



QM<sup>PLUS</sup>

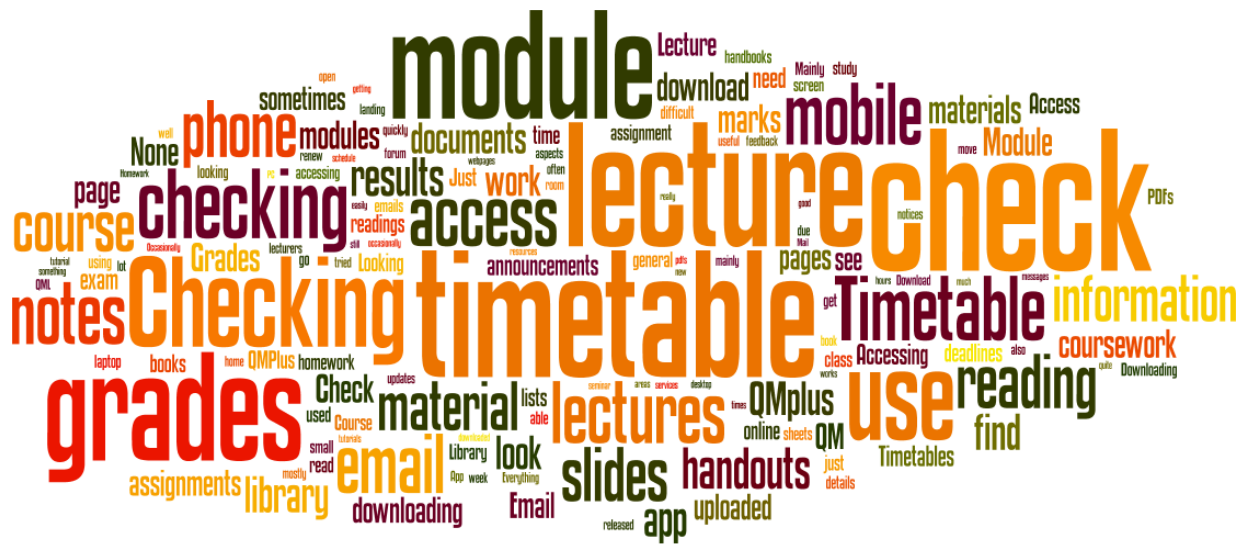
# QMplus 2013/14 Student Survey

A report by the E-Learning Unit, Queen Mary University of London

By: Brett Lucas

February 2015

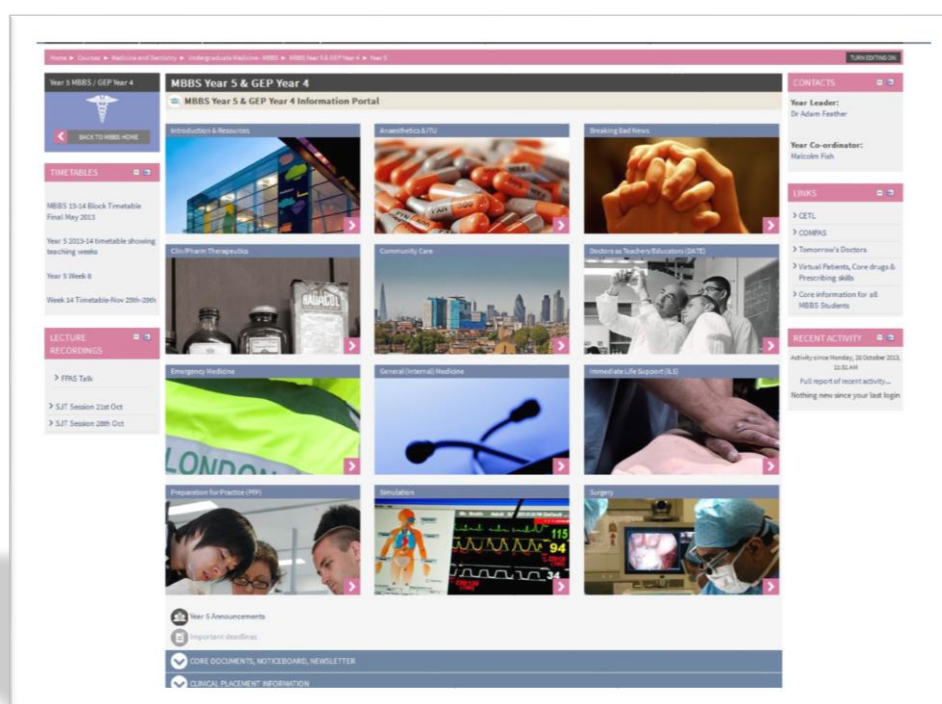
 Queen Mary  
University of London



Student responses to the question: What aspects of QMplus do you use on your mobile phone?– presented as a word cloud from [Wordle](#)

# 1 TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Table of Contents.....	3
2	Foreword.....	5
3	Executive summary.....	6
4	Background and Methodology.....	15
5	About the respondents.....	19
6	Orientation and use.....	27
7	Supporting student learning.....	42
8	Technical support.....	69
9	Look and feel.....	75
10	Usability.....	88
11	Useful tools, Enhancements & General comments.....	93
12	Conclusion.....	100
13	Appendix.....	102



*The Information Portal page for Year 5 and GEP Year 4 undergraduate Medicine (MBBS)*



## 2 FOREWORD

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Use of QMplus has grown immensely since its launch with one faculty and three schools back in 2012 to its now comprehensive use across QMUL. This report is particularly important since we are for the first time surveying students as QMplus is universal and staff and students are accessing the environment more often. Early in 2014/15, we hit one million logins in a single month – double the previous year.

Incredible effort goes into running QMplus from staff across many parts of the college and the fruits of these efforts are borne out in these survey results. Students are becoming more dependent on QMplus as it takes a more prominent role amongst their learning resources. Alongside this, a community has grown up over the past two years of engaged staff who are motivated to use QMplus effectively and who make it possible for us to respond to the messages that emerge from this survey. QMplus will need continuous improvement if it is to adequately support student learning at QMUL, and I am pleased to see that between the two surveys significant progress has been made. Right now we have developments in the pipeline that will be available to students next year and that address some of their concerns.

Stella Ekebuisi

Head of E-Learning

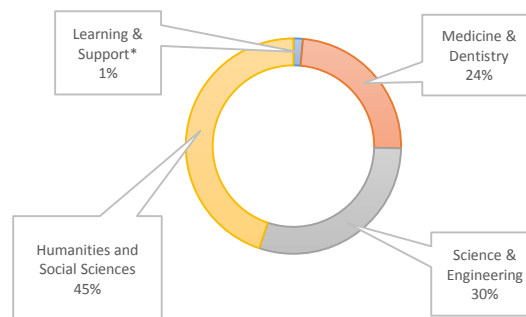
## 3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

During the academic year 2012/13, QMplus was introduced into all three academic faculties at Queen Mary University of London under a project called *QMplus phase I*. This phase saw QMplus used within all taught modules in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), all postgraduate taught and distance programmes in the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD), and all taught programmes in the Institute of Dentistry.

In the academic year 2013/14, QMplus was introduced into the remaining schools and departments of the college including all schools in the Faculty of Science & Engineering, the 5 year Undergraduate Medical programme (MBBS) and the newly created Joint Programme at Nanchang University in China. This second part of the project was called *QMplus phase II*. Thus, for the first time since the introduction of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to Queen Mary all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students were able to access an online module /course to complement their face-to-face teaching. This had been the ambition of the strategic plan 2010-15.

**Figure 1: Proportion of survey respondents represented by each faculty**



The purpose of carrying out the 2013/14 student survey was to gauge what are arguably the most important measures of the effectiveness of a new system:

- What do the students who have been using it to study think of it?
- Has it helped enrich and enable their learning?
- Have we got the balance of design and usability right?
- Do students feel that their experience has improved by using the tool?
- Have the changes made after the first year of operation enhanced student learning?

This survey was administered over six weeks from mid-May to the end of June 2014. In total we received 780 responses which compares to 542 responses in the 2012/13 QMplus survey. This represents a response rate of around 4.5% of the total eligible headcount<sup>1</sup>.

