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Implementing UDL the Benefits and Barriers: Listening to the voice of faculty and staff

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NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction to Research

Background and Design

Research Findings

Focus Group Output

Recommendations

Based on Findings

Presentation Overview



Introduction to Research



Background



Part of an initiative from the ATU UDL Steering group to identify barriers in implementing UDL in higher education



Academic Staff Focus Groups - identifying the barriers for implementing UDL for academics through academic peer led focus groups



Faculty and staff across ATU who completed the UDL digital badge were invited to a focus group session to share their experience with implementing UDL

Design

Format: Microsoft Teams

Time frame: 1 hour

Participants: ATU Faculty and Staff - 10 participants divided into 2 sessions

Overview:

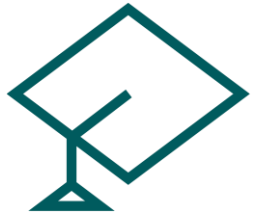
- Participants were asked to complete online questions using Padlet www.padlet.com
- Time was allowed for individual reflection in advance of group discussion

Research Outcomes - Common Themes

- UDL implementation
- Benefits
- Barriers
- Recommendations



Padlet questions



Discussion point

How have you implemented UDL principles in your teaching practice



Discussion point

What impact did these changes have on the learning experience of students



Discussion point

What obstacles if any did you face in implementing UDL into your teaching practice



Discussion Point

What can the institution do to make the learning experience more inclusive for students

