaison, for input to program, gaining some indication of School level of support for participating/attending?*

Other comments or suggestions

Two final suggestions were made that will assist in planning for 2010.

- *Have the Deans emphasize to the HOSs that teaching is a valued skill and as consequence, staff should be encouraged to attend*
- *Please, any presentations should actually be presenting something new and innovative. One doesn't have time to waste on basic BB stuff*

Reflections from the organisers

In terms of attendance, it was noted that many people left the presentations at the end of the first hour. This is in line with the survey indicating one hour sessions were preferred. It was also noted that some presenters were poorly prepared with presentations clearly not designed to fit within the time limit. Attendance was heavily divided along faculty lines, with few from the Faculty of The Professions attending the Faculty of Arts and Sciences session and vice versa.

Amongst sessions presented by the Faculty of The Professions, *Technology for Learning* was the best attended and stimulated the most questions and discussion. Sessions where attendance was poor proved a challenge for presenters, but were highly appreciated by those attending.

The quality of presentations across the week varied. Most presentations were of high quality, but the week overall was let down by a few that were poorly planned and unpracticed.

The Arts and Sciences presenters were recruited from faculty grant holders. This could be why the session had a greater proportion of poorly prepared presentations in terms of time management and overall quality of presentation, and a high proportion of presentations which presented material with which the audience was already familiar. Recruitment of speakers for 2010 will therefore require a different approach.

The opening keynote and welcome function clashed with a major annual lecture with welcome function hosted by the School of Humanities.

3. Documentation

Documentation of presentations

All presentations were audio recorded, and these will be made available on the web along with the presenter's slides. Where slides are not available a summary of the presentation will be incorporated. As recruitment of presenters was informal in 2009, presentations and abstracts were not collected as a matter of course. This means all presenters have had to be contacted requesting documentation, with some yet to be provided.

Certificates of appreciation

In order to gain maximal profile for the event, Heads of School were sent 'Certificates of Appreciation' for all staff participating. A cover letter was included, signed by the PVC(A), asking that the certificates be handed out during School staff meetings. By means of public thanks we hope other staff members will feel encouraged to participate in 2010.

4. Discussion of possibilities for 2010

After reflecting on their observations of the event, the survey feedback, and their own experiences as academics, the Faculty PEI Coordinators identified the following issues to be taken into consideration when planning the Learning and Teaching Showcase for 2010:

- Scheduling to avoid date clashes and include shorter sessions (1 hour) sessions with a mix of lengths of presentations
- Selection of themes for sessions to provide staff with immediate practical benefits
- Inclusion of presentations which are of high quality, interesting and practical, and which do not repeat content from a previous year
- A quicker way to document presentations
- Obtaining further institutional endorsement such as commitment from senior management to attend

Scheduling

Participant feedback indicated that there were too many events held in too short a time, and that sessions should be shorter and include a range of presentation times. One way to address this is to expand the duration of the Showcase into a full month – Learning and Teaching Month. A full month would allow for easier tagging of the event e.g. *September is Learning and Teaching month*, greater flexibility in scheduling to avoid clashing with other UNE events of significance, and for a greater range of activities to be included. The range of activities could include:

- Schools could be encouraged to include one or two SoTL presentations in their regular research seminar schedule
- Introductory workshops (with a series to follow) for grant writing or preparing a teaching portfolio
- More student centred events such as panels on topics related to the themes selected for the month
- A series of themed sessions across the month (say one per week), each focusing on a theme
- A formal function where teaching award recipients for 2009 are recognized

Themes

Themes need to be selected which relate to issues staff face. From the survey, some themes of interest are: collaborative online tasks, managing large groups online, efficient assessment (reducing marking time), collecting and using student feedback, and stimulating online discussions. A further suggestion was that School Teaching and Learning Committees be approached to suggest further possible themes.

Presentations and documentation

Most presentations were of high quality, but the week overall was let down by a few that were poorly planned and unpracticed. As previously noted, as Arts and Sciences presenters were selected as a result of holding Faculty Teaching and Learning grants, this meant some unavoidably presented on almost exactly the same topic as they had the previous year.

We believe a formal application process for speakers will ensure presenters take a serious approach to their presentations. It will also provide clear information on presentation needs, titles, authors and presenters. By requiring speakers to submit an abstract it will also assist in documentation of the Showcase.

A further upgrade could be to include a formal SoTL national conference to the Learning and Teaching Showcase event, thereby encouraging UNE staff to submit formal papers and higher quality presentations, as well as facilitating participation of external speakers and sharing of information. This would provide staff with greater encouragement to present as it could be recorded on their CV, provide a first step SoTL goal on the way to developing a paper, and be viewed as institutional recognition for the purposes of ALTC citation applications. Such a move would necessitate changing the date to a non-teaching period (either July or September) to ensure room availability. A further range of benefits for a formal SoTL conference are documented in Appendix A.