*More detail can be found in section 5 & 6 of the report*

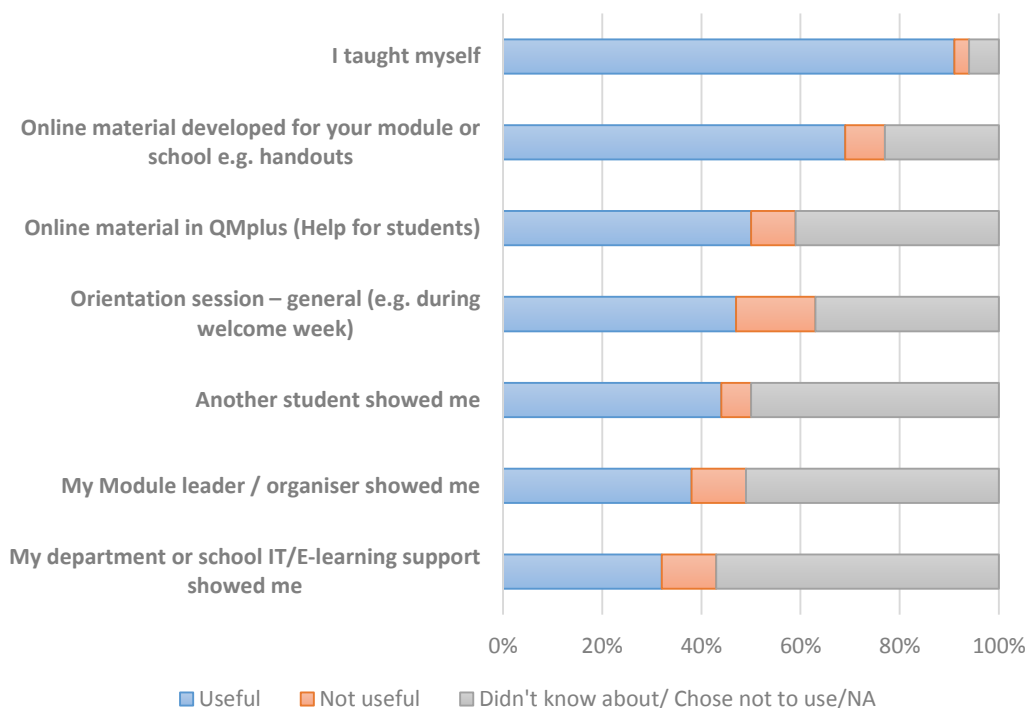
<sup>1</sup> Data source: Queen Mary Strategic Planning Office statistics: <http://qm-web.planning.qmul.ac.uk/FactsAndFigures/StudentStatistics/index.html>

## 3.2 KEY FINDINGS

### 3.2.1 Orientation and access

The results in this section demonstrate that the balance of approaches we have employed for orientating students to the learning environment is about right. On the whole self-directed methods have proved most useful, with students learning as they go along or accessing handouts or online material available through QMplus itself. This year we have seen an increase in the development of handouts on QMplus at School level and these have proved popular too.

**Figure 2. Perceptions of the usefulness of QMplus training and orientation opportunities**



63% of respondents (485) are accessing QMplus at least once a day up from 58% in 2012/13. Of those, 37% are accessing QMplus more than once a day (285 respondents) up 6% from the previous year. We also see that the vast majority of students are accessing QMplus at least once a week (93%).

**What aspects of QMplus do you use on your mobile phone?**

*“To gain access to lecture slides. However, the mobile interface of QMplus still needs a lot of improvement. Currently it is still very difficult to navigate on a mobile”*

The results of this year’s survey provide a wealth of information about how, when and where students are accessing our VLE. We learn that mobile device usage has grown compared to last year particularly for off-campus access. It is no longer possible to make assumptions about standard access methods and standard browsers or operating systems as the landscape is so diverse and varies depending on context. Statistics across all device

types showed that more than 50% of respondents are using mobile devices on campus, at home and on the move.

The move to mobile devices to access the VLE can also be viewed as a great pedagogical opportunity for educators. Mobile devices can more easily be integrated into teaching experiences whether in

labs, seminar rooms or out in the field and offer a host of tools that can be employed by students when working on coursework or developing e-portfolios.

More detail can be found in section 7 of the report.

### 3.2.2 Supporting student learning

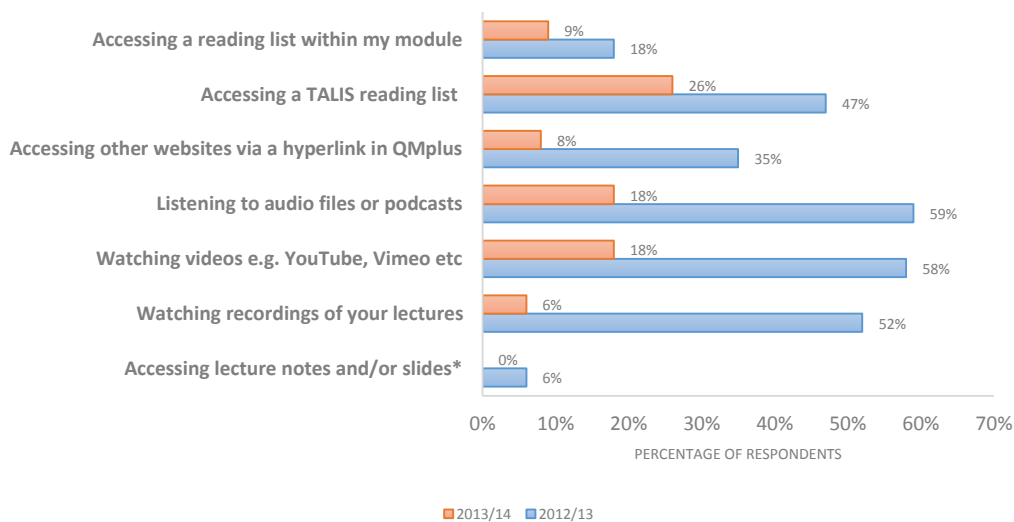
#### 3.2.2.1 Teaching materials

There is an overall trend of increased awareness across all categories of teaching material i.e. more respondents had encountered them or knew they were there in this survey compared to the last.

*“Not all lecturers are using the system fully. e.g. some lecturers put assessment details, revision slides and lots of other useful information on there whilst others put up a bare minimum of lecture slides”*

Perhaps the most important message coming out of this section is that the core teaching materials made available through QMplus i.e. lecture notes and slides, reading lists, links to external websites and access to videos of lectures (Q-Review) are all seen as useful by students, in fact in the case of notes and slides 67% found them *very useful*.

**Figure 3: Comparison of respondents who had never heard of different teaching materials in QMplus 2013/14 survey vs 2012/13**



There were, however, a lot of comments in the optional questions about the consistency, quality and provision of those teaching materials.

Respondents did not rate links to multimedia content to be as useful as the other teaching materials investigated, though many respondents had not encountered these kinds of content at all. This may be due to the fact that curating a set of multimedia materials and linking them to key areas of the curriculum takes time and energy, it may be due to the lack of quality external resources worth linking to or it might be a question of awareness of the ease with which resources such as this can be included in QMplus. Many students told us how useful Q-Review was (*“Q-Review is very handy”*) though we also received a substantial number of comments about reliability and quality of the provision, as well as a desire for more of it, and making its availability more prominent in the module layout.

More detail can be found in section 8.2 of the report.



### 3.2.2.2 Assessment and Feedback Tools, Methods and Approaches

Assessment and feedback are two of the most important aspects of the student learning experience and if we can get them right in QMplus then we can make a huge impact on the way students perceive their experience at Queen Mary. There are lots of variables that make up the lifecycle of assessment and the VLE is only one part of it. Every school, department and institute has their own processes and finding alignment can be tricky.

