Online Learning Model: Phase 1

EVALUATION REPORT

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Evaluation of the Online Learning Model, Phase 1: 201730 and 201760

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Online Learning Model (OLM) is being increasingly implemented in a more holistic manner across courses. Version 2.0 of the OLM contains seven elements which are interdependent and described in detail in this report. These elements are:

- Learning Communities
- Interaction Between Students
- Teacher Presence
- Interaction with the Professions
- Flexible and Adaptive learning
- Interactive Resources
- eAssessment

Further information about the OLM and specific strategies for consideration to improve student engagement by focusing on the various elements are available on the CSU Learning Exchange (https://uimagine.edu.au/csulx/) showcasing examples of subjects which have applied elements of the OLM and approaches used for implementation.

In 2016, session 90, and 2017, sessions 30, 45, and 60, 116 online subjects incorporated elements of the OLM in eight courses. The most commonly implemented OLM strategies focused on *building and maintaining teacher presence* through improved landing pages, restructure of discussion boards, providing additional Adobe Connect meetings; improving content delivery through *improved subject and module organisation*, incorporating adaptive release, MCQs, welcome recordings, and faculty templates as examples, in addition to revised assessment criteria and design in some subjects; *improving lecture and tutorial support* materials by using CSU Replay, podcasts of lectures, and uploading presentations to SlideShare for example; *improved communication, collaboration and reflection* through the use of Adobe Connect, peerwise and Google forms.

Data collection

All students and staff in the 116 subjects were invited to participate in the evaluation of the OLM conducted by electronic survey and individual interviews. There were 1270 student responses to the survey in 2017 (13% response rate), and 19 individual student interviews, as well as 34 academic staff (40% response rate) and 12 education support staff[1] responses to the staff survey.

Respondents

Student respondents were mostly female (80%), aged 21-40 (64%) with a mean age of 34 years. The mean age of respondents is slightly higher than the proportion of online students at CSU on 2017 (25-30 more commonly), and although there is a higher proportion of female respondents than the online student population (61%), this does reflect the nature of the courses which implemented the OLM

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[1] 'Support staff' includes Educational Designers, Education Support Coordinators, and Media Technologists

(e.g. nursing, social work, psychology). Most student respondents were completing two subjects concurrently (62%) and were in the early stages of their course. More detailed information about the respondents and other demographics is included in Section 3.1 (students) and 3.2 (staff).

Key findings

An overview is provided here of the key findings in relation to the OLM evaluation. The full report provides graphical displays and more detailed information in relation to each of the key themes reported here.

Student learning preferences and experiences of learning and teaching

Student **study preferences** were examined to investigate a variety of online learning options (see Figure 3.3.1 in Section 3.3.1), with a need to have all online workshops and lectures recorded dominating the results at 98%, followed by wanting repeat online workshops to be offered (71%) and flexible commencement dates (59%).

Student **perceptions of the OLM** are positive on the whole, and when the importance of various elements was mapped against actual experience of the elements (see Figure 3.3.3 in Section 3.3.3), the following trends were seen:

- Over 80% of students agree that each element is important to their learning
- Teacher Presence is rated as being the most important (97%), followed by Interactive Resources (96%), Flexible and Adaptive Learning (96%), and e-Assessment (94%)
- Regression analyses showed that 71% of the variance in student satisfaction with overall subject quality is explained by their perceived inclusion of the seven elements. Teacher Presence and Interactive Resources were the two elements which correlated most strongly with student satisfaction (r = 0.798 and 0.760, p<.001 respectively)
- Students had mostly experienced Interaction between Students (83%), Interactive Resources (78%) and Teacher Presence (78%)
- There was a significant gap between student's perceptions of the importance of Interaction with the Professions (88%) and their experience of this element (50%)
- Overall, there is some alignment between students perceptions of importance and their actual experience of an element, but there is scope for greater improvement here and students preference for the Interaction with the Professions element are not being met

Interview responses and open ended comments on the survey showed that Teacher Presence was the most critical aspect of the online learning experience for most students. This also aligns with the linear regression analysis. Teacher Presence was valued for making connections, creating a sense of belonging to the university, communicating experience and knowledge, and helping to inspire students. This was achieved through availability and accessibility of teaching staff via regular emails, online meetings using Adobe Connect, phone calls, responsiveness when needed, and through residential schools. In the open-ended survey responses, the helpfulness and support of teachers was the most frequently coded category in this area. More detailed information in relation to interview responses about each of the elements can be found in the full report Section 3.3.3 for interview data, and Section 3.3.9 for open-ended survey responses.

Using national measures of **teaching quality**:

- ➢ Student and staff survey scores were positive (greater than 70% agreement) for most indicators with the exception of 'commenting on student work in ways that help student learning' for students (63%)

> Students in OLM subjects perceived a higher degree of teacher quality than all online students at CSU and also when compared with national results (see Figure 3.3.7b, Section 3.3.7).

Assessment was the main **area of concern** for students, with lack of clarity, weighting of exams, and poor feedback cited as the most lamented features in the open-ended survey responses.

Student comments relating to the **design of learning activities** or assessment tasks were predominantly positive with respect to the relevance, authenticity, and usefulness of tasks and assessment items. Students especially commented on having tasks which were interesting and which helped their learning and understanding. Regular quizzes, podcasts, feedback, and clarity of tasks were regularly commented on. The quotes provided in the full report (see Section 3.3.8 for examples) show how good subject design, with consideration given to appropriate assessment schedules, relevance, and support, can positively impact student engagement and learning.

***Student Insights*:**

> Online students were strategic in their engagement with content and with others online and were most likely to interact with others when there was a set purpose
> Students crave interaction with the lecturer and are very receptive to any strategies which help to facilitate this
> There was a strong demand for high quality recorded online lectures (98% students wanted this)
> The high Teacher Presence in OLM subjects compared with other online subjects is associated with greater levels of satisfaction with teacher quality
> Relevant, authentic assessment tasks, alongside interactive quizzes help to engage learners further in the subject

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Staff perceptions of the OLM and experiences with implementation

Although less than half of the academic staff survey respondents felt familiar with the OLM as a whole, 76% agreed that they felt clear about the intention of the OLM. Although there were moderate levels of familiarity (>50%) with the elements of Teacher Presence, Interaction Between Students, and Interactive Resources (see Figure 3.3.4, Section 3.3.4). Less than half of all staff respondents felt familiar with the remaining elements. Levels of confidence to implement each element were also low – less than 50% for all elements with the exception of Teacher Presence. Teaching staff felt least confident to implement e-Assessment, and support staff felt least confident to implement the Interaction with the Professions element. There is more work to be done in this area for staff development, however time and motivation is a major limiting factor here. As reported by staff respondents, the majority were externally motivated to participate in the OLM implementation as their subject was part of a review or they were directed to by their school leadership. In contrast, staff who were more internally motivated found that the OLM implementation provided an opportunity to improve their learning and teaching practices and they reported wanting to make a positive change in their subject to improve student learning.

Staff held similar perceptions to students in relation to the inclusion of the elements within subjects, with 80% agreeing that the Teacher Presence and Interaction Between Students were included, and 50% agreeing that the Interaction with the Professions element was included. However, there was some divergence of opinion with regard to how important staff perceived the OLM elements to be compared to students and how staff thought students might perceive the importance of elements (see Figure 3.3.5, Section 3.3.5). For example, students rated the importance of Learning

Communities, Interaction with the Professions, and e-Assessment much higher than staff thought these elements would be of importance to students. Overall, staff underestimated the importance of the elements to student learning, and underestimated students' perception of the importance of elements in all facets of the OLM excepting Teacher Presence.

Phase 1 has hit the mark with Teacher Presence – with high levels of agreement that each element was included, and high levels of importance attached to this by both students and staff. Phase 1 has not quite matched expectations however with regard to the staff perception of the extent to which elements were included and student perceptions of the importance of those elements.

Of concern is the number of staff who feel that their workloads were "insufficient to do the job properly" and that technical problems with interactive resources hampered the implementation of some OLM elements. There were also reports of dissatisfaction that the OLM implementation was mandated and a lack of consultation about how the OLM would be enacted within subjects. Open-ended survey responses suggest that although staff are clear the purpose is to improve student engagement, some wanted more evidence about how the OLM will do this or why this is important to student learning outcomes.

The most challenging aspects of implementing the OLM were related to the lack of time and lack of availability of educational designers at certain time points. From the support team perspective, only 36% of support staff agreed that the time available to support the academic's implementation of the OLM was sufficient. The issues experienced by the teaching staff may have therefore been confounded by education support staff lack of time and competing demands.

Staff Insights:

➢ Teaching staff are confident and familiar with the Teacher Presence and Interaction Between Students elements of the OLM
➢ Teaching staff are on average, not familiar or confident to implement the other elements of the OLM
➢ Time and motivation are the main limiters for staff development surrounding the OLM
➢ Knowing how important students perceive the OLM elements to be to their learning may help to facilitate staff engagement with the OLM
➢ Clearer linkages need to be made between the OLM and impact on student learning outcomes
➢ More evidence of the link between the OLM and student engagement and success is needed– this may also facilitate staff engagement
➢ Greater time needs to be allocated by educational designers and academic staff in designing and developing aspects of the OLM. Longer lead times before implementation are also needed

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Perceptions of learning resources and available support

Students and staff were asked about their perceptions of online learning materials, computing/IT resources, and assigned books, notes and resources. Over 80% of students and staff agreed that online learning materials were excellent or good, and over 80% of staff and 70% of students agreed that the assigned books and resources were also excellent or good. Students were more likely than staff to have positive views towards computing/IT resources however (70% vs 60%).

Open-ended survey responses from students provided greater clarity and more useful information here. Although students were impressed with the variety and usefulness of online learning materials,

the IT resources sometimes let them down when recordings are of poor quality or some specific software doesn't work as it should. Suggestions for improvement included having more online books made available, having more prompt responses to the online forum by the lecturer, updating the CSU Replay lectures to be of higher quality, and ability to access lectures on iPhones.

Students valued the Interactive Resources, the interactive classroom sessions with polling, and use of mini-tests to gauge performance and understanding. The assigned books, notes, and readings were also positively received as being relevant, applicable to the subject, and accessible in most cases, especially when provided in a PDF format.

Areas identified for improvement primarily concerned the need for greater use of online learning tools and resources and a need to improve the quality of recorded lectures – sound in particular was an issue, as was the recordings being stopped before the lecture had ended. Students also requested podcasts of lectures along with more quizzes.

For staff, aspects of the OLM implementation which were most valuable were the interactions with the Educational Designers, and the professional development of skills associated with Adobe Connect, interactive resources, and improving the look and feel of the Interact site. Education support staff held similar sentiments about the most valuable aspects of implementing the OLM, with connections with academic and QLT staff and the professional development opportunities being most frequently mentioned.

> **Insights about resource use:**
>
> ➢ Teaching staff found the interactions with support staff and QLT leads to be beneficial and appreciated the professional development opportunities the OLM afforded. Interaction is just as important for staff as it is for students in this respect
> ➢ The quality and availability of recorded lectures is the main resource needing improvement
> ➢ The majority of staff and students are satisfied with the quality of online resources

Technology and tools

The majority of student respondents agreed that the available technologies supported their learning (77%). Students valued having tools to support interaction between themselves and their lecturer, and also highlighted the benefits of online lectures and online meetings. Suggestions were also made however and faults were recognised with some of the tools, poor quality of recorded lectures, inability to access resources or subject sites on iPhone, and lack of ability to turn notifications on in the Discussion Board.

> **Technology Insights**:
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> ➢ Technologies for learning seem to be sufficient but could be improved with greater access to online tools on mobile devices and improved recording quality of lectures

Impact on student engagement

Student engagement has various definitions and is known to associate with retention. For the purposes of the OLM, we used the learner engagement items from the national student experience survey as our measure of student engagement and we asked the same questions of students and also asked staff to comment on the engagement of students using these items. They included the

frequency (e.g. sometimes, often, very often) with which students Participated in discussions, Worked with other students, Interacted with other students outside of study, and Interacted with students different to you.

Although student respondents self-rated as Very often/Often from 25-40% on all of these items, this was greater than the percentage of all CSU Online students which ranged from 12-30%. In contrast, teaching staff perceived that students were engaged as indicated by these measures from 30%-63% (see Figure 3.3.9b, Section 3.3.9).

The utility of these measures of engagement are somewhat questionable however. Online students may have no idea if the students they are interacting with are 'very different' to them and it is not practical or in some cases even feasible for students to interact with other students outside of study. Interview data in relation to levels of engagement within the class and with peers suggest that the Discussion Forums on subject and/or course Facebook pages seem to be the primary way in which students interact outside of study or with specific regard to the subject. Perhaps a more appropriate question for our population might be to what extent do you interact with peers using social media channels, email or telephone? This strategy has been adopted in the forthcoming evaluation of the Transform Online Learning pilots.

A second measure of engagement, also utilising the national Student Experience Survey (StES), concerns engagement with key stakeholders such as other students, subject content, teaching staff, the university, and the professional and wider community. This scale is perhaps of greater relevance and is more appropriate to the aims of the OLM. The results show that students felt most engaged with subject content, followed by teaching staff and the university. Engagement with peers was low, as was engagement with the professional and wider community. These results (see Figure 3.3.10, Section 3.3.10) align well with the student experience of OLM elements in previously mentioned Figures which show that students did not frequently interact with other students, the positive responses to teaching quality and the results which showed that students had little experience of engaging with people and practices in the professional workplace.

Teaching staff are satisfied with the quality of student engagement, especially the engagement of students with subject content, and over 70% agreed that the OLM had improved the student learning experience (see Figure 3.4.2, Section 3.4.2). Some caveat's to this data were provided in the form of staff commentary and provide further understanding here. For example, in some subjects there were concurrent content changes alongside OLM implementation, and staff had also not seen the results of the student subject evaluations at the time they were interviewed. There were also many students who failed to take advantage of some of the new tools being trialled to enhance learning.

Interactive resources, authentic practice and site aesthetics were found to be successful strategies in improving student engagement. Student attitudes, lack of time to trial and test new technologies and lack of continuity in staff support were cited as the main barriers.

Moving forward

Although 80% of teaching staff felt that subject resources and teaching approaches in the OLM were sustainable, and over 70% felt well supported by educational designers and QLT leads, just over 10% agreed that there was sufficient planning time to implement the OLM changes.

Being supported to implement the OLM elements through regular contact with an educational designer, and being shown the possible tools and strategies was identified as crucial to the element being successfully implemented, despite the lack of time allocated. In addition, teaching staff commented that direct support at the time of implementation was required, especially when Adobe Connect is being utilised.

From the support staff perspective, greater engagement between the OLM staff and academics is needed alongside early and regular consultation with teaching staff surrounding resource development and training in the relevant technology being used.

Challenges to implementation reported included the lack of planning time, the level of trust within academic teams and between academics and the support staff, and the concurrent introduction of the Transform Online project. There was some confusion expressed about the TOL project and the pedagogy behind this, with some staff reluctant to engage further with the OLM because of the perception that TOL and the OLM are somehow in competition.

Overall

Students had an overall positive experience with their subjects, mainly attributable to strong teacher presence which was engaging, helpful and supportive. Students responded favourably to Interactive Resources and were engaged with the subject content to a moderately high level. Improved quality of lecture recordings, greater feedback and responsiveness from some staff, and a need for more direct interaction with the lecturer, through online meetings for example, were identified needs from the student perspective.

Staff responded well to the Teacher Presence element and had a moderate level of understanding about the intentions of the OLM project but more work is needed to upskill staff and improve confidence and understanding in relation to the six other elements of the OLM. Greater communication and engagement with staff about the purpose of the OLM, evidence and rationale for implementation is also required.

Staff made specific suggestions to improve the OLM implementation in relation to greater planning time needed, the provision of ongoing support at the time of implementation and greater clarity about the impact of the TOL project. Subject changes made to date seem to be sustainable but ongoing evaluation is needed to gain a greater understanding of the impact of the OLM on both students and staff who have participated in OLM elements through multiple iterations.

Recommendations

Areas of strength

Teacher Presence is being done very well and producing favourable student comments. Exemplars of this need to be more widely distributed with positive feedback to staff who are doing this well.

Educational designers have established strong relationships with teaching staff which need to be fostered, supported with appropriate time allocations, and continued.

Students are responding well to Interactive Resources. Exemplars of these need to be more widely distributed as well. In addition, online learning resources and tools are well received and generally accessible with a student preference for PDFs to be made more available to aid printing.

In summary, the evaluation data suggests that the model is at an appropriate level of refinement to meet staff and student needs and now the focus needs to be on increasing familiarity with the elements and promoting the Learning Exchange where there are examples of the implementation of the OLM.

Areas for improvement

It would be useful to follow up with staff who are implementing the OLM elements a second or even third time to investigate ongoing impact on workload and student engagement and to further investigate from a staff perspective how the OLM could be refined and/or supported.

Student demand for high quality recordings of lectures and online meetings needs to be acknowledged and appropriately resourced.

Interaction with the Professions is an element needing greater attention as students perceive it to be very important to their learning and have not received much experience of it. Staff also reported a lack of confidence in implementing this element and perhaps more time and attention needs to be allocated to developing strategies to overcoming these challenges.

Authentic assessment tasks with timely feedback and greater clarity are perceived as an area of need for students, alongside improved quality of recorded lectures and improved accessibility of learning materials on mobile devices.

Greater consultation with staff alongside appropriate workload allocation and planning time is needed in future iterations.

Implications for TOL moving forward

Clearer communication is needed about how the OLM is informing TOL and early data needs to be released, for example in a workshop format, to staff to indicate how it has been implemented by staff and received by students. TOL champions from within the TOL pilot could be identified to lead a series of discussions around these issues.

Conclusion

This evaluation report presents the results of the first upscale of the OLM into subjects. Further implementation and repeat implementation of OLM elements within subjects is needed to more accurately understand the design challenges, student and staff perceptions of implementation, and solidify implementation protocols and improved support strategies. Nevertheless, the overall experience of the OLM has been a positive one, despite the workload and technology challenges associated with trialling new tools, and the OLM seems to have had a positive impact on Teacher Presence. This is something to build on as staff gain more confidence with understanding the OLM and become more familiar with implementing particular elements.

A third iteration is needed to trial the OLM in subjects with full support capacity, improved planning time, in an environment of trust and collegiality where staff are genuinely motivated to improve the subject using the OLM elements.

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1. Introduction

The OLM is a learning design model consisting of seven elements designed to improved student engagement, retention and overall satisfaction. These elements are:

- Learning Communities
- Interaction Between Students
- Teacher Presence
- Interaction with the Professions
- Flexible and Adaptive learning
- Interactive Resources
- eAssessment

Further information about the OLM and specific strategies for consideration to improve student engagement by focusing on the various elements are available on the CSU Learning Exchange (https://uimagine.edu.au/csulx/) showcasing exemplar subjects and approaches for implementation. In particular, the CSU Learning Exchange describes the ways in which each element in the OLM can be supported by a number of specific strategies aimed at increasing student interaction and engagement, and which can be applied in different ways to align with individual subject needs, student cohorts, and disciplines. The strategies showcased on the Learning Exchange can be searched by element and browsed in their entirety.

A summary of showcased strategies to focus on improvements in particular elements has been included in Table 1. Detailed information about each strategy is available on the Learning Exchange. This information includes background literature, subjects which have successfully implemented the strategy, additional supportive resources, and tips. The interdependencies between the various elements become more evident when specific strategies are examined in Table 1. For example, through providing a video based orientation to the subject Interact site and the various features which will be used in the subject, Teacher Presence is also improved; through using Google Maps to create a learning community, the Interactive Resources element is also utilised, both can positively impact on student engagement.

