

L. Higgins (2006). FDTL 5 project: Towards Learning Creatively. Assessment Audit 2004/05 Report. Southampton Solent University.

Introduction

One of the FDTL5 project's aims was to conduct a base-line survey of assessment practice. The audit questionnaire, based on work by Brown (2001) and the LTSN Bioscience (2005), was piloted by the project partners in April-May 2005, and the audit was carried out between June 2005 and May 2006. A purposeful sampling method was used. Partners selected two undergraduate courses at their universities that were thought to be attractive to dyslexic students. All of the core modules or units were audited plus as many of the option modules/units as could be arranged. The main sources of information were the module/unit specification and annual unit reports.

Rationale

An audit can be an effective way of initiating a discussion about, and the development of, an issue. In this case the issue was how much of unit summative assessment relied on written, partly or non written output by students. Moreover, whether there were any relationships between the type of assessment and the type of course, module/unit and students studying it.

An audit may also serve broader purposes. It may raise awareness of assessment practices on specific courses and at universities generally. It may reveal or clarify links between the assessment practices and the learning, teaching and assessment strategies. It may be a useful way to engage with a wider constituency within an academic community. Finally, an audit may facilitate a dialogue and development between teaching units (LTSN Bioscience, 2005).

Methodology

A quantitative method was adopted for this survey, based on the work of Brown (2001) and the LTSN Bioscience (2005). It was piloted by the project partners in April-May 2005, and the audit was carried out between June 2005 and May 2006. A purposeful sampling method was used. Partners selected two undergraduate courses at their universities that had traditionally attracted dyslexic students. Six courses have been sampled. Bournemouth University (BU): BA Sports Development and BA Sports Management. Oxford Brookes University (OBU): BA International Tourism Management and BA Tourism Management. Southampton Solent University (SSU): BA Outdoor Adventure Management and BA Sports Studies with business. All of the core modules/units were audited plus as many of the option modules/units as could be arranged.

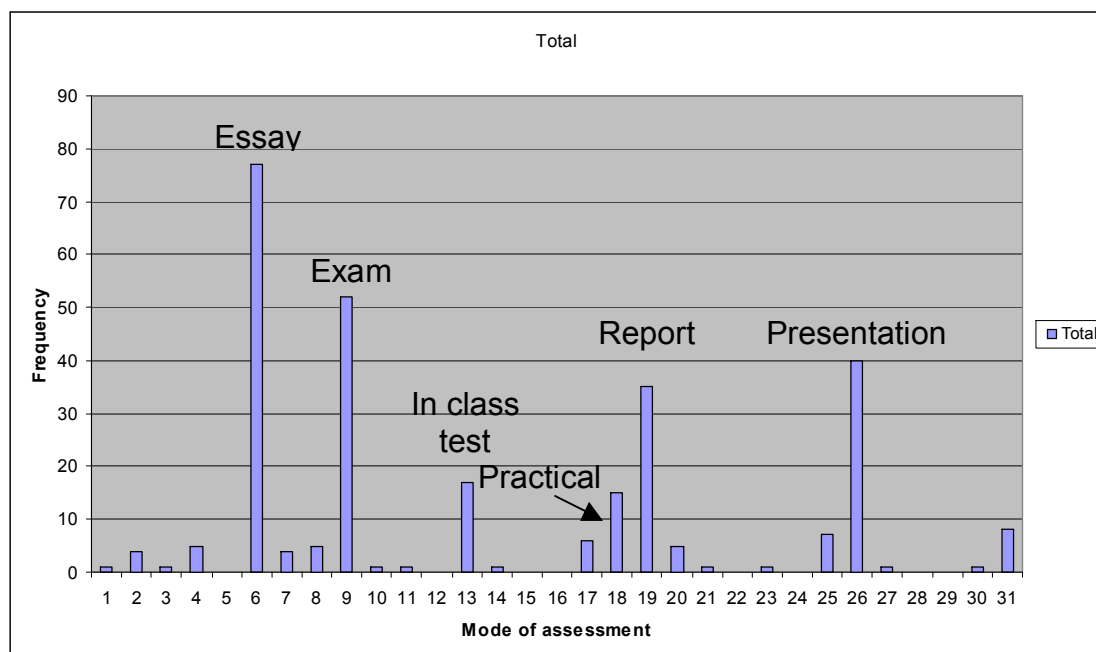
Results and analysis

The analysis was carried out using both descriptive and inferential statistics (see the Appendices for more details of the descriptive statistics). The assessments, and whether they were wholly, partly or non written, were subjected to measures of difference such as ANOVA, so that any changes in assessment could be measured over the course of the three year project.