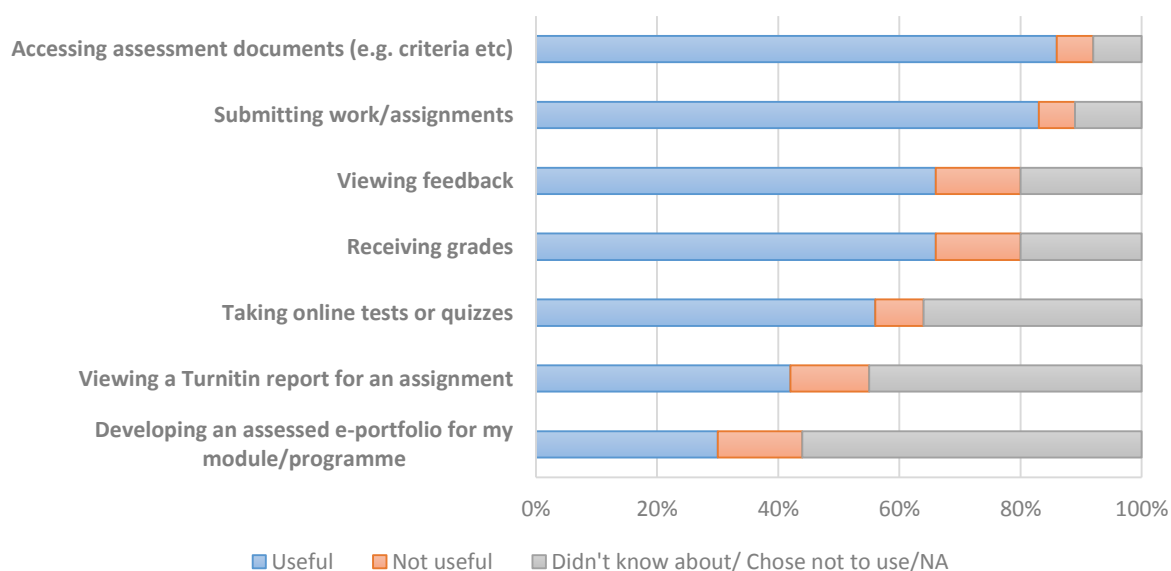
Assignment submission in QMplus proved useful for most, but many students commented about the lack of assignment receipts, the mixture of buttons on screen or the lack of information about what to do if something went wrong.

Assessment information is rated as most useful in this section, but students are also looking for this to be more up to date, they would like to have links to worked solutions or past exam papers and they would like that consistently across modules.

Grades and feedback were widely commented on too. In this section they have been rated as useful for the majority of students but what they are also asking for is school wide decisions about where the grades are going to live: QMplus? MYSIS? Bespoke systems? They are also asking for the grades to be more accessible on the module homepage. As far as feedback is concerned there is a call for it to be provided, provided more consistently and for students to be notified when it is available.

Given the complexity of assessment, we recommend that we do not carry out any significant development of assessment and feedback tools in QMplus prior to the college carrying out a full examination of the requirements of assessment and whether current systems for supporting those processes are fit for purpose. When we understand what is required in a clear and consistent fashion we should align our e-learning systems to match those needs.

**Figure 4. Perceptions of the usefulness of different QMplus assessment tools, methods and approaches**



More detail can be found in section 8.3 of the report.

### 3.2.2.3 Groups and Portfolios

We are still not seeing as much use of the Groups & Portfolios area (Mahara) as we might have expected. In fact the survey results suggest that it is the part of the system that students are requested to use the least in their studies. This may be due to lack of awareness of its potential to support teaching and learning and it may also be the fault of the software itself i.e. lacking particular functionality.

**Of all the ways used to support your learning in the Groups & Portfolios area of QMplus which was the most or least useful and why**

*"I think that if each module had like a chat/forum on its page where each student can quickly ask question and others or the teacher can reply... something like groups on facebook but on each module site; so you don't have to look for it, go different*

More detail can be found in section 8.4 of the report.

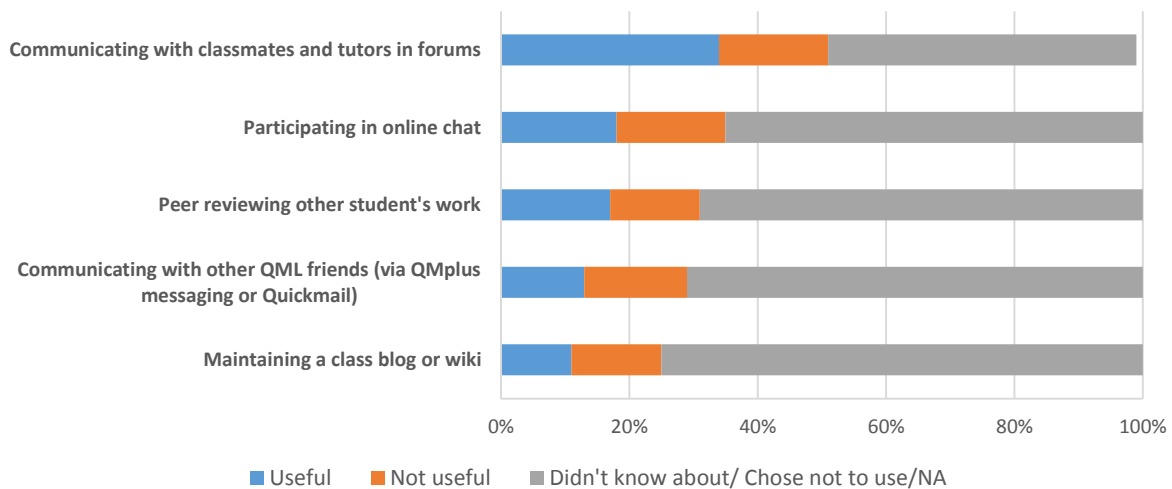
### 3.2.2.4 Collaborative activities

Like the Groups & Portfolios area, the collaborative tools in QMplus are not being used as widely as we might have thought. Building collaborative activities in QMplus that work can take considerable time and effort. When they work they can be particularly enjoyable for all involved. A persistent group of respondents simply do not know about some tools like blogs, wikis, messaging and peer review capabilities.

Given this, it is pleasing to see that forums are being used and perceived as useful by 37% of respondents, but it may also be considered somewhat surprising that forum use is so low. Asynchronous discussion is one of the bedrocks of blended teaching viewed by many as a relatively easy way to extend the classroom conversation into the virtual space, include unheard voices in the classroom, and allow for more thoughtful response to questions.

Students should be free to choose whatever communication channel they like to chat and email friends. However, there may be specific learning contexts where communication between classmates, group members or between a student and their personal tutor or module lead should be done in a password protected environment that is close to the materials being discussed, free from advertising or more 'private'. For this reason we must ensure that the tools provided are fit for purpose and we should continue to inform users of their presence and how to use them.

**Figure 5. Perceptions of the usefulness of different QMplus collaborative activities**



More detail can be found in section 8.5 of the report.

### 3.2.3 Technical support

The results in this section overall suggest that QMplus is becoming more reliable and that fewer respondents are seeking out help from any of the support channels we investigated. When they do need help, the informal channels of asking friends, colleagues or their module convenor, as well as the online help are all preferred and seen as being useful. When help is required and the preferred channels are not available, or they cannot resolve the problem themselves, then the more formal support provided by the Helpdesk is sought with face-to-face or email support considered to be the most useful, compared with the Helpdesk telephone line.

**Do you have any comments or suggestions to make about technical support?**

*“Perhaps there could always be someone online on QMplus or Twitter who answers queries about QMplus or technological problems. This is what our department has*

*More detail can be found in section 9 of the report.*

### 3.2.4 Look and feel

The results from this section do suggest that in terms of usefulness the various components that make up the design of most module templates rate highly. In fact, the responses received in this section rate the features higher in terms of usefulness than any other question we asked. However the ability to use QMplus on mobile devices was a persistent issue with difficulties in downloading files and viewing content expressed by many.

**We would welcome any further comments about landing pages**

*“would be very very confused without a landing page.”*

*“Needed more information. The original detail remained there for the duration of the year and was never updated.”*

Landing pages were a new innovation for QMplus in the 2013/14 academic year. This survey is the first opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness in delivering a School-level ‘identity’ and information area to the otherwise ‘institutional’ and ‘faculty’ look of QMplus.

Clearly some students struggled to see the usefulness of the landing page and would have preferred a direct route to their learning materials. This was compounded by the fact that for many the page never seemed to change and therefore felt redundant. Other students were more enthusiastic but wanted to see richer, more stimulating and up-to-date content including such things as news and information about what is happening in the school, careers advice and job support etc.

*More detail can be found in section 10 of the report.*

### 3.2.5 Usability

It is pleasing to see that students continue to find it easy to use the core QMplus functionality required on a daily basis i.e. logging in, accessing and downloading files, getting news and announcements etc. In fact only two of the features we explored (*Accessing grades and feedback and navigating around*) were difficult for more than 14% of respondents. That said, four of the features and activities that we asked about had not been tried at all by 75% of respondents and this was unchanged from the first year of QMplus use.