Table 1

Example strategies specific to each OLM element available on the CSU Learning Exchange
https://uimagine.edu.au/csulx/

OLM element	Potential strategies for consideration
Learning Communities	Creating a *shared resource* (e.g. Group Wiki)
	Dividing large cohorts into *smaller groups* to increase interaction and participation (e.g. Study Buddy groups, tutorial groups)
	Mapping student locations – students share their place in the world to help connect to one another (e.g. can be used as an ice breaker activity to form virtual study groups using Google Maps)
	Structured discussion forums
	Social media streams for real time sharing of news stories relating to course work and aggregation
Interaction between students	*Asynchronous discussions* (e.g. using Flipgrid, specific organisation of discussion forums, blogs)
	Collaborative group projects (e.g. using Google Docs, Wikispaces Classroom, Adobe Connect meeting rooms)
	Peer commenting (e.g. using PeerWise to review, comment and critique each other's work)
Teacher Presence	Adding *voice recordings* (using mini-lecture podcasts to supplement and enhance weekly content – informing students of key concepts to focus on and/or pending assessment considerations)
	Feedback and learning commentary (e.g. using VoiceThread to comment on student case studies, short introductory videos accompanied by structured discussion forum threads and online meetings; Norfolk tool for text and audio annotation on assignments)
	Multimodal presence (e.g. tight structures and clarity surrounding student participation in Adobe Connect meetings, Flipgrid to obtain insights on the weekly readings from teacher and peers, regular responses to student questions on the discussion board, CSU Replay for lectures, virtual open door policy via Skype)
	Announcements as a direct connect with students at pertinent time points (e.g. personalised with images, colour, hyperlinks, highlighting important tasks, direct email)
	Welcome videos – (e.g. selfie style, including a guest expert welcome)

OLM element	Potential strategies for consideration
Interaction with the Professions	*Guest presentations* (e.g. colloquia, short filmed insights from practitioners uploaded to the CSU YouTube channel and embedded in topics)
	Authentic learning experiences (e.g. creating a personal digital artefact to complement the learning module material using Wikispaces; selecting an issue or challenge within an organisation of their choice and provide recommendations in a formal report)
	Simulation (e.g. for role play communications, using Second Life)
Flexible and Adaptive Learning	Using *learning analytics* to develop a more personalised learning approach in a core subject (e.g. Interact2 Site Analytics)
	An *early assessment task* (e.g. stepped reflective journal process to gauge who was and was not active in the subject and early identification of necessary help)
	Choice within assessments (e.g. based on life experience, workplace, interest)
	Individualised learning pathways (e.g. using Smart Sparrow, Realizeit, e-portfolios)
Interactive Resources	*Contextualising discussions with video* (e.g. embedding quizzes and questions into the video, annotate and embed hyperlinks relevant to the video section, combining discussions with video, use of interactive videos which students can annotate)
	Collaborative pin board to share perspectives
	Case-based e-simulation
E-Assessment	*Blogging* (e.g. through ThinkSpace, using Blogging Buddies)
	Creating rich media artefacts (e.g. digital story telling, using Smore, Slideshare, PowToons, Go Animate, Voki)
	Student ePortfolios
	Adaptive quizzes

In recognition of the key findings from the pilot implementation, the implementation of the OLM in the Phase 1[2] scale up has been done in an integrative manner, reflecting the interdependencies between the various elements. A team based approach has also been utilised within the Phase 1 implementation, facilitated by the appointment of Quality Learning and Teaching Online Leaders in each faculty.

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[2] Phase 1 incorporates subjects in 201690, 201715, 201730, and 201760

Video's and podcasts, along with an increased number of interactive resources (including online quizzes) were increasingly employed as strategies to improve Teacher Presence and e-Assessment in a variety of Phase 1 subjects, as recommended in the OLM Pilot.

Recommended strategies in the OLM Pilot which required further time and academic involvement for development and implementation in Phase 1 included Learning Communities, Interaction between Students, and Flexible and Adaptive Learning. In some OLM Phase 1 subjects, this has been achieved with significantly structured subject discussion boards and improved teacher presence using other elements. Interaction with the Professions remains an element requiring more focused attention.

1.1 Phase 1 context

1.1.1   Subjects and faculties involved

In contrast with the Pilot in 201660 (4 Faculties, 8 courses, 28 subjects), the scaled up implementation of the OLM, incorporating subjects offered across four sessions (201690, 201715, 201730, and 201760) involved the following:

3 Faculties	→	8 Courses	→	116 Subjects	Impacting 9478 students
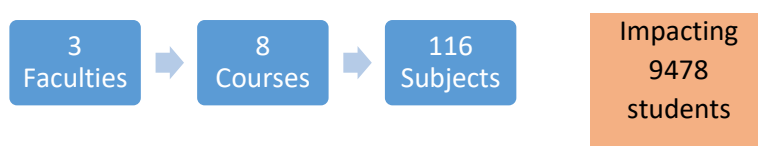
A list of all subjects and courses included in this evaluation is provided in Appendix 1. Subjects listed as under-development for 201790 and 201830 were excluded from this analysis.

The implementation of the OLM within each faculty was facilitated by a dedicated Quality in Learning and Teaching Online (QLT) Online leader – an experienced academic employed to oversee and support the implementation of various OLM initiatives, liaising directly with academics, educational designers, and OLM element specialists to enact the strategies agreed upon. The appointment of the QLT (online) leaders was strategically designed to ultimately improve the quality of the student experience through enhanced subject designs integrating elements of the OLM. In contrast to the pilot initiative, the Phase 1 scale up focused on the implementation of several OLM elements together within a single subject, rather than treating each element separately.

1.1.2   Description of implementation strategies

Within faculties, school and course teams were engaged as well as individual subject coordinators, to implement OLM initiatives in subjects with the support of a QLT leader, educational designers, and specialist support based on individual subject needs. This could include an OLM element specialist, media technologist, educational support coordinators, QLT Assessment leads, library staff, and support from the Academic Literacy, Learning and Numeracy team.

A combined report of the specific implementation strategies and outcomes from each faculty is available in Appendix 2. In summary, the most commonly implemented OLM strategies focused on *building and maintaining teacher presence* through improved landing pages, restructure of discussion boards, providing additional Adobe Connect meetings; improving content delivery through *improved*

subject and module organisation, incorporating adaptive release, MCQs, welcome recordings, and faculty templates as examples, in addition to revised assessment criteria and design in some subjects; *improving lecture and tutorial support* materials by using CSU Replay, podcasts of lectures, and uploading presentations to SlideShare for example; *improved communication, collaboration and reflection* through the use of Adobe Connect, peerwise and Google forms.

Examples of digital technologies which were trialled included Padlet, Flipgrid, Adobe Spark, h5P interactive content, Answergarden, VoiceThread, Smart Sparrow, PsychLabs, Zero, YouTube Channels, Screencast-o-matic, GoAnimate, using QR codes in prac manuals, Flipbooks, Late Nite Labs for virtual simulation, Picktochart for infographics, Mindmeister for mindmaps, Thinglink, and dialogicinquiry.net for discussion forums.

2. Evaluation strategies

2.1 Surveys

All students enrolled in the 201730 and 201760 OLM subjects were emailed an invitation by the uImagine Evaluation officer to participate in a survey on SurveyMonkey immediately prior to the beginning of Session 2 for the 201730 cohort, and at the conclusion of Session 2 for the 201760 cohort. Approval was granted from the CSU Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct the evaluation. The OLM Phase 1 survey was based on the original survey used in the pilot of the OLM with some additional questions added. Questions were also incorporated from the national SES survey as well as items from the CEQ.

The student survey included 29 open and closed questions, some with multiple items. In addition to demographic information, students were asked about their study preferences, the importance of OLM elements, experience of OLM elements, satisfaction with subject quality, teaching, learning resources, technologies and engagement. Questions were repeated for each additional subject students completed which trialled the OLM. Three $100 gift cards were offered as an incentive for student participation (one for each Faculty) and drawn at random using an online random numbers generator.

Separate but similar surveys were distributed by the Evaluation Officer via email to teaching staff involved in the 2017 OLM subjects, Education Design staff, and Education Support Coordinators just prior to the beginning of Session 2 and at the conclusion of Session 2. The staff surveys comprised 35 open and closed questions, some with multiple items, and in addition to questions based on teaching experience at CSU and online, included questions about staff familiarity and confidence with the OLM, perceived intention of the OLM, perceptions of the OLM in relation to student learning, strategies used and challenges met in the implementation, the technologies, approaches, and improvements needed. Staff were also asked to complete questions about any professional development undertaken or needed, perceptions of student behaviour, OLM sustainability, workload, and support provided.

2.2 Interviews

Staff

Individual interviews were conducted with uImagine and QLT (online) leaders to gain insight on the implementation of the OLM, experiences in liaising with key stakeholders, challenges and improvements needed in view of the TOL project.

Focus groups were held with Educational Designers and well as the Media Team and Education Support Coordinators to gain a holistic insight into the design and implementation processes of the OLM.

Staff were specifically asked to comment on their perceived role (achievements, what they enjoy and find challenging), methods of engagement with key stakeholders, professional development, OLM implementation (successes and challenges), suggestions in moving forward and support needed. Based on experience in the OLM pilot evaluation, where academic staff expressed the view that completing a survey as well as an interview was somewhat redundant, academic staff trialling the OLM were not interviewed for the Phase 1 evaluation.

Students

Students indicated their interest in participating in an interview when they completed the survey and provided a personal email address to be contacted on for this purpose. 165 students were emailed half way through Session 2 to participate and interviews were arranged with 19 of those students[3]. The remaining students did not reply to a request for specified dates and times. Most interviews were approximately 40-60 minutes in duration, and were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Students were asked about the best and worst features of their subject, the importance and experience of each of the OLM elements in their subject, suggestions for improvements to the design of learning activities and any other comments on the OLM.

2.3 Additional data

Where possible, survey data has been compared with historical CSU StES (Student Experience Survey) and nSES data publicly available or made available for the purposes of the report by CSUs Adaptive Learning and Teaching Services (ALTS) and the Office of Strategic Planning and Information (SPI). We have also compared the data gathered with data from the pilot to illustrate any differences.

2.4 Data analysis

2.4.1 Surveys

All data was exported from Survey Monkey into SPSS version 24 for analysis. As students could respond in the same survey to more than one subject, the total responses for each item varied, and so the number of responses rather than number of respondents will be shown.

2.4.2 Interviews

Notes were made throughout each interview and formed the basis of preliminary reports. Transcripts from recorded interviews were imported into NVivo for coding and thematic analysis. Illustrative quotes from coded interviews have been incorporated throughout this report.

3 Results

3.1 Student respondent characteristics

There were 1270 responses to the survey across Sessions 1 and 2 in 2017, representing a 13% response rate for students completing OLM subjects.

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[3] 12 from FOAE, 5 from BJBS, and 2 from Science

3.1.1 Age

As shown in Table 3.1.1, most online students (on average, 62%) in the OLM Phase 1 subjects were between the ages of 21 and 40, with a mean age of 34 years. The age demography of the survey respondents was slightly over-representative of the mean age of all online students enrolled at CSU in 2017 (most commonly in the 25-30 year age group).

Table 3.1.1

Age distribution of survey respondents

Age group	Percent of respondents Session 1	Percent of respondents Session 2
<20	10%	5%
21-30	35%	32%
31-40	29%	29%
41-50	19%	24%
>50	7%	13%

3.1.2 Gender

The majority (85%) of survey respondents were female. This is slightly over-representative of students enrolled in the courses implementing the OLM (80% female), and also higher than the proportion of all female students enrolled in 2017 at CSU online (61%), but it does reflect the nature of courses selected (e.g. Nursing, Social Work, Psychology) which attract predominantly female students. Gender comparisons won't be made in this report due to the large percentage of female students evident in the sample and population.

3.1.3 Geographical distribution

As depicted in Table 3.1.3, most survey respondents were from the state of NSW or other eastern states, with almost half of NSW respondents located in a regional or rural centre.

Table 3.1.3

Geographical distribution of survey respondents

State	Percent of respondents (rounded up)
NSW	78% (*45% rural*)
ACT	2%
VIC	8%
QLD	6%
SA	2%
WA	2%
NT	1%
TAS	1%

3.1.4 Year level of respondents

The year level of respondents was assumed based on calculating the number of responses to subjects offered at the various levels. A subject code beginning with a one for example was assumed to be a first year level subject. However, due to the various methods of entry into courses, assumed prior

knowledge and credit transfers, first-year university students could be enrolled in Level 2 type subjects. The list in Table 3.1.4 is therefore only indicative of the level of experience survey respondents may have with university. Students were able to respond to more than one subject in the survey as well, and some may have completed a level 1 and a level 2 subject concurrently. For example, 62% of students had completed a second subject in 201730, and 11% had completed a third subject. The results in Table 3.1.4 are therefore indicative of the number of responses to this item rather than number of respondents per se.

Table 3.1.4

Responses to subjects by year level

Year level	Number of subjects represented	Number of responses
First year	29	531
Second year	38	523
Third year	34	382
Fourth year	10	77
Fifth year	5	67
Missing/Other		233

The information presented in Table 3.1.4 suggests that in interpreting the results presented in this report, it may be helpful to consider that most students are early to midway through their degree program.

3.1.5 Faculty and course representation

To further facilitate interpretation of the data presented and make a judgement about representativeness, the information provided in Table 3.1.5 shows the respondent numbers in relation to the courses and faculties involved in implementing Phase 1. A complete list of subjects implementing the OLM in each course in Phase 1 is included in Appendix 1. The results illustrated in Table 3.1.5 show that there is an over-representation of responses from students enrolled in the Faculty of Science in comparison to other faculties, and that responses from online students enrolled in the Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Science are least well represented.

Table 3.1.5

Survey responses listed by faculty, course, and subject

Faculty and Course	Percentage response overall and within courses (N = number of online students enrolled in the course in 201730; 201760; n = number of survey responses across sessions 1 and 2)
BJBS	27% of all survey responses
BAccounting	N = 540; n = 87 (16%)
BBusiness (HRM)	N = 242; n = 109 (45%)
BSocSci (Psych)	N = 622; n = 151 (24%)
TOTALS	**1404 enrolled** for BJBS in courses with OLM subjects **347 responses** (representing 25% of enrolled online students in BJBS OLM subjects)

Arts and Education:	34% of all survey responses
BSocSci (Social Welfare)/ BSocWork	N = 1251; n = 407 (32%)
MSocWork (Professional qualifying)	N = 285; n = 28 (10%)
TOTALS	**1536 enrolled** for Arts & Education courses with OLM subjects **435 responses** (representing 28% of enrolled online students in Arts & Education OLM subjects)
Science	43% of all survey responses
BNursing	N = 823, n = 368 (45%)
BMedSci	N = 228; n = 179 (78%)
TOTALS	**N = 1051 enrolled** for Science courses with OLM subjects **547 responses** (representing 52% of enrolled online students in Science OLM subjects)

3.2 Staff respondent characteristics

There were eight courses involved in the Phase 1 OLM implementation, comprising 116 subjects, and 88 subject coordinators. From this population, we had responses from 34 academic staff, including both teaching staff and those involved in the design and development aspects only. In addition, there were four responses from educational support coordinators, none from media technologists, and eight educational designers. The 12 educational support staff (coordinators, designers, and OLM specialists) have been included as a single category (support staff) for the purposes of this report and for maintaining anonymity.

The Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Science (BJBS) was the best represented with responses received for 21/38 subjects, followed by the Faculty of Arts and Education (13/32 subjects represented) and then Science (16/46 subjects). There was representation for each of the eight courses involved. Some academics taught in multiple subjects trialling the OLM.

Most respondents were involved in design, development, and teaching of the subjects (n = 22), with an additional 13 specifying teaching only, and 2 respondents as design and development only. From the support team, respondent experience with OLM subjects varied from working on 2 subjects to over 30 subjects.

Academic respondents were experienced instructors, with 86% having more than 5 years of experience at CSU teaching face to face, and 76% more than five years of teaching online.

3.3 Key findings by theme/topic
3.3.1 Student learning preferences
To facilitate understanding student attitudes towards some of the intended TOL initiatives, students were asked about their preferred ways of studying and preferences for future enrolment patterns. The data presented in Figure 3.3.1 suggests that the majority of students prefer to learn on their own

rather than with other students, would like the option of attending an online workshop offered several times during the week, and want all online lectures and workshops recorded. Students would also like the opportunity to commence study at any time during the year and slightly prefer the opportunity to complete subjects more quickly and the possibility of setting their own assessment due dates.
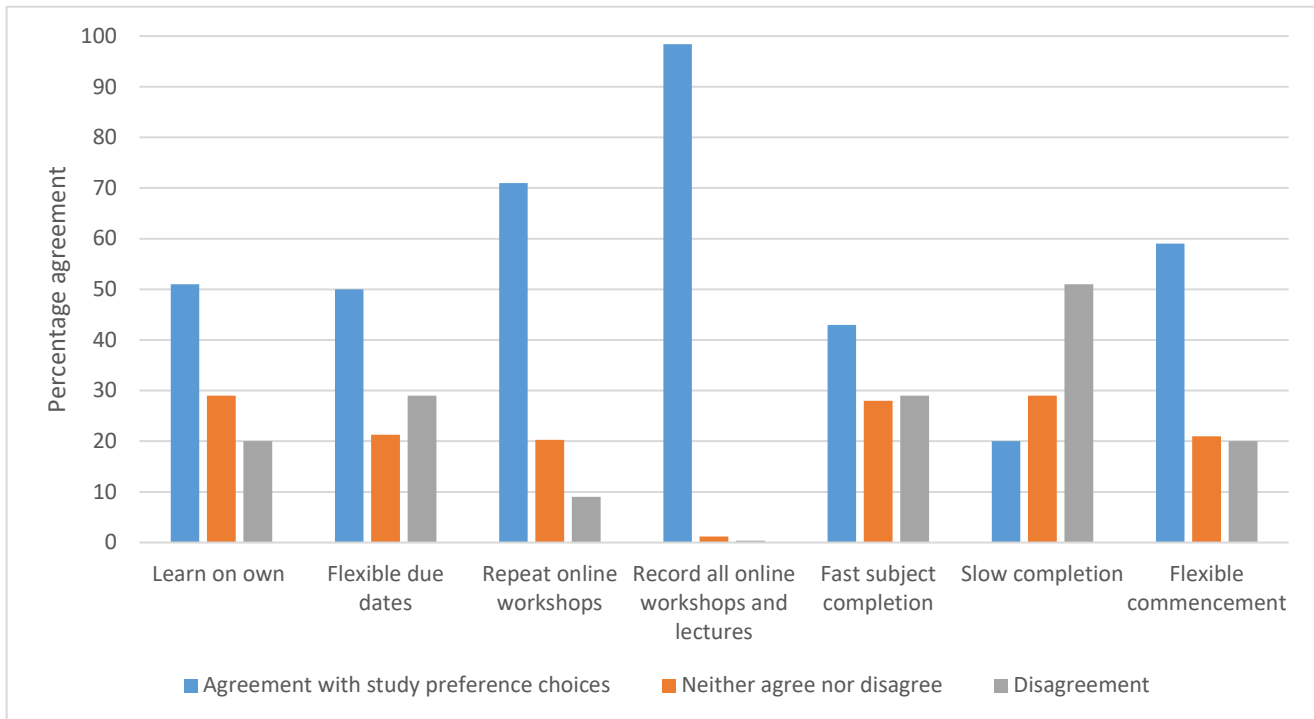
Figure 3.3.1: Respondent study preferences (n = 1251)

3.3.2 Perceptions of technology

Students were asked about their perception of whether or not the available technologies supported their learning in their subjects. Across all subjects responded to, 77% of responses showed agreement with this item[4].

3.3.3 Experience and importance of each OLM element

On the student survey, students were first asked to rate the importance ascribed to each OLM element on a scale of 1 (Very important) to 5 (not at all important). They were subsequently asked to rate their agreement with the extent to which each of these elements were experienced in their subjects on a scale of 1 (very strongly agree) to 7 (Very strongly disagree). The results in Figure 3.3.3 show reasonable alignment in the trends for six of the seven elements between the importance ascribed by students and the experience of the element in their subjects. The one element which did not align well was the opportunity to Interact with the Profession, where students generally rated the element as important but were much less likely to have experienced it in their subjects. The data in Figure 3.3.3 also highlight several additional areas in which improvement is needed to align student experience more closely with the importance ascribed, such as continued improvement in facilitating Teacher Presence, supporting learning through engaging students in Learning Communities, and enhancing the range of online assessment strategies used.

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[4] Incorporating 1863 individual responses across subjects
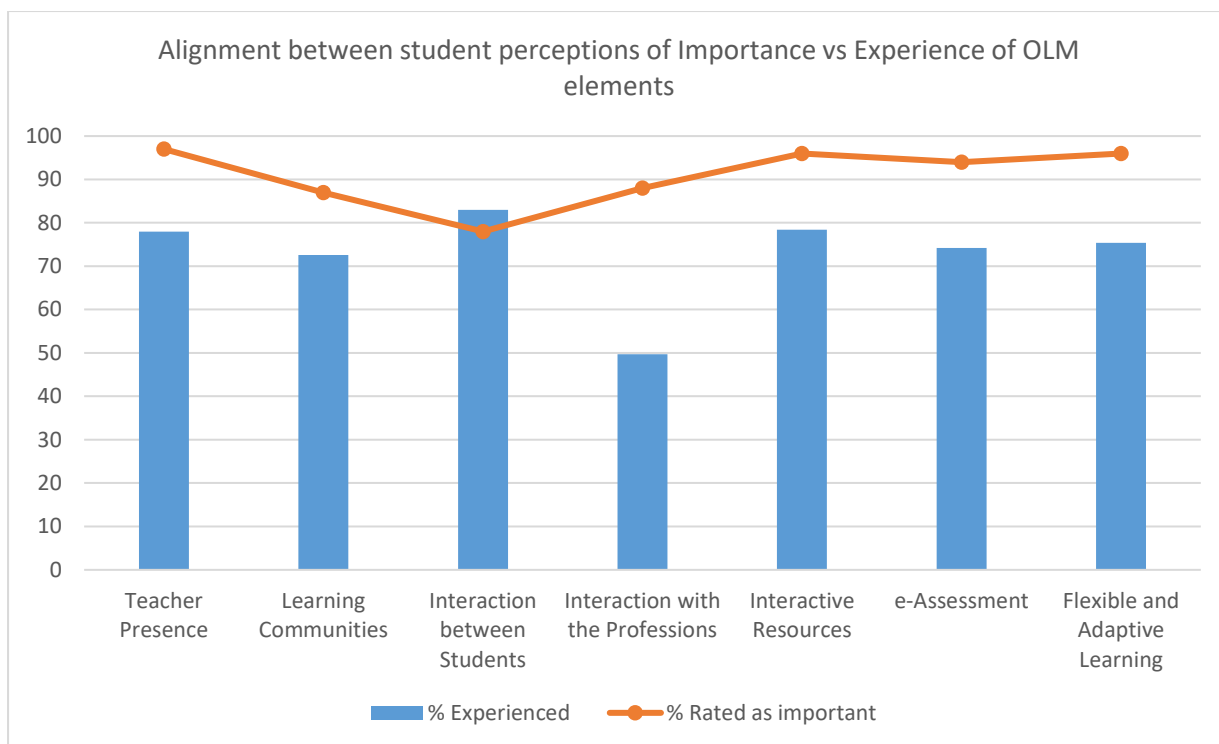
Figure 3.3.3: Student perceptions of importance of OLM elements mapped against experience of elements in their subjects where <u>Importance</u> includes: *Very important + Important;* <u>Experienced</u> includes: *Very strongly agree + Strongly agree + Agree.*

Number of responses = 1243 for Importance, and 1766 individual responses relating to the experience of OLM elements in subjects

The phrasing used in relation to questions about each element is included here in Table 3.3.3. As a caveat to the data presented in Figure 3.3.3 it is noted that 84 students commented on the question rating the importance of OLM elements, and 37 (44%) of those comments specifically related to experiences within individual subjects rather than perception of importance overall. The second survey, in 201760 specified this more clearly and there were no student comments expressing confusion.

