Remote Teaching Practices Survey Report, Spring 2020

Summary

At the end of the Spring 2020 semester, the Owen Center for Teaching and Learning, in coordination with the Faculty Development Committee, surveyed Heidelberg students and Faculty to gather information about our collective experiences with emergency remote teaching. The surveys collected information about instructional practices, learning experiences, and feedback from the perspectives of both faculty and students.

Both surveys contained a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions, with the faculty survey modified from the student survey. Questions were changed as little as possible to provide easy points of comparison between the two demographics. Response rates varied; only 48 students completed the student survey (less than 5% of the HU student population) while 46 faculty completed the faculty survey (37.4% of those eligible to complete the survey). Because of the low response rate for students, the CTL cannot determine the extent to which patterns in the information gathered are applicable beyond the existing sample size.   The information gathered from student responses is consistent with that gathered by Dean of Student Affairs Chris Abrams in a student focus group, discussed in the "Additional Information" section of this report.

Overall, both students and faculty acknowledged that remote teaching was stressful and difficult. But, both populations also expressed their appreciation and gratitude for one another - many student respondents pointed out how flexible, supportive, and understanding most of their faculty were. Likewise, many faculty respondents acknowledged the stress and difficulty remote learning presented their students, and expressed concern for their students' well being. The survey results show us that Heidelberg's faculty and staff did an excellent job providing continuity of instruction for our students. The survey results also highlighted some areas where we can improve, areas of challenge that we (as a community of educators) need to grapple with, and opportunities for future development and growth. Based on the data from this survey, the CTL has provided some recommendations for HU's administration and faculty for future online/remote teaching.
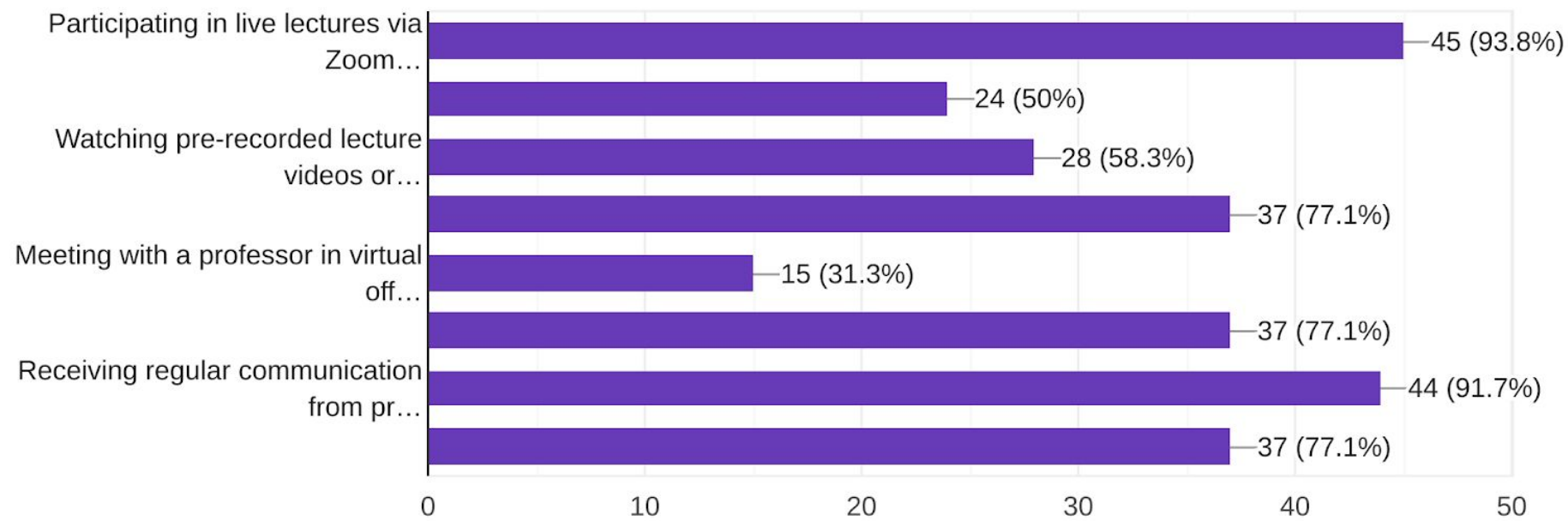
Faculty Teaching Practices and Technology Use

Faculty Teaching Practices

Students reported that the most frequently used instructional practices were: live lectures via Zoom (nearly 94% of student respondents), regular communication from a professor via email or Canvas (nearly 92%), and having a combination of live lectures and other activities. Students also noted a high degree of flexibility among their faculty, as 77% of student respondents reported that a faculty member granted them flexibility.