The sample, taken from three universities, consisted of six undergraduate courses, 139 modules/units and 289 assessments. There were 31 types of assessment (Brown, 2001) listed in the survey. The most common types of assessment (see Fig i) were: an essay; an unseen exam; a student led seminar presentation; a report; and in-class tests. These results seem to support those of the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) National Survey of Assessment Practice in Hospitality, Sport and Tourism (HEA, 2005).

The HEA survey sampled 49 HE and FE colleges. The same types of assessment were identified as most commonly used, but in a slightly different order: reports; essays; exams; presentations. It should be noted that the methodology was different. The HEA survey was conducted by telephone with mostly Course Leaders. However, one could conclude that in both surveys, the most common assessments types were in writing, with just one not solely written – student presentations.

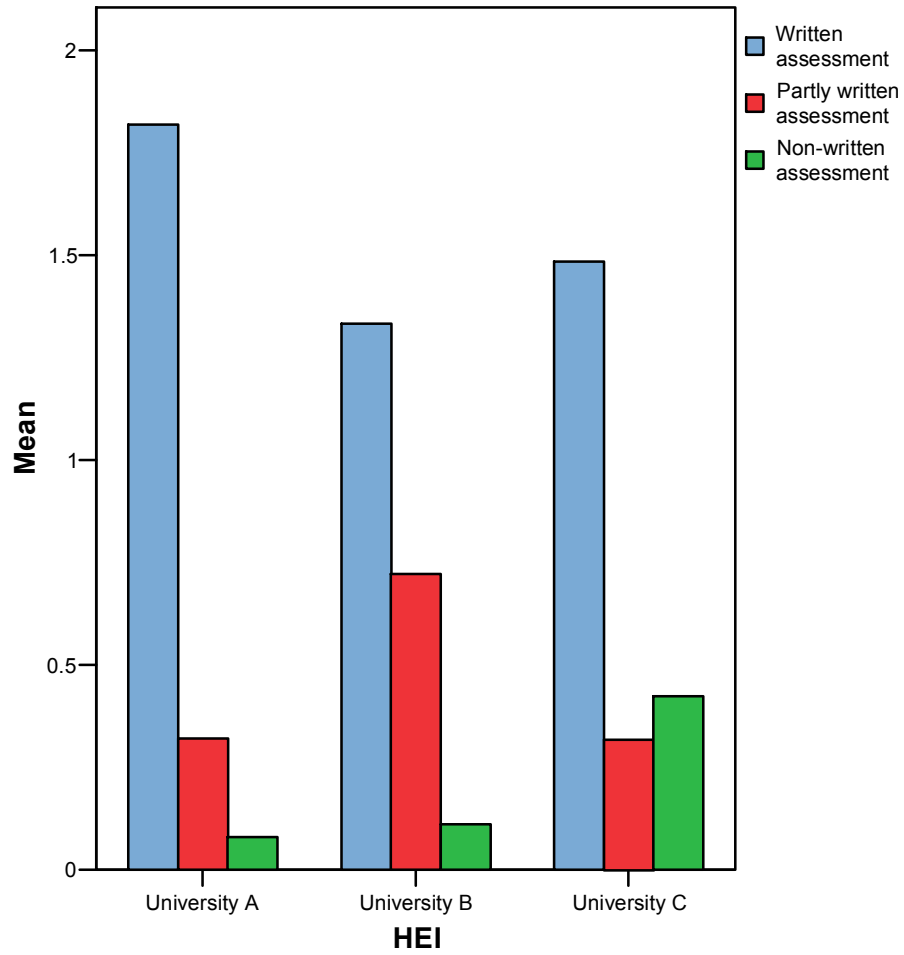
Fig i. Frequency of different modes of assessment



The data was examined to find whether there were any significant differences between various independent variables and whether the assessment was in writing, partly or non written. No significant differences were found for: the level of module/unit; whether core or option module/unit; the CATS value; and the number of dyslexic students on the unit.