Table 3.3.3
Questions used to ask about the experience of each element

Element	Question phrase
Teacher Presence	My teacher facilitated my understanding of content and supported my learning in this subject
Learning Communities	My learning was supported within this subject through my engagement as part of a community of learners
Interaction between Students	There were opportunities to interact with fellow students in this subject
Interaction with the Professions	There were opportunities to engage with people and practices of the professional workplace in this subject
Interactive Resources	High quality online learning resources helped me to engage with the content and ideas in this subject
e-Assessment	A range of online assessment strategies were used

Flexible and Adaptive Learning (FAL)	The learning experiences in this subject were flexible and adaptive to my learning needs

Responses from student interviews

Teacher Presence was the most important aspect of the online learning experience for most students, with all interviewees reporting that it was important, positive, critical, and essential. Most interviewees reported positive experiences, although several also reported a noticeable lack of Teacher Presence. Teacher Presence was valued for making connections, creating a sense of belonging to the university, communicating experience and knowledge, and helping to inspire students. This was achieved through availability and accessibility of teaching staff, via regular emails, online meetings using Adobe Connect, phone calls, responsiveness when needed, and through residential schools. The importance of teacher presence to student learning is evidenced by the following quotes:

> *Lecturers are very connective and supportive. Always. ….lots of emails, couple of phone calls – they are so nice on the phone and very constructive. Sometimes that connection helps clear the wood for the trees* (Interviewee 09, Female, FOAE)

> *I felt a part of the uni environment due to the online lecturer availability* (Interviewee 04, Female, FOAE)

> *She inspired me to work harder and created a sense of belonging and respect* (Interviewee 05, Female, FOAE)

When interviewees were asked about their engagement with Learning Communities, most thought this was a good idea, some also reported positive experiences of this in structured group work assignments or through separate discussion boards and online meetings designed specifically for this purpose. Students reported that it was beneficial to engage with others from different states or to gain valuable support from peers when a lecturer wasn't responsive. Students also expressed a preference to form study groups. Others reported reservations however due to lack of time, not wanting to engage with students from different generations, and felt the opportunities were limited due to poor information system capabilities. For example:

> *I think it [interaction with peers] was obviously important to some students. I just don't have, … I didn't have time to go to read everybody's chit-chat, so I'd look at the subject title, which I suppose is a good thing, if you choose to participate in that debate or read it or not read it, but I probably read maybe 20% of the forum discussions.* (Interviewee 02, Female, BJBS)

 Although Interviewee 02 lacked the time to engage in the forum discussions she found it valuable
 to strategically engage with the community of learners in her subject when necessary, for example:

> *When it came to the … subject discussions, I liked when the discussions were linked to the lecture for the week, and then the questions were linked back to your assessment material, and then everyone had to do some research and submit their thoughts on whatever question it was that the lecturer put up for the week, so it was relevant, in those cases it was relevant to what we were learning and I found that good. I found that actually almost a way to get a summary of the topic, you could sort of flip click through a few students and you'd get to know who was quite switched on and doing quite a lot of work, and you knew if you read their answer to*

the question and then you were getting a pretty good overview. . (Interviewee 02, Female, BJBS)

In relation to the value of *Interaction between Students*, interviewees responded favourably to the desire for this and indicated that Facebook groups were common in their subjects as a source of support, to discuss resources and tips. Some students continued to be active members of their subject Facebook groups even after finishing the subject. For example:

> *some are kind of doing the same topics, some are kind of doing a different kind of path but, yeah, the friendships made are amazing and totally kind of got me and I know a lot of students through because there were times when you kind of definitely felt, oh, my God, I'm just never going to pass, why am I doing this, I feel like giving up, but having that support of other students who understood exactly what you were going through definitely made it happen, basically* (Interviewee 11, Female, FOAE)

> *I created a Bachelor of [discipline removed] Facebook site, both for on campus and distance students where we can just, basically support each other. You know, we buy and sell textbooks on there, we upload subject outlines on there, so we can have a look at subjects that we might be wanting to enrol into and have a better understanding on how we might be able to cope with that next session before we enrol. Yeah, we share funny videos regarding studying, and you know, some people are going through tough times... So, yeah, it's a very supportive community. There's never been any issues on it. And from that Facebook site, we then set up other Facebook sites, depending on the subjects we're studying, and we share them to that site, and yeah, and then people join their individual study groups for the sessions, as well.* (Interviewee 10, Female, BJBS)

Discussion Forums and Adobe Connect meetings were also seen as useful spaces with which to interact with other students' online, and residential school was valued for this reason as well. However, other students indicated that they did not have time to engage with peers or read discussion forums and that it wasn't important to them or the level of discussion was poor. For example:

> *…to be honest I actually find the students quite frustrating. They seem to either be quite young or not able to look up the information themselves… I really get frustrated with the whole quick answers by going online, by sending an email, by going on the forum, by going on Facebook or whatever. To me a lot of these questions could be answered if I just read the subject outline and so I find the forums really really frustrating because to me it's just like read the information before you go asking a stupid question. So to me I find that the most frustrating. I don't think so far I have ever come across a subject where I have really felt the forum has been helpful and for that very reason…. sometimes I actually stop looking at the forum because it is a complete waste of time.* (Interviewee 13, Female, FOAE)

Online students were strategic in their engagement with content and with others online and were most likely to interact with others when there was a set purpose. For example:

> *It's [interaction with peers] not overly important for me, because I'm time-poor as it is. So it's hard enough to try and get all your work done as well as interact. But I do use the forum to see the questions that they've asked, I interact that way, do you know what I mean, through the questions they raise or questions they have. Not so much … more of a developmental thing* (Interviewee 15, Female, FOAE)

Interaction with the professions was seen by interviewees as a valued learning experience that is missing from a lot of subjects. This experience is seen as important and needed, and is currently best experienced by students participating in a residential school or in subjects with guest lectures from the profession. Interviewees suggested that this is an area for improvement and greater attention devoted to potential career pathways would be helpful, as well as work experience and more authentic assessment tasks. Although some students experience these interactions naturally in their work related roles, other students see the potential for this to occur in their subjects and suggested improvements to make this happen. For example, a third year Accounting student noted that "*CSU doesn't actively offer or promote interaction with the professions. What you learn and then practice is different*" (Interviewee 10, Female, BJBS). Other comments to illustrate these points are included here:

> *I know no-one in the health industry so it would be vital almost as I get towards the end, [……]I would really be relying on the uni to make those connections for me,[….] so that you do get your foot in a door so to speak, and some practical experience as well* (Interviewee 02, Female, BJBS)

> *It was great again with residential to have that experience of seeing what it would potentially be like for us when we're said and done in our studies and have moved into the social work.[…] that's the great thing about social work, they're still practising or someone is doing a research or everybody seems to be in an area where they're passionate about social work and what it is.* (Interviewee 04, Female, FoA&E)

When students were asked about their experience and preferences for *Interactive Resources*, most were favourable, with only one interviewee expressing a dislike for it. Students commented favourably on a variety of interactive resources which they said "made you feel engaged" and "feel more a part of the university". These included recordings of online meetings held after hours, video clips, YouTube video's, TedX talks and online quizzes. These types of resources are useful to break up the reading but also require careful curating and structured guidance as to how and when to use them to be of most benefit to students so that they do not feel overwhelmed. For example:

> *The learning material, there was so much of it, there was an extra, so there were 3 text books and you know, obviously the online lectures and the tutorials for that. For someone who isn't that wonderful at maths, it would have been great to have recordings of the tutorials as well. I thought that on occasion, but everything was there, you know, she put up the answers and the questions and the answers, and you could work through them yourself. I think that the supplementary materials to the lectures each week are great, and I think the environment, the interactive environment, the discussion forums, work really well.* (Interviewee 02, Female, BJBS)

It's a hard one because the [subject name] this semester has a lot of YouTube clips which are fantastic but the time you need to watch them and do all the reading that she has put in it without a lot of announcements it doesn't work. If she had the YouTube clips for example and less readings and she was more responsive on the forum and more responsive to announcements and encouraging announcements then I would go yes absolutely. So I think definitely it is a good idea but its very much how you coordinate the subject and what you are expecting your students to do and with limited announcements in feedback and encouragement from her it doesn't work – it doesn't make you motivate to look at everything that she has put up there. (Interviewee 13, Female, FoA&E)*

Students had very favourable impressions of *e-Assessment* and commented positively on the flexibility it enabled as well as on the benefits of the online quizzes to providing feedback on understanding. There were a few technical issues noted such as internet dropping out, but on the whole students enjoy this element and are in favour of seeing more of it. As one student commented: "Loved the multiple choice self-quizzes and practice exams, very helpful as a form of study" (Interviewee 02, Female, BJBS). The e-Exam was also favourably commented on:

…they've been interesting, interesting to navigate because you have this conception of an exam and I think an exam is closed book and sitting in a classroom with somebody watching over you which I know does happen. But so it was kind of – I had the flexibility of going to my notes and checking these things out and making sure that I've – for want of a better term got the right answer- (Interviewee 04, Female, FoA&E)

The strategy of providing *personalised support and flexible and adaptive learning* opportunities was mostly well received, with students commenting on the importance of being supported as an online learner and recognising the benefits of extra flexibility for enrolment and assignment submissions to coordinate around work deadlines or school holidays. There were some concerns raised however with respect to needing a deadline and that the software providing the analytics may not provide an accurate representation. For example:

I'm not sure whether getting the information from Interact would be particularly accurate. I know that I can spend a lot of time clicking on something or reading something on Interact, but I'm kind of doing something else as well, so maybe I'm not really giving it my full attention but then I'll go back to it and give it my full attention, so the amount of time that I would be active on that component isn't necessarily an accurate reflection of whether I'm understanding it or not (Interviewee 11, Female, FoA&E)

Overall, the key messages coming through the interviews with students about this aspect of the OLM was that students crave interaction with the lecturer, and if flexible and adaptive learning facilitates this then they are very much in favour of it. As one student remarked, it is "disheartening when trying to engage and get no response from the lecturer – makes you lose focus and motivation for the subject" (Interviewee 10, Female, BJBS).

<u>Responses from open-ended survey items</u>

There were 175 comments from students regarding their perception of the *importance* of the OLM elements. In general, students supported the idea of increased flexibility of enrolment and assessment

patterns, valued instructors who were accessible and responsive, preferred e-Assessments over sitting an external exam and valued the interactive nature of resources when they were available. Students especially commented favourably on having access to recorded lectures and online meetings, in addition to the ability to attend online meetings held of an evening. The opportunity to interact with the lecturer and peers in the online meetings were highly regarded and sorely missed when students enrolled in a subject without this element included. Of concern is the number of quotes which indicated that students felt uncomfortable to ask questions or participate in online discussion forums because of fear of being judged or made to feel stupid. Selected quotes which highlight the student perceptions of the importance of various OLM elements, and their commentary when this element was lacking, have been included here as examples.

All DE subjects should have recordings of the internal lectures/tutes available

I found the recorded lectures very useful and engaging. Interspersed quizzes throughout the lecture were very useful for reviewing content as the lecture progressed. I prefer to listen to the recorded lecture rather than live as I can pause or repeat parts to ensure I understood the content fully.

Recorded weekly lectures help to fully understand topics and readings and stay on schedule

The subject material was not very explanatory. The subject outline is really the only information received. No lectures are recorded and online tutorial classes are not conducted to help assist with learning and understanding of the learning material. We pay the same fees as on campus students but receive no support at all. Other universities record all lectures and conduct online tutes. I hope it is something that is implemented in the future to assist students in their studies

….No recorded lectures! A big downer for me. My best subjects are when I can listen to lectures over and over, even when I am doing other activities

I feel more comfortable interacting on group FB pages as we have the support of each other without feeling like we have the lecturers breathing down our back

I have found that with most subjects in my course there is very little engagement on the subject forums, and very little facilitation by the subject coordinators. Interestingly however, there is generally more discussion through 'informal' mediums such as Facebook study groups and private chats between students. I think a big part of this is not feeling judged when you ask 'a stupid question', or if you admit you are struggling. I think CSU should find a way to promote a more relaxed learning environment to promote engagement, as studying through distance often seems to mean we miss out on peer learning opportunities

In the lead up to the pilot of other initiatives to improve student engagement and flexible study options students were asked to respond to survey items about their perceptions of flexible assessment strategies and flexible start dates in particular. Student responses indicated a favourable degree of receptivity these ideas. For example:

CSUs flexibility and online access is wonderful. The Pathophysiology Pharmacology are remarkable. Some other subjects have a tendency to not resource with recorded lectures which makes it hard for the visual/auditory learners, but this subject had everything. The lecturers were interested and helpful. Thank you

I think when you are working around studying online - some flexibility would be good. I worked full time the first 3 to 4 weeks of last semester to generate income to support myself during the first session. Sometimes an assignment is due on a day where I am working so I lose that time - it would be good to have some flexibility but not too much as - you need timeframes to help you keep on track.

The tests each week were great but I would prefer to have all content and assessments open from the start so that I can learn as fast as I like. So that when I have more time I can progress instead of being forced to spread it out because of the schedule

Overall last session was fantastic. One thing that would be great is being able to do the subject at any time during any session

I feel more could be done to connect the students to each other, not just through the mentor pages for commencing students or forums. I found the student run facebook pages to be an excellent way to connect to other students and gain support when a page had been set up for different social science subjects

Would love to be able to complete subjects via distance any time throughout the year

Flexibility of learning really helps to assist with work/life balances and can assist with making education more attainable

Although there were many favourable comments about the need for, or appreciation of flexible study opportunities, there were also several students who commented that they required more structure and deadlines to succeed and remain motivated. For example:

I find if a timetable is flexible I don't have the discipline to keep on track with my learning

…some structure with dates for assignments etc provides discipline and organisation in a busy life.

I prefer having structure and weekly modules to keep me motivated and challenged. If it were too flexible I'd never complete anything!

The overall subject was great! I had lots of fun learning this session and the setup was perfect for me. I need assignment due dates to help me organise and get them done but I like knowing that if an issue arises I can speak to the lecturer and get an extension (like I did this session when I was quite sick). In other words a deadline helps me but slight flexibility with it is also good

The need for interactive resources was very clear:

I would have enjoyed a more interactive model of learning. Kind of like an "electronic pick a path" virtual setting

I would like to have a very interactive work environment including youtube videos, pictures and diagrams with minimal bulk text paragraphs

Need more video and audio resources for each topic within the unit, in addition to the lectures. Sound quality of lectures needs improvement

Having access to lectures that have been recorded is invaluable for study and revision. I have completed a few online subjects that don't have recorded lectures and it is very disappointing and certainly impacts my learning. It also gives the impression that the lecturer is not willing to go that extra mile for the students and isn't that engaged with our progress. The online adobe connect meetings are amazing and once again, when they don't occur it creates a disconnect with the lecturer because as students, we are aware that they occur for other subjects.

This needs to be carefully balanced however, as some students reported having too many resources to access:

I found the online resources were too lengthy and far too many for each module, it was impossible to find information with such large resources

This module had far too many youtube clips to watch & death by power point

Too many online communication resources made my study difficult, to the point I stopped looking at them eg. forum. I could not work out how to open and read comments then go back to previous question. Uni is constantly changing website. We need to be focusing on our study resources, not spending our time working out how to use the continuously changing website

3.3.4 Staff Perceptions

Staff were asked to rate their familiarity and confidence with the OLM as a whole and then each of the elements. Figure 3.3.4 provides a comparison of these responses between staff roles and between familiarity and confidence.
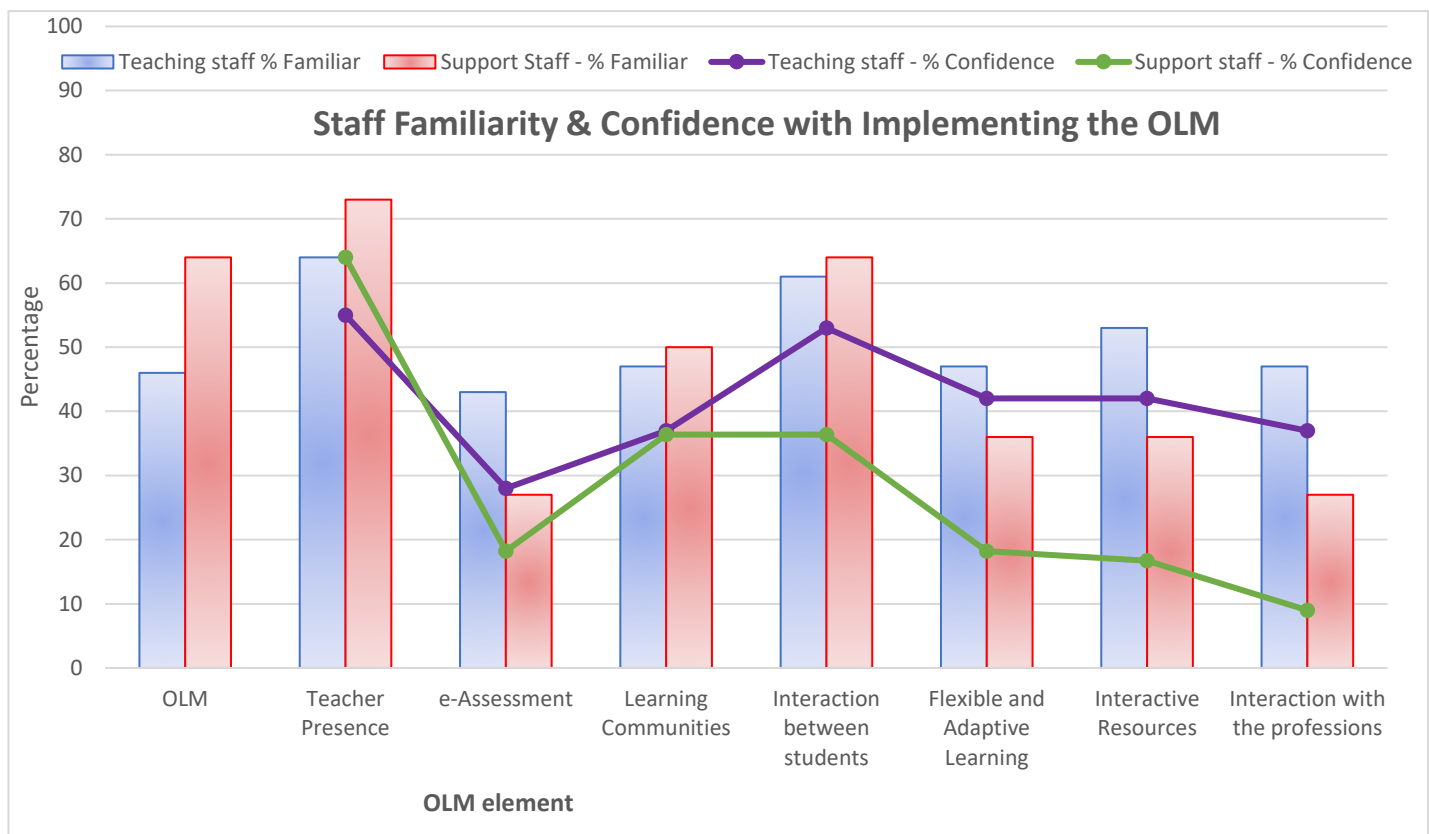
Figure 3.3.4: Staff <u>familiarity</u> with the OLM as a whole and with each element, measured against <u>confidence</u> with implementing each element (teaching staff n = 37; support staff n = 11) where % Familiar and % Confident = To a fairly great extent, To a great extent, and To a very great extent[5].

The information in Figure 3.3.4 is useful as it shows that only 46% of teaching staff felt familiar with the OLM as a whole, suggesting that there is still some professional development work required to facilitate a greater understanding of the model and how it can be implemented. Teaching staff felt most familiar with the Teacher Presence element and least familiar with e-Assessment and Flexible and Adaptive Learning elements.

In contrast, support staff reported a high percentage of familiarity with the OLM as a whole, but similar trends were shown with higher levels of familiarity for Teacher Presence and Interaction between student's elements and lower levels of familiarity for e-Assessment and Interaction with the professions. Teaching staff however felt markedly more familiar with e-Assessment methods than support staff and a similar trend can also be seen for the Interaction with the professions and Interactive Resources elements. Neither type of staff felt especially confident however with respect to implementing e-Assessment.

