

TESTING THE EFFICACY OF STUDENT SELF- ASSESSMENTS IN THEIR LEARNING JOURNEYS

**PRESENTED BY DR SONALI MISRA
FOR PGCERT ACADEMIC PRACTICE IN ART, DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION (24/25)**

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CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

- **Project:** Skills and Knowledge Mapping (SKM) Surveys
- **Participants:** BA (Hons) Magazine Journalism and Publishing Year 2 students, LCC
- **Unit:** Creative Magazine Writing (option unit) – I am the unit creator and leader

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE MAPPING 1 SURVEY

Skills and Knowledge Mapping 1 – Start of the Unit (25/26)

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

1. Student's full name * 

Enter your answer

2. How would you score your confidence regarding... * 

	V low	Low	Below Avg	Avg	Above Avg	High
Idea generation for creative magazine writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Knowledge about different magazine creative magazine writing forms	<input type="radio"/>					
Knowledge about different creative writing theories	<input type="radio"/>					
Creative magazine writing skills	<input type="radio"/>					
Critical evaluation of your creative magazine writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Knowledge of appropriate platforms and audiences for your creative magazine writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Editing your own written work	<input type="radio"/>					
Editing and peer-reviewing others' writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Sharing your writing and receiving feedback on it	<input type="radio"/>					
Pitching your work to different magazines/platforms	<input type="radio"/>					

3. What skill or knowledge area are you most looking forward to improving in this Unit? * 

Enter your answer



REPORT 1 EXAMPLE

Hi XYZ,

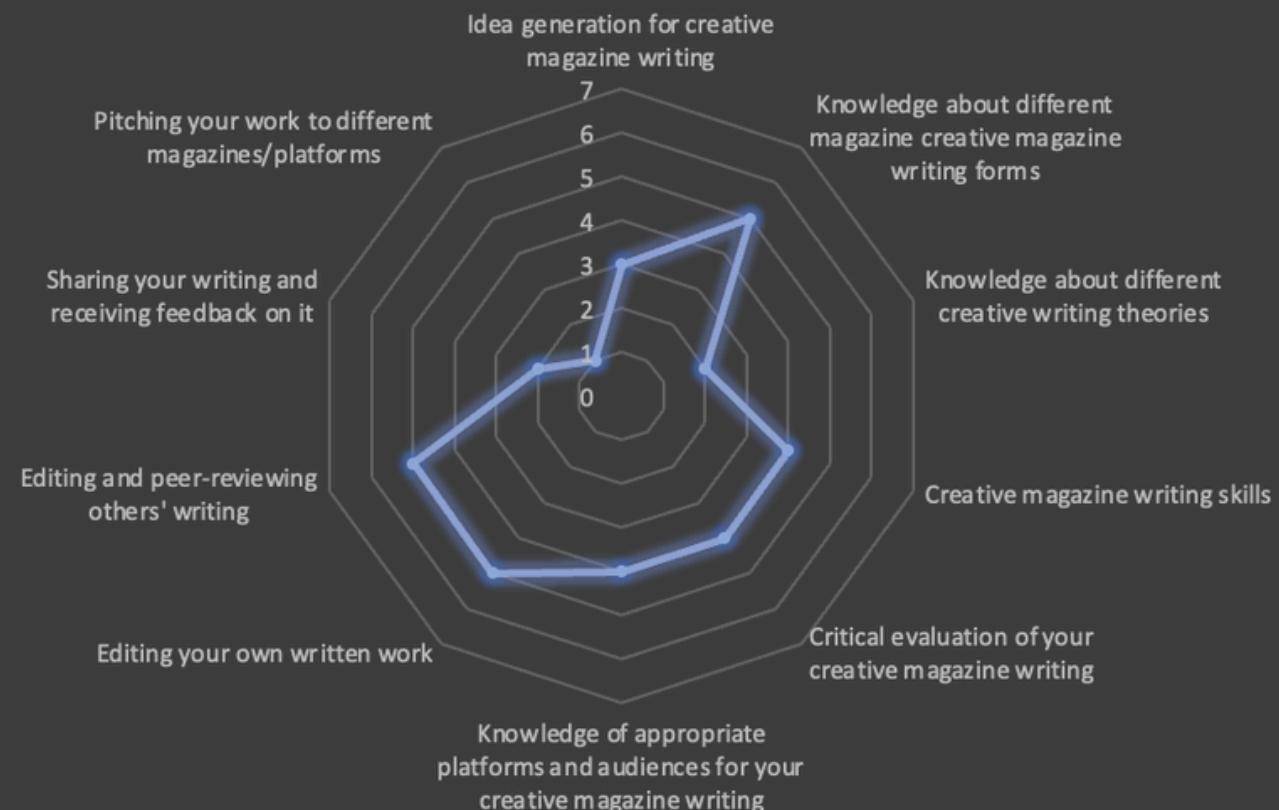
Thanks for filling in the Skills and Knowledge Mapping (SKM) 1 yesterday. Below is a visual representation of what your perception is of your various creative magazine writing skills. The farther away the dots from the centre, the more confident you are (so, 7 being the most confident and 1 being the least).