On a more positive note, progress has been made in a number of areas and more students are encountering a richer variety of learning materials in QMplus including Q-Review lectures, quizzes

and audio and video content.

*More detail can be found in section 11 of the report.*

### 3.3 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS & COMPLETED ACTIONS

#### 3.3.1 Key Recommendations

- Consider integrating a standardised question about QMplus into Module evaluations across the college.
- Develop an online 'Welcome pack' for students.
- Find out more about how and why students are using their mobile devices by running focus groups possibly through the student union.
- Publicise the availability and potential value of the QMplus Archive to staff and students.
- Showcase best practice in the use of video and audio in teaching, particularly within QMplus.
- Implement a college-wide evaluation of assessment & feedback with a view to aligning QMplus tools more effectively.
- Profile the benefits of using QMplus Groups & Portfolios (Mahara) for such things as reflecting in an e-portfolio, sharing work with colleagues and supporting group work and interaction.
- Develop a good practice guide for staff in the use of Discussion forums.
- Surface KPIs for the IT Helpdesk based on speed and quality of responses.
- Provide best practice guidelines on designing QMplus module/course areas.
- Communicate survey results to the timetable team in IT services.
- Enhance and expand our guidance and support around advanced features of QMplus including the development of peer assessment and use of discussion forums.
- On the next upgrade work with our theme designers to ensure navigation, usability and prominence is given to those features deemed important by QMplus users.

#### 3.3.2 Completed Actions

- Bespoke workshop or training sessions now being offered to schools, tailored to specific needs.
- QMplus Phase III project is working on making the Mahara software mobile friendly delivery June 2015.
- The 'Module info block' is now easier to edit and now takes contact information from the QMplus profile of the module convenor automatically where it exists.
- Two video recording booths (Mile-End and Whitechapel) to be launched in spring 2015 enabling easy production of high quality content.
- Currently developing enhanced integration of grades between QMplus and MySIS to be implemented in March release to QMplus.
- Developed a suite of video and text-based support materials for students showing them how to take advantage of the key features of Mahara.
- The new ELU website has a guide for staff on enhancing communication.
- Live online support being piloted in Spring 2015.
- Implementing a 'mobile friendly Mahara' theme as part of QMplus phase III (June 2015).
- An optional news 'ticker' allowing schools to promote local news and the capability of adding a Facebook group feed was added to the functionality in December 2014.
- Development of a 4E framework to assist in the development of e-learning around the college.
- Book a Learning Technologist scheme launched.

## 3.4 CONCLUSION

The 2013/14 QMplus survey has provided an extremely valuable and informative snapshot of the primary tool provided for e-learning at Queen Mary and as such will help guide its development over the forthcoming year.

780 students not only completed the mandatory questions but also spent a considerable amount of time providing detailed commentary, including an incredible 607 comments on aspects of QMplus they used on mobile devices. We had clearly touched a nerve! It is heartening to see that level of engagement so late in the year which suggests that just as students have told us they are using these tools on a daily basis, they also feel passionately about them as we do and are keen to work with us on ensuring that they are fit for purpose.

Students have commented for two years in a row now that they would like to see better and more consistent use of QMplus across their modules. Whilst we must celebrate the achievements we have made in extending VLE usage to all corners of Queen Mary teaching, we must keep our eye on the way the system is being used with a view to maintaining standards and enhancing what we do.

### 3.4.1 Improved Awareness

The most pleasing trend that has emerged from this year's survey is the clear and significant increase in awareness of the tools and functionality available within QMplus compared to the first year of its rollout. Of particular note is the increase in awareness of the tools within the *Mahara – Groups and Portfolios* area. On the other hand, almost 50% of survey respondents had not used an online discussion forum, often considered a basic blended learning tool, so we still have some work to do in demonstrating to academic staff ways in which the system can be used to enhance learning and teaching.

### 3.4.2 Consistency

It's one thing to have awareness of tools and functionality but a greater leap to actually engage with these tools and incorporate them into teaching and learning. In the survey this year, students indicated that they didn't just want to see stimulating online modules but they also wanted those modules to be designed and organised in consistent ways. If you are going to use Q-Review then use it all the time and make sure the lectures have been captured properly and are properly signposted in the course; if you are going to post grades and feedback via digital channels then post them for all assessments across all modules in the same way and let the students know at the beginning of the year the approach you are going to take.

The 2013/14 survey has revealed that students are happy with QMplus when it is delivering course content but less so when it is being used as a communication tool. Emails received from announcement areas in QMplus are seen as useful but messaging, groups and other 'social' tools are either not known about or perceived as clunky or not fit for purpose.

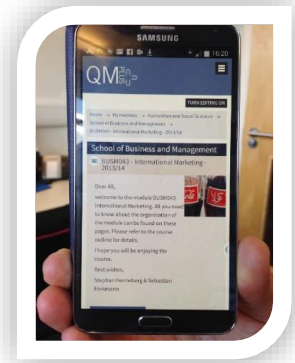
There was a cry from the trenches that consistency in schools and policies are lacking:

*“Not all lecturers are using the system fully. e.g. some lecturers put assessment details, revision slides and lots of other useful information on there whilst others put up a bare minimum of lecture slides.”*

The survey has shown us how valuable it is to have a school strategy in place for using QMplus and to publicise this strategy as widely as possible. This strategy might be prescriptive about the types of content required in a course area, the layout of learning materials, provision of grades and feedback and the configuration of assignments. Once a strategy is in place then it can be demonstrated to students across all levels at the beginning of the semester so that expectations are understood by all parties.

### 3.4.3 Continuous Improvement

Students have indicated that we should not stand still, and we haven't. Since the 2013/14 survey closed, we have been working hard on improving and expanding the e-learning offerings to the college. This year as part of the QMplus Phase III project, we are working to provide an improved communication platform that meets the needs of students when they require the privacy and security that a college-supported system can bring. The lecture capture system (Q-Review) was expanded and upgraded in the summer of 2014, bringing HTML5 streaming capability to mobile and international audiences as well as better and more comprehensive analytics. Simultaneously, HSS has adopted an opt-out policy for the use of Q-Review across all schools with a subsequent leap in the volume of lectures being captured. Undergraduate medicine was already doing this and S & E may follow in 2015.



*The new responsive (Mobile friendly) theme implemented on QMplus in July*

Video streaming capability is being further expanded in the near future with the launch of a college-wide media server (QMplus Media). This will be an effective but easy-to-use platform for staff and students alike to upload and store video content through QMplus. We are also launching two purpose-built video recording studios for staff to capture high quality video and/or handwriting for incorporation into their online teaching.

### 3.4.4 Looking Forwards

As we continue to enhance QMplus we need to ensure that all staff involved with using the system are kept up to date with changes and enhancements. Many staff will only have engaged in formal training during the migration into QMplus, and for some that is almost 3 years ago; a lot has changed in 3 years. The E-Learning Unit must continue to provide opportunities for basic training in the use of the tools within QMplus as well as the more advanced capabilities and we must put particular focus on the opportunities these tools can provide to extend and enhance the excellent teaching that is already taking place.

Finally, an important approach will be to work with faculty e-learning user groups and School administration and management teams to help develop local strategies that support disciplinary pedagogical needs as well as school-wide priorities. At QMUL we can and should continue to enhance our e-learning and teaching through both ambitious strategies (e.g. SETLA<sup>2</sup> and ITTP<sup>3</sup>) and practical implementations of the spirit of these strategies. The E-learning Unit has chosen a 4E enhancement framework that will help to stimulate conversations across the college in this area. With this framework, continued engagement with the QMUL community, and a commitment to improving the technical infrastructure, we will deliver QMplus as the effective online learning environment for all Queen Mary students.

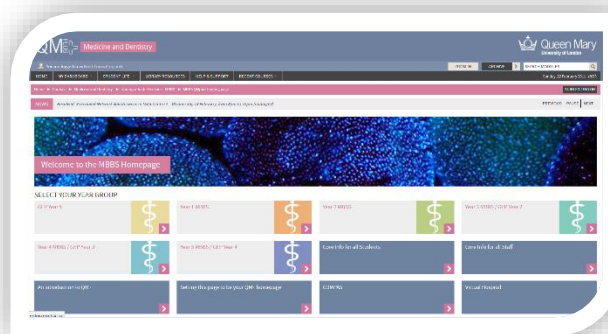
<sup>2</sup> Student Experience, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

<sup>3</sup> IT Transformation Programme

## 4 BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In August 2012 a new online or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) called QMplus was launched at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL). The new system was introduced to replace both the centrally supported VLE that had been in use since 2005 (Blackboard) and a variety of bespoke systems that have been used by Schools in the faculty of Science & Engineering. The rollout took place over two academic years: 2011 – 2013. This survey represents the first opportunity to evaluate the system at the end of the first year of its usage across all taught modules in the college.