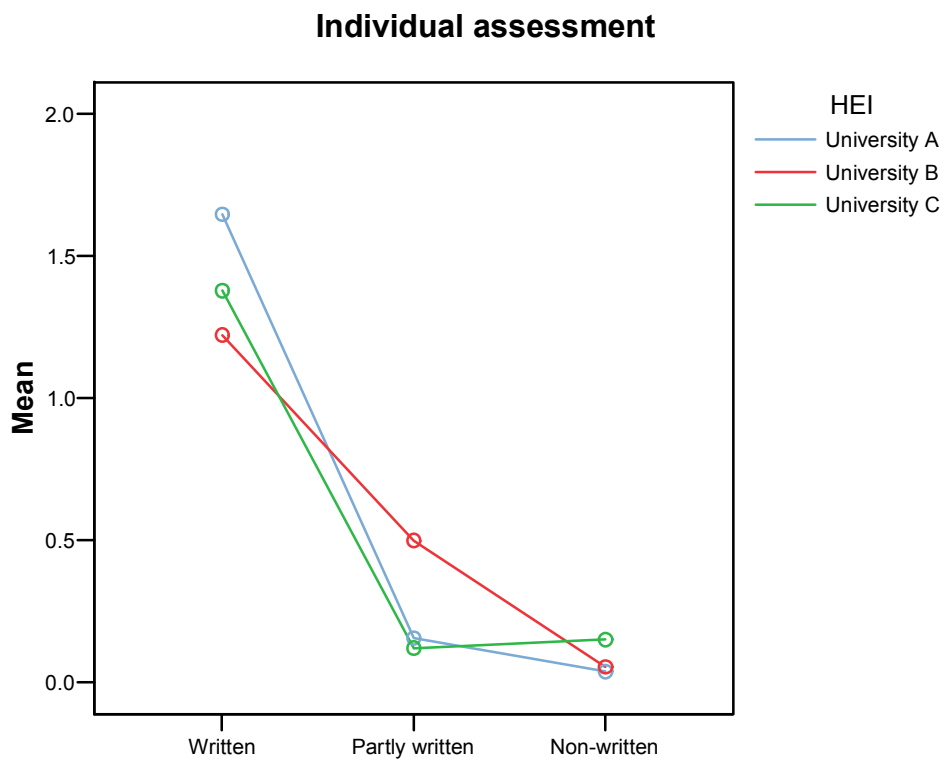
There was a significant effect of the university on the number of written assessments used ($p = .030$) (see Figure ii). With non written assessments, SSU used significantly more than BU and OBU ($p = .000$).

Fig ii. Whether assessments were written, partly written or non written by university. (A = Bournemouth; B = Oxford Brookes; C = Southampton Solent).