It would be good for you to keep this in mind as you work through this Unit, so that you can especially focus on skills/knowledge bases you think you need to work harder at (such as pitching your work to different magazines and platforms, sharing your writing and receiving feedback on it, idea generation, knowledge about different creative writing theories – which we will cover in the coming weeks). It's great to see that you're comfortable with editing and are familiar with different magazine writing forms – these will come in handy. Do keep your goal for this Unit in mind as well:

'Coming up with new ideas and improving my confidence when it comes to sharing my work with others'

We will do another Mapping near the end of the Unit, so we can track any changes you feel have occurred in your perception of your skills and knowledge.

XYZ SKM



MIDWAY TOUCHPOINT WORKSHEET

4 THINGS

Write on here 4 things:
1 thing you have learned
1 thing you have enjoyed
1 thing you have found surprising
1 thing you need more of



Learned -
Significant amount
more on
structure and
consideration of a
writers tone and
voice

Enjoyed -
Taking on new theories
and structures

Found Surprising -
I've actually
realised a
potential with
my writing

Need more of -
Subjective but
maybe a task
to construct a
piece in class
to be pitched
forward

Adapted from Hall (nd)

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE MAPPING 2 SURVEY

Skills and Knowledge Mapping 2 – End of the Unit (25/26)

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

1. Student's full name *

Enter your answer

2. How would you now score your confidence regarding... *

	V low	Low	Below Avg	Avg	Above Avg	High
Idea generation for creative magazine writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Knowledge about different magazine creative magazine writing forms	<input type="radio"/>					
Knowledge about different creative writing theories	<input type="radio"/>					
Creative magazine writing skills	<input type="radio"/>					
Critical evaluation of your creative magazine writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Knowledge of appropriate platforms and audiences for your creative magazine writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Editing your own written work	<input type="radio"/>					
Editing and peer-reviewing others' writing	<input type="radio"/>					
Sharing your writing and receiving feedback on it	<input type="radio"/>					
Pitching your work to different magazines/platforms	<input type="radio"/>					

3. What skill or knowledge area have you improved upon the most through this Unit? Does it match your goal at the start of the Unit (refer to the Skills and Knowledge Mapping 1) and/or the mid-point worksheet? *

Enter your answer

4. What can you do or continue doing to improve your creative magazine writing skills and knowledge? *

Enter your answer

5. What would you do differently if you could retake this Unit? Is that something you can apply in future units? *

Enter your answer

6. Any other comments?

Enter your answer

Submit

REPORT 2 EXAMPLE

Hi XYZ,

Thanks for filling in the second survey. Below is the visual representation of your own assessment of your growth through this Unit. The blue denotes how you rated your skills and knowledge on the first day of class and the yellow denotes how you rate them now. The farther out from the centre, the higher your confidence (7 being the maximum).

As you can see, you've grown a lot in confidence through these 10 weeks! It's heartening to see your confidence jump so highly among all the different criteria. I realise your confidence score for pitching is a bit lower than others, but that should grow too with Monday's guest talk on pitching to magazines – that's the dedicated session on pitching in this Unit. So, I hope you celebrate your growth and that you will keep this growing confidence going into the rest of the second year and the third year and further build upon your skills and knowledge. Remember: reading and writing are your best friends in this area.

I'll be around even after this Unit to chat about any ideas and pieces you're working on, if you ever want to fix a chat with me.

Here are your text-box comment reflections on what can help you continue your growth – something for you to keep in mind as you work ahead:

Q: What skill or knowledge area have you improved upon the most through this Unit? Does it match your goal at the start of the Unit (refer to the Skills and Knowledge Mapping 1) and/or the mid-point worksheet?