New School Landing Page for Undergraduate Medicine (MBBS)

The new VLE consists of two distinct pieces of open-source educational software configured to work as a single environment:

- *Moodle* - for academic staff to design and deliver interactive online modules to students in both blended and distance mode and
- *Mahara* - primarily a student-led environment specialising in the creation of digital or E-portfolios, creation of online groups and some lightweight social networking capability.

These two pieces of software work closely with each other in a single sign-on environment we have called QMplus. QMplus sits at the heart of an ecosystem of software products that are used to support online learning at Queen Mary which includes:

<b>Q-Review:</b> A lecture capture system based on the Echo 360 platform.	<b>MySIS:</b> The student record system.
<b>QuestionMark Perception:</b> A computer-based assessment system that is used by the School of Medicine & Dentistry	<b>Turnitin:</b> Plagiarism detection software
<b>Talis Aspire:</b> Reading list software – supported by the library	

#### 4.1.1 2012/13

In the academic year 2012-13, QMplus was introduced into teaching within all three academic faculties at Queen Mary University of London under a project called *QMplus phase 1*. This phase saw QMplus introduced into all taught modules in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), all postgraduate taught and distance programmes in the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD), and all taught programmes in the Institute of Dentistry.

Although the faculty of Science and Engineering (S&E) was to officially begin using QMplus, during the next phase, there was some take-up in the first year undergraduate programmes in the School of

Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences (SBCS). The system was also fully adopted by our Joint Programme in B.U.P.T<sup>4</sup>, China.

#### 4.1.2 2013/14

In the academic year 2013/14, QMplus was introduced into the remaining schools and departments of the college including all schools in the Faculty of Science & Engineering, the 5 year Undergraduate Medical programme (MBBS) and the newly created Joint Programme at Nanchang University in China. This second part of the project was called *QMplus phase II*. Thus, for the first time since the introduction of a learning environment to Queen Mary all UG and taught PG students were able to access an online module /course to complement their face-to-face teaching. This had been the ambition of the strategic plan for the university 2010-15.

During the QMplus phase II project which took place from January to November 2013, we implemented a number of new technical developments and design features. Highlights of this development included:

- Development and implementation of *Faculty and School Landing pages* giving schools the opportunity to develop their identity in QMplus.
- *Personal timetables* introduced into QMplus through the 'Welcome' block on the logged in home page and landing pages.
- *Module timetables* introduced into QMplus through the Module Info block in module areas.
- An upgraded *Module info block* providing a more user-friendly interface for updating key module data such as office hours and teaching team.
- A *Module dashboard* for School landing pages providing an overview of recent activity, assignments and forum posts across all modules a student is registered on.
- An *Archive* of modules from the previous year 2012/13 forming the first year of a new five year archive service made available to students while they study at Queen Mary.
- New plugins including the *OU Blog*, *OU Wiki* and the *Certificate*.
- The ability to post *anonymously to forums*.
- An upgrade of Mahara from version 1.4 to 1.5.
- The Turnitin direct assignment plugin.
- *Numerous bug fixes*.

Professional Services is represented in QMplus at Faculty level as 'Learning and Support'. In 2013/14 the majority of the use in this area came from the CAPD<sup>5</sup> and courses provided by the library.

To facilitate the changes required to make QMplus a success when rolled out to all modules in the college a series of ambitious and forward-looking strategies were developed at faculty level and in some cases adapted to local school, department and institute contexts. These e-learning strategies acted as enablers to help shape the development of the emerging service and in addition helped guide the design and configuration of the system during the first two years of the rollout of QMplus.

## 4.2 PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of carrying out the 2013/14 student survey was to gauge what is arguably one of the most important measures of the effectiveness of a new system after it has been rolled out across the whole college: What do the students who have been using it to study think of it? Has it helped enrich and enable their learning? Have we got the balance of design and usability right? Do students feel that

<sup>4</sup> BUPT: Beijing University of Post and Telecommunications

<sup>5</sup> CAPD: Centre for Academic and Professional Development – The former Learning Institute at Queen Mary



their experience has improved by using the tool? Have the changes made after the first year of operation enhanced student learning?

The survey sought student opinions and responses across six main categories covering the uses of QMplus as well as background respondent information.

### 4.3 TOOLS EMPLOYED

The survey was developed and administered via a questionnaire run through the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) Tool<sup>6</sup>.

The survey consisted of 28 questions with some mandatory and some optional long answer questions. Many of the questions were reused from the 2012/13 version which contained 32 questions. In addition the measurement tools employed were changed for several questions e.g. rather than ask about the frequency of use of a particular tool it was felt that the tools 'usefulness' would deliver better results.

The survey was tested on a sample group of students before the design was finalised. The average length of time to complete the survey was 15 – 20 minutes.

Unfortunately the omission of the undergraduate medical programme (MBBS) from *Question 2* (Which School, Department or institute do you study in?) was not picked up in initial testing. This meant some MBBS students completed the survey by selecting another school. After the error was noticed a variant of the survey was created which included the programme concerned. Results from both surveys were therefore combined for this report.

### 4.4 TIMEFRAME & PROMOTION

This survey was administered over 6 weeks from mid-May to the end of June 2014. Entry into a draw to win a Google Nexus tablet computer was offered as an incentive for students to complete the survey.

The survey was advertised through a number of channels at Queen Mary including direct emails to students through QMplus, emails to academics and key school contacts in all faculties, posts to all 4 e-learning user groups, a mini-poster campaign and a prominent graphical link /advertisement for the survey from the home page of QMplus itself.

### 4.5 NOTES ON READING THE REPORT

This report presents the results of the survey in chapters which correspond to the main categories in the questionnaire. The commentary describes the data received then highlights the key findings in each area and compares those to the previous year's survey, which are usually displayed in blue.

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<sup>6</sup> Bristol Online Surveys:

Comments from respondents have been categorised, where possible, and information presented in both graphical and discursive form where appropriate. The underlying raw data may be provided to those Queen Mary staff who are interested by contacting the e-learning unit directly.

Where applicable a selection of student comments is presented along with the results for that question in a section called '*Student voices*'. Comments in this section are presented verbatim.

## 5 ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

In this part of the survey we asked six questions to find out some background information about the respondents. We were interested in which school and campus they are based, whether they were campus-based, distance or part-time, their year of study, what their general attitude to using technologies in their learning is and whether they had used a VLE like QMplus before.

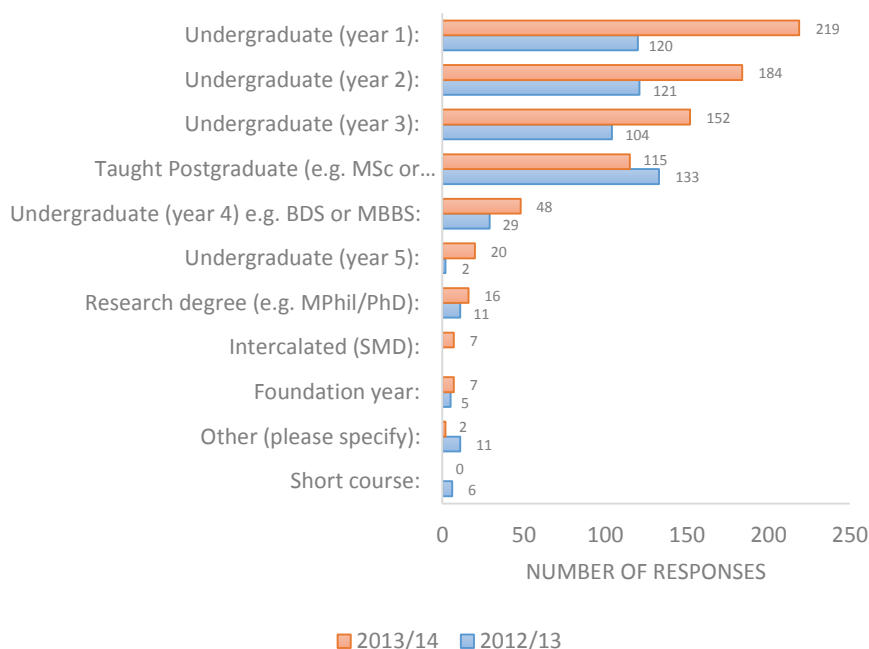
In total we received 780 responses to the survey which compares to 542 responses in the 2012/13 QMplus survey. This represented around 4.5% of the total headcount for students studying at Queen Mary on 1/12/13 - 17,499 excluding PG research students and including the International office and the learning Institute<sup>7</sup>.