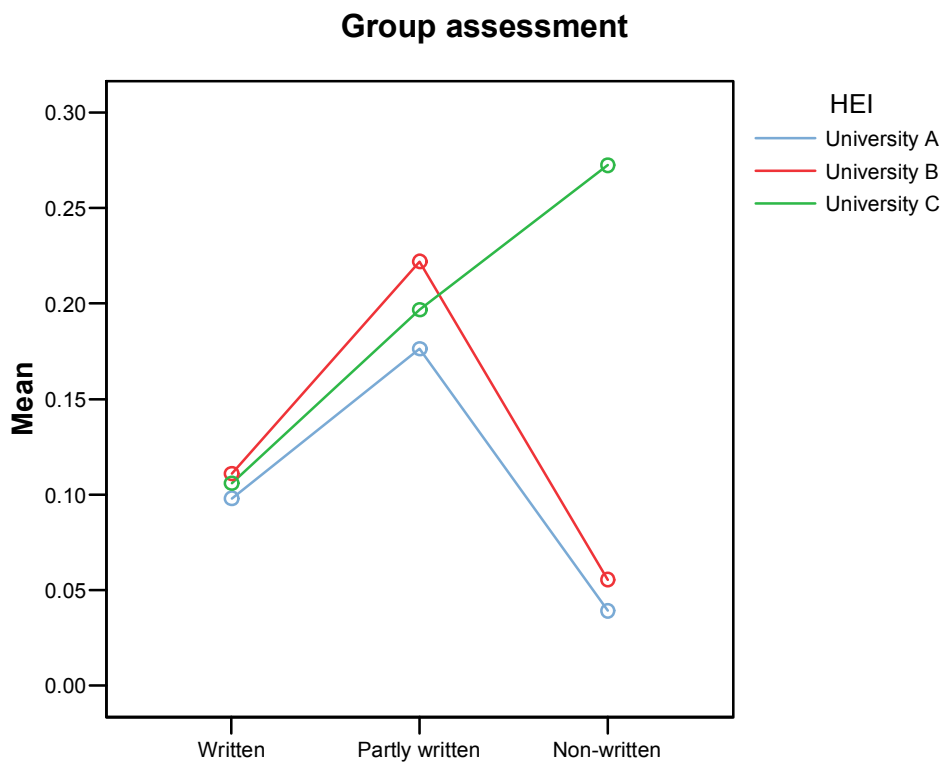
There were significantly more individual assessments in writing at all of the universities ($p = .000$) (see Fig iii).

Fig iii. Individual assessment, whether written or non or partly written, by university. (A = Bournemouth; B = Oxford Brookes; C = Southampton Solent).



For group assessments there were significantly more partly written than written or non written ($p = .000$) (see Fig iv). There were no significant differences between the universities, except for University C (SSU). At SSU, group work had significantly more non written assessments ($p = .001$).

Fig iv. Group assessment, whether written or non or partly written, by university. (A = Bournemouth; B = Oxford Brookes; C = Southampton Solent).



There was a significant interaction between year of study and assessment type ($p = .000$) (see Fig v and Fig vi). The number of written assessments for groups has decreased for 2004/05, partly written has increased, and non-written has also increased. To summarise, for 2003/04 there were more written than partly written assessments for group work, but for 2004/05 there was an opposite effect, in that there were more partly written than written assessments for groups. For individual assessments the trend is starting to go the same way, however not to the same extent.