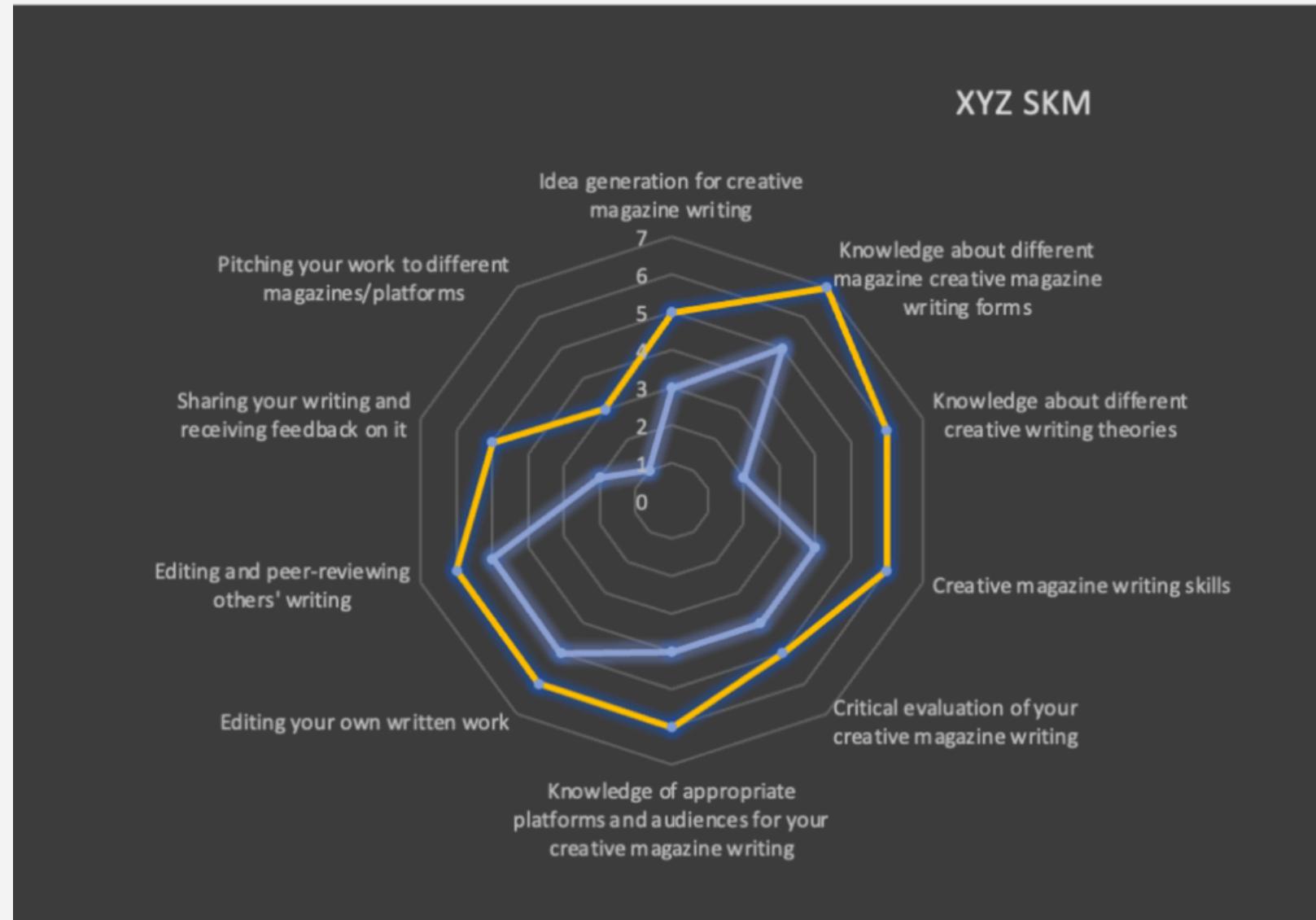
A: My confidence in sharing my work and my knowledge of different creative writing theories. My goal at the start of the unit was 'Coming up with new ideas and improving my confidence when it comes to sharing my work with others' and I feel as though I have worked on and improved this

Q: What can you do or continue doing to improve your creative magazine writing skills and knowledge?

A: Work on reflecting on my work critically and generating new ideas to write about

Q: What would you do differently if you could retake this Unit? Is that something you can apply in future units?