The information represented in Figure 3.3.4 is also interesting in highlight the disparity between feeling familiar with an element and being confident in implementing it, with confidence ratings lower than familiarity for all elements. Staff felt most confident with the elements they also expressed greatest familiarity with (Teacher Presence and Interaction between students). This provides useful information upon which to target professional development for staff.

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[5] Confidence and Familiarity are measured using the same scale anchors where 1 = Not at all and 7 = To a very great extent.

When academic staff were asked how they became familiar with the OLM, common responses were through meetings and working collaboratively with the EDs, through personal reading of related material available on the websites, via email updates and newsletters, and through looking at other people's work on the Learning Exchange.

Motivation is a factor underpinning most teaching practices, and may be a driver for staff familiarity and confidence in implementing the OLM. When staff were asked what motivated them to participate in the OLM implementation in Phase 1, 34 responded, and their responses were categorised into either an internal source of motivation or an external source. Of those 34 responses, 20 were externally motivated and stated that they had no choice: it was mandated by the school or leadership, the existing staff member had left, or the subject was part of a review. The internally motivated staff commented that it was an opportunity to improve their learning and teaching practices and they were positively motivated to make a positive change in their subject to improve student learning. For example:

> *I wanted to expand my understanding in reviewing subjects and wanted to implement my workplace experiences into the subject to make it workplace ready rather than just relying on theoretical aspects*

> *Wanting to improve my teaching and the experience for the online students. I see that this is the way of the future*

3.3.5 Staff perception of importance of OLM elements to student learning

Staff were asked to rate how important they thought each of the OLM elements was to student learning and then to rate how important they think students perceive each element to be. For comparative purposes, the student ratings of importance from Figure 3.3.3 have also been included here in Figure 3.3.5. The two descriptors of importance are 'Important' and 'Very important' – they have been collapsed into one category of 'Importance'. The bars in Figure 3.3.5 represent staff agreement with the extent to which each element was included in the subject, where agreement is represented by 'Agree', 'Strongly agree', and 'Very strongly agree' grouped as a single category 'agreement'. Although the ratings of support staff haven't been incorporated in Figure 3.3.5, the majority of support staff (>70%) rated each element as being important or very important to student learning.
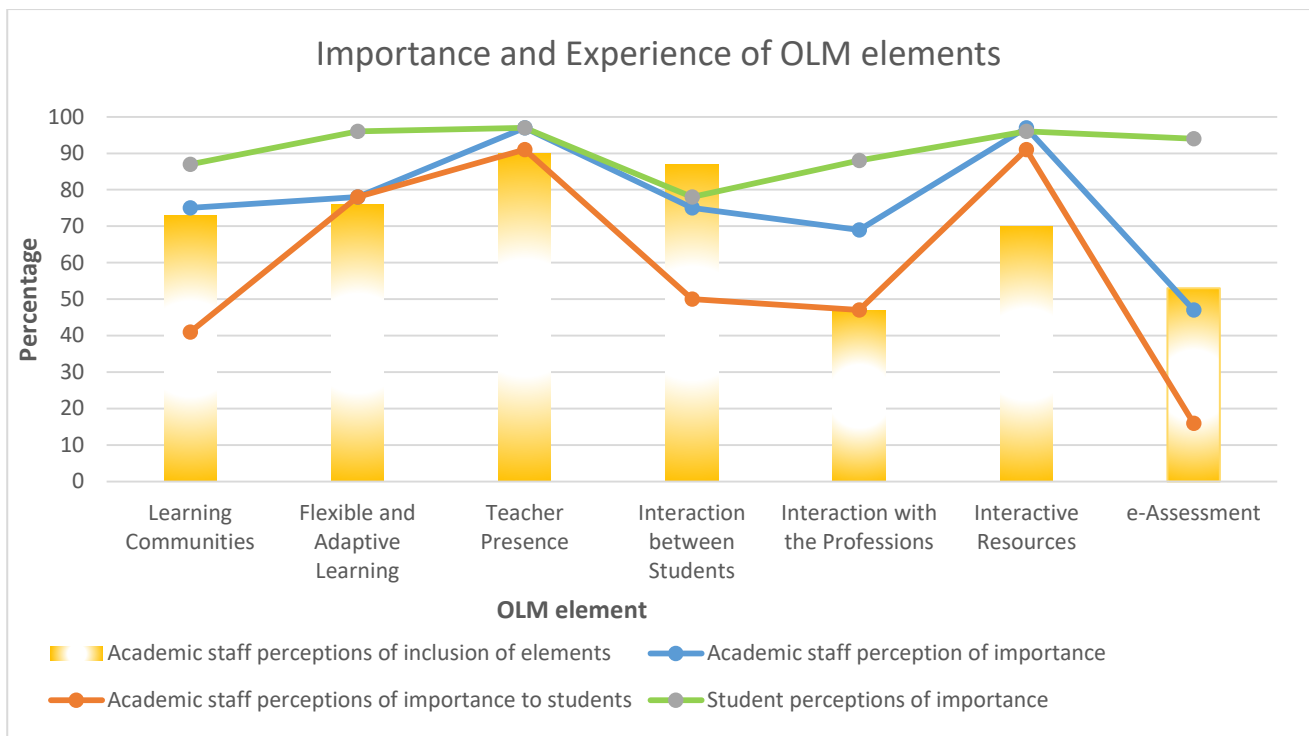
Figure 3.3.5: Academic staff perceptions of the inclusion of elements (Very strongly agree + Strong agree + Agree), Importance of OLM elements (Important + Very Important), and perceptions of importance of elements to students mapped against student perceptions (academic staff ratings n = 21, student ratings n = 1776)

The results in Figure 3.3.5 show an interesting dynamic between student and academic staff perceptions of the importance of each OLM element. Although there is strong agreement between students and staff perceptions of the importance to students (green and orange lines) for Teacher Presence and Interactive Resources, there is great disparity with regard to the e-Assessment (78% difference), Learning Communities (55%), and Interaction with the Professions (41%). In all of these instances of disparity, students rated the importance of Learning Communities, Interaction with the Professions, and e-Assessment much higher than staff thought these elements would be of importance to students. Overall, staff underestimated the importance of the elements to student learning, and underestimated students perception of the importance of elements in all facets of the OLM represented in Figure 3.3.5, excepting Teacher Presence.

In terms of the actual incorporation of elements in the subject, Figure 3.3.5 shows that Phase 1 has hit the mark with Teacher Presence – with high levels of agreement that each element was included, and high levels of importance attached to this by both students and staff. Aside from Teacher Presence however, Phase 1 has not quite matched expectations with regard to the academic staff perception of the extent to which elements were included and student perceptions of the importance of those elements. The results in Figure 3.3.5 suggest that there was an alignment between student perceptions of importance, and academics' perceptions of importance and actual implementation. It was mainly staff predictions of student perceptions of importance that differed most visibly, especially with regard to the Interaction between Students element. In the interviews, most students shunned interaction with other students within the subject site due to lack of time and lack of capacity in the online environment. Students chose to interact with peers on Facebook instead of through CSU mediums for the set purpose of seeking support when needed. It may be that the question in the survey needs to be worded differently to more accurately capture student perceptions and

experiences with regard to this element. The Facebook pages which existed for subjects contained student members at all stages of the course and so more junior students were able to benefit from the insight and tips of students who had gone before them, something not available on subject Interact sites. For example, from the open-ended survey responses and interviews:

> *I depended heavily on the use of a facebook group to gain insight, support and guidance on the subject assignments and exam preparation as this was not provided by the lecturer.*

> *Delivery of content was far below par. No regular live lectures or tutorials. No chance to interact with other students. We created our own Facebook group and ran our own tutorials. The most disappointing online study experience to date.*

> *…it's been a really good online community. And yeah, because when you're a distance student, you don't have that face-to-face support of study groups, and you know, being able to study with someone and talk something over with someone to get someone's different perspective* (Interviewee 10, Female, BJBS)

3.3.6 Student Satisfaction with subject quality
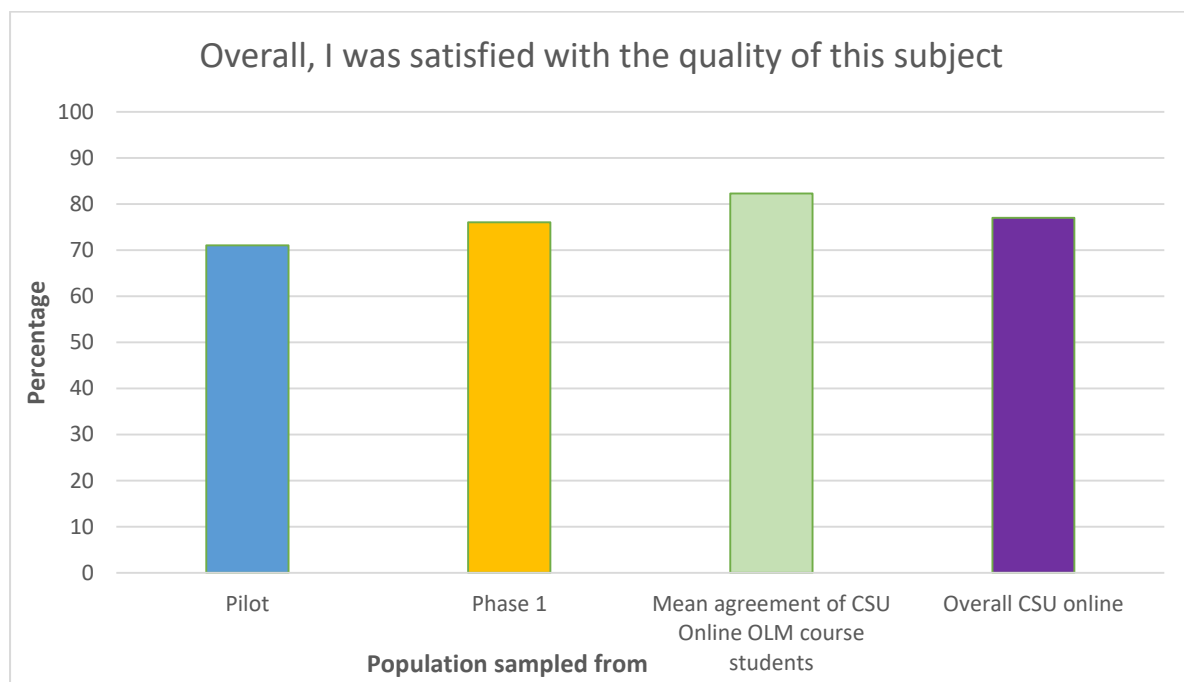
Figure 3.3.6: Subject satisfaction in the pilot and Phase 1 in comparison with levels of satisfaction across all students enrolled in OLM courses as measured by the StES 'Quality of overall educational experience', and compared with all CSU online students.

Number of responses Phase 1 = 1766, **Pilot** = 202

Compared with the pilot OLM evaluation, student satisfaction is slightly higher for Phase 1 (76% agreement as opposed to 71% agreement). The students who responded to the survey however are

slightly less satisfied than the students completing the CSU Subject Experience Survey who were enrolled in OLM course subjects in 201730 and 201760, although satisfaction was on par with the CSU Online students overall.

The results of a linear regression analysis indicated that student's perceived inclusion of the seven OLM elements significantly predicted 71% of the variance in overall student satisfaction with subject quality (R^2= 0.844, $F_{(7, 1758)}$ = 620.15, p<.001). There was a strong positive correlation between Teacher Presence and student's overall satisfaction with subject quality (r = 0.798, p<.001) and also between Interactive Resources and student's overall satisfaction with subject quality (r = 0.760, p<.001). In fact, all OLM elements were significantly correlated with student satisfaction at p<.001.

3.3.7 Teaching quality

In Phase 1, teaching quality was measured in three ways. Firstly, by a single item used in the CSU subject evaluation survey: "How would you rate the quality of the teaching you have experienced in this subject" (see Figure 3.3.7a); secondly, through an open ended question asking students to comment on this; and thirdly, through the use of items from the national Student Experience Survey (see Figure 3.3.7b).
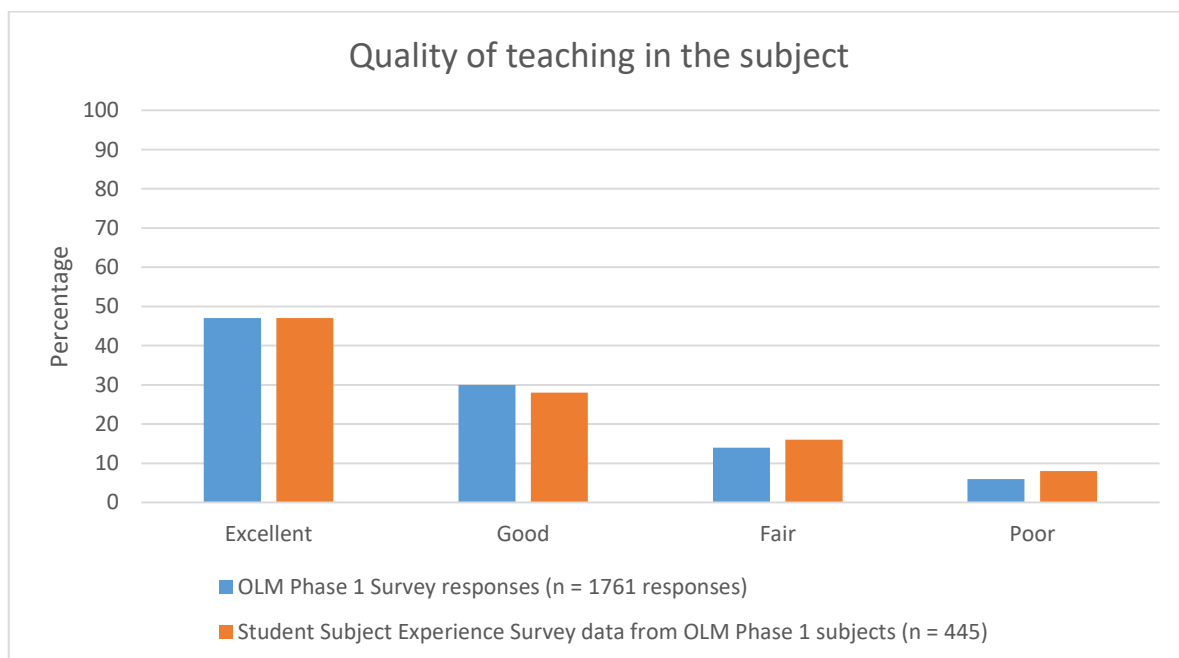
Figure 3.3.7a: Single item measure of teaching quality compared across survey respondents and OLM Phase 1 subject cohorts

The data illustrated in Figure 3.3.7a show that although there is a similar profile of responses between the Phase 1 survey respondents and students in the OLM Phase 1 courses, suggesting that the survey respondents are a representative sample in this respect. The data for both sources suggest that the majority of students were satisfied with the quality of teaching, with 77% in the OLM survey, and 75% in the Subject Experience Survey rating the teaching as Good or Excellent.

The second measure of teaching quality consisted of items from the national Student Experience Survey (nSES) Teaching Quality scale. The results from both survey respondents and CSU online only students are represented in Figure 3.3.7b. Teaching staff were asked the same questions about their own teaching in subjects, albeit slight re-worded[6].
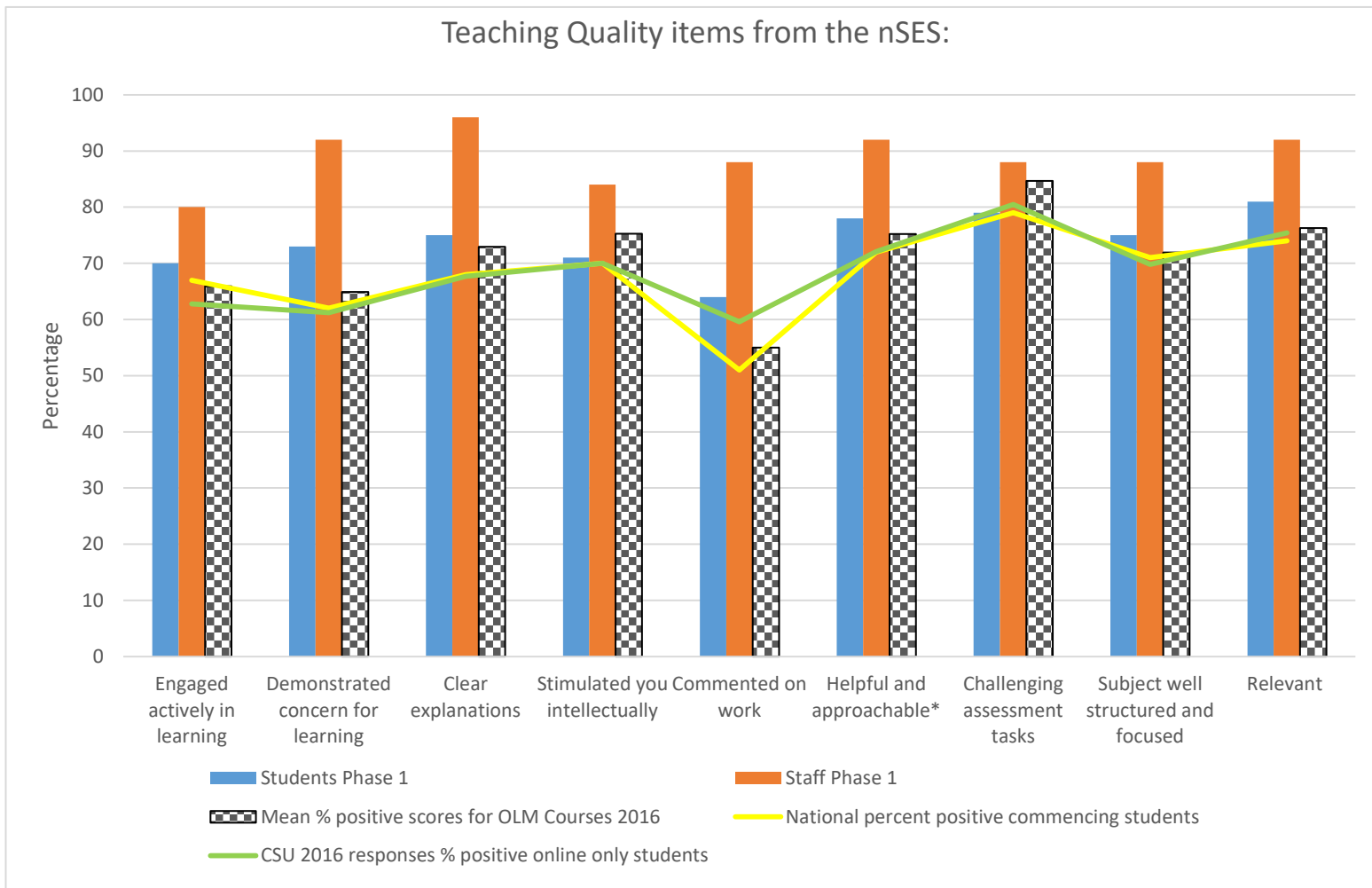
Figure 3.3.7b: Distribution of student and staff survey scores from 'quite a bit to very much' for teaching quality measured against the percentage positive scores from CSU online students, CSU online students in the OLM courses, and nationally. Responses: Students n = 1761; Staff n = 25

The results shown in Figure 3.3.7b indicate that students in OLM subjects perceive a higher degree of teacher quality than all online students at CSU and also when compared with national results. Students perceive teaching staff to positively impact on their learning in various ways, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.7b above. Even though Phase 1 student perceptions that their teachers commented on their work was the least agreed to item, this was actually the item where OLM subjects were furthest above the national mean as rated by students in Phase 1. This suggests that although teachers nationally could improve on the extent to which they comment on students work, CSU staff do better than most.

In comparing the results of survey respondents (blue bar) and subjects specific to OLM with CSU online students in the OLM courses (checked bars), there is only some slight variation of 5-10% between the

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[6] For example, the wording of the stem question was "overall, students were actively supported by staff in this subject through"….

ratings, suggesting that the survey respondents were either from the same pool as those who responded to the nSES or that their views are representative of their cohort as a whole.

The blue and orange bars in Figure 3.3.7b highlight the differences in ratings between students (n = 1761 responses across more than one subject) and teaching staff (n = 25) for the same items. The area of greatest discrepancy is 'commenting on student work in ways that help student learning' (24% difference). Although 64% of students agreed this was the case, 88% of staff agreed with this, suggesting that staff either over-estimate the time and effort made in commenting on student work or students do not see that the comments made are sufficient to help their learning. There was also a large disparity in the extent to which staff believe they provide clear explanations (96%) compared with student perceptions of this (75%).

The third measure of teacher quality in Phase 1 included items from the Good Teaching Scale in the national Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), administered within the nSES. Student responses to these items from Phase 1 are illustrated in Figure 3.3.7c and mapped against national responses as well as CSU responses for the relevant courses.