Research Findings

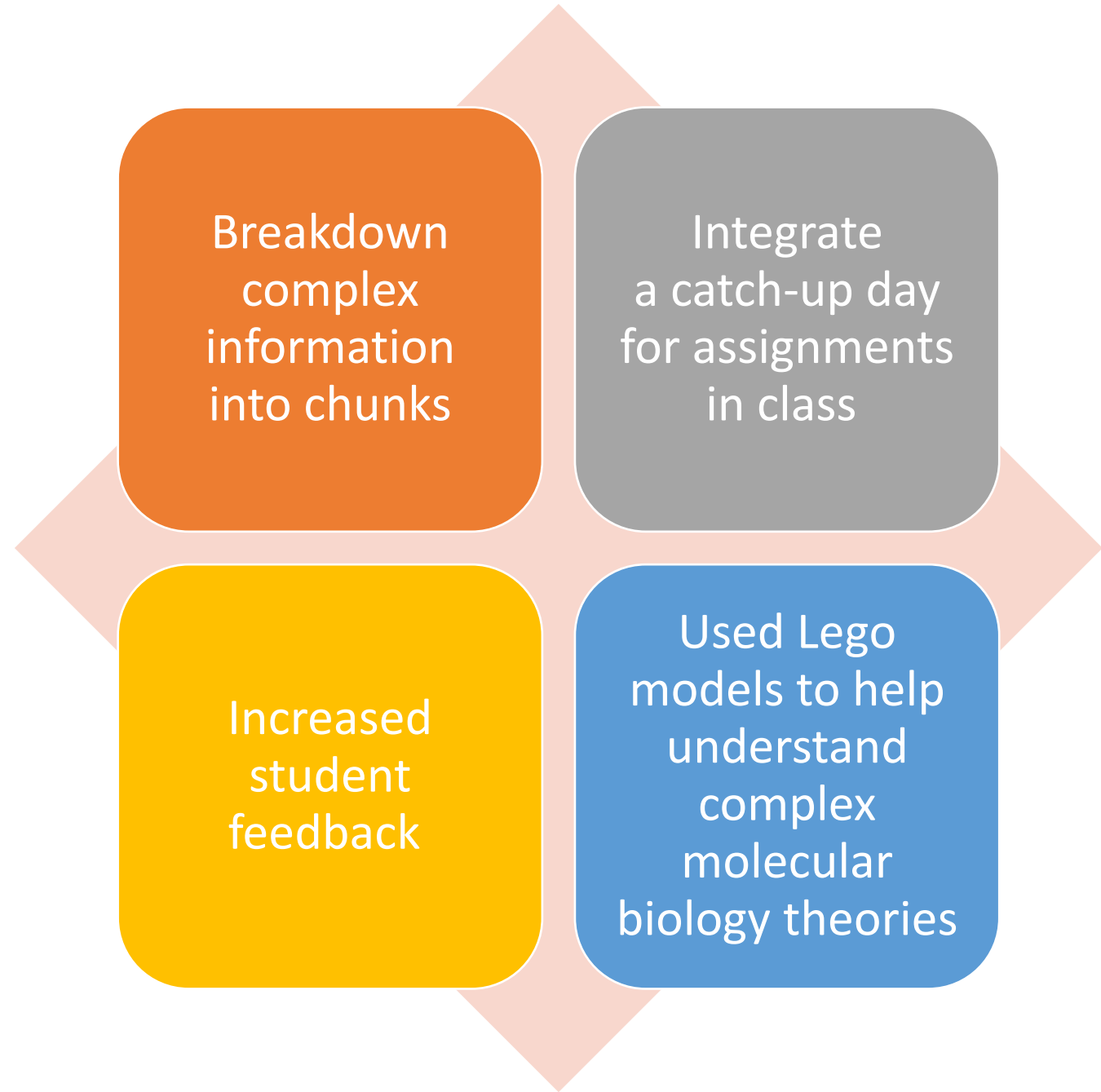


Focus Group Output

Implementing UDL



Engagement



Representation

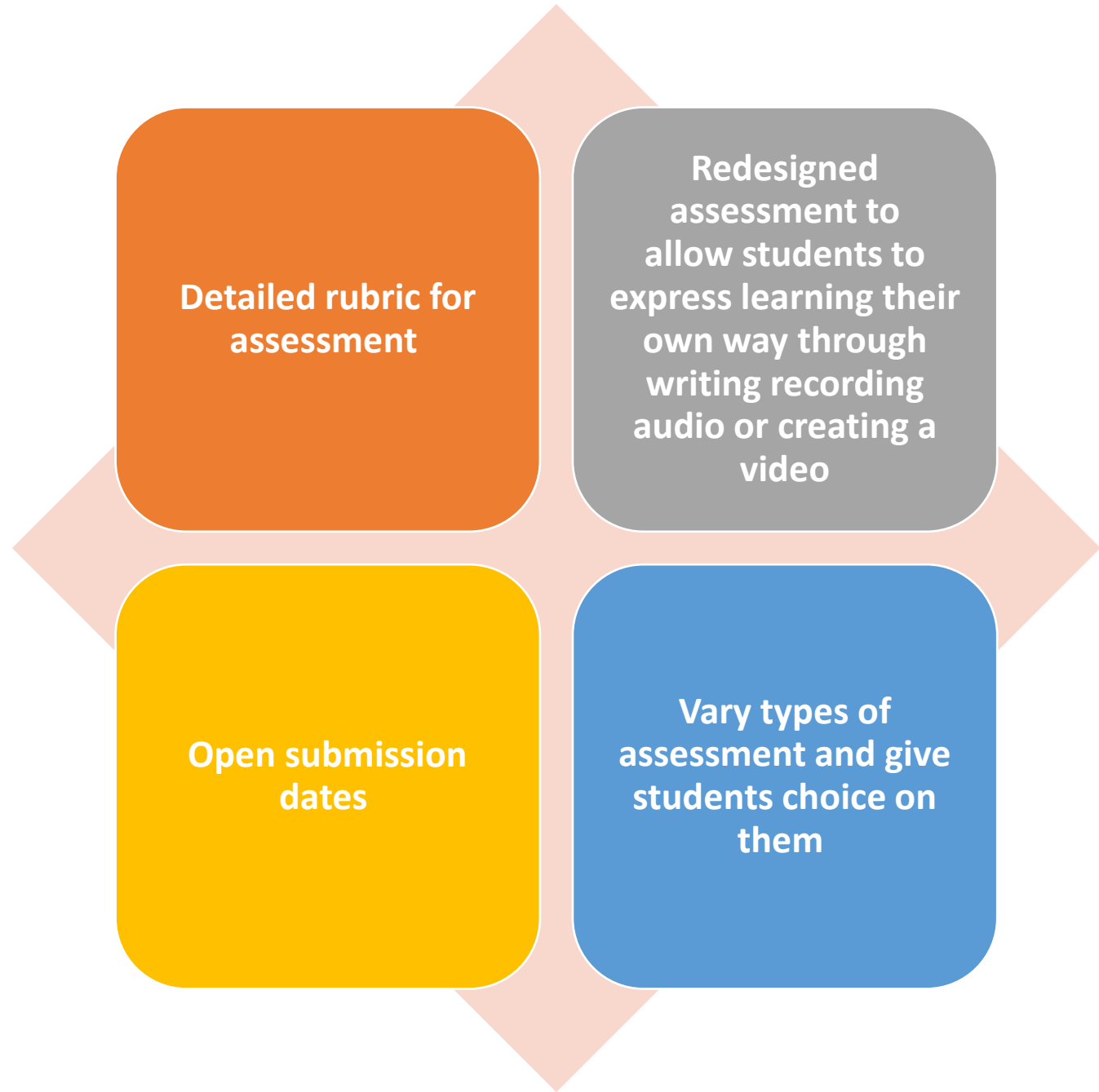
Provided audio and written feedback to capture my tone