A: I would maybe try to write a piece for each of the writing forms rather than a select few so I could improve my skills and knowledge in them



RATIONALE FOR SELECTING TOPIC

- **Power imbalance in a classroom** between teacher/student and within student body, depending on **opportunities/privileges students have had, the knowledge they've been exposed to, their first language, their sociocultural background (Fitzgerald 2020) – intersectional identities (Crenshaw 1991)**
- As teaching is often aimed at the **median**, wanted to test if SKM can be a tool to understand **diverse learning backgrounds and needs** (especially in international classes) and provide **1-to-1 focus** that may not be easily achieved in a big classroom

RATIONALE FOR SELECTING TOPIC

- In a unit with extensive content, wanted to test if **students can be more empowered** and take charge of their learning journeys – **constructivism** (Allen 2022; Buffkin & Bryde 1996; Carlson and Blanchard 2024; University of Buffalo nd)

- In student surveys (NSS, CSS & PTES), our programme has seen students misunderstand terms such as 'intellectual stimulation' in a vocational, arts-focused degree

RATIONALE FOR SELECTING TOPIC

- Students often ignore/don't understand Learning Outcomes (LOs) and how assessments are marked

From a 'practical' standpoint → better performance in assessments and higher survey scores for UAL



RESEARCH AIMS

01

STUDENT LEARNING
Make students active participants in their own learning journeys and have them more actively engage with unit Learning Outcomes

02

DIVERSITY OF CLASSROOM
Tool for teachers to understand diverse learning needs in a class and provide 1-to-1 support

03

NEW KIND OF UNIT EVALUATION
Assess if SKM can replace standard unit evaluations and help with UAL's NSS, CSS & PTES scores

METHODOLOGY

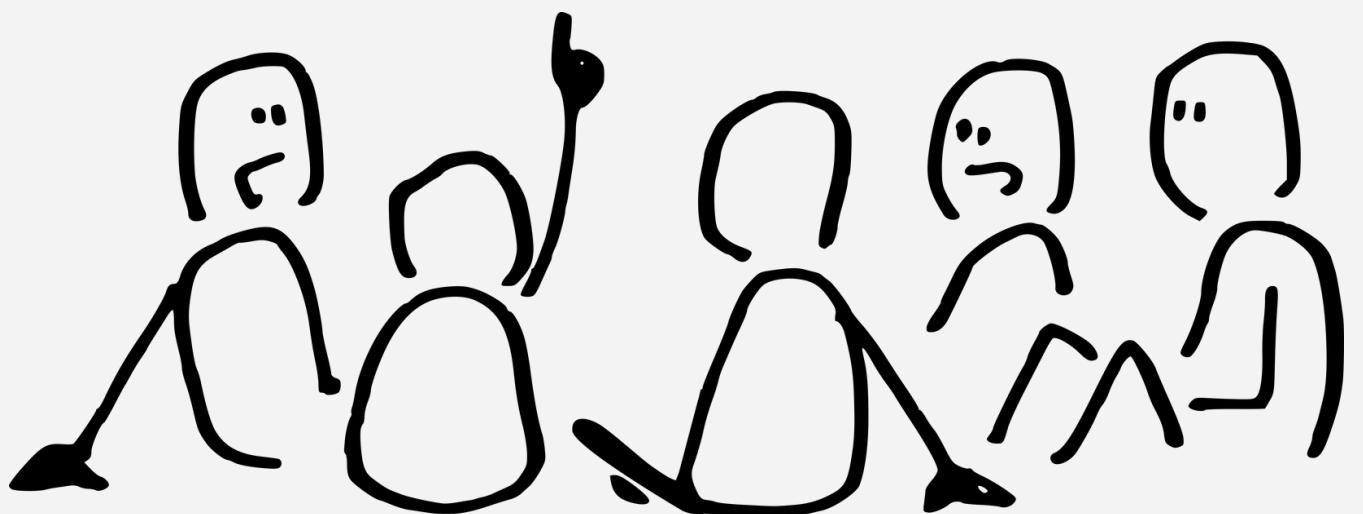
QUALITATIVE METHOD



- From Latin *qualitas* (qualities or features of entities) vs *quantitas* (variances in amount) (**Erickson 2018, p 33**)
- My study examines the *kind* of experiences the students had to the SKM project as opposed to measuring any quantity