Thinking about all your spring 2020 remote classes as a whole, what instructional practices did you experience? Check all that apply.
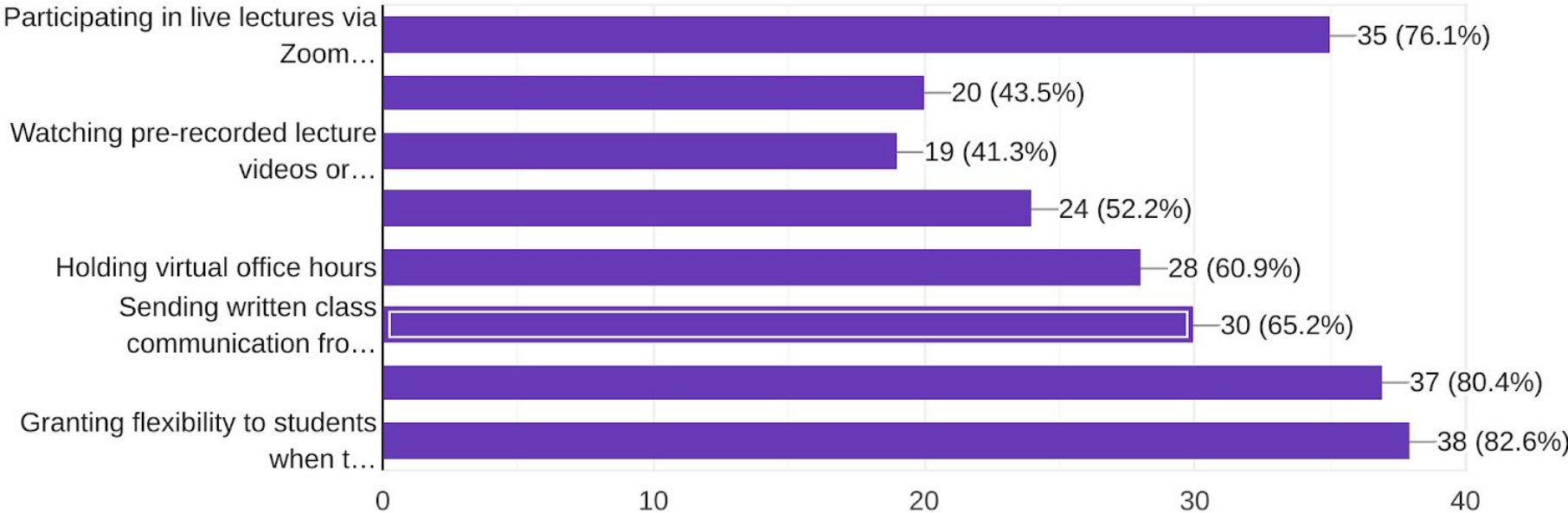
48 responses

Student reporting of faculty instructional practices is generally consistent with faculty self-reporting. Among faculty respondents, the most frequently used instructional practices were sending written communication to students (80.4%), granting flexibility to students (82.6%), and giving live lectures via Zoom (76%).