Queen Mary Graduation Ceremony – December 2014

### 5.1 YEAR OF STUDY

Figure 6: Survey responses by year of study – 2013/14 vs 2012/13



First year undergraduates represented the majority of respondents at 219 (28% of all responses). Undergraduates overall represented 81% of the total with 630 responses and the remaining 19% of

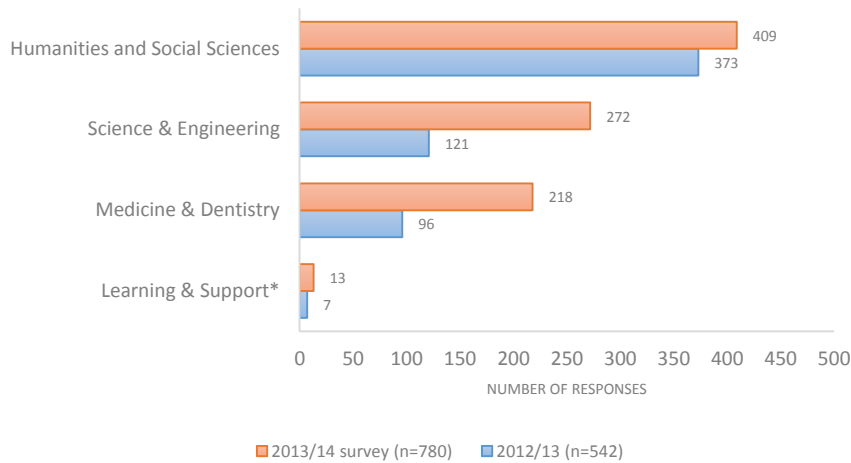
<sup>7</sup> Data source: Queen Mary Strategic Planning Office statistics: <http://qm-web.planning.qmul.ac.uk/FactsAndFigures/StudentStatistics/index.html>

responses (150) came from those studying on taught postgraduate courses, short courses and others (e.g. those offered by the CAPD).

## 5.2 FACULTY AND SCHOOL BREAKDOWN

In this question respondents were asked to select which school, department or institute they studied in. They were allowed to select as many as applied to them.

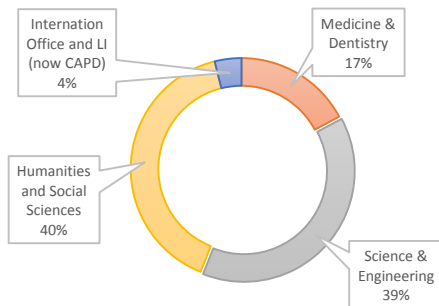
**Figure 7: Survey responses by Faculty – 2013/14 survey vs 2012/13 survey**



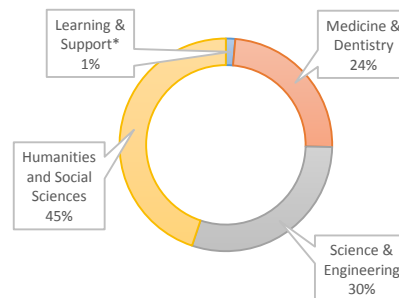
\* Learning & Support represents Professional services departments in QMplus

The greatest number of responses (409 or 52%) came from the schools that make up the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences (HSS). This was followed by 272 (35%) from the Faculty of Science & Engineering (S&E) and 218 (28%) from the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD). As can be seen in the charts below, the overall proportion of responses received from each school is similar to the overall proportion of students studying in each faculty at the time i.e. slightly higher than the overall headcount in HSS & SMD and lower in S & E.

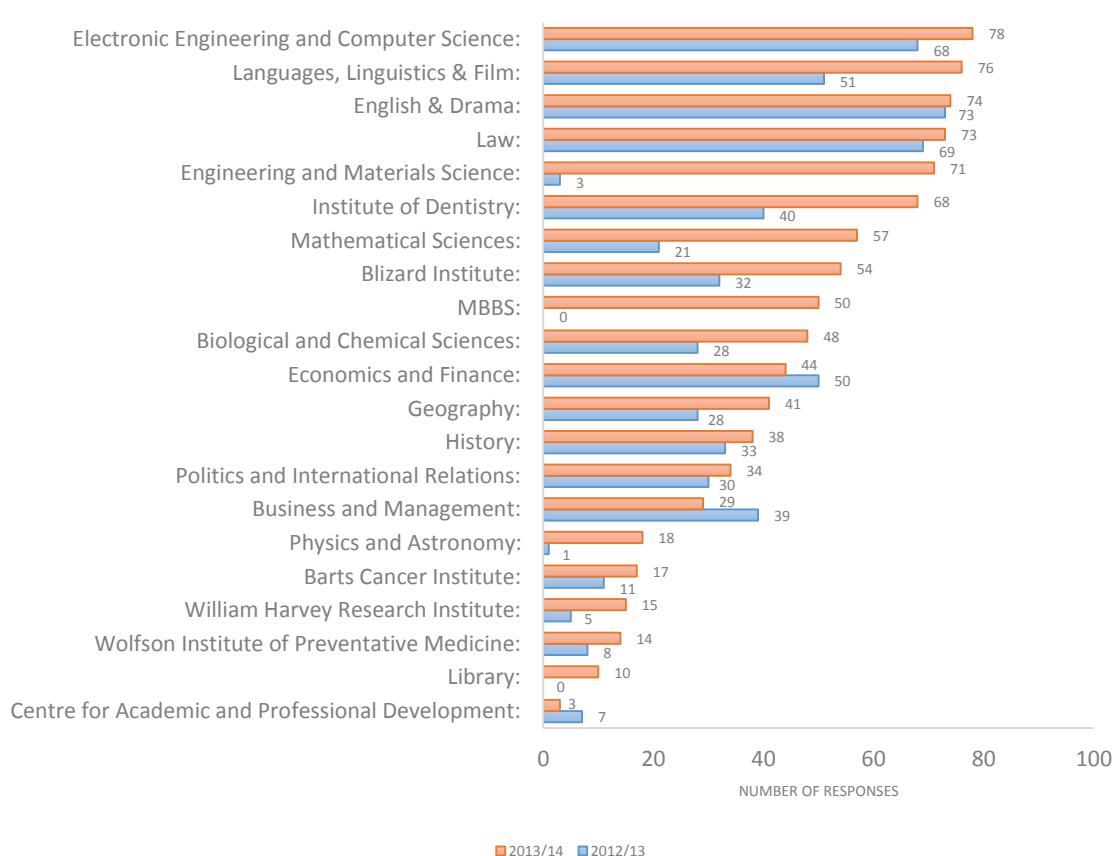
**Figure 8: Proportion of total QMUL headcount represented by each faculty on 1/12/13**



**Figure 9: Proportion of total respondents to the QMplus 2013/14 survey represented by each faculty**



**Figure 10: Number of survey responses by School or Institute**



With respect to the breakdown of respondents by individual school or department we can see that the greatest number of respondents came from the School of Electronic Engineering & Computer Sciences (EECS) with 78 responses (10% of all survey responses and approximately 10% of the total school headcount) this was followed by The School of Languages, Linguistics & Film with 76 responses (9.7% of survey respondents and 11% of school headcount) and the School of English & Drama with 74 responses (9.5%).

Schools and departments with high response rates in HSS included the 63 responses from the Department of Law (8%) and 56 from the Department of English (7%). Disappointingly the number of responses in the School of Economics & Finance and the School of Business and Management dropped from the first survey in 2012/13 to this year.