METHODOLOGY

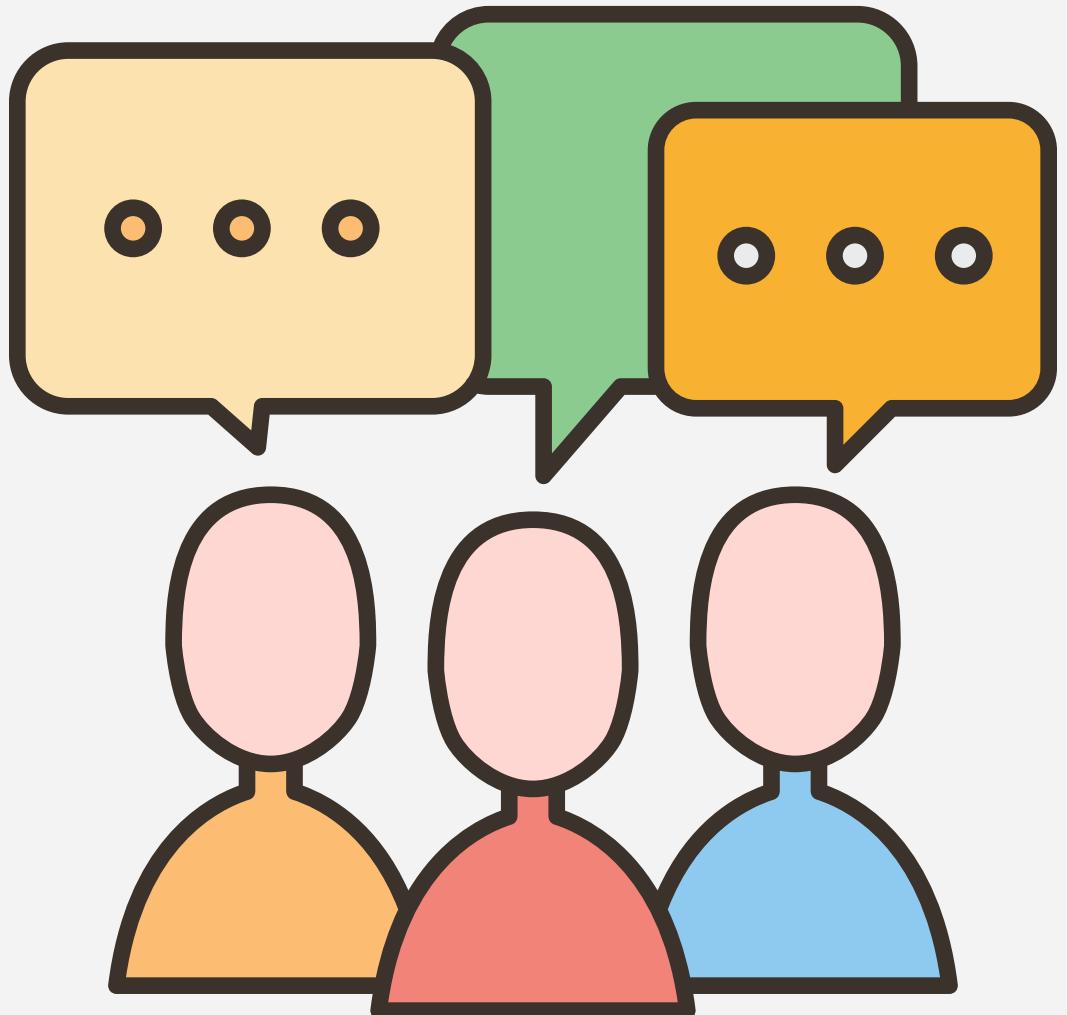
FOCUS GROUP



- Not just a way to conduct multiple interviews simultaneously
- Key – **group dynamics/interactions (Liamputpong 2011, p 3)** leading to tangents generating interesting data
- **Method in spirit of project aim, ie, empowering student voice (Smith 2021)**
- New research method for me – **experimentation**

METHODOLOGY

FOCUS GROUP REFLECTION



- Conducted during class time due to attendance issues/non-responsiveness from cohort
- Smooth, interesting conversation but **limited voices** – 3 participants from the cohort
- **Bias** – students who were more earnest about attending class enjoyed the class and got along well with me

DATA AND FINDINGS

Thematic analysis of the focus group transcription led to following themes:

1. Students **tracking their progress** through self-assessment surveys
2. Significance for students to **visualise** their skills and progress through the radar charts
3. Significance for students to **set goals** for themselves through self-assessment surveys
4. Significance for students of receiving **customised written reports** that I created
5. Students **understanding Learning Outcomes** of a unit through self-assessment surveys
6. Student response to the self-assessment surveys approach **vs standard unit evaluations**
7. Student response to **practicalities** of the survey
8. Significance for students of the **midway touchpoint worksheet**
9. Students more **actively engaging in their learning journeys**



1. VISUALISATION AND REPORT

- All students wholeheartedly agreed that the radar chart helped them visualise their growth, especially by comparing their responses to the 2 SKMs.
- S2 emphasised that if the radar chart was sent without the report, they would've found it hard to understand – **emphasising the need for both elements**, written and visual.