Thinking about all your spring 2020 remote classes as a whole, what instructional practices did you use? Check all that apply.
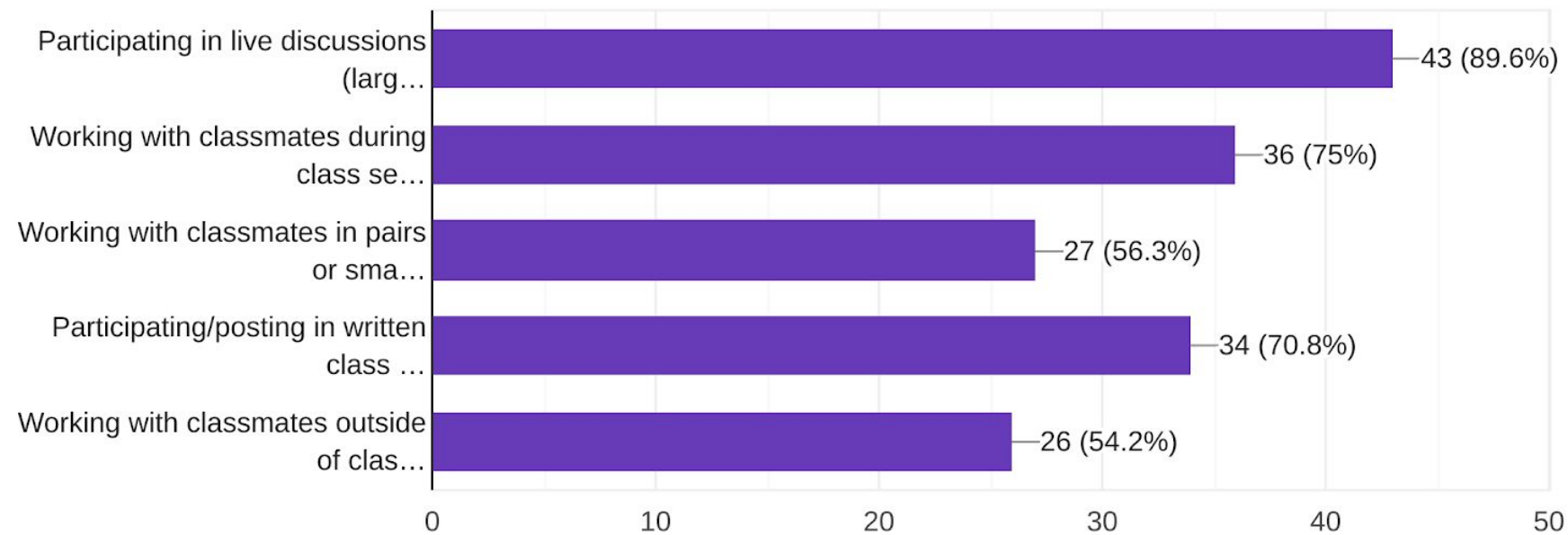
46 responses

The frequency with which both students and faculty reported instructor-centered teaching practices (live lectures viz Zoom and faculty sending written communication to students) implies that faculty had a hard time transitioning student-centered or active learning activities to remote instruction. As relates to active learning, the majority of student respondents indicated that faculty used discussion-based

pedagogy most frequently. Nearly 90% of student respondents participated in live discussions, while nearly 71% participated in virtual discussions.

Thinking about all your spring 2020 remote classes as a whole, what active learning activities did you participate in? Check all that apply.
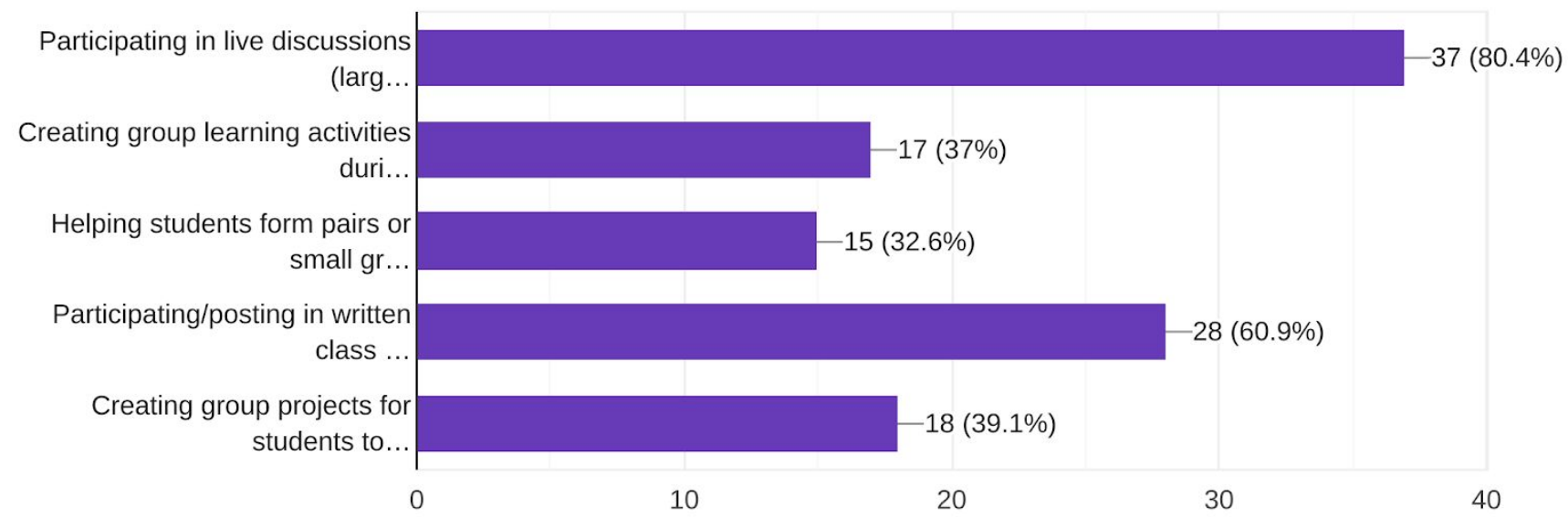
48 responses