Fig v. Individual assessment and year

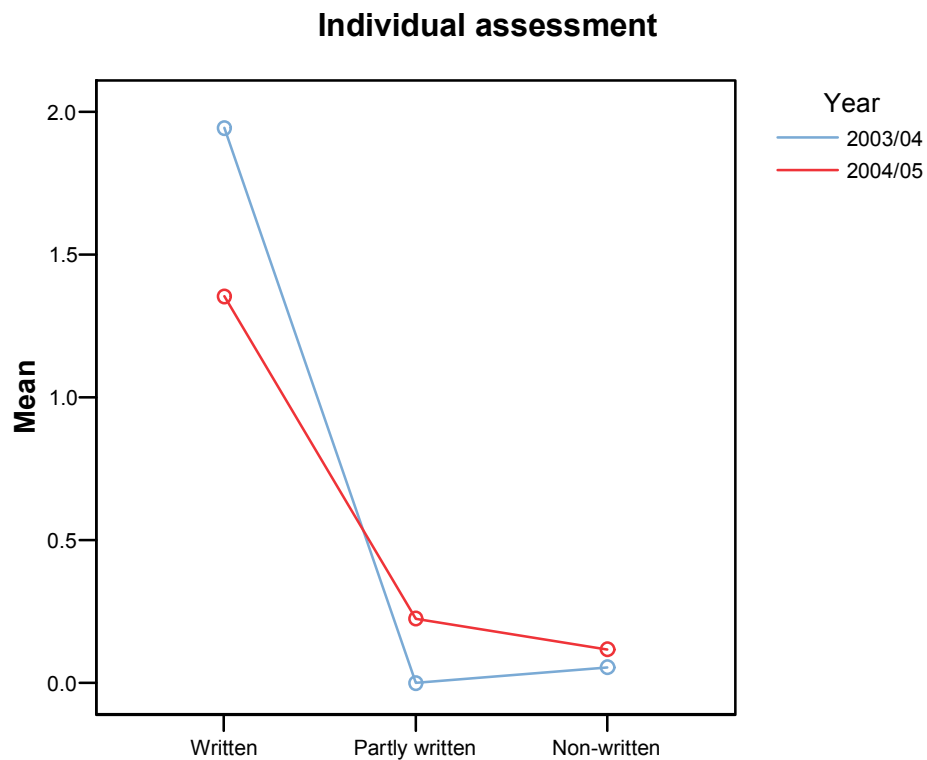
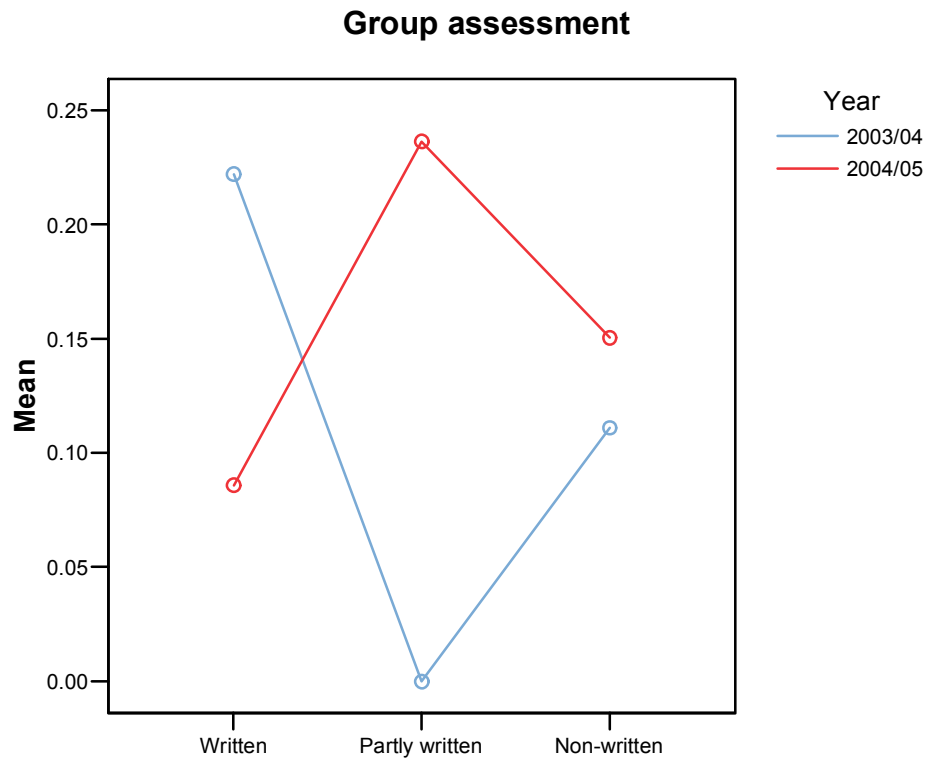


Fig vi. Group assessment and year.



Conclusion

The overall impression from the descriptive statistics was that the assessment, in this sample of 139 units and 289 assessments, tended to be written and done individually as part of a 20 CATS unit/module. The most common type of assessment appears to be one of five: an essay; an unseen exam; a seminar presentation; a report or an in-class test. There appears to be no significant differences between whether the assessment was in writing, partly or non written, and the level of the module/unit, whether it was a core or an option module/unit, the CATS value, nor the number of dyslexic students studying it.

Overall there were significantly more individual written assessments, and more partly written group assessments. Moreover, in this sample, there were significant differences between the universities in how the modules/units approached the use of individual or group work, and written, partly or non written assessment.

Furthermore there was a significant interaction between year of study and the assessment type. The number of written assessments has decreased between 2003/4 and 2004/5, whereas partly written and non written assessments has increased.