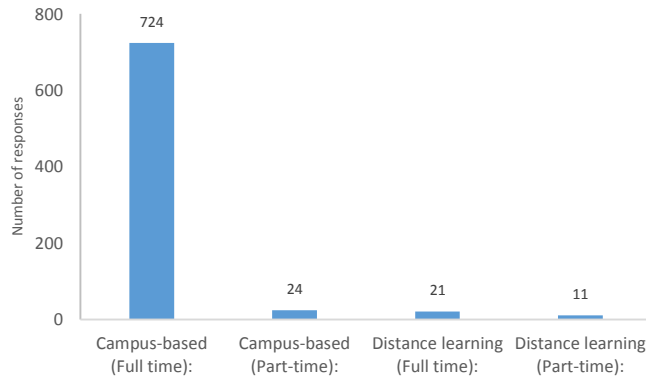
EECS had the largest response in Science & Engineering but good response levels were also seen in Engineering and Material Sciences (SEMS) with 71 responses (9%) and Mathematical sciences with 57 responses (7%).

The Institute of Dentistry had the highest response rate in Medicine & Dentistry with 68 responses (~9%). This was followed by the Blizard Institute with 54 (7%) and Undergraduate Medicine with 50 responses (6.4%). Due to the issue of not including the MBBS in the list of schools when the survey was first released, it is possible that some responses have been attributed to another school in SMD.

Students studying on learning modules offered by the library have also appeared in the survey for the first time this year (10 responses).

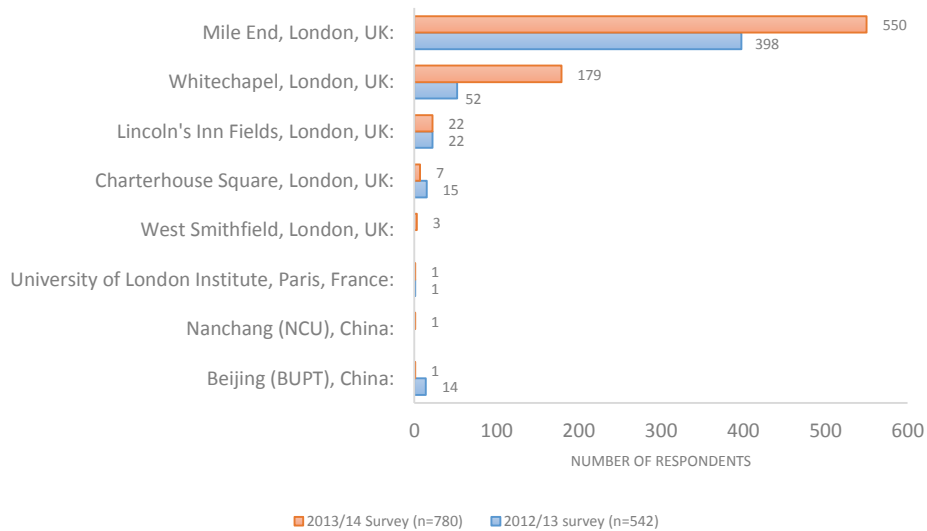
### 5.3 ATTENDANCE MODE AND CAMPUS

**Figure 11: Response by attendance mode**



Respondents were asked to select what their ‘mode of study’ was at Queen Mary. 93% of respondents were studying full time (724), while 4% were studying through one of Queen Mary’s Distance taught postgraduate programmes (taught in the School of Law - <sup>8</sup>LLM , and in the research institutes in SMD).

**Figure 12: Responses by main campus of study – 2013/14 vs 2012/13**

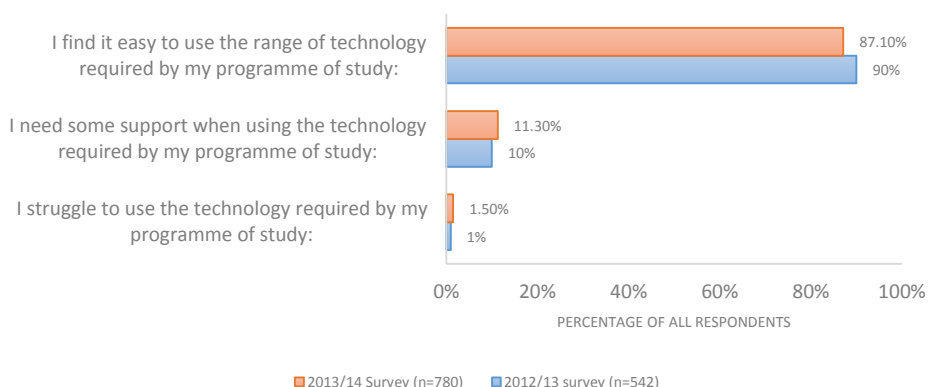


In this section we asked respondents which campus they were mainly studying at. The vast majority of respondents (550) were studying at the largest Queen Mary Campus at Mile End London (71% of all responses), while 23% were studying at the Whitechapel Campus (179), home to much of the teaching in the Medical and Dentistry Schools. 3% responded from the Lincoln’s Inn Fields campus (22) and we only received 2 responses from the QMUL Joint Programme students studying at the Beijing University of Post and Telecommunications (BUPT) and Nanchang Universities. This can be attributed to technical issues with QMplus in China experienced throughout 2012/13.

<sup>8</sup> Postgraduate Programme taught in the School of Law and the Centre for Commercial Law studies

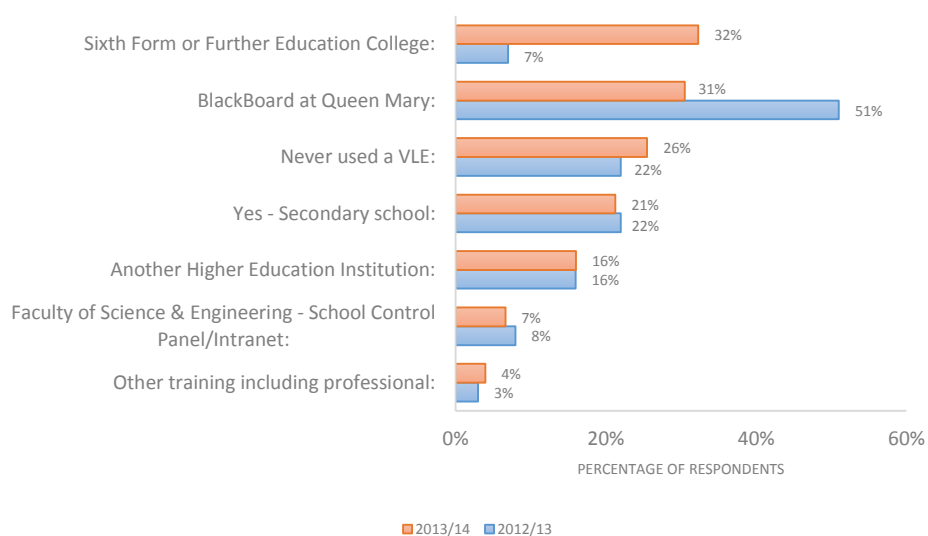
## 5.4 ATTITUDE TO LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES AND PREVIOUS USE

**Figure 13: Respondent feelings about using technology in their studies – 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



We asked respondents how they felt about using technology generally in their learning and found that 87% (682) found technology easy to use in their programme of study. 11% (87) mentioned that they required some support, and only 11 respondents out of all those surveyed (1.5%) indicated that they struggled with the technology required by their programme of study. As can be seen in the bar chart above the overall proportions have not changed substantially from the first QMplus survey.

**Figure 14: Comparison of previous VLE usage – 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



We were particularly interested to know whether students came to QMplus with experience of using Virtual Learning Environments previously in their studies and whether this might have an effect on their attitudes to using the VLE at Queen Mary and their ability to study in the kind of blended context that we promote. Respondents were asked in which previous educational contexts they had used a VLE, and could select as many as applied. Each result is presented as a percentage of the total number of responses for the year surveyed.

74% of all respondents had used some kind of VLE before the 2013/14 academic year (581) compared to 78% in 2012/13. This year the main previous uses of a VLE were in a sixth form or Further Education college (32% or 252 responses) or Queen Mary's former VLE- Blackboard – 31% (238 responses). The number of former QMUL Blackboard users dropped significantly from the previous year's survey – 51% to 31%.

7% of respondents (52) had used the various bespoke VLE systems in S & E (often referred to as 'Control panel' or 'Intranet'). 21% (166) had used VLEs in their Secondary schooling and 16% (125) had encountered VLEs in previous studies in Higher Education.