With regard to teaching in the subject, teaching staff:

Legend: ■ Survey respondent Agreement ■ 2015 CSU % Positive* ▢ Pilot

Categories: Gave helpful feedback | Put time into commenting on work | Motivated me | Explaining things | Subjects interesting | Effort to understand difficulties
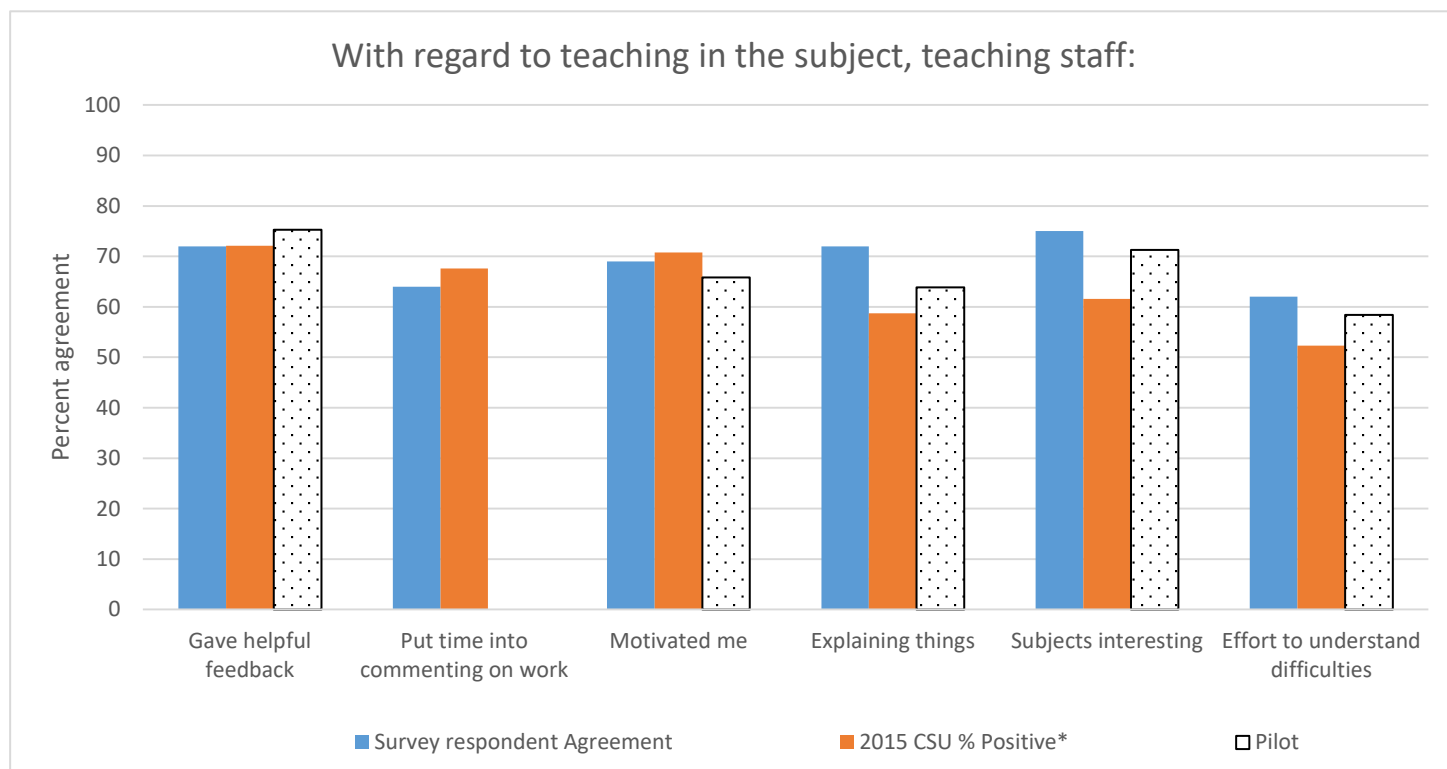
Figure 3.3.7c: Survey responses to items from the Good Teaching Scale of the CEQ for Phase 1 mapped against the 2015 CSU CEQ good teaching scale results (latest data available) and compared with the Pilot evaluation. Survey responses = 1766 (students responded across more than one subject)

*Most recent data available

Agreement includes: Strongly Agree, and Agree; Disagreement includes: Disagree, and Strongly disagree

The results illustrated in Figure 3.3.7c show that student respondents in Phase 1 are more positive about their perceptions of teaching staff compared with the general CSU population in 2015 for half of the items, and had similar ratings for the other half. The 2015 data include all CSU students, not just online. The Phase 1 subjects score particularly well on the extent to which staff "worked hard to

make their subjects interesting" and "were extremely good at explaining things" compared more broadly to CSU as a whole.

Examples of positive responses about teacher quality are included here:

> *Beyond excellent, they were all beyond excellent in their support, reassurance, teaching, and layout of residential schooling in all subjects for this session. Residential schooling is a must!*

> *Outstanding*

> *The lecturer was one of the most personable and active teachers I have ever encountered. Kudos to her for the active participation she showed in our learning*

> *The feedback provided on my assessments was valuable and constructive. As a student, it's nice to know through feedback that your hard hours work on assessments are read thoroughly and appreciated by the marker*

> *Enthusiastic lecturer who is very knowledgeable/experienced in the subject matter &who was available to assist online students. She responded to requests for assistance within 24hrs*

> *The lecturer was engaging and accessible. He explained topics well and the learning material and assessments enabled maximum learning in this subject. It was an enjoyable unit to undertake.*

Of concern are comments like these below, directly related to lack of teacher presence, lack of feedback on assignments and unresponsiveness when students sought help. Students have had good experiences in the past which they have also commented on and which make the variable quality of teaching presence more noticeable in some online courses:

> *I felt extremely isolated and unsupported through semester one. [teacher 1] was very communicative and responsive, unlike [teacher 2]….very disappointing!!! I would of learnt more through either engagement with fellow students face to face or within a workplace environment…..*

> *I was very unhappy with not receiving feedback on one of my assignments. This would have been nice so I knew the areas I did well in and the areas that may need improvements, but all I received was a grade and when I questioned one of the lecturers she replied only some people got comments.*

> *reduced interaction with teaching staff and peers makes it hard to assess if you are on the right track particularly with assessment tasks. this is why online tutorials and online meetings about assessment tasks by teaching staff is so important. I think the staff need to go through tasks thoroughly and make it available for viewing later. Not just be led by the students who attend meetings but give guidance and also give complete answers to any weekly tutorial work. If the answers aren't provided then you can't learn and in fact are more likely to reinforce incorrect understanding.*

[teacher 2] was basically unavailable to the students and from the time of the 1st post about an assignment question to the last, her answers had changed so many times and actually contradicted her previous answers. I enjoyed the subject but it was a difficult subject and some weekly lectures would have been extremely helpful.

It felt like I paid $1300+ for a unit which I taught myself from a $150 text book. CSU itself has a good support network, I felt the lecturer for this subject was not available enough, especially comparing to my [teacher 1]

3.3.8 Perception of resources

Students and staff from Phase 1 subjects have an overall positive response to the learning resources made available, and the results here also compare favourably to institutional and national responses, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.8.
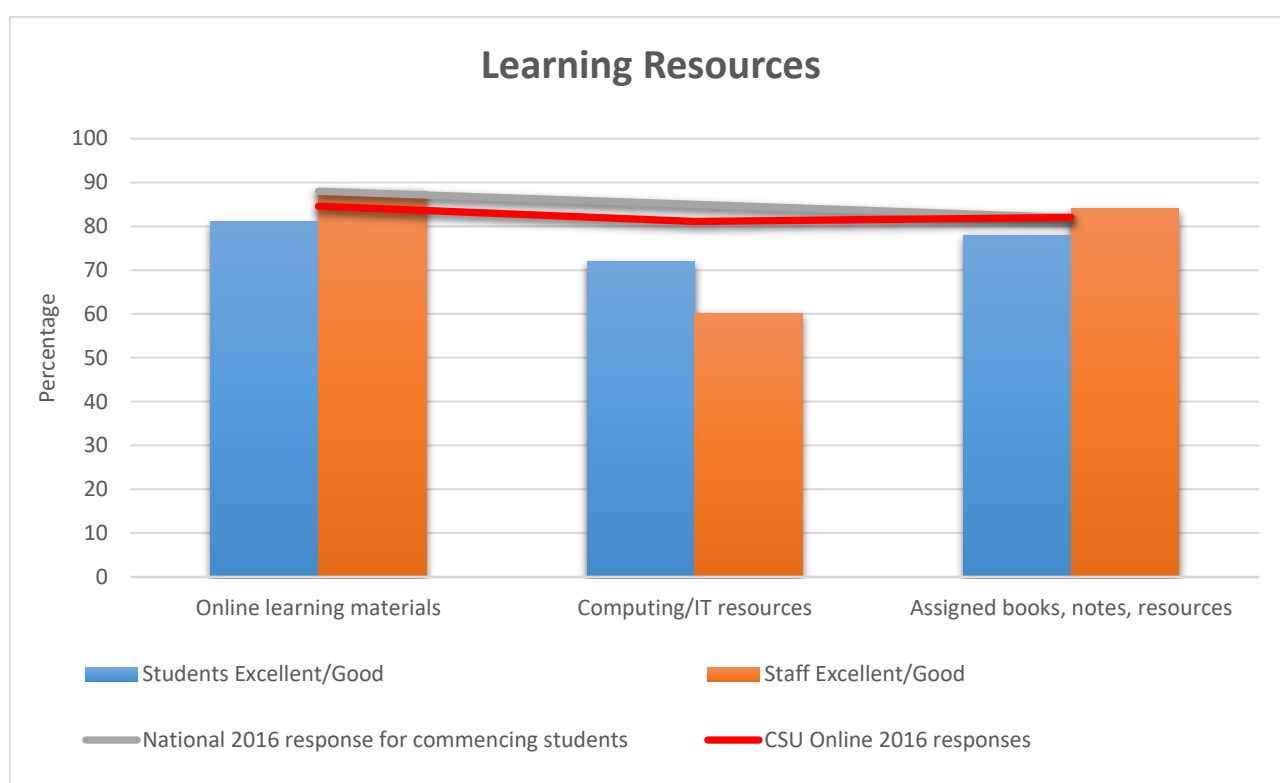
Figure 3.3.8: Distribution of responses to perceptions of Learning Resources from Phase 1 (student responses = 1846 across multiple subjects; teaching staff n = 25)

The items in Figure 3.3.8 are taken from the national Student Experience Survey (Learning Resources items) and the Figure shows that the Phase 1 subjects compare somewhat favourably with larger scale information available although there is scope for improvement, especially with regard to computing and IT resources. It is also worth noting that 82% of students agree that the technologies available to them supported their learning in their subject.

Interview responses

Learning resources were variously commented on through the interviews and open-ended comments on the survey. One interview response which encapsulates the nature of learning resources and which indicates the inseparability of online learning materials from computing/IT resources and Assigned books, notes and resources is included below. This quote is an example of the difficulty students may have in responding to questions of the nature included in Figure 3.3.8

…he put up lectures from the year before in like two batches. So, he put up the first lot, and then you could work your way through the study guide. The study guide was, oh, incredible, it was just so well done, and the reader that came with it, and the fact that you could get them printed at the uni printing place and get them sent to you was brilliant. And he kept saying that what we need to do is know the study guide and we would be fine for the exam. So, I did learn some strategies, but I think they might have been a little bit too- … (laughing) like for myself, but it's because I'm a mature age student and I haven't sort of done this kind of thing for many, many years, I just found the study guide and the questions, and the follow-up with the online meetings that we had were brilliant. (Interviewee 04, Female, FoA&E)

Open-ended survey responses

The 423 comments on the survey in relation to the technologies, online materials, and resources used in the subject have been categorised as positive, needs improvement, and negative. Overall, it seems that although students are impressed with the variety and usefulness of online learning materials, the IT resources sometimes let them down when recordings are of poor quality or some specific software doesn't work as it should. Suggestions for improvement included having more online books made available, having more prompt responses to the online forum by the lecturer, updating the CSU Replay lectures to be of higher quality, and ability to access lectures on iPhones.

Many positive comments were concerned with the usefulness of recorded lectures, online meetings, online quizzes, Interact2 and specific tools such as Online Classroom, Coursemate, Peerwise, Late Nite Labs, Medsafe, MeWe, Adobe Connect, FlipGrid, TurnitIn, Easts, and CSU Replay. Students really valued the Interactive Resources, the interactive classroom sessions with polling, and use of minitests to gauge performance and understanding. The assigned books, notes, and readings were also positively received as being relevant, applicable to the subject, and accessible in most cases, especially when provided in a PDF format. Example quotes to illustrate these points are included here:

Good level of support from the lecturer through the online meetings, met with a solid level of information in written resources - a very good balance

Great to have 3 online real time interactive classroom sessions through our computer. It felt like you were in the classroom and talking with the teacher and other students

Recorded lectures were not just "useful". They were an integral part of the subject as it provided so much more content and relevance to the subject.

Technology is interesting - online discussion board is a valuable resource. Use of videos and podcasts was very interesting. The text book is very detailed and at times dry. The technology helped overcome this and make the subject more interesting

The online meetings were an essential part to my learning!

Practical labs sessions had amazing instruments and tools to use

The interactive lectures were a great tool. There was a wide range of options for each topic to support different learning styles

Coursemate was absolutely amazing and helped me understand the content in depth

The material provided on Interact2 was excellent. Really well designed for online learning

Weekly mini-tests, in which free statistical software was used to solve problems, were extremely useful for embedding understanding of and applying content

I enjoyed the use of technology in the lectures. Though I didn't participate live, being able to answer questions throughout the lectures provided reinforcement of the topic, and appropriate breaks to absorb content. My only suggestion might be to include animations and/or videos, but only if they enhance/reinforce the content and are brief.

Keep the live polling, it's a good way to get immediate feedback as to your understanding of the lecture material

The technologies were very useful and appropriate, I could see a clear connection between course content and real life applications and I have since used some of the newly acquired skills such as forecasting and excel functions successfully in my workplace.

…teachers personal videos were very helpful and reduced the element of isolation experienced in every other DE subject.

The online library searching is excellent, and so is interact. I've had dealings with two other university websites/systems and neither as good as CSU.

Areas identified for improvement primarily concerned the need for greater use of online learning tools and resources and a need to improve the quality of recorded lectures – sound in particular was an issue, as was the recordings being stopped before the lecture had ended. Students also requested podcasts of lectures along with more quizzes. For example:

Please roll out the use of recordings of real lecturers and tutorials. Seeing staff deliver content and the back and forth between staff and students in a classroom setting will go a long way to making the content more engaging, accessible, and clear.

Please continue to utilise live lectures & interactive poll questions as another option on top of the recorded lectures

The infrastructure needs to be improved so that the lecturer can be heard and their demonstrations and slides are accurately recorded.

The on line lectures were often hard to hear, cut out before the end of the lecture - often. And any questions asked by students - which may have helped with my own learning - were inaudible

The PDF topic resources were very useful, perhaps could be made more interactive on Interact2 to include a 'workbook' type function where you submit your answer to an exercise and are provided with immediate feedback and workings on the correct answer.

The ppt, subject outline, forum, interact 2, resource folder updates were all very useful. Podcasts would have been good too if your driving to work to listen to various podcasts to expand our knowledge

The Modules tool could be difficult to navigate at times for students, with too many resources in some and difficulties in keeping track with what had and had not been looked at:

I found the modules confusing in this subject, it was hard to work out if I had completed everything for that week

I felt that there was an overload of resources offered with this subject rather than one module with them all. I had to download a high number of individual items

Students commented negatively when there were no interactive or online resources, poor quality or difficult to use online resources (e.g. Interview Stream, SPSS), and glitches with Interact2. For example:

I think this was a distance learning and not an Online learning subject!

CSU needs to smarten up its act with regard to recording lectures. Currently, the facilities are dismally inadequate

online prescribed text was difficult to interact with, wouldn't work on certain platforms, took time to sort out (lecturer was very helpful but caused delay in ability to use the text effectively. cost was also very high for online resource.

The portal we use SPSS through can be very slow sometimes, and a lot of the time we have to email the data and outputs to ourselves as our USBs wouldn't show up. This created a headache for an already complicated process.

While there was an attempt to work on online learning, I still think we have a long way to go in terms of changing teaching techniques to engage with online students

Learning is obviously reliant on internet connection. Connecting to online communities is at times challenging

Lecturer had a lot of difficulty with the technologies used

We are almost in 2018 and I am still handwriting 10 pages of answers in an exam that goes for three hours

there have been some problems with the live tutorials, causing them to start 15-20 mins late. Not great when you have a babysitter for an hour

The Interact 2 website was disorganised and stressful to use. It was not clear which document or recording related to which week or topic

The comments illustrated here showcase the realities of learning online for most students who are studying part-time and fitting study in around other responsibilities and internet availability.

3.3.9 Perceptions of the learning experience

Items representing the learning experience are the same as those which are used in the Learner Engagement scale of the national Student Experience Survey (nSES). The results of our survey have been mapped against CSU Online students from 2016 and also the national results, in Figure 3.3.9a.
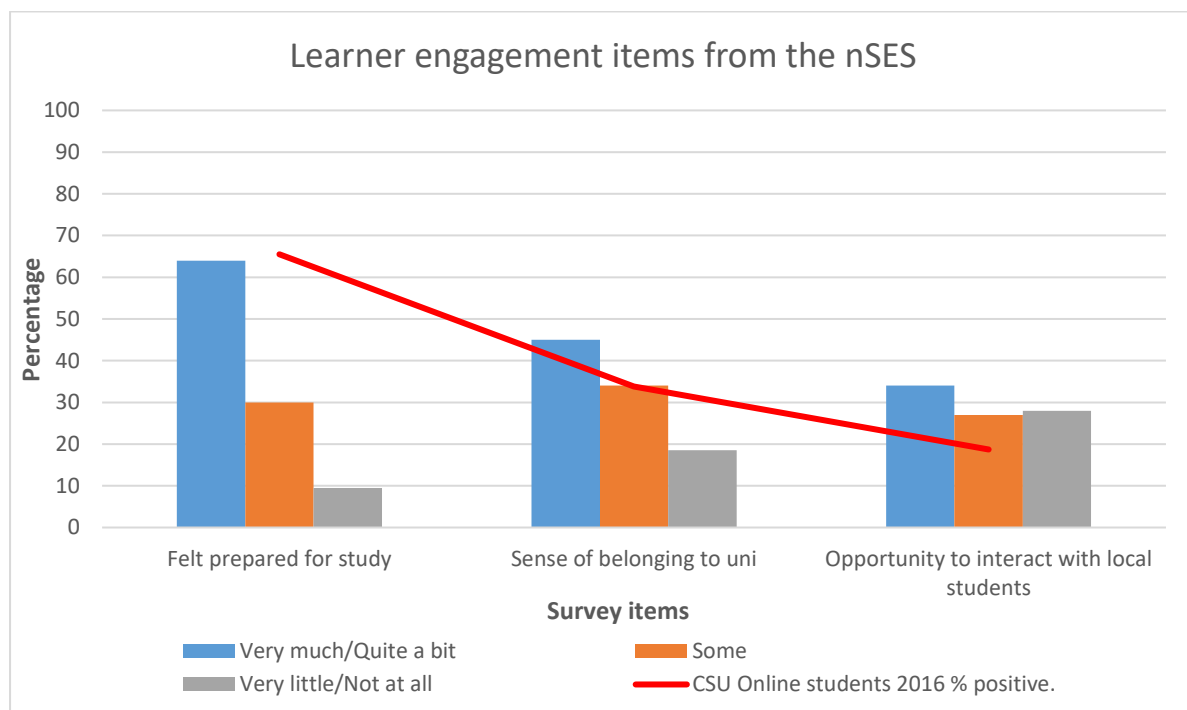
Figure 3.3.9a: Learner engagement as measured by the nSES Learner Engagement scale of the nSES in our sample of students completing OLM subjects (n = 1776) compared with the broader CSU. National level results for online (external/distance) students are not available[7].

The items in Figure 3.3.9a may be considered as measures of the breadth of engagement. The CSU line represents online students only and shows that students completing OLM subjects have more positive perceptions of feeling a sense of belonging and have markedly more opportunities to interact with local students.