*S1: I found [the visual reports] very helpful. I was able to **visualise** where I was at with like, my sort of thought, abilities and stuff like that. It's been nice to see that **progression** with the second one.*

S2: Looking at the points and thinking: 'OK, where are my weak points? Where are my strong points?' And seeing that and then being able to look for it in your work – yeah, definitely makes things easier. [relates to constructivism (University of Buffalo nd)]

2.DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS

- Student focus was on their own self-assessment and progress, **not competition with their peers.**
- Students felt comfortable sharing their self-assessments with me knowing that only I will see them.
- Some students dropped down by 1–2 points in SKM2 but I explained the Socrates saying '**I know that I know nothing**' – indicating that sometimes we don't even know how much we don't know. Students didn't feel disheartened by this drop.
- On the significance of having that 1-on-1 focus in the customised report:

*S1: It felt a lot more **personal** because I feel like some feedback feels quite generalised if it's delivered in class. Whereas it's given to us individually, we could actually know **where we can build on, where we want to build on from**. [relates to constructivism (Allen 2022)]*

3. STANDARD UNIT SURVEYS VS SKM

- Students **preferred the SKM and midway touchpoint approaches** to standard unit surveys they have answered before.
- Students emphasised that since they actually got back their responses from different points of the unit, they could **reflect** on their responses, **set objectives** and **track their growth**. And **we as tutors can do that too**. This is different from unit evaluations that students quickly answer and never look at again.
- Students found SUS ‘throwaway’ (S1):
S2: Yeah, I don't really like the end of unit surveys that much. I think they're not... I don't know how to describe. It's very much like: ‘Oh, what do you like? What do you dislike?’ I don't dislike anything, but I don't really have... Yeah I can't really reflect on what I've done in this unit just based on the questions that they ask. So, I preferred this approach because it again made me reflect, made me think about it. [relates to constructivism (Allen 2022)]

4. ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING JOURNEYS

- Students found freedom in self-assessing and on the basis of their confidence. They didn't feel 'restricted' (S1) by my pushing them towards improving any one specific area. They could experiment, push themselves, and move around different areas – **constructivist approach (Carlson and Blanchard 2024)**.
- Setting goals for themselves at the start made students focus on the goals more 'consciously' (S1) throughout the unit and helped them 'find direction' (S3). The goals were then aided by the assessment (S1). Thus, the different elements worked hand-in-hand.

S2: But I think the main focus of it was about how you personally feel about [your skills and knowledge]. And again like your own confidence. Yeah, which I think makes a nice change, I think not just from uni, but I think throughout school. It's almost like your own feelings aren't really considered and that they kind of just focus on grades to see how well you're doing from what you've written down. So, I think this was quite nice to think about like: 'How do you feel about this?' rather than just like 'How good you think you are?'. [relates to constructivism (University of Buffalo nd)]

5. UNDERSTANDING LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students **didn't realise** themselves that the SKM criteria were mapped against the LOs.
- Once I mentioned it, it **made sense** to them – thus **SKM allows understanding LOs through application and reflection** instead of reading more formal, dry language about assessments **[constructivism]**.
- Even with repeated showing of LOs in units, students don't read them carefully before assessments. SKM approach addresses that and will lead to more precise assessment approach (thus higher grades) and better CSS, NSS and PTES scores for UAL, especially if confusing terms like 'intellectual stimulation' are explained in SKM.



FUTURE RESEARCH

- More focus groups, 1-on-1 student interviews to test findings validity
- Testing across programmes and colleges to test application in different kinds of courses and teachings
- Testing across class sizes
- Experimenting with other visual depictions besides radar charts
- If findings verified, investment needed to build a tool that automates radar chart creation (or similar), especially for larger classrooms



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ANY QUESTIONS?

S.MISRA@LCC.ARTS.AC.UK

PGCERT BLOG: [HTTPS://STUDYON.MYBLOG.ARTS.AC.UK](https://studyon.myblog.arts.ac.uk)