Encouraged students to read up around the topic before class by providing reading material and pictures on our virtual learning platform

Ensured that students are comfortable using blackboard and made resources more accessible by using Microsoft accessibility tool and Ally

Use multiple means of engagement using videos to support lecture materials and always use closed captions

Action and Expression



Focus Group Output

Benefits of UDL



Benefits of UDL

STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

- Students appreciate being able to demonstrate their learning in a model preferable to them
- Offering flexibility in assessment empowers students to make their own decisions and not feel restricted

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- Students engaged very well with the alternative assignment options and submitted assignments well ahead of the deadline
- Provides opportunities for learners and enhances creativity

INCREASED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

- The performance of a particular lab report - the class average GPA increased by 49%



Benefits of UDL

ENTHUSIASM

- Staff enjoyed applying UDL principles and student surveys indicated that learners enjoyed the experience
- Shifting from PowerPoint presentations to workshop style tutorials makes the skills being taught to the student more relevant to them

MIRRORS WORKPLACE

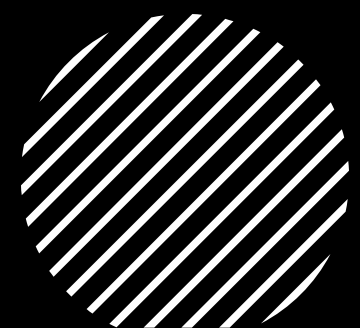
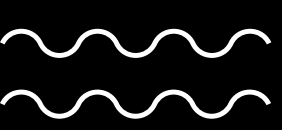
- Develops skills for students - they learn how to reflect and evaluate better
- Allows students to have their own goals and work towards them



Focus Group Output

Barriers





BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS

Moving out of student comfort zone

Fear of the unknown

Choice of alternative assessment can be overwhelming for students

Many students went to the traditional assessment methods

More confident students more willing to embrace alternative assessments

Some students not accessing feedback focus on grade only

Language barriers 'educational speech' not always understood by students

BARRIERS FOR STAFF



Lack of flexibility in assessments due to having to follow the module descriptor which is tied to the Approved Programme Schedule (APS)



Time constraints – Lecturers *'what can I do in the time available'*



Time consuming e.g. providing different rubrics for alternative assessments



Learning challenges that lecturer may not be qualified to support



Pushback from staff not engaged in UDL – viewed as something extra and time is not available



Semesterisation – 12 exams instead of 6 in a year *"So you put in more hurdles"*

BARRIERS FOR STAFF

A lot of students are very assessment driven – takes time to discuss which method they will use

Some students *“just want to get the course done box tick and get on”*

What works with one group might not be replicated with another cohort

UDL is not what we're teaching students – we're concentrating on our own disciplines
“Alternatives can be perceived as putting more work on them rather than actually trying to help them”

VLE e.g. Moodle pages all the same template
Lack flexibility
Hard to make it exciting

Students don't navigate how you think they're going to navigate around your VLE

BARRIERS FOR STAFF

- Lower pass grades – reducing standards
- Constantly being given new modules to deliver

Quotes:

- *“We keep getting people to teach stuff which is not their core - If we taught our core and we’re passionate about that we teach and why we’re teaching and why it’s important to the students”*
- *“So many people come in, bright eyed, bushy tailed and they’re thrown something which is really not their thing”*
- *“Usually the week before or the day before you’re going into the classroom”*



Recommendations





Institutional Support

Allow more flexibility to change assessments *'on the hoof'* to improve UDL implementation

Allow flexibility with deadlines where appropriate

Make UDL part of the culture of the institution so students become familiar with it

Encourage all staff to incorporate UDL into professional practice

Provide additional time to incorporate UDL into practice

Acknowledge staff who engage in UDL activities



Student Engagement

Provide students with resources that will help with alternative submission format

Provide quality examples from previous student work

Train students on how to receive understand and implement feedback

Provide additional supports to students who may need learning supports

Link UDL activities to students' career aspirations

Incorporate peer assessment to develop integrity



Resources and Training

Have a UDL support group and provide and allocate time for activities such as a lunch and learn

UDL practitioners could share their ideas with Teaching and Learning to build a bank of resources templates and rubrics

Consider the physical environment to maximize creativity and accessibility

Have additional training at staff induction on Ally and MS Immersive Reader to demonstrate how they support learning

Resources on how to encourage students to become more of an active vs passive learner

Provide additional staff training for supporting students with learning difficulties

Q&A