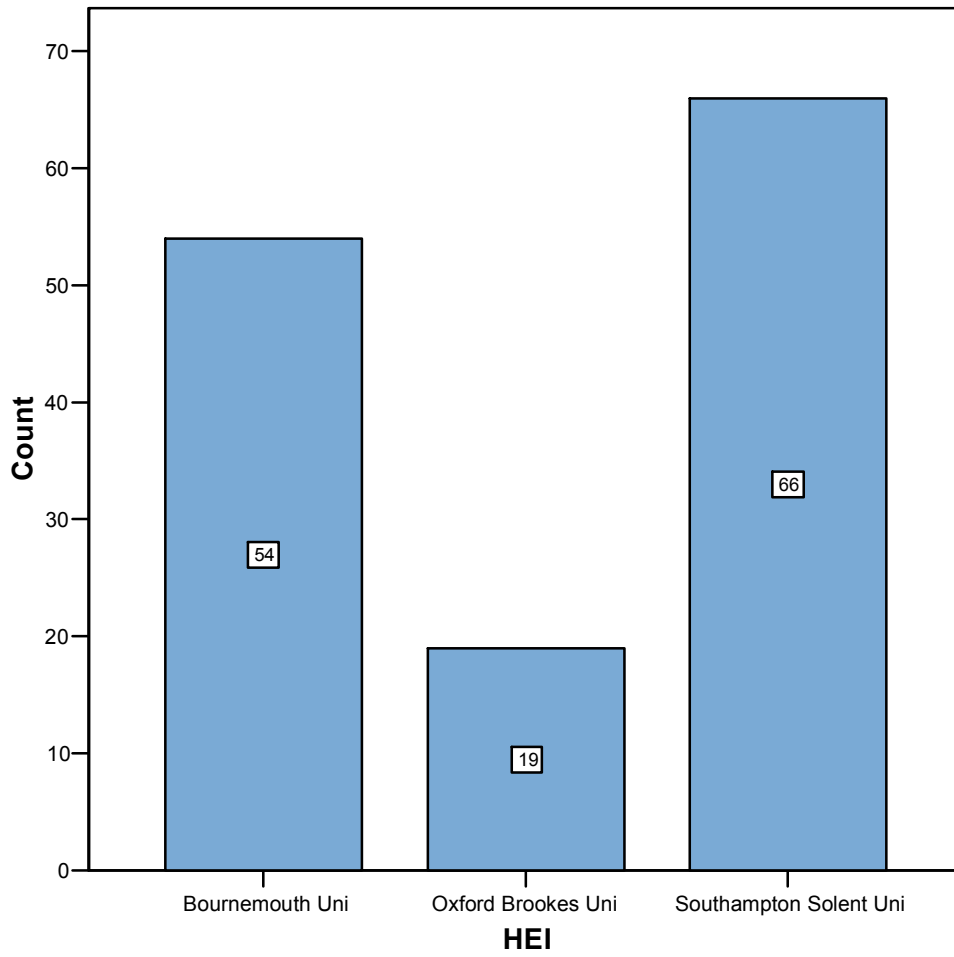
References

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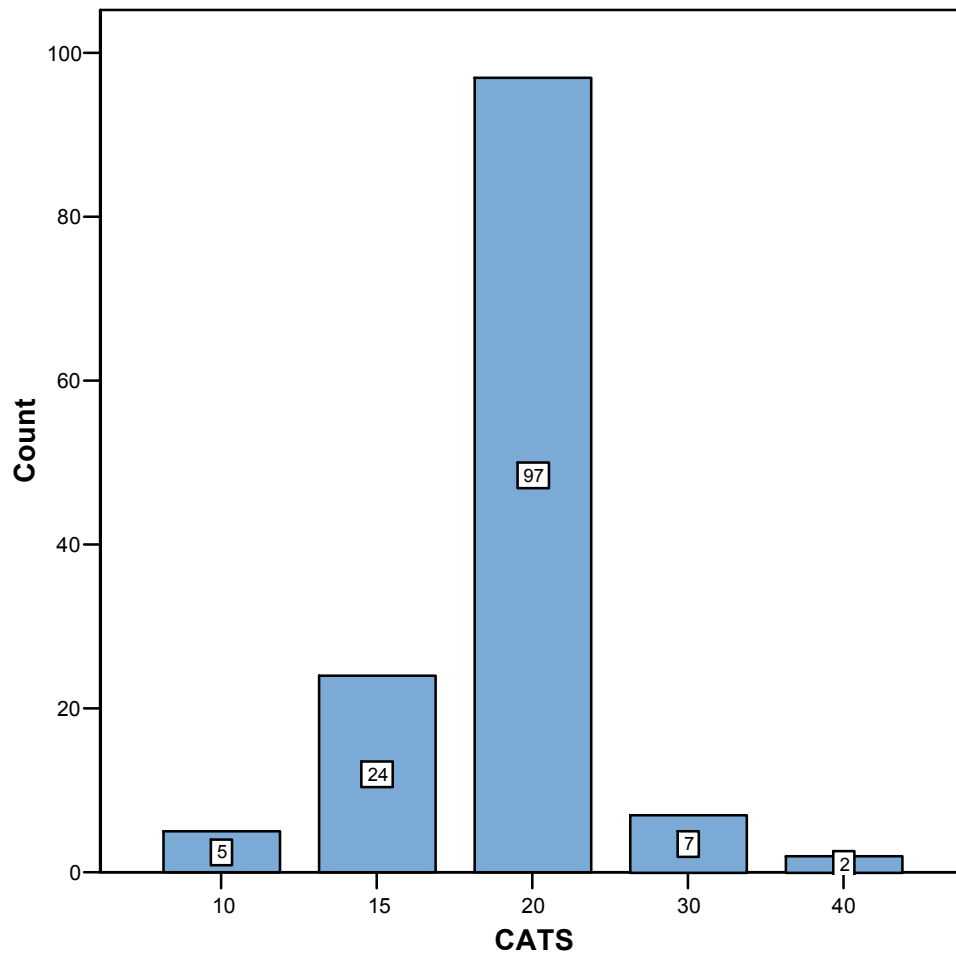