The emphasis on discussion based pedagogy is also reflected in the results of the faculty survey. 80% of faculty reported using live discussions and nearly 61% reported using written discussions. The frequency with which faculty adopted discussion based pedagogy as their "go-to" active learning strategy is not surprising given the widespread adoption of Zoom as a teaching tool (discussed below). In terms of functionality and ease of transition, moving in-class discussions to Zoom/remote discussions or online discussions on Canvas is a relatively easy shift. Transitioning other active learning strategies from the classroom to remote delivery is far more

time, thought, and labor intensive. Therefore, it is not surprising that far fewer faculty used group learning activities, small group or pair activities, or group projects.

Thinking about all your spring 2020 remote classes as a whole, what active learning activities did you use? Check all that apply.

46 responses

Students and faculty were also asked about faculty skill with technology. Students generally viewed faculty as skilled with technology, with nearly 90% of respondents rating faculty at 3 or higher (out of a 5 point scale). Faculty rated their tech skills similarly high, with 95.6% of respondents rating themselves at a 3 or higher. When asked about their comfort with technology, faculty similarly rated themselves highly, with 93.5% of respondents rating themselves at a 3 or higher.

Faculty Technology Use

Both faculty and students were asked about faculty adoption of technology, and their answers were generally consistent. 95.8% of students reported that faculty adopted Zoom and Canvas. Faculty also reported high rates of adoption of these two tools; 91.3% of faculty reported using Zoom and 80.4% of faculty reported using Canvas. Students reported that 62.5% of faculty used G Suite tools (Docs, Drive, Slides, etc.), and 47.8% of faculty reported using G Suite in their teaching. Kahoot was the 4th highest used tool, with 17.4% of faculty reporting that they used it (compared to 14.6% of students who reported that faculty used Kahoot). None of the other tools listed (EdPuzzle, ThingLink, etc.) were adopted by more than 13% of faculty.

Technology Challenges

Students and faculty were asked open ended questions about their technology challenges. Responses among both faculty and students showed commonalities. Two main themes emerged in both groups:
- Technical problems with Zoom - audio, the feed being laggy or glitchy, etc.
- Internet connectivity issues (unreliable or weak wifi, general lack of internet access, limited bandwidth), especially for students.
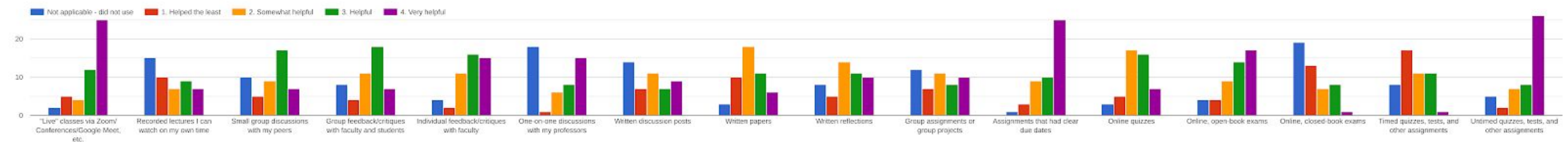
Among both faculty and student respondents, internet connectivity/access was the most frequently reported technology problem.