To assist staff in preparing for either a formal or informal presentation, a series of SoTL workshops will be conducted early in the year, and from these the formation of peer support SoTL groups will be encouraged.

Obtaining further institutional endorsement

It will be important to clarify expected roles of UNE senior management to ensure their participation can be documented early in the preparation. Staff should be encouraged to attend, and this could be achieved by encouraging Heads of School to include participating as a PPR teaching goal.

5. Recommendations

The above discussion leads to the following recommendations:

1. Expand the duration of the Learning and Teaching Showcase to a month (September)
2. Include a formal national 2 day SoTL conference within the month
3. Include a function at which Teaching Award winners for the year are recognized
4. Include a series of 1 hour examples from practice sessions in the Learning and Teaching Month, with application to present required
5. Include a keynote speaker with the speaker also offering a substantive workshop (1-2 days) on a practical topic
6. Encourage Schools to include at least one SoTL presentation in their normal seminar program series during the month

Any fee attached to the conference should be subsidized either in part or in full for UNE staff as an incentive to attend and as an indication of the value placed on SoTL by the institution as a whole.

Appendix A: Reasons for including a SoTL conference in the UNE Learning and Teaching Showcase

Including a nationally advertised SoTL conference in the UNE Learning and Teaching month will:

1. Demonstrate to all staff that UNE takes learning and teaching seriously
2. Change staff conception of the Showcase event, that as a conference it is to be taken seriously rather than being an informal drop in event
3. Raise the profile of learning and teaching at UNE further
4. Encourage staff to prepare presentations of conference standard that can be delivered and then prepared for submission to a learning and teaching journal. This may be a mechanism to raise the standard of presentations
5. Provide opportunities for staff to receive feedback on learning and teaching research before submitting to a journal
6. Provide opportunities for staff to participate in a national Learning and teaching forum which can be added to their CV and teaching portfolios
7. Provide opportunities for staff to hear about the research of colleagues from other universities
8. Provide opportunities for staff to network with colleagues from other universities, to find teaching synergies, and develop collaborative research proposals
9. Encourage staff to look more seriously at the teaching and research nexus
10. Link the Showcase with a workshop program supporting staff to develop learning and teaching research projects
11. Build learning and teaching research capacity across the university
12. Capitalise on the approach of other universities such as those in Western Australia where their learning and teaching forum is open to participants from across the country and is richer because of it.

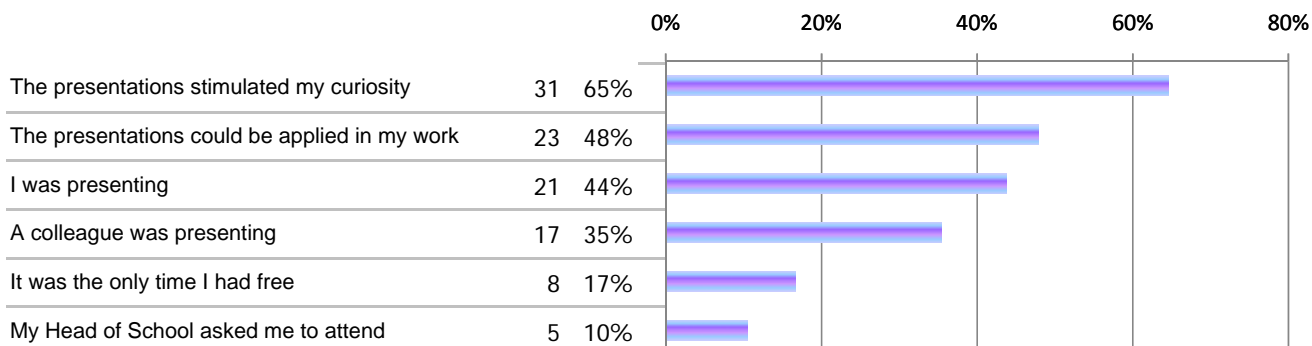
Appendix B: Participant Feedback Survey Results

