

Development of a transition management module for induction of postgraduate taught students into medical science programmes



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Background context

- Increasingly diverse student population at PGT level
- Huge variation in:
 - educational background
 - practical proficiency
 - language competence
 - research skills
 - writing experience
- New students face a variety of challenges:
 - educational transition
 - social transition
 - institutional unfamiliarity
 - late arrival / visa delays
 - short transition period
 - fast pace of PG programmes

Aim

- To create an induction course to ease PG student transition
- This module should:
 - offer incoming students a *soft landing* at the University of Aberdeen
 - be flexible to account for varied experience levels and needs
 - create an atmosphere of support and guidance
 - introduce students to the systems and processes of the University of Aberdeen

The module

- Non-credit bearing module and compulsory for all medical science post-graduate students (~200)
- Runs for first 6 weeks of programme (Sept – Oct)
- Teaching and learning includes:
 - lectures
 - tutorials
 - practical simulations (dry lab)
 - practical classes (wet-lab)
 - “weekly tweet”
 - student-led journal club
- Despite being non-credit bearing there are still assessed exercises:
 - early written piece appraising an experimental approach
 - laboratory follow up exercise
 - each contributes 50% to overall grade
- Module design based around 2 key elements:
 - engagement
 - practical skills

Design element 1: engagement

Aspects of the *Engagement Design*:

The Weekly “tweet”

issued by each student through the virtual learning environment (VLE) about an article in their specific discipline area

Why?

- familiarizes students with VLE use
- early flag for disengagement
- promotes inclusive and communicative environment (sense of School belonging)
- engages students with their individual discipline areas (sense of discipline belonging)

Written assessment

appraising experimental approaches using and citing supportive literature

Why?

- early flag for disengagement
- early indication of writing skills (targeted support if required)
- assesses research skills
- early engagement with the literature
- engagement with the University expectations and rules around writing and citing

Student-led journal club

article(s) selected from weekly tweets and discussed in a journal club format organized by students (at discipline level rather than entire cohort)

Why?

- develops sense of discipline belonging by breaking cohort down
- develops student-led learning element
- advances levels of student engagement with literature
- cultivates critical analysis skills
- continues and improves emphasis on communication skills
- fosters ongoing sense of community and belonging

Design element 2: practical skills

Aspects of the *Practical Skills Design*:

Dry lab exercises

students work through a series of simple laboratory simulations in small groups (serial dilutions, concentrations, cell culture)

Why?

- promotes group work and interaction
- refreshes skills in low cost, low risk context
- accounts for variability in experience and background
- builds confidence and competence in core technical areas