The following results, in Figure 3.3.9b, also represent the responses of students to OLM subjects in comparison with CSU online students, but different response options were used for these questions, in accordance with how they are asked on the nSES.
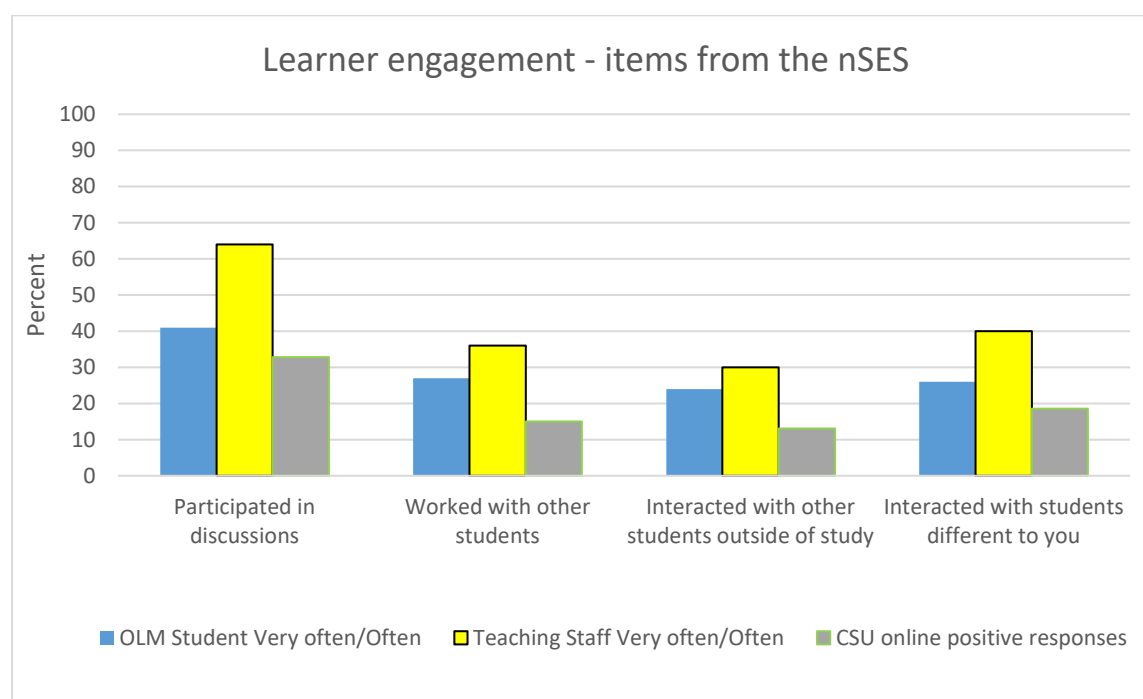
Figure 3.3.9b: Frequencies of learner engagement as measured by the nSES Learner Engagement scale and contrasted between OLM subjects (n = 1761), CSU online students, and teaching staff (n = 25)

The items in Figure 3.3.9b may be considered as measures of the depth of student engagement. Comparatively, the results in Figure 3.3.9b show that students enrolled in the Phase 1 OLM subjects felt more engaged than their peers in other online subjects at CSU. Teachers in OLM subjects were also inclined to rate student engagement on all items moderately higher than the students.

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[7] "Large differences in results by study mode for Learner Engagement suggests this scale may be performing differently for internal/mixed mode students and external mode students. The Department of Education and Training is undertaking a review of the Learner Engagement scale prior to the 2017 SES. As an interim measure, the QILT website, which reports SES results at institution by study area level, currently excludes external mode responses for the Learner Engagement focus area" Page 4, https://www.qilt.edu.au/docs/default-source/gos-reports/2017/2016-ses-national-report-final.pdf?sfvrsn=14e0e33c_5

The validity of utilising these measures for our population of online students' needs to be questioned however, and the interpretation of these items by external or distance students in the national sample has also been queried. This may especially be true when considering the practicality of interacting with other students outside of study and with students who are very different to you. Online students may have no idea if the students they are interacting with are 'very different' to them and it is not practical or in some cases even feasible for students to interact with other students outside of study. Interview data in relation to levels of engagement within the class and with peers suggest that the Discussion Forums on subject and/or course Facebook pages seem to be the primary way in which students interact outside of study or with specific regard to the subject. Perhaps a more appropriate question for our population might be to what extent to you interact with students using social media channels, email or telephone?

Qualitative data in relation to the student experience of learning online
Students were asked to identify the best features of the subject, and there were 1178 responses received to this question. All responses were imported into NVivo for coding and analysis.

A word cloud created in NVivo based on student comments to the best features of their subject (including first, second, and third subjects) is illustrated below in Figure 5.3.9c

Figure 3.3.9c Word cloud representation of <u>word frequency</u> in student open-ended comments about the best features of their subjects

Although the word cloud depicts students commenting most frequently about the subject, content, online, learning, lecturer and interesting, an analysis of codes used when the open-ended comments were imported into NVivo show that the four major themes occurring throughout the 1178 responses to this question were:

- Teacher Presence (372 coding references),

- Resources (315 references),
- Content (212 references), and
- Assessment (172 references)

Teacher Presence and Resources were also the two most common themes to this question in the student interviews. Codes under the theme of **Teacher Presence** in the open-ended comments on the survey comprised: the way in which content was delivered, availability and approachability of the teaching staff, helpfulness and support of the teaching staff, the way in which lecturers were engaging and passionate about their subject, and knowledge of teaching staff. These aspects were highly valued by students who frequently commented that the lecturers and staff involved in the subject delivery were the best feature of the subject; in particular, the *helpfulness and support* of teachers was the most frequently coded category within the Teacher Presence code (with 106 references). For example:

Careful sequential planning of content, passionate lecturers that were highly motivated to provide innovative technology strategies. Highly patient and understanding teaching staff that genuinely wanted students to succeed

[Lecturer] is clearly passionate about the subject matter, which helps him to deliver the material in an engaging way. I liked that he made it explicitly clear what to expect in the assessment and how we should prepare for the exams. If anyone fails this subject, it's not because of subject delivery.

Our lecturer [name removed]. He made himself constantly available to students (which is often not the case with distance student lecturers!!!!) and was very invested in ensuring all students kept up and understood the content

X and Y's enthusiasm for the subject and their helpfulness and understanding

The lecturer [name removed] was very supportive, approachable and inspirational. Without her guidance and assistance, this subject would have been dull.

Students also frequently commented on the nature of **resources,** citing texts, recorded lectures, Online Meetings and access to live or recorded lectures as key to enjoying and getting the most out of the subject. For example:

Diverse learning materials meant each topic was explored in multiple ways at various levels of complexity and difficulty

Being able to follow the subject as though it was an on campus class, by watching recordings of real lectures and tutorials.

Lectures and tutorial activities, pop quizzes and review questions, these were what really helped me understand the content!!!

> *I enjoyed the resources and online meetings, as they allowed me to gain information needed to enhance my learning and to feel confident completing assessment tasks.*

> *Online meetings that we were able to communicate directly with teaching staff and other students*

With regard to **Content**, students frequently commented that the content was interesting, relevant, engaging, stimulating, and challenging, and this is why it featured as one of the best aspects of the subject, as shown here:

> *I enjoyed most of the topics covered off in this topic. It was very helpful to my current employment and future employment as well.*

> *I loved the content, I found it fascinating and engaging*

> *Practical, useful content - the subject aligned very well to what I do professionally. Not as theory based as other subjects.*

> *The subject itself is utterly fascinating, and has changed the way I look at the world.*

Assessment areas which were frequently commented on as part of the best features of the subject included feedback provided, the design - valuing relevance and authenticity, clarity, and opportunity to evaluate knowledge with regular mini-tests which provided motivation and sense of achievement. For example:

> *Overall I thoroughly enjoyed the format of the online assessments and end of session exam and feel like I have learnt a lot and achieved good results thanks to the memorable teaching and learning experiences.*

> *The exam & the support given by teaching staff prior to the exam - the exam looked at all aspects of the subject, with excellent support prior to the examination - Thankyou*

> *The assignment topic gave us the opportunity to pursue an area of interest - made it much more engaging to have that little bit of flexibility.*

> *Weekly assessments that I got feedback on that week, and had an opportunity to think about and try again*

> *Weekly online assessments involving 10 short answer questions were a great way to test my comprehension of each weekly topic. I can't remember being tested on each aspect of my learning in this way for a very long time - we've become so accustomed to writing long essays that focus on just one particular topic in a subject. The final assessment involved interviewing older persons and this was a great way to put theory into practice.*

The variety and design of assessment tasks and the constructive feedback on every assessment.

<u>Staff</u>

Resources was the main area commonly commented on by 20 teaching staff in relation to being one of the best features of the subject. For example*:*

Some of the best features included giving a consistent look and feel across a course. Increasing student engagement through different activities and increasing the teacher presence.

Simplified navigation. Provision of multimedia resources that would aid student learning.

Students were engaged with the content and found the subject interesting. They enjoyed the interactive resources and I received very good SES feedback about teacher presence. The students found the online weekly study modules to be very user-friendly.

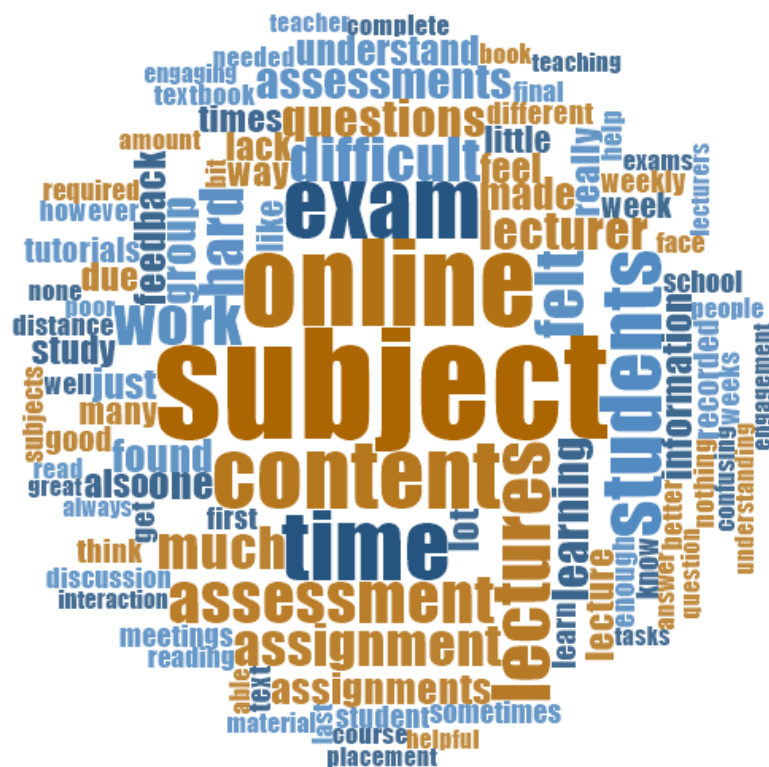*Analysis of worst features of subject*

Figure 3.3.9d: Word Cloud of the worst features of a subject based on 1058 responses over the 201730 and 201760

For students, a word frequency analysis of responses to a question about the worst features of a subject in 201730 and 201760 revealed a focus on exams, content, and time. Coding and thematic

analysis of these responses showed that the main themes arising from coding the data relating to this question were:

- Assessment (562 references)
- Resources (255 references)
- Teacher Presence (168 references)
- Subject design and delivery (102 references)

It is interesting that the content frequencies arising from this analysis show that Teacher Presence, Resources, and Assessments were similar areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for students, but prioritised differently. Teacher Presence was the most frequently cited area of satisfaction whereas Assessment was the most frequently cited area for concern.

With regard to **Assessment,** the features most lamented by students were *lack of clarity, the exam* and *poor feedback*, in addition to design features, difficulty of task, lack of preparation, timing and concerns about weighting. For example:

Some of the wording in a number of the assignments were either miss leading or hard to work out what it was asking you to do.

The confusion surrounding the assessment task and exam, every person from the course that I spoke to has expressed that they feel frustrated and confused … I believe every student enrolled in this unit would have benefitted from clear instructions and our assessment task being returned prior to the exam. We are all feeling frustrated, confused and anxious regarding the results of this unit.

I hated the exam, found the anxiety of attending an exam overwhelming and didn't help my learning at all.

The exam. 1) Because it's an exam; and 2) I would prefer to get feedback for my work and exams don't offer that.

Traditional assessment that was conducted as three exams only. While it was understandable for the size of the cohort, it didn't help engagement, there was no continuous assessment of subject outcomes

Assignment feedback was quite general and I had trouble trying to understand why I lost or gained marked in certain sections

The feedback on assignments was below average and when asked for more I was advised that it couldn't happen.

The lack of constructive feedback to better my understanding of the learning outcomes

Under the category of **Resources**, the *textbook*, *poor quality of resources*, and *lectures* were the main feature cited as the worst aspects of a subject. The textbook was commonly listed as being of concern due to its perceived lack of relevance, cost, and difficulty reading. Comments relating to resource quality were associated with lecture recordings (poor audio, cutting out), and lecture slides. Lectures were the focus of complaint in terms of resources due to when they were delivered and student inability to attend live lectures, compounded lack of recordings being available. The way in which lectures were delivered was also commented on in terms of pace, lack of engagement, lack of lecture slide availability, and repeating the content of the text. Comments to illustrate each of these main points are included here as examples:

> *Ongoing weekly problems with lecture recordings - as a DE student these recordings are absolutely essential. We had lectures that weren't recorded, lectures that recorded but had such poor quality sound we couldn't hear them, and a lecturer who wasn't experienced in catering for a DE audience so drew pictures and pointed to things on slides we couldn't see. This was rectified after student complaints however when students attending the lecture live asked questions, DE students could never hear them but had to listen to the answers*

> *The chapters extracted to be the textbook were mostly useless. Detail was way outside the scope of the subject.*

> *The Learning Materials at times felt really clunky and poorly pieced. It would have been nice to have texts each week, then a test relating to them, before moving on*

> *Online content was poor with many broken links to resources, spelling errors and older resources with new research is available.*

Poor content delivery was the main feature cited in the category of **Teacher Presence** as one of the worst features of a subject. This was compounded by a lecturer's *lack of engagement* and responsiveness, and general *unhelpfulness*. For example:

> *Delivery of content was far below par. No regular live lectures or tutorials. No chance to interact with other students. We created our own Facebook group and ran our own tutorials. The most disappointing online study experience to date.*

> *Lectures were spoken information directly from power points provided earlier and made it hard to understand with not much explanation to back up the information.*

> *The subject coordinator [name removed]. She basically just dumped a whole pile of readings on our computer and expected us to do the work without any teaching*

Terrible teaching methods and a very rude and unapproachable teacher that I gave up asking anymore questions and to be honest, at the end of the day, all I wanted to do was to get a pass mark and stop the subject due to the teacher

The teacher did not interact with students almost at all times, except after constant email requests that she interact. Didn't reply or replied late to emails. Didn't answer questions in forum until long after questions were asked, if at all. Provided outdated and irrelevant resources. Returned assignments very late. Blamed "IT issues" for her organization or lack of communication. Did not explain tasks upon requests via email. Directed everything to [subject matter removed], disadvantaging other states. All round a horrific experience that I don't believe was worth any money that we paid.

This is the worst subject I have ever done at CSU. The lack of engagement with subject coordinator who really was no help with subject content or slow to respond on the forum

The lecturer also did not seem to be supportive and refused to answer questions or give guidance to students regarding the examination preparation. Overall this has been by far the worst subject that I have completed and I was very disappointed in it.

I felt the lecturer was not very supportive nor helpful in answering any questions in relation to assessments which was obviously important.

Teacher availability and response time. Took days for email responses, weeks for forum responses and when I asked for assistance or questions it took day for a response and all I got was she was busy helping those students who failed their assessments... not good enough. I pay just as much as they do, and deserve just as much help.

Overall subject design and delivery aspects were also commented on negatively and reflected a lack of subject structure and disorganised delivery. For example:

Needs a lot of improvement and communication between all lecturers, markers and academic staff.

Subject was contradictory - we were told in lecture notes and by the lecturer that we would not have to apply theories, however, half of an assessment piece was applying a theory

The subject is very hard to understand. It's too congested, I found it difficult to know the head from the tail. ….I almost drop out because of this subject

I felt the subject was poorly organised and not engaging. Way too much information on lecture slides and hardly any learning objectives. It was hard to know what we had to know. It was confusing and I'm glad I don't have to do that subject again.

I feel the delivery of the content was haphazard and overwhelming. There were often multiple emails daily which were unnecessary I feel this subject needs an overhaul in presentation and delivery. Especially the mixed and ever changing fonts and presentation in the learning material.

The subject was quite disorganised. Assignments were returned late, exam results were accidentally released to different students at different times, and I noted in the forum one student had her assignment feedback written in German and was understandably confused?!

In reviewing comments in more detail it is clear that there is significant overlap between the factors leading to student dissatisfaction – many of the features mentioned as relating to Resources also related to Teacher Presence and Subject Design and Delivery.

Staff

From an educational support perspective, the over reliance on PowerPoint slides, text and modules was a limiting factor to improve student engagement and site navigation.

Teaching staff commented that from their perspective, workloads are "insufficient to do the job properly" and that technical problems with interactive resources and the lack of after-hours support to help with these issues were the worst aspects of the subject.

Students

Comments relating to assessment and design of learning activities

Student comments relating to the design of learning activities or assessment tasks were predominantly positive with respect to the relevance, authenticity, and usefulness of tasks and assessment items. Students especially commented on having tasks which were interesting and which helped their learning and understanding. Regular quizzes, podcasts, feedback, and clarity of tasks were regularly commented on. The quotes illustrated below further show how good subject design, with consideration given to appropriate assessment schedules, relevance, and support, can positively impact student engagement and learning:

It was evident that a lot of thought has gone into creating the assignment material, as well as their timing.

I found the assessment tasks challenging and useful in evaluating my learning, as the feedback was very quick and allowed me to progress my learning.

I felt the online exam gave me a good indication of the design and level of difficulty of future assessments and I changed my study approach as a result.

Yes, the design of the assessment tasks was brilliant each assessment provided a different presentation format, research component and allowed me to engage more with the subject's texts and gain a better understanding.

I love Peerwise!!! Please use it in more subjects! Even as a 10% assignment! Soo useful for revision and study

I think interact 2 supplies quite a lot. Firstly you read your relevant chapters, then you answer questions supplied by the lecturer to consolidate what you read. Then you can listen to lectures or audio or watch videos to get a different view of what is being taught. I found the course organisation for BOTH my subjects to be pretty good.

Suggestions for improvement in this area related mostly to the weighting and design of assessment tasks, quality of recorded lectures, need for greater interaction, and the need to have less emphasis on exams. Some students reported that the organisation of content and the delivery structure was disorganised, lecture material was too text based, and students also suggested removing the group assignment for online subjects. The quotes provided below show the converse of the positive feedback, illustrating the negative impact poor assessment design and lack of task relevance can have on student engagement. For example:

The first parts of the assignment were clearly a mess. I also found other parts of the assignment difficult as I felt like the questions came from very specific resources and I had to read many resources many times to ensure I had found the correct answer, and even then it sometimes felt a bit like a crap shoot. I was terrified of the ESE. An entire subject assessed in a single exam? Yikes! It was eased a little by only concentrating on the study questions. In the end I found the exam not too difficult, though I still would prefer for a subject content to be divided across a MSE and ESE.

Please roll out the use of recordings of real lecturers and tutorials. Seeing staff deliver content and the back and forth between staff and students in a classroom setting will go a long way to making the content more engaging, accessible, and clear

Exam, would be better to have two large assessments that push students to use resources and apply learning rather than memorising journal entries to regurgitate in an exam, and subsequently forget about.

I think regular mini tests would be a good way to pace yourself and give regular feedback to gaining an insight into how you are going with the current topics. I would have found this more helpful than the 3 day lab.

More online formats that teach in a different way - podcasts that are engaging - more lively online videos, i found lots of them boring. Recorded lecturers would be helpful form the uni too - but needs to eb high quality video production.

There needs to be a series of tests/quizzes along the way to assist in learning and to monitor the student's understanding of bottlenecks and weaknesses in understanding this complex subject

This subject would be better offered without an end of session exam, but with 2 written assessments (45% each) & maybe online multiple choice questions at the end of each module which could be worth 10% Also including lectures podcasts

Comments relating to technologies and tools

In this section students commented more specifically on their use and perceptions of the technology and tools available to support their learning. The majority of comments were very positive, showcasing the usefulness of the available technology, availability of online resources, value of having tools to support interaction between students and with the lecturer, and also highlighted the benefits of online lectures and online meetings. Suggestions were also made however and faults were recognised with some of the tools, poor quality of recorded lectures, inability to access resources or subject sites on iPhone, and lack of ability to turn notifications on in the Discussion Board. Several comments were also made about the subject site being disorganised content not aligning with what was presented in lectures. For example:

Wonderful use of technology. Enhanced my learning.

The technology on I2 is very excellent as it allows distance students to connect with other students and ask questions.

The complete learning modules being posted early in the semester was very helpful for planning my time and fitting this in around my work.

Having access to adobe connect meetings for every assessment within this subject was fantastic, as it allowed a more 'face to face' questioning about the content, which did not feel as silly as asking dumb questions in emails to the lecturer.

And suggestions:

Would have liked to see online tutorials or workshops to discuss course materials. There was very limited use of discussion forums

Tools could have been used much more creatively to enhance the feeling of engagement and discussion within the subject

The interact website could be more user friendly. I find it hard to find what I am looking for on the university website, however it has improved since I started studying

Please update the CSU replay videos so they are recorded in a higher quality. If this is difficult to do so within a classroom environment, perhaps they need to be recorded out of class in a powerpoint presentation

Weren't able to view recordings on portable mobile devices. Missed most of this subjects online sessions due to placement and recordings are not supported by phone/tablets.

Students were given one final opportunity to provide feedback on the survey through the provision of an 'any other comments' question. Coding of responses to this item revealed that students had an overall positive experience with their subjects, mainly attributable to strong teacher presence which was engaging, helpful and supportive. Specific suggestions were made however with regard to improvements needed to workload, provision of feedback, and need for more interaction with other students and with the lecturer. There were also some negative experiences reported, mainly attributable to poor teacher presence, lack of responsiveness and engagement. Some example quotes here to illustrate positive experience and specific suggestions:

Brilliant subject & it was clear to me that all the teachers were encouraging & supported students to succeed

Thank you for a great subject, I thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt so much! Thanks for showing your love for genetics through your delivery. It makes it so much more enjoyable to learn from someone who loves what they do.