Learning and Teaching Showcase Week - Participant Feedback

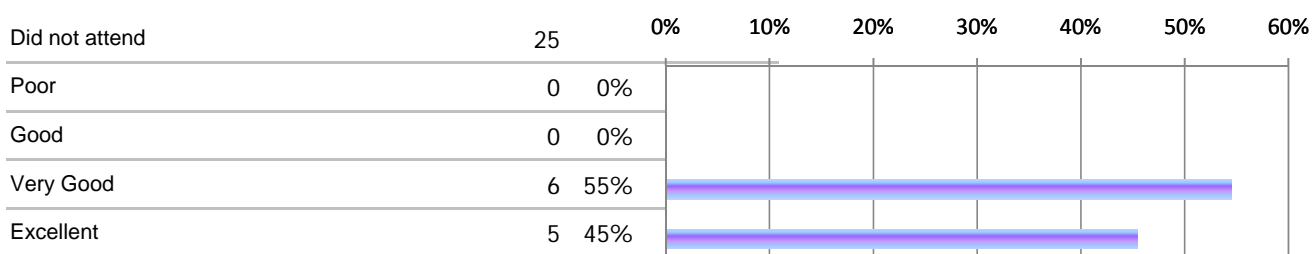
2009

Total Responses: 48

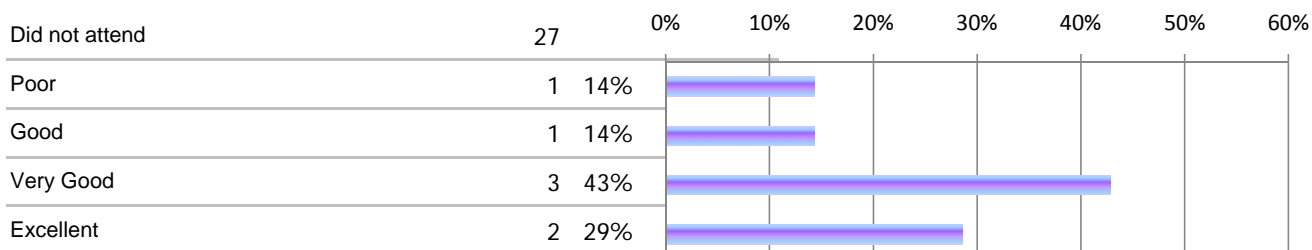
Why did you choose to attend the Showcase Week session(s) you did? (Select as many as apply)



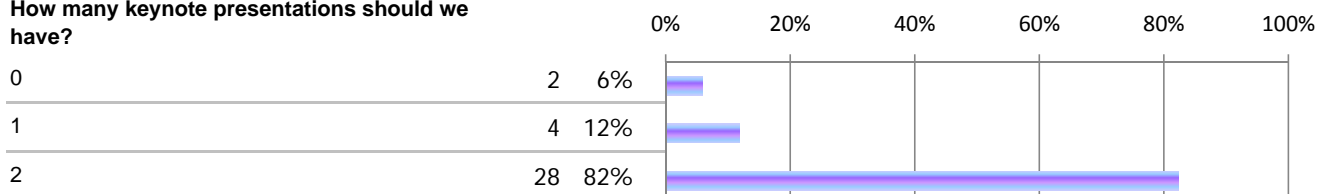
Overall Rating - Professor Geoff Scott



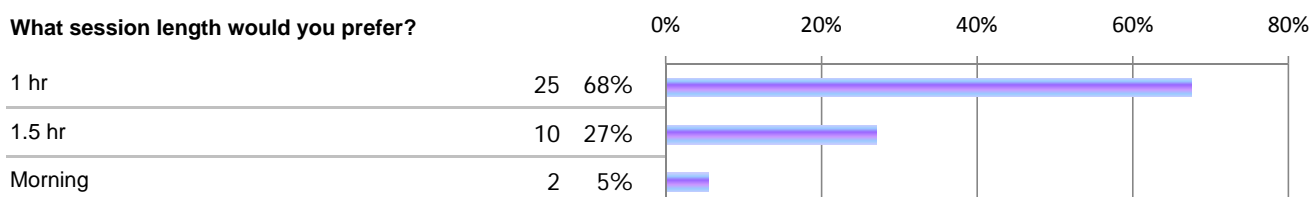
Overall Rating - Dr Kerri-Lee Harris



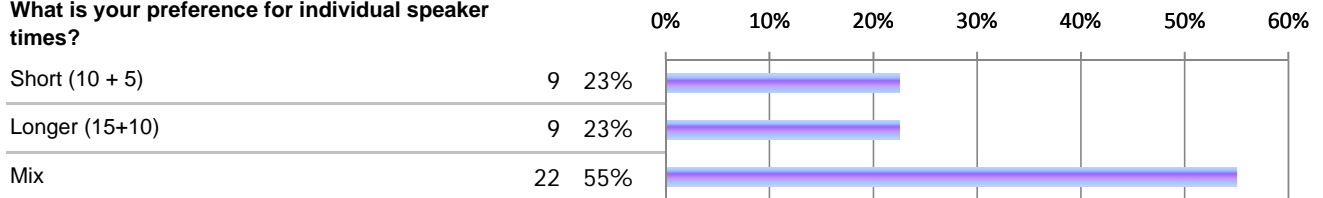
How many keynote presentations should we have?