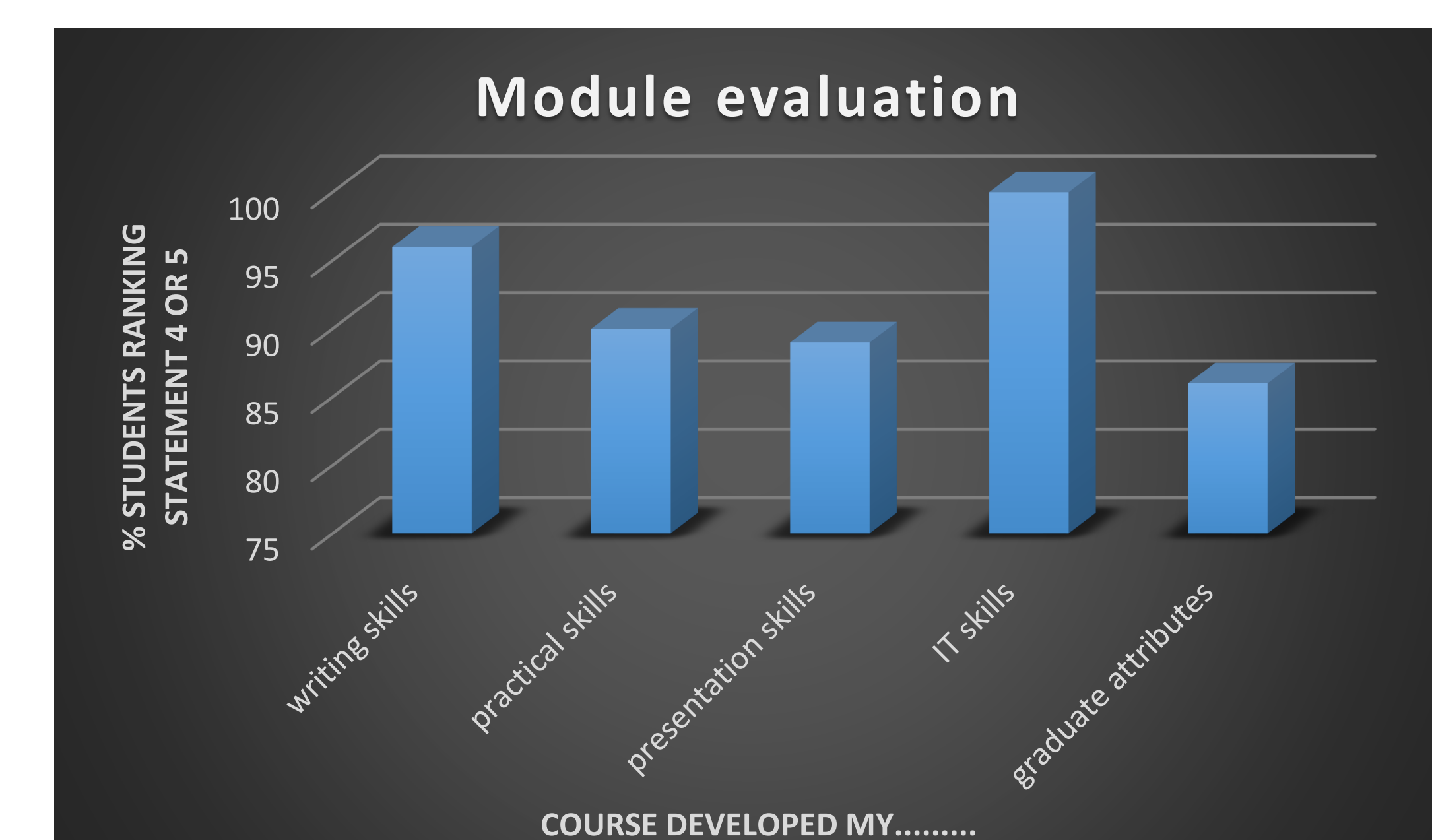
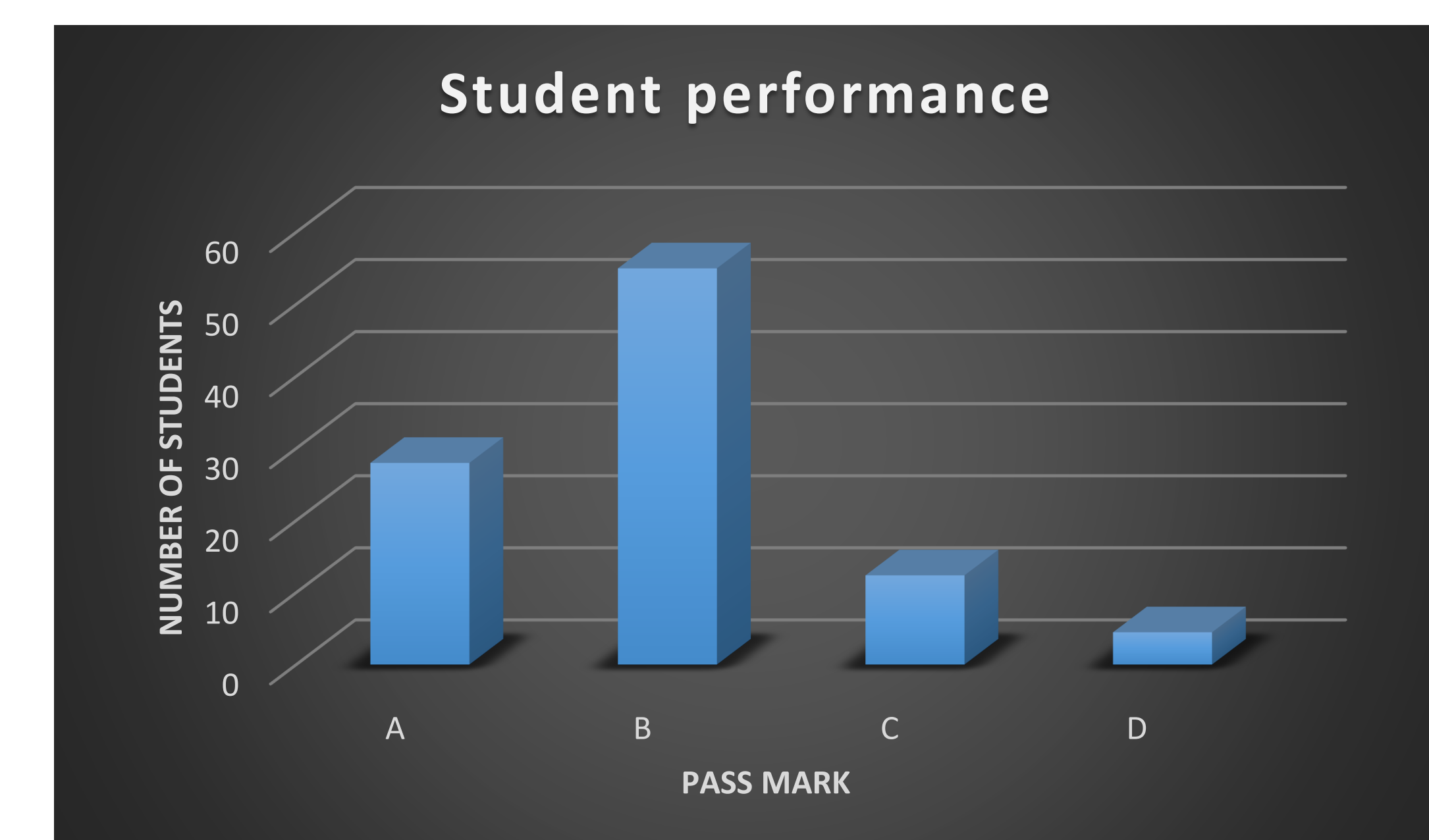
Wet lab exercises (non-compulsory)

students work through protein assay and SDS PAGE and can also attend a basic technical skills session

Why?

- builds practical skills in a focused and supportive environment
- flexible to account for prior experience (or lack of)
- develops, revises and refreshes core techniques and skills
- prepares students for more complex practical classes scheduled for later in their programmes

Evaluation



- students generally do well, but module also provides an academic challenge
- recognition of skills being developed amongst students on the course
- balance struck between academic challenge and transitional elements
- clearly, module is delivering content, whilst also operating to help students settle in develop their skills and confidence