This has been my favourite subject since commencing in 2015 at CSU. I was engaged, encouraged and felt very accepted and an important member of the class/group.

Example suggestions:

Further development of a program that links each distance student to a specific mentor to improve understanding, quality of assignments and a sense of belonging to the learning community.

I often feel that lectures think online students are too lazy to go to class and therefore they don't present in the same way they would face-to-face. I would like more effort to go into teaching online students.

Although some students may dislike it, having a weekly topic to discuss on the discussion board helps build a learning community, share resources, have a conversation, and also to gain some feedback and input from lecturers. I have found this very helpful in other subjects.

3.3.10 Perceptions of engagement (survey and comparison with nSES – 5 items)

In addition to measuring the depth and breadth of engagement, the nSES Learner Engagement scale also measures student perceptions of their actual engagement with key stakeholders. The views of students in the Phase 1 OLM subjects are represented in Figure 3.3.10 in relation to this.
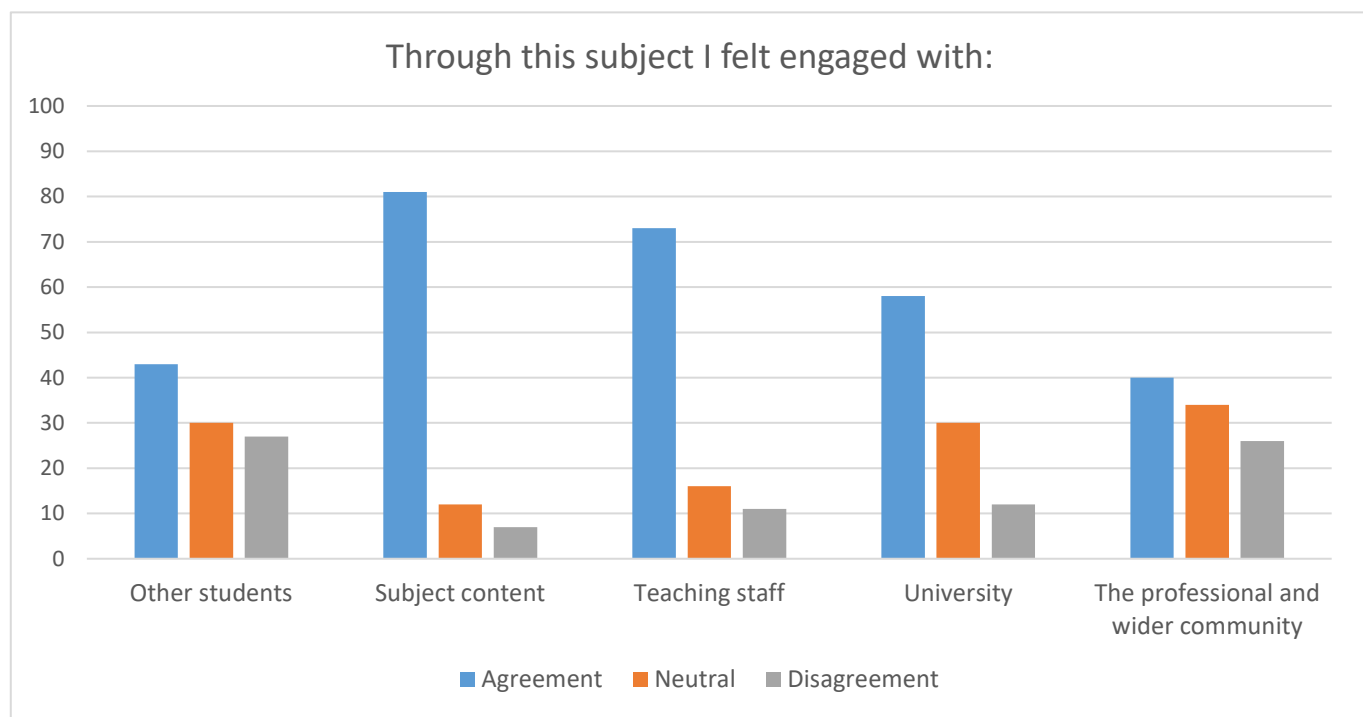

Figure 3.3.10: Student perceptions of engagement with key stakeholders (n = 1776)

As may be expected, the results in Figure 3.3.10 show that students felt most engaged with subject content, followed by teaching staff and the university. Engagement with peers was low, as was engagement with the professional and wider community. These results align with the results in Figure 3.3.9b, which show that students did not frequently interact with other students, the positive responses to teaching quality in section 3.3.7b and 3.3.7c, and the results in Figure 3.3.3 which showed that students had little experience of Interaction with the Professions.

3.4 Staff Perceptions of implementation

Most staff (76%) agreed that they felt very clear about the intention of the OLM (agree + strongly agree + very strongly agree). Although staff expressed clarity here, there were several comments which expressed some degree of antagonism about how the OLM was rolled out which perhaps wasn't unexpected given the previous comments on motivation where staff commented that implementation was mandated, they weren't consulted about it, and weren't given a choice in whether or not to participate. The comments also reflect that although staff are clear the purpose is to improve student engagement, they wanted more evidence about how the OLM will do this or why this is important to student learning outcomes. Some of the comments which reflect these points are as follows:

> *It was introduced at the opening of the subject. I was unaware of the project. It*
> *appeared to be about including more tech frills theoretically to improve student*

engagement. It did not address the limitations of our technology as I experience them

It was very much top down strategy and practice with a wrong attitude (attitude was that you as academic might have thirty year's of teaching experience at the tertiary level, you do not understand student engagement, but we do, so you should do what we tell you do do).

At the beginning of the implementation of the OLM, academics were presented with statistics in relation to other universities and student engagement. This information was presented in a way that implied that academics were not doing their job well. I felt that the rationale for the model would have been better presented in terms of enhancing quality teaching and working on what we already do well rather than the negative stance that was taken.

Some of the concepts are poorly defined. For example, what is student engagement? Further, is there evidence that it contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes?

I was not clear on what the overall OLM strategy was when applying it to my subject.   My only understanding was that we were allocated 30 units to make a bunch of online resources for the students.

Like most top down imposed strategies there was a fairly large gap between the OLM 'model' such that it is and the teaching of the subject. it is always interesting to me that 'teacher presence' is acknowledged as being highly important for teaching purposes, but not so for design purposes...strange, isn't it?

3.4.1 Experience of implementation

Aspects of the OLM implementation which staff found to be most valuable were the interactions with the Educational Designers, and professional development of skills associated with Adobe Connect, interactive resources, and improving the look and feel of the Interact site. For example:

The interactive learning resource to provide some variety for the students and help them engage. I could not have improved the subject so much without the help of the educational design team. They were brilliant

Definitely the work with [educational designer]. She was very helpful because she took the time to understand the particularities of the subject and did not try to force a one-size fits all model onto it. Instead, we implemented things that were

appropriate to the subject and that made a real difference to the student experience of it.

Hours allocated to subject development was the most valuable part of this whole process - with or without the added benefit of the skilled OLM'ers. It is highly appropriate that CSU is looking seriously at improving the online environment, because the online learning experience is much more challenging for learners. They are missing out on so much.

Education support staff held similar sentiments about the most valuable aspects of implementing the OLM, with connections with academic and QLT staff and the professional development opportunities being most frequently mentioned. For example:

Making connections with academics and starting them on their journey to improve their practice to engage students in learning

Professional learning opportunities, as this allowed both information giving/sharing, but also allowed academic staff to air concerns, ask for clarification on matters, or present their own concerns and learning design desires/intentions.

Working with the [faculty] team. I really learnt a great deal from my QLT lead, as well as the other members of my [faculty] team. I felt very supported in my role by my QLT lead, and I had a great working relationship with my team as a whole. A relationship that I know will continue beyond the OLM work.

The most challenging aspects of implementing the OLM were related to the lack of time, lack of availability of educational designers at certain time points, and sometimes there were issues of pedagogical differences between the academic and the educational design team. In terms of education design team, staff felt that there was a lack of availability compared with when EDs were school based, there was inconsistent support from the ED, lack of communication within the ED team, long delays in getting work done, and one person mentioned there was "*a bit of bullying by the educational designers to implement changes that were not entirely appropriate to the subject*". Pedagogical differences became apparent when some staff reported difficulties trying to encapsulate all OLM elements within proposed assessment tasks, superficial suggestions for improving the student experience, a feeling of "*introducing tech for tech sake during period of trying to get subjects up*", imposed processes with no consultation with the academic, and an unrealistic time allocation of 30 hours when one person commented they spent "*at least twice if not three times that amount of time on the project*". From the support team perspective, only 36% of support staff agreed that the time available to support the academic's implementation of the OLM was sufficient.

The issues experienced by the teaching staff may have been confounded by education support staff lack of time and competing demands. The challenges as expressed by some:

Time-frames. In retrospect, I think it would result in better outcomes if the planning phase was done 2 sessions prior to delivery and then the implementation of the plans carried out in the following session prior to delivery in the third. This is because I found it difficult to get the academics to engage with the planning early enough to get any significant work done other than cosmetic improvement.

> *The management of it all. There were a lot of different divisions represented in the team, all requiring us to track our work in different spreadsheets. The management of this became very time consuming. The processes for this will need to be streamlined in the future*

The QLT Leads expressed similar sentiments to the academic and support staff in their reflections on the Phase 1 implementation and delivery and on the role they played.

The QLT role was multi-faceted and holistic in nature and involved a high degree of organisation and planning in liaising with faculty management, the OLM team, academics, and educational designers "setting everything up to enable people to be able to do their work" (QLT 1) as well as evaluating implementation on the run to provide information to Heads of Schools to support their academics. A broader aspect of the role involved "communicating the vision of what we are trying to achieve", and during the implementation phase, a mentoring role "it's working with the ED's to be able to take them one step further, and to say "Have you thought about this", and "What about if we did it this kind of way?" …it's about just taking them one step further and asking those what if questions" (QLT 1).

There seemed to be three strategic purposes to the QLT Lead position in relation to the OLM: raising awareness, supporting implementation, and providing professional development. The professional development to both EDs and academics was perceived by the QLT Leads to be a core aspect of the role and depended upon creating supportive relationships with staff, and in some cases empowering staff to try new things – almost like a teaching coach.

QLTs were supported by heads of school and leadership within uImagine, but more frequently felt that they supported one another in their joint endeavours:

> *We met weekly, sometimes more fortnightly, and we used to play around with issues, we used to talk about issues that were common across all three of us and that, I think that was useful. And we developed strategies to get around some of those common issues as well, and share different strategies that each of us were using. Then if you look at, in terms of resolving issues, the heads of schools were useful in that, that's a different kind of leadership support…They were supports we used to, whenever we did things, professional development or newsletters, whatever, we'd share them with each other, and so we reused some of the stuff so that we weren't always working in three different silos, so where it was relevant we used to carry that across* (QLT 1)

> *I don't think it was acknowledge that we had built a really strong working relationship and that – it wasn't just the relationship that we were able to model, possibly best practise in terms of how you can work in an online space in a managerial capacity and manage projects as well* (QLT 2)

> *I've had support from the other online leads. I've had support within the faculty to various degrees…now being more nestled into UImagine of course, this whole UImagine team is good support (QLT 3)*

QLT leads enjoyed working with educational designers, enjoyed mentoring staff with respect to the OLM, and also enjoyed working on subject design themselves and having the opportunity to innovate:

> *I really enjoy that creative side of it, I really enjoyed playing around with different ideas. I love it when an academic will text me at night and say that they are so excited about*

some of the stuff that we're doing, and they just couldn't stop and wait till tomorrow (QLT 1)

…the opportunity to go into doing something different in terms of potentially influencing innovation and online learning (QLT 2)

I think one of the key things in my role is really to have that whole faculty perspective… I like designing and delivering professional development so that was part of the brief to improve pedagogy, improve understanding about technologies… I like the idea of working for an innovation unit. That sort of meets my needs because I, I do things that, outside of CSU that are innovative and pushing envelopes (QLT 3)

I think I had, I had a pretty good relationship with the ED's, I feel like I did and we, we built some professional development together (QLT 3)

Engagement of QLT leads with school leadership varied from school to school, with some meeting more frequently with the QLT leads than others. Buy in and a trusting relationship with the heads of school was critical to engaging academic staff with the implementation, and in some instances, it was only after head of school involvement that some academics became more amenable to implementing the OLM elements. Relationships and engagement with leadership depended upon the individuals involved however – some leaders were keener to be involved than others who felt more comfortable in facilitating the initial engagement between QLT and academics and then letting it happen. For example:

> *I had 2 key school – schools only that I was working with and one of those I worked with on and off communication wise quite a bit and the other I would have had 2 emails in my life with I think … he actually allows the staff to take the decision making processes. So you could work with a staff member and then just let him know and he'd say yeah that's fine, terrific, I'll fund that, I'll help you with that. It made complete sense so you didn't have to do this, go to the leadership and then say can we do that and then go back to the academic and do that (QLT 2)*

The trust building aspects of the role were critical to the success of the implementation, but sometimes took up a significant portion of the workload allocated to both the QLT leads and the EDs on the team. The time taken for building rapport and engaging relevant stakeholders needs to be accounted for in any future planning and should not be underestimated. For example:

> *…a lot of the things that you'll see in the subjects probably look less, but then what's actually happened in the relationship and they're willingness to do things, and the willingness to take on the next step it's actually what's important, but it's invisible and no one sees that … in the first session we had 30 hours for an academic and something like 16 hours for an ED. And to do fairly, make significant changes when you're developing relationships at the same time, that's not very much. And so that was quite challenging (QLT 1)*

> *…people are doing all that sort of finding – to find you where the challenge – what the level of trust is because it's about building up levels of trust… And whether or not the person's judging me and all that kind of stuff. So it's a very slow process (QLT 2)*

The flip side of this relationship building however, is that once academics get excited and want to be more involved and contribute to try out new things, the ED they have been previously associated with may have been moved on to another role and the academic then needs to submit a service request and have the job completed by someone they are unfamiliar with:

> *I had some good EDs. I was very lucky to have [name] consistently which makes a difference although she went down to 0.4 I think, the juggling and moving ED's is problematic. We were lucky to have [name] second time around because he was familiar with the faculty* (QLT 2)

The challenges of the role varied between the QLT leads from lack of discipline level knowledge to lack of planning and implementing the OLM within subject rather than course structures. Some schools had greater levels of staff changes and disorganisation than others which also negatively impacted on the OLM implementation. Lack of staff buy in and point blank refusals to engage with the OLM implementation also proved challenging to the QLT leads in each faculty. There was also an overarching challenge recognised by the QLT leads - the model cannot be applied the same way in every school or discipline. The lack of quality assurance in subject delivery was also recognised as a challenge, with some academics still developing content for later weeks of the session whilst also teaching. The lack of planning here negatively impacted on the academic's engagement with the QLT lead and also the potential to implement some of the targeted strategies. For example:

> *…someone has to be ultimately responsible for that group of subjects. All first year subjects who's going to look at those before the students actually get in there, or the day the students get in there are you going, who's going to go in and just check that everything's okay? Now that could be a position of responsibility within the school or something like that* (QLT 3)

Future iterations would benefit from greater planning time, a course level focus, and a dedicated team to work together on implementation, linking up with the Smart Learning process where suitable.

> *…the overall design and the outcomes and where things fit together, rather than working on the subject basis. But also, the course team are also aware of the online possibilities and course wide possibilities as well right from the start, and so that's really important* (QLT 1)

> *…the number of people even in the faculty of […] who have approached and said yes but we did X, Y, Z 3 years ago and we didn't get any ongoing support to maintain that this is the same problem we've got with OLM. That where you've got pockets of innovation or you've got a strategy like OLM, it's not – never sustained or sustainable because we don't have the structures in place and so a lot of the good work has been done and lost and a lot of people have got… this is part of the problem with … staff. They lose faith. They've got all the goodwill in the world and got some great staff but they lose faith and they lose energy* (QLT 2)

The communication of QLT and ED work was also a challenge with expectations and feedback not fully informing the implementation. For example:

> *We've had instances where – particularly in this last session where certain manager decided that the work was too hard, took too long, it wasn't completed we were told. So 2 modules were completed, 4 or 5 were never touched. We*

> *weren't advised that sort of stuff. So we're not part of those – that sort of work flow management process and certainly if there was an issue with timing and so on, then you can make adjustments if you knew* (QLT 2)

A more strategic implementation would need greater levels of communication and the ability for all key stakeholders to interface together as a team:

> *EDs are banging their heads on the wall. They're so frustrated by the fact that they've got no way of interfacing with the ESCs on this stuff…. There was no interface so you don't have an interface between – you've got the OLM happening here, you've got course review with Smart learning there and you've got QLT initiatives here and yet really it's all about changing education practice. If it was dove tailed you could have some chance of changing the base line. (QLT 2)*

The mentoring and professional development of EDs is also critical to the success of at scale implementation of OLM and other innovations in online learning in the future.

QLT leads felt the OLM implementation to date had some great successes but also that it's potential has not yet been fully realised:

> *I think it's a start. I think it's, that it's not perfect, it's been to a great extent a band aid approach but it's started to ruffle feathers and I think that's great. When you start to be a disruptive influence it's a good thing in the end- … if we can get people looking at their own practice and saying well yeah I've always wanted to do that or I really want to do that, oh now you've shown me how I could do that.* (QLT 3)

Communication, trust building, course design processes, and workflow seem to be the common themes arising from the QLT reflections which may need further consideration in moving forward and informing future OLM implementation.

In addition to their reflections on implementation, the QLT leads identified some specific achievements which facilitated successful implementation and should also be considered in future OLM design and delivery:

- Development of an enhanced faculty template for improved visual design of modules, including exemplars
- Smart Sparrow lessons, case study videos, teaching tutorials, adaptive release of modules, interactive content
- Discipline team collaboration
- Practice examples and technology guides
- Development of a workplace learning Challenge Bank and plans to incorporate this in multiple subjects in the Faculty of BJBS

Overarching challenges related to time constraints, staffing changes and academic availability, instability within the ED team, competing demands, and the need for building staff technological capacity.

3.4.2 Staff perception of impact

In the survey, staff were asked to comment on their agreement with statements about the implementation process and experience of delivery, the results are illustrated in Figure 3.4.2. The results presented in Figure 3.4.2 are contrasted with teaching staff responses to the same items in the pilot where n = 10.
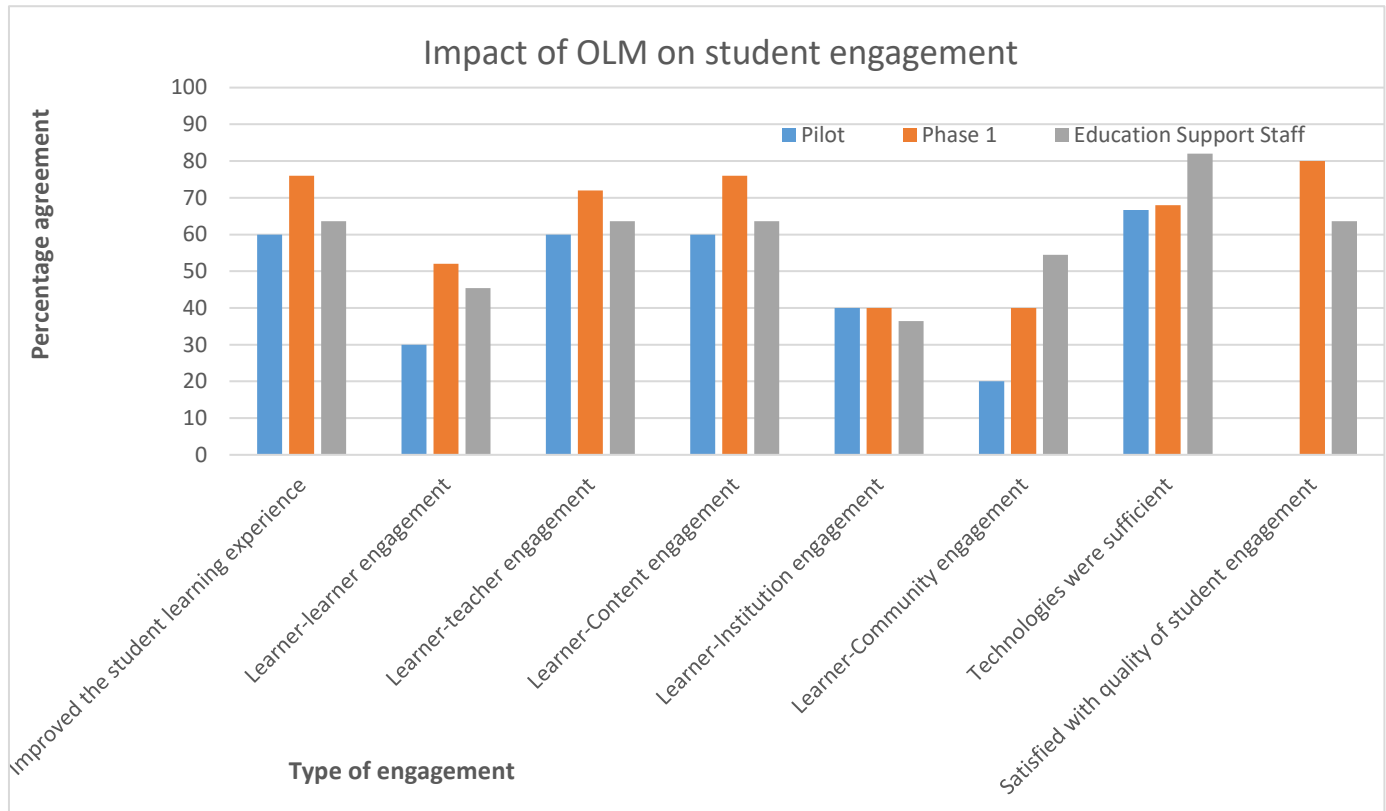

Figure 3.4.2: Teaching and education support staff agreement with statements about how changes made to the subject as part of the OLM improved various aspects of student engagement (Phase 1 n = 25; Pilot n = 11)

Despite some of the challenges and doubts mentioned in staff comments earlier, the process of engaging with and implementing the OLM seemed to positively impact the degree of staff perceptions of learner engagement which were moderately high throughout Phase 1, but especially for Learner-Content and Learner-Teacher engagement, satisfaction with the overall quality of student engagement, and impact of the OLM implementation on the student learning experience. Learner-Institution and Learner-Community engagement had the lowest levels of agreement by teaching staff and may have been difficult for staff to judge. Compared with the pilot in 2016, improvements in staff perceptions of student engagement can be seen in most of the elements, but especially for the Learner-Learner and Learner-Community elements of the model. Education support staff had lower levels of agreement than teaching staff on most indictors in Figure 3.4.2 and possibly were not well positioned to rate their agreement. Several education support staff for example commented that it was hard to evaluate at the current point in time because the subject and work was not yet completed or there had been insufficient time to evaluate the success in these terms.