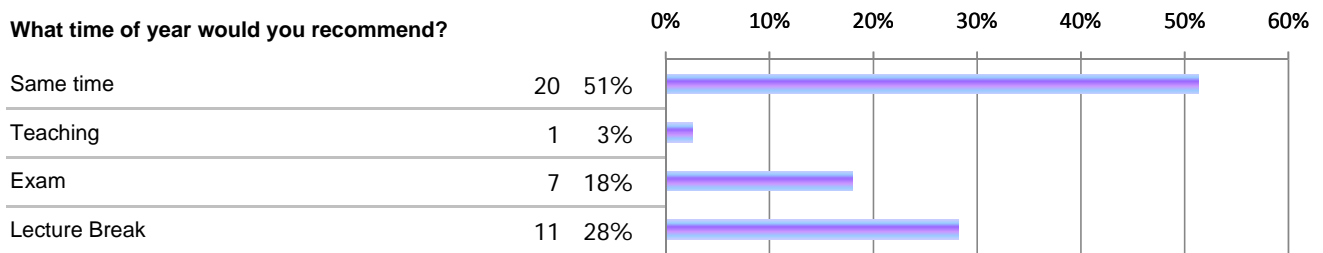
What session length would you prefer?



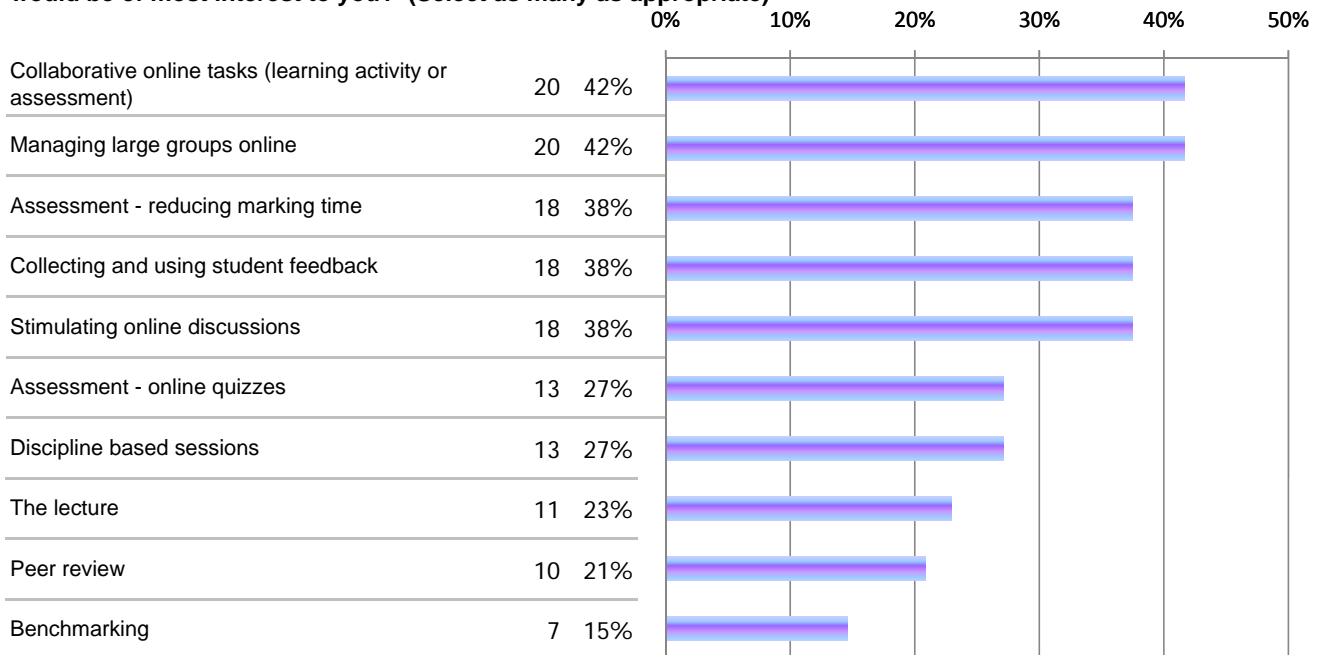
What is your preference for individual speaker times?



What time of year would you recommend?



Next year we are intending to organise presentations more strongly into themes. Which of the following themes would be of most interest to you? (Select as many as appropriate)



We are also considering including a range of workshops and roundtable sessions. Which of the following workshop topics would be of most interest to you? (Select as many as appropriate)