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Student Learning

Students were asked about which faculty instructional practices helped them learn course materials. The instructional practices that students **rated most highly** as helping them learn were: participating in live Zoom sessions, individual feedback from faculty, assignments with clear due dates, open-book exams, and untimed exams and quizzes. The instructional practices that were **rated most poorly** in helping students learn were: online closed book exams and timed quizzes. This second data point reveals a flaw with the question, as it included both formative (learning) activities and summative (evaluation) activities. Our goal with this question was to determine what types of formative assessments were viewed as most helpful by students; in that regard, the activities students rated most highly provide that information.
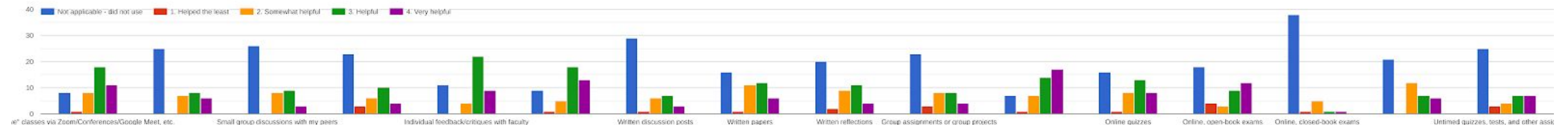
Several instructional practices were distributed evenly across student responses, indicating that those practices were more beneficial for some than others. Those practices included: recorded lectures, small group discussions, discussion posts, written papers and reflections, and group projects.

Faculty responses to the same question about which instructional practices helped students learn yielded somewhat different results. Faculty reported that the following instructional practices best helped their students learn the course materials: live zoom sessions, one-on-one discussions between faculty and students, assignments with clear due dates, untimed tests and quizzes.   It is interesting to note that the practices students identified as most helpful for their learning were not necessarily those identified by faculty.

Faculty responses were also similar to those of students in regards to which teaching methods best allowed students to demonstrate their learning, with individual feedback and one-on-one discussions rating the highest. Faculty reported that written papers, online quizzes, and untimed exams allowed students to demonstrate their learning. Faculty also reported that the three practices most helpful to students were: granting flexibility to students, students receiving regular written communication from faculty via email/Canvas/etc., and students receiving regular written communication via discussion boards/feedback, etc.

When asked about instructional practices that allowed them to demonstrate their learning, students reported that small group discussions, untimed tests or quizzes, group feedback with a faculty member, written reflections, and online open book exams allowed them to best demonstrate what they had learned.

Thinking about all of your spring 2020 remote classes as a whole, please check FIVE of the teaching methods below that best allowed you to DEMONSTRATE your learning:

48 responses

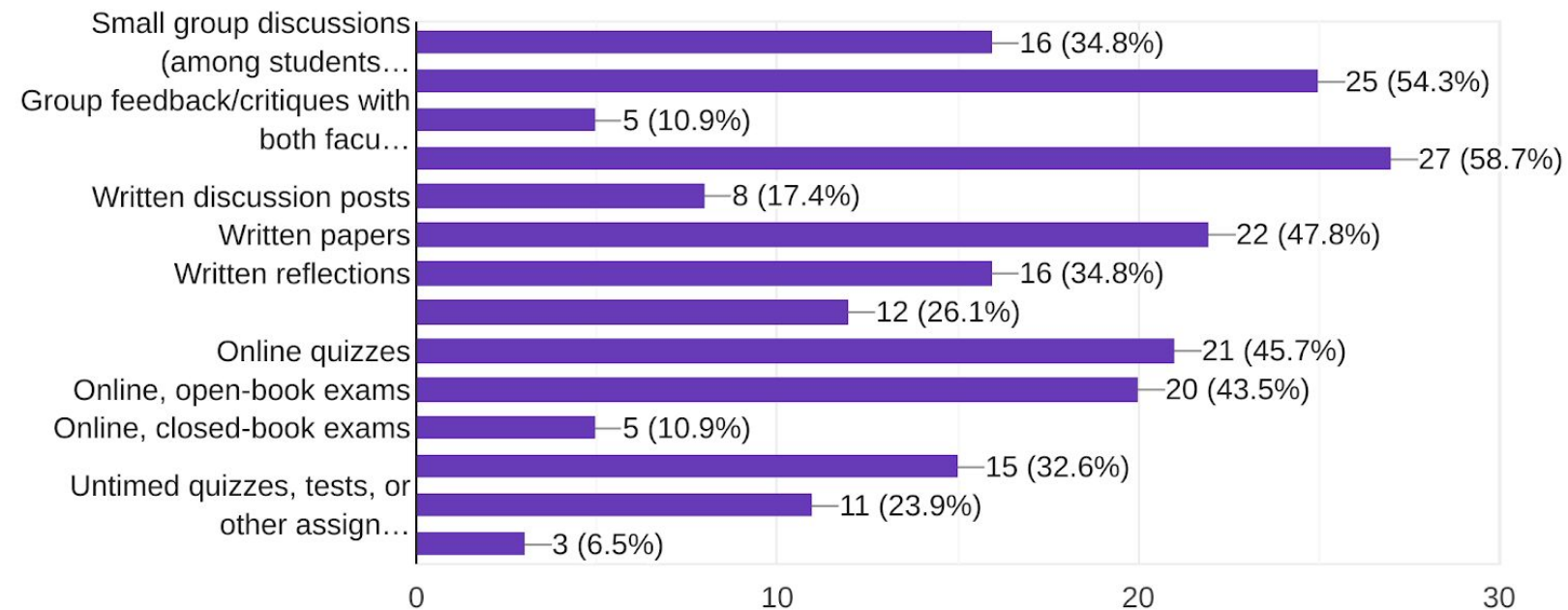| Teaching method	Count
Small group discussion with my peers	28 (58.3%)
	18 (37.5%)
Group feedback/critiques with faculty a…	23 (47.9%)
	19 (39.6%)
Written discussion posts	18 (37.5%)
Written papers	21 (43.8%)
Written reflections	23 (47.9%)
	16 (33.3%)
Online quizzes	13 (27.1%)
Online, open-book exams	23 (47.9%)
Online, closed-book exams	2 (4.2%)
	3 (6.3%)
Untimed quizzes, tests, or other assign…	30 (62.5%)

Faculty were asked the same questions.

Thinking about all of your spring 2020 remote classes as a whole, please check FIVE of the teaching methods below that best allowed your students to DEMONSTRATE their learning:

46 responses

Bar chart showing responses:
- Small group discussions (among students…): 16 (34.8%)
- 25 (54.3%)
- Group feedback/critiques with both facu…: 5 (10.9%)
- 27 (58.7%)
- Written discussion posts: 8 (17.4%)
- Written papers: 22 (47.8%)
- Written reflections: 16 (34.8%)
- 12 (26.1%)
- Online quizzes: 21 (45.7%)
- Online, open-book exams: 20 (43.5%)
- Online, closed-book exams: 5 (10.9%)
- Untimed quizzes, tests, or other assign…: 15 (32.6%)
- 11 (23.9%)
- 3 (6.5%)

Learning Challenges

Both students and faculty were asked open-ended questions about the challenges they faced in regards to learning. Both populations expressed general dissatisfaction with their remote teaching/learning experiences, though both populations also indicated that they understood why things were done the way they were and that, under the circumstances, faculty did quite well with remote teaching.

Like the question about technology problems, there were several themes that emerged among both groups. Recurring issues reported by both faculty and students include:
- Multiple students/faculty referenced the difficulty of attending synchronous sessions and/or studying while at home and juggling the various responsibilities students faced.
- Difficulty identifying a designated place for students to attend class or do coursework/study.
- Student engagement - both in class and with peers

In addition to the themes that appeared in both student and faculty responses, students also reported the following challenges:
- Difficulty maintaining focus/motivation for schoolwork
- Difficulty maintaining attention and/or engagement during Zoom sessions, especially ones that were primarily lecture
- Unclear expectations or deadlines for assignments from faculty
- Lack of communication or unclear communication from faculty
- Loss of direct access to faculty (harder to ask questions in class, more difficult to get help when needed, etc.)

Faculty members also articulated several recurring issues:
- Academic honesty/dishonesty
- Zoom fatigue, especially among those whose students did not turn on their cameras in synchronous class sessions
- Increased workload - faculty reported that it took much longer to prep their courses for remote delivery than face-to-face classes
- Faculty reported that first year students and/or larger classes struggled more with the transition to remote learning than upper level students and/or smaller classes.

