



Using Formative Assessment to Teach Academic Writing Skills at level 9

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Background

- 5 credit level 9 academic writing module (2008/09).
- Module design used:
 - peer review and feedback on master's research proposal (Aitchison and Lee, 2006),
 - WebCT© discussion postings with tutor feedback,
 - tutor review, feedback, and student re-drafting of master's research proposal (Bharuthram and McKenna, 2006).
- Low contact hours.
- Assessed by 8 WebCT© postings and a portfolio.

Aim

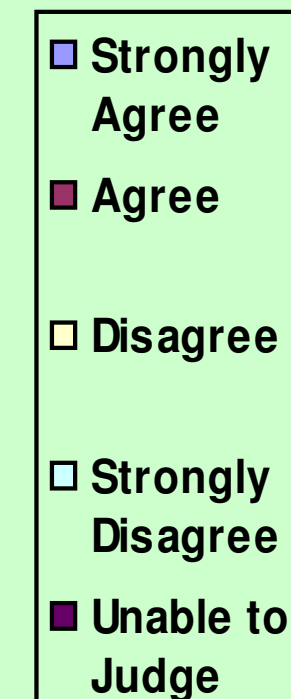
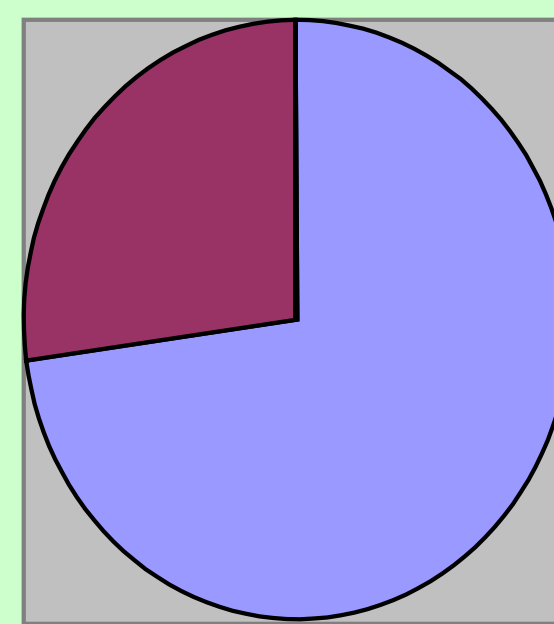
To ascertain student perceptions of the usefulness of formative assessment in the teaching and learning of academic writing skills.

Methods

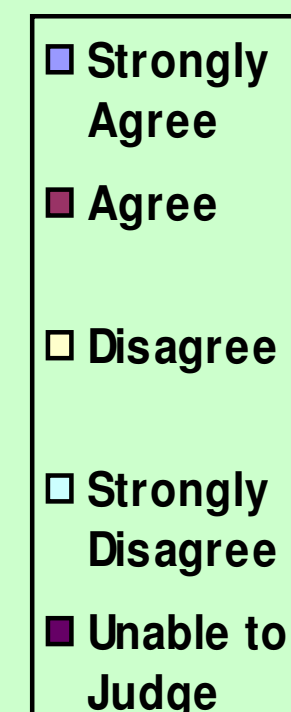
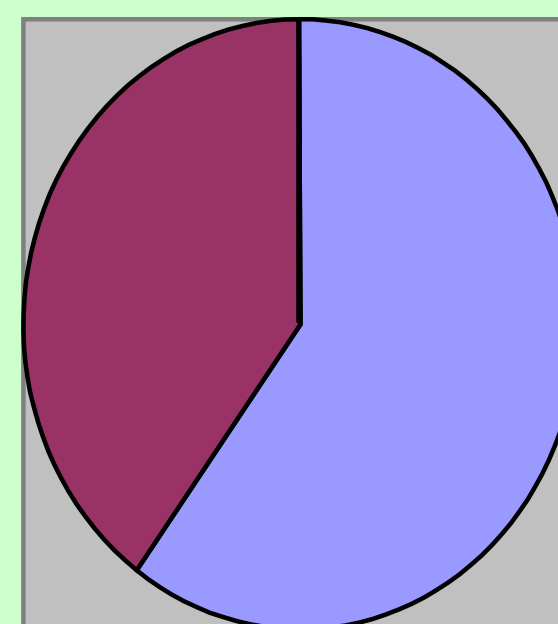
- Questionnaire module participants on fulfilment of LO's (Oliver et al, 2008).
- 11 out of 12 students participated.
- Also, 7 semi-structured interviews of module participants.



Charts



The learning experiences in this module helped me to achieve the LO's



Feedback on my work in this module helped me to achieve the learning outcomes.

Results

Students perceived:

- Tutor review and re-draft improved academic writing skills and helped to normalise frequent editing and re-drafting.
- Reading and critiquing peers' work was a learning experience that enhanced academic writing skills.
- The peer aspect of WebCT© discussion postings heightened awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses in writing skills.

Student comments

- Definitely, the feedback is a big, big thing on this course – you couldn't do without it.
- The peer reviewing was a good task that in turn highlighted strengths and weaknesses of our own pieces.
- [the module] was hugely beneficial for my thesis writing and also gave me more confidence in my own writing.

Conclusions

- Formative assessment aspects of this module were integral to its success in the teaching and learning of academic writing skills.
- More formative assessment would improve this module.
- Formative assessment is a useful method for the teaching and learning of academic writing skills.
- Peer review approach valued as a learning experience.

References

- Aitchison, C, and Lee, A (2006) 'Research Writing: Problems and Pedagogies' *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(3) pp.265-278
- Bharuthram, S, and McKenna, S (2006) 'A Writer-Respondent Intervention as a Means of Developing Academic Literacy' *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(4) pp.495-507
- Oliver, B., Tucker, B., Gupta, R. and Yeo, S. (2008) 'eVALUate: an evaluation instrument for measuring students' perceptions of their engagement and learning outcomes' *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(6) 619-630

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