Teaching staff also commented here to further explain and provide context for their responses. For example, two staff commented that they would have provided more useful information here if this survey had been administered after receiving the results of the student subject evaluation. One staff

member also commented that the OLM changes were introduced concurrently with content changes and so it is difficult to know what to attribute increased student engagement to. Other comments concentrated on the challenges of trialling various strategies only to have students drop out at the time in which the interactive task was introduced, or have very few students uptake the new technology.

Some useful suggestions were also made here:

> …..An easy way to upload lectures would be useful and significantly more accessible assistance with adobe meeting rooms. A single forum for multiple offerings of the same subject would also help then all academics involved could share the load and offer more

> ….A suggestion made by the educational consultant post-delivery is that there needs to be some consistent resources developed for students working in groups that are available for all cohorts at CSU.   I think that this is a good idea.

> The OLM should be started now for the next session so the subjects could have a complete re-format with consistency throughout.

> Still needs work, there was not enough time or support to do it well

Strategies reported to be most successful in improving student engagement in the subject by both teaching and education support staff included:

- Interactive resources such as video introductions, adobe connect sessions, and online tests
- Authentic practice through the use of real life case studies
- Site aesthetics – ease of navigation, presence of multi-modal resources to reduce cognitive load, reformatting discussion boards so that students could more easily interact with peers and staff
- Teamwork and breaking cohort down into smaller groups, and
- Actual interaction and engagement with others which was structured, well planned, and well timed. Interactive resources was the most commonly mentioned strategy

The barriers encountered to the effective implementation of elements included:

- Attitudes - student resistance to interaction, and
- Struggles with technology – new technology that didn't function as intended, lack of experience with technologies such as Online Meetings
- Lack of time to trial and test new strategies
- Lack of continuity in staff support and faculty/school organisation around staffing commitments

In a separate survey item, staff were asked for their agreement as to whether or not elements of the model focused on in their subject will help to improve the student learning experience across CSU in the future, and 73% indicated their agreement, suggesting some confidence in the OLM.

3.4.3 Perceptions of the technology, learning resources, and sustainability

75% of teaching staff and 60% of education support staff agreed that the technologies available were sufficient to support student learning in the subject. Teaching staff commented that better microphone set up and cameras are required in teaching rooms to engage DE students that log in live to the lectures. Other comments indicated that the main challenges involved with technology is

getting students to become familiar with the tools and have access to sufficient training and support to do so. Comments from education support staff provide a higher degree of insight of quotes have been included here to illustrate key points:

> *There is a large variation in comfort levels of academics with using technology. The OLM project has been encouraging the use of tech tools, however I have seen some examples of where I think it is used in a gimmicky way and doesn't enhance the design of the subject*

> *We are still building up institutional expertise in the use of specialist technologies and processes used for the Flexible & Adaptive Learning element. The OLM Project allowed much needed opportunity to test and try strategies but the immaturity of technology implementation hampered a fuller use of FAL strategies within subject design.*

> *I am concerned who will support academics with the new technology and monitor any changes to license and privacy*

Experimental technologies used were Screencast-o-matic to scaffold student preparation for their assessment tasks, Flipgrid for student introductions and interaction, Interview Stream, and Late Nite Labs.

Suggested improvements to CSU technology were as follows:

- More user friendly student discussion boards – accessible on mobile devices
- Single sites for multiple cohorts on the same subject
- A different interview simulation platform
- A CSU ED who is a professional in media production
- Improved capability of Test Centre in Blackboard to do formative assessment for short answers (needs to be capable of showing a modelled response)
- More IT support for staff and students

Part of evaluating the technology and resources involves developing an understanding of perceptions of sustainability. The information in Figure 3.4.3a shows a comparison of how effective and sustainable staff think the OLM changes are.
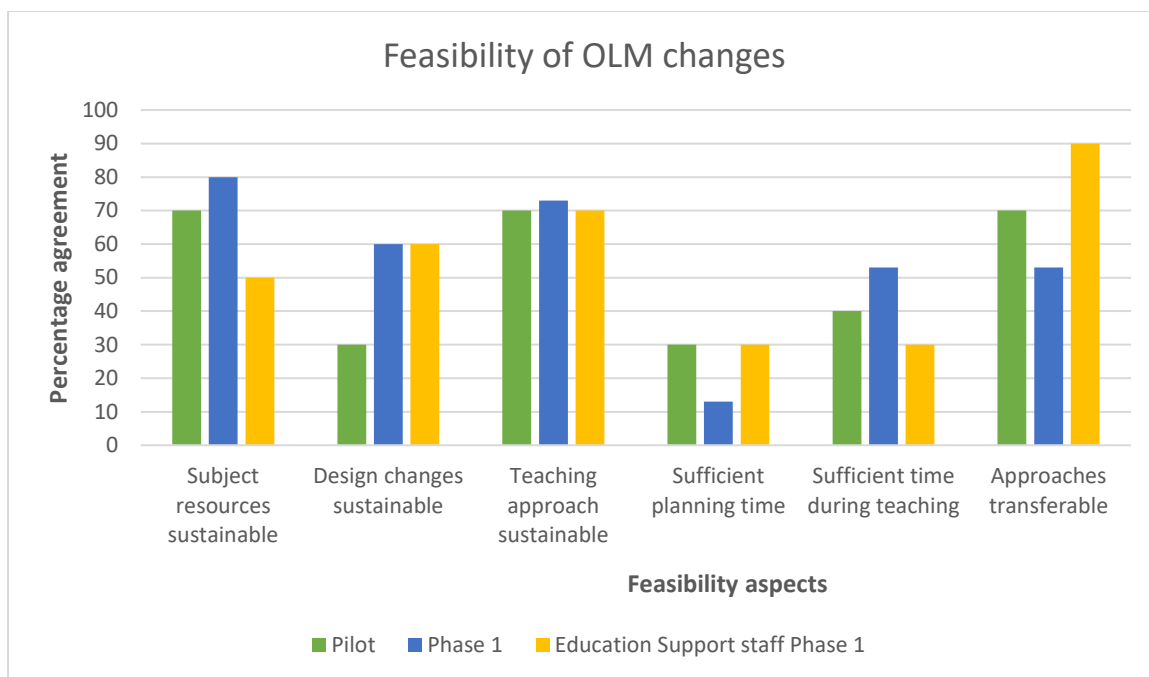
Figure 3.4.3a: Comparison of perceived feasibility of OLM changes to subject between the pilot (n = 10) and Phase 1 (n = 15) staff and education support staff (n =10)

The response of staff to questions of sustainability of the OLM initiatives indicate that staff feel mostly confident that subject resources and teaching approaches are sustainable, although education support staff are less agreeable about the sustainability of subject resources. Sufficient planning time was clearly an issue in Phase 1 compared with the pilot, possibly due to the greater allocation of hours in the pilot, although design changes were viewed to be more sustainable in Phase 1 compared with the pilot. Fewer teaching staff also thought that the approaches used in their OLM subject would be effective across a range of disciplines (transferability) (53%) compared with 70% in the pilot and compared with 90% of education support staff.

Part of ensuring the sustainability of these initiatives involves a strong support base for continual development and maintenance. In Phase 1, this support base included educational designers, the Learning Resources Unit, and the QLT (online) leaders. Staff responses to these items are represented in Figure 3.4.3b.
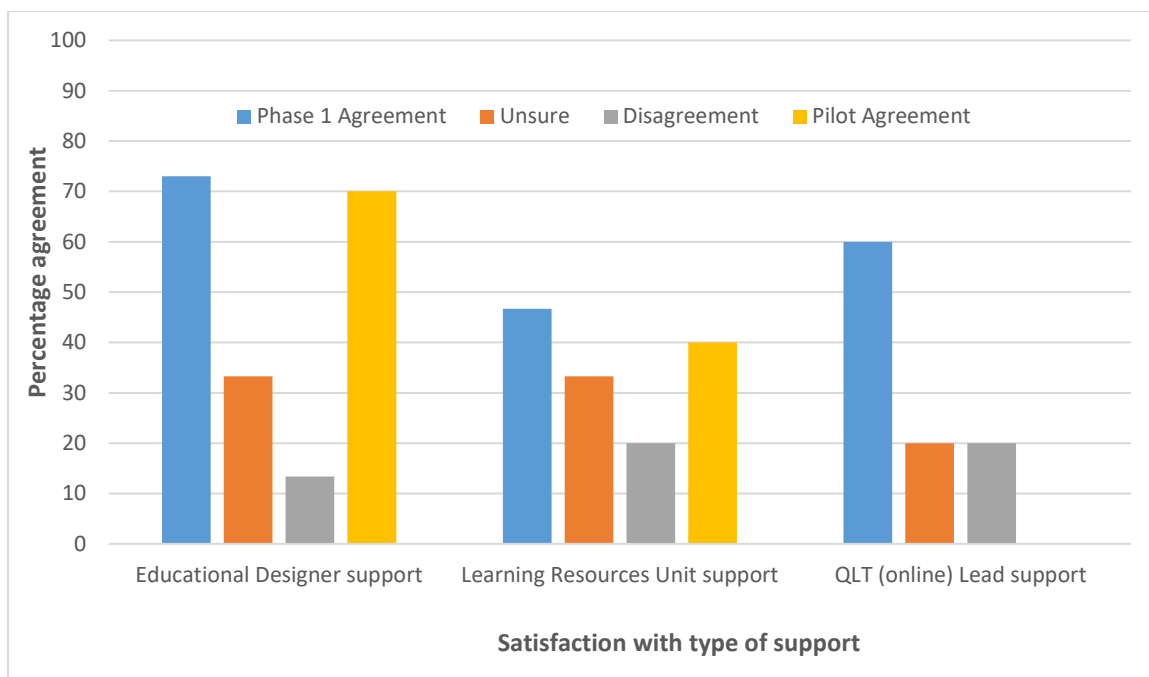
Figure 3.4.3b: Teaching staff satisfaction with the way support was provided (Phase 1 n = 15, Pilot n = 10)

As illustrated in Figure 3.4.3b, teaching staff were satisfied with the support provided by educational designers and the QLT leads but less satisfied with supported provided by the LRU, although the Phase 1 results did show some improvement from the pilot in this regard. In concert with this view, the education support staff also held favourable opinions of teaching staff engagement with the OLM objectives, receptivity and focus towards working on the OLM, and believed that the OLM would positively impact on the academic beyond the subjects they were involved with.

The primary strategy used by education support staff to encourage academics included showing them examples of how different strategies could be used. This was supported by regular emails and phone calls, adopting a listening approach and starting with where they felt most comfortable.

3.4.4 Successes

Establishing trust between teams and academics, regular communication and meetings between teams, and the appropriate allocation of workload to academics are deemed as critical support factors for the success of the OLM by education support staff.

Although some teaching staff commented that it is too early to comment on this, others suggested that the support received by EDs and the QLT leads was crucial, and others commented more specifically on the introduction of a video and use of the adobe connect meeting room.

3.4.5 Challenges

Some teaching staff felt that it was too early to tell what has been successful or not, with one staff indicating a preference to focus on more scholarly content of subjects and less on interactive resources. There was also a staff member who commented on the challenges of trying to accommodate the changes made in the subject with the TOL aims for flexibility in assessment and session length, which was thought to "*contribute to student isolation as we find that students who fall behind will not interact online because others will see they are behind. Adding flexibility to the assessment and session length will make this worse, not better. Plus you'd never manage the res schools and students won't be properly prepared*".

Education support staff were most challenged by trying to align their own workload with that of the academics they were working with and finding a lack of support to get some of the work done in time. There were also constant changes needing to be made, and continual adjustments due to changing academic staff. For example:

> *Sometimes the time frame they have to complete work is different to the one that is needed. Sometimes the gap is also large between the work the academic is doing and the OLM*

> *Most challenging was finding mutually convenient meeting times, amidst their busy teaching and marking schedules. Some were also on leave at important development points.*

> *Probably most important were the difficulties some academics had to allocating time and focus on the agreed developments because of their other CSU commitments, esp. marking and preparation of MSIs*

One further challenge to the Phase 1 implementation of the OLM was the concurrent introduction of the Transform Online project and lack of complete understanding of time and pedagogical implications:

> *I think the specific goals of the OLM scale up were clear but the future beyond that time and how it would be sustainable was unclear and it became discouraging when TOL was introduced before we really had time to take in what OLM had achieved*

3.4.6   Improvements needed

When staff were asked to comment on their capacity to implement the OLM in future and what their professional development needs might be, most commented that direct support at the time of teaching was required, especially for Adobe Connect meeting rooms. More support was also indicated from EDs, and greater engagement between OLM staff and academics was requested. Some staff also lamented the loss of administrative support especially at the start of session. Although staff suggested that time is limited for professional development and they can only commit to things which are crucial, specific PD opportunities were noted for the following areas:

- Setting and supporting e-group work
- How to create online videos; tips and tricks on editing

Examples of staff needs are as follows:

> *I think this will depend on what staff are seeking to pursue but I think they certainly need greater awareness of what's available. The CSU Learning Exchange was supposed to do this but last time I checked resources were limited and not many colleagues know about it.*

> *More support from educational designers, greater availability of educational designers. Current booking system takes too long, responses are poor*

> *There is no professional development required here. It's more just a matter of discussing the content and assessments to ensure that they align themselves to the requirements of the OLM.*

> *What is really needed is for the Educational designers to listen to staff when we tell them about things we have already tried and be prepared for different subjects to have different requirements*

> *More face to face engagement would be ideal with the OLM team and the designers*

> *I still am really unsure about the whole premise of this model so I would be cautious about the allocation of further resources before it is thoroughly evaluated.*

More specific improvements needed include creating more streamlined marking systems such as having marking criteria within the assessment linked to gradebook – an inbuilt feature of Norfolk; connections with ED staff who are specialised in discipline areas, continue to have online assessment tasks with real deadlines.

Education support staff commented on the need to ensure that subject design and development begins at the course design stage and that exemplars of work done be posted on the Learning exchange and the Learning Exchange be promoted. It was also noted that teaching staff should be included in resource development from the beginning and have the appropriate training in the relevant technology required. For example:

> *Subject design and development needs to begin at the course design stage. One of the often-encountered issues was the mismatch between assessment tasks and learning outcomes. Therefore there was more of a surface-level change to subjects that focussed on improving student engagement but not really on ensuring that 'engagement' issued in better understandings and performance.*

> *More individual work with academics on how they can restructure their online meeting to make them more interactive, including use of new technologies such as poll anywhere.*

> *I think the Xchange will be important to highlight worked models of subjects that were a part of the OLM. I think people want to see examples of what worked, how to implement, expected outcomes etc. It gives staff who are suggesting changes to subjects, some data and supporting evidence*

In reading through the various staff comments on different areas there appears to be an earnest tension between the pedagogical requirements of adult education – creating self-directed learners, providing a high quality learning experience in terms of content, getting students to engage deeply with content and with each other, and the need to maintain our online learning edge by offering flexibility in enrolment and assessment. The assessment flexibility seems to be a key sticking point with teaching staff who have put a lot of time and thought into assessment designs and timing the assessments appropriately to meet learner needs and prepare them for engagement with forthcoming sections of the subject. There is a real anxiety that staff experience in this area is being disregarded in order to superficially engage students in the short term.

Further improvements are needed with respect to communication from senior leadership in schools and faculties as well. Some staff were not clear about the intentions of the OLM, as evidenced also in the following comments by education support staff:

I had experiences that indicated that even senior academics in schools had a variety of perspectives on what it is about and how it should progress and how committed they were to it.

Although I knew what the OLM project was - when I joined the faculty team there was no introduction or induction on the OLM project and what the team was trying to achieve

4. Recommendations

4.1 In relation to the OLM (refinements)

After the pilot implementation of the OLM it was recognised that there were significant interdependencies between the seven elements and elements were implemented in a more integrated manner. A significant breadth and depth of data has been gathered from both staff and students utilising mixed methodology and there was no lack of clarity expressed in relation any of the elements. The evaluation data suggests that the model is at an appropriate level of refinement to meet staff and student needs and now the focus needs to be on increasing familiarity with the elements and promoting the Learning Exchange where there are examples of the implementation of the OLM.

4.2 In relation to *implementation* of the OLM

Staff views indicate a consensus on the need for more planning time prior to implementing the OLM in subjects. QLT Leads in particular recognised the missed opportunity of the consideration of cross-course, multi-subject design strategies due to time constraints and lack of resourcing. A longer lead time before commencing development work to enable deeper planning and engagement for all staff is recognised.

More support, coaching and mentoring of staff who are new to teaching online is needed, with appropriate workload allocations made to all parties involved. This support may be facilitated through the design and production of a short handbook for online learning and teaching at CSU, with a focus on detailing specific strategies trialled with success in the OLM pilots and Phase 1 in order to meet specific standards required to maintain best practice in online learning and teaching. The CSU Learning Exchange is working in some ways towards this but needs better promotion of its value.

From the student perspective, they value the Teacher Presence and Interactive Resources but would like better quality lecture recordings, greater accessibility of resources on mobile devices, and more emphasis on Interaction with the Professions.

4.3 In relation to the broader student experience

As illustrated throughout this report students value Teacher Presence and feel engaged when they have responsive teachers, and when they can see and talk to their lecturers. Feedback on performance is always sought and having interactive quizzes and e-Assessments is seen in a positive light by students. The momentum of the OLM should continue to be supported in these aspects, and built on in other areas, to further foster student engagement with subject content, with the lecturer, and with peers.

4.4 In relation to the broader staff experience (emergent and in addition to the specific model)

As indicated by the results in Figure 3.4.3a, over 70% of staff feel that the teaching approach implemented is sustainable, and 60% agreed that the design approach was sustainable. This suggests that staff may be willing to continue the OLM implementation and further investigation is needed to develop the appropriate support strategies to increase the number of staff agreeing with the

sustainability of the design and teaching approaches. Having dedicated educational designers and 'just in time' support may be one way to facilitate this

4.5 In relation to future implementation and evaluation

As suggested by the QLT Online Leads in section 3.4.1, and also Appendix 2, future work needs to build on the achievements here by disseminating a series of exemplar strategies at varying levels of granularity and promoting this across Faculties as part of a broader focus on learner-centred design. Consideration might also be given to the grouping of academics into 'subject families' or team to enable collaborative subject design and implementation in digital environments. This idea of 'subject families' can enhance design change sustainability and ultimately design quality, as well as minimise the impact of staff changes.

Ongoing evaluation, albeit more focused, is needed to more fully understand the feasibility and impact of the OLM implemented iteratively in subjects. A more refined evaluation process focused on specific outcomes and impacts will help to solidify our understanding of the successes and challenges of the model in this respect.

5. Conclusion

After a 12 month period of piloting and upscaling of the OLM in 116 subjects we have learned some considerable lessons about early consultation with staff, longer planning times needed, gaps in knowledge and skill in relation to online learning pedagogy and practice, and the potential to have a sustained impact on student engagement, learning and satisfaction. There were many positive elements arising from the OLM Phase 1 implementation, including staff collegiality across teams, new understandings generated about particular resources being trialled, student appreciation of Teacher Presence, and a greater understanding of the online learning environment. These findings have positively impacted on the TOL pilot with lessons learned about early consultation, greater planning time and workload allocations to support the introduction of new technology and innovative design practices. The findings here will further inform the development of professional practice and staff support for ongoing implementation of the OLM.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of subjects against courses involved in implementing Phase 1 of the OLM

Appendix 2: Faculty summary

Appendix 3: Teaching Staff Surveys

For 201690, 201715, and 201730

For 201760

Appendix 4: Support Staff Surveys

Staff survey for Education Designers

Staff survey for Education Support Coordinators and Media Technologists

Appendix 5: Student Surveys

Appendix 6: Staff interview scripts

Appendix 7: Student interview scripts