Additional Information

Chris Abrams, Dean of Student Affairs, conducted a student focus group to get feedback on the student experience with remote teaching. This focus group was conducted at the request of the Board of Trustees, and was completed separately and independently from the surveys discussed in this report. Dean Abrams' focus group consisted of 8 student leaders, with participants representing campus demographics, including: racial/ethnic minority students, religious minority students, student-athletes, and students involved in Greek life. Because the 8 students who participated were not selected at random, their comments and feedback (like the comments and feedback provided by the 48 students who responded to the CTL's survey) are not necessarily representing the overall student experience as a whole, but rather of the experiences of the 8 students who participated. Chris Abrams summarized the student feedback as follows:
- Remote learning needs to be more vibrant if it were to happen again. The students all understood how quickly the University pivoted but noted a need for greater active remote learning if this were to happen again.
- Also of note were international students and those who live in distant time zones like the West Coast. An 8am class [in Ohio] is 5am in California.
- One student noted that a professor increased his/her "office hours" to be more attentive to student needs, which was greatly appreciated.
- One student asked if remote learning was an option for the fall if students or families did not feel safe sending their child to campus.
- Faculty and staff could have been more understanding of a lack of WiFI for some students or WiFI issues. Some households had 4 or more people attempting to access WiFI at one time and not everyone was understanding.
- Overall, the group of students is not interested in remote learning in the future unless absolutely necessary.

Takeaways

The survey results also indicated that Heidelberg's faculty did a good job of continuing their teaching in the face of major challenges. This is something to be very proud of. Heidelberg's faculty rose to the occasion, providing continuity of instruction for all their students and dedicating countless hours to re-prepping their courses and supporting students.

But, both faculty and students expressed general dissatisfaction over remote teaching and learning from the Spring 2020 semester. Multiple students and faculty stated that they would not like to repeat their experiences of the Spring 2020 semester. Both faculty and students expressed a general sense of exhaustion after the Spring semester, and both faculty and students indicated that they preferred face-to-face teaching over remote teaching. As stated in the opening summary, the low response rate among students makes it difficult to extrapolate larger patterns from the survey data. However, the CTL can make a few pedagogy recommendations based on the information provided.

CTL Recommendations for Future Remote/Online Teaching and Learning

1. Heidelberg should consider investing in programs/software that helps faculty identify academic dishonesty, including (but not limited to):
    a. Resuming our Turnitin.com subscription
    b. Purchasing access to a lockdown browser or remote proctoring system such as Respondus, Proctorio, or Honorlock
2. Heidelberg should investigate the adoption of additional technologies to support teaching and learning, including:
    a. Lecture capture technology for a variety of teaching spaces, including large lecture halls, general purpose meeting rooms, classrooms, and lab spaces
    b. Respondus licenses to support faculty who need to convert and import exams into Canvas
    c. Other possible programs that can help make Canvas more math/science friendly
3. The CTL should continue offering faculty development opportunities on the following topics:
    a. Online pedagogy (including all modalities of online instruction - synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid, etc.)

  b. Canvas tools

  c. External tools (websites, programs, etc.) that support student learning

4. Faculty should consider a combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities for future online teaching. Students reported appreciating flexibility and having difficulty (due to school/home life/work/technology issues) with entirely synchronous sessions.

5. Faculty should consider diversifying their pedagogy to make their teaching more active and student/learner-centered. The most frequently used instructional practice (according to both students and faculty) was "Live Lectures Using Zoom".

  a. This is especially relevant for lower-level courses or courses with higher enrollments. Faculty reported more difficulty engaging with students over Zoom in lower level or higher enrolled courses. Multiple students reported difficulty staying focused during Zoom sessions, and multiple faculty reported that student engagement was difficult to gauge using Zoom.

6. Faculty should consider ways to build community and/or encourage interaction among students in future remote learning. This can not only help combat student apathy for remote learning, but can also help maintain a student's connection to Heidelberg as an institution.

7. Faculty should continue being flexible with deadlines, especially if we continue remote teaching and learning.

8. All faculty should consider using Canvas as a basic instructional tool, even if only to post resources for their classes. Basic Canvas use will make future remote teaching less difficult on both students and faculty, if all parties are used to using the LMS in even a basic way.