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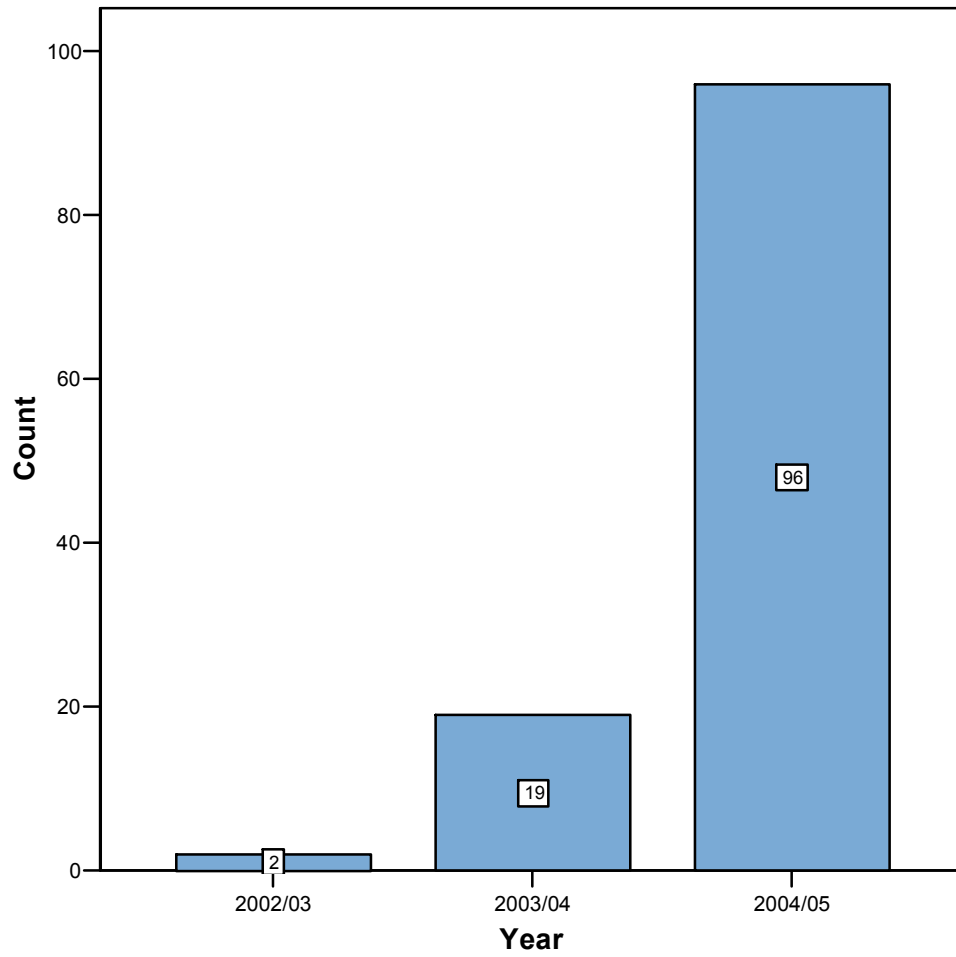
Appendix I. University and modules/units sampled



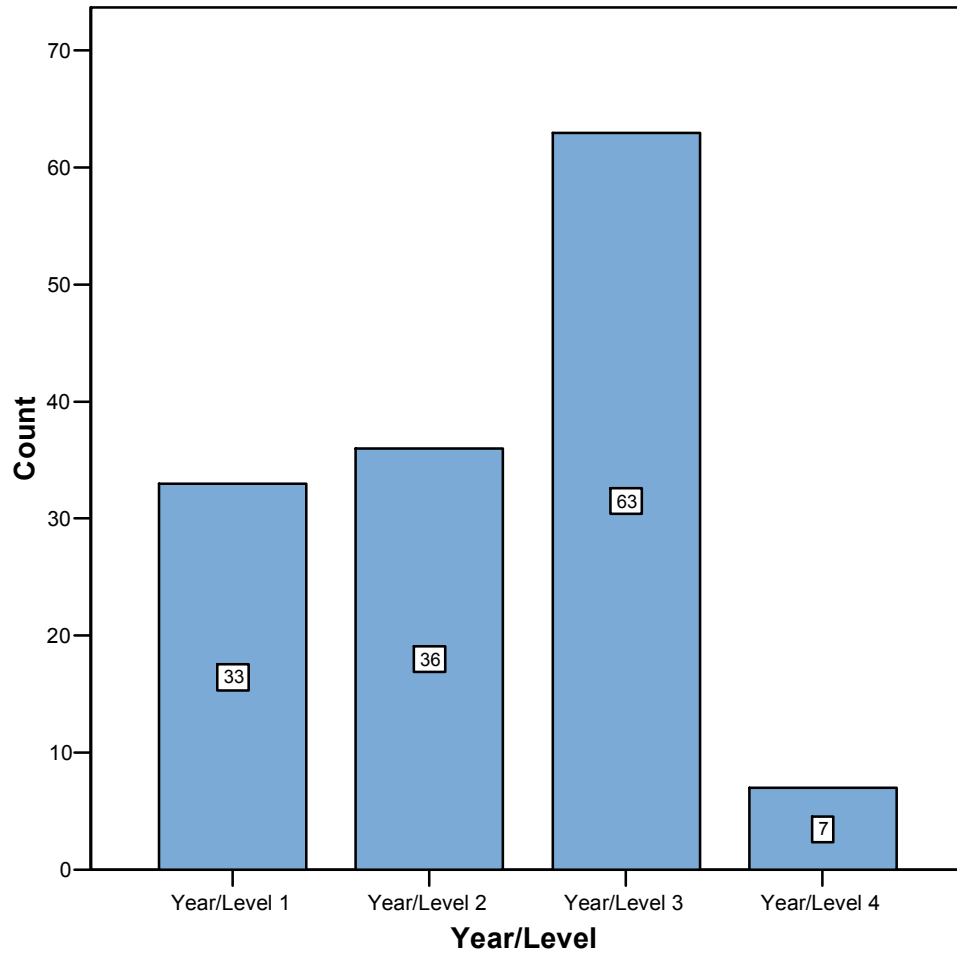
Appendix II. CATS value of sampled units/modules



Appendix III. Year of modules/units sampled



Appendix IV. Year / level of modules/units sampled



Appendix V. Whether sampled module/unit was core or an option.

	Frequency	Percent
Core module / unit	85	61.2
Option module / unit	54	38.8
Total	139	100.0

Appendix VI. Whether individual or group assessment by university.
 (A = Bournemouth; B = Oxford Brookes; C = Southampton Solent).