## 5.5 DISCUSSION

### 5.5.1 Response rate

The response rate to the survey this year was a 40 % improvement on the 2012/13 survey and represented approximately 4-5% of overall student numbers in the college at the time. Whilst these numbers are welcomed we would have liked a higher response rate given that the entire university is now using QMplus. Of particular note are the poor response rates overall from the Faculty of Science & Engineering and the School of Medicine and Dentistry and from particular schools and campuses e.g. Politics & International Relations in HSS with only 34 responses, Physics & Astronomy in S & E with only 18 responses and postgraduate student response rates overall which were rather low (Charterhouse Square results reflect this).

Responses from our Joint Programmes in China were almost non-existent and this was due to the technical problems we experienced throughout the year. Nanchang University students never used QMplus because the performance was so slow. At BUPT performance was also an issue with QMplus pages taking a long time to load for students in Halls of residence and almost impossibly slow for visiting academics from London trying to upload learning materials. There is currently a major project tasked with resolving these technical issues in China and anecdotal evidence already suggests that BUPT in the 2014/15 academic year is using QMplus to much better effect than last year. We must ensure that this usage is matched by an increase in response rates next time we run the survey and we must work closely with our colleagues managing these programmes to achieve this.

Participation in student surveys such as this can be problematic amongst a student body that can feel slightly survey-fatigued.

To encourage a greater response rate from as broad a range of students as we can across the college in the next survey we will need to promote the survey in advance through as many appropriate channels as possible. Many developments and changes were made to QMplus over the summer of 2014 and hopefully students can see how the feedback they provide has a direct correlation to the ongoing growth and development of QMplus. It is incumbent upon the E-Learning Unit and our network of Learning Technologists and Administrators around the college to communicate the benefits of these changes and how they came about to both staff and students.

These findings and observations will all shape the future development of the VLE. Sharing this information with our students will ensure that they know their voices are being heard and will encourage participation when running future surveys.

### 5.5.2 Integrate with module evaluation

Another way to increase the quality of evaluative data about QMplus at a module level would be to incorporate a question about the use of QMplus in teaching into the formal module evaluation for



every module at Queen Mary. Some schools have already begun doing this in 2014 (e.g. Maths). Whilst less detailed than a dedicated survey, this valuable module data could be incorporated into the survey report for QMplus thus presenting a more rounded picture of overall usefulness from a student perspective.

### 5.5.3 Timing

The survey ran from early May to the end of June which meant we spanned the entire exam period at QMUL for most students.

We believe that a higher response rate would be achieved by bringing the survey date forward to the end of Semester A i.e. at a moment in the academic cycle where students will have had enough time to have utilised enhancements that have been added to the Learning Environment during any upgrade over the summer. The additional benefit of running a survey at this time would be that results could be processed in time to inform the subsequent year's development work more effectively.

### 5.5.4 Previous use and experience

The fact that so many students in Higher Education today have already experienced VLEs in other educational contexts and express comfort with using technologies in their studies is a growing trend across the sector. Recent surveys into the Student experience by JISC<sup>9</sup>, and the 2012 UCISA VLE report<sup>10</sup> also point to this trend nationally.

There are obvious benefits from a more digitally comfortable (though not necessarily 'literate') student body as it means that academics can feel more comfortable about exploring some of the innovative pedagogies that are possible with learning technologies without fear of students feeling alienated or unfairly discriminated against (the so-called digital divide). Of course, merely 'using' a learning environment doesn't suggest a lot about the types of learning activities students may have encountered previously but it might suggest that we may, in Higher Education, need to differentiate our use of VLEs in blended teaching to establish more pedagogically advanced approaches for an increasingly discerning audience. Module leaders and programme teams working with first year students, for example, have less to fear than they may have thought about the kinds of online approaches they take.

*"HE institutions need to make it clear that access to the latest technology and a cornucopia of digital resources are not the only ingredients in becoming a successful learner. Alongside ongoing improvements to infrastructure led by IT induction programmes, course teams need to challenge incoming students assumptions about the nature of learning and the role digital technology can play in their studies."*

*Dave White, UOA, London ([What do students entering HE expect from Digital Technologies.](#))*

Further implications of this growing depth of experience and comfort students are bringing to HE contexts lies in the expectation levels about how blended learning can take place and the kinds of support we provide: how much is required, what type and how advanced? Some of the comments we received in this survey point to a tech-savvy generation that understand very clearly what they want and how it should look, function and be utilised.

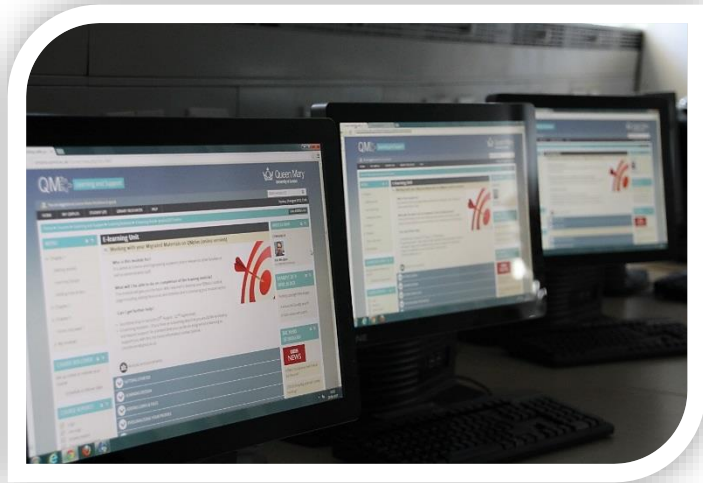
The E-learning Unit will continue to develop materials for academic staff that enable them to extend and enhance their use of the various tools within QMplus.

<sup>9</sup> [What do students entering HE expect from Digital Technologies – JISC Website](#)

<sup>10</sup> [2012 Survey of Technology Enhanced Learning for Higher Education - UCISA](#)

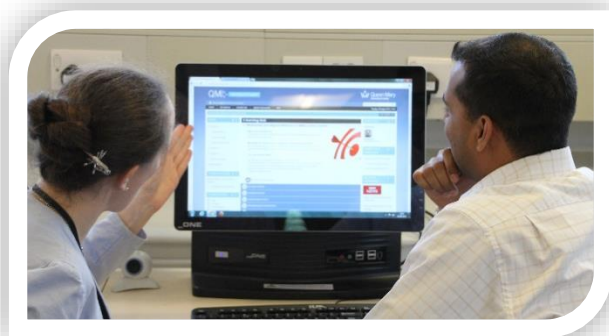
## 5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Change the frequency of the survey to run every 2 years launching in week 11 of Semester A (next student survey December-January 2016).
- Encourage more students from *all* campuses of Queen Mary to participate in the next survey. Particular focus will be made on students in China (both at BUPT and the new programme in Nanchang), Whitechapel, Charterhouse square and our Distance and Part-time students.
- Consider integrating a standardised question about QMplus into Module evaluations across the college.
- Ensure that students across Queen Mary are informed of how the recommendations from this survey have informed and are informing the future shape of QMplus.
- Promote a framework for e-learning that encourages academic staff to engage with opportunities to extend and enhance the range of activities and resources within their online modules where appropriate.



## 6 ORIENTATION AND USE

In this part of the survey we wanted to find out how respondents had learned how to use QMplus and what they thought about those methods. We were also interested in where QMplus was being accessed from (e.g. at home, work etc.), and what kinds of technologies were being used to access it. This year we also asked new questions about usage of QMplus on mobile devices.



### Types of training and orientation offered

**Orientation sessions:** The E-Learning Unit in conjunction with schools, departments and institutes run *orientation sessions* for QMplus during Welcome week. These sessions are not mandatory and can be run by the department themselves, or by a member of the E-learning unit. The format differs and can range from as little as a 10-15 minute walkthrough with the entire year-group, through to an hour-long QMplus tutorial with a particular programme or module.

**E-learning managers:** In the 2013/14 academic year six Schools/Institutes at Queen Mary had a full-time e-learning professional working for them. Responsibilities include providing training and support for the VLE in the form of sessions similar to those mentioned above or developing bespoke handouts and user guides, screencasts etc.

**Online help:** The ELU put together a set of training materials including screencasts and handouts in an open course area on QMplus accessible from the primary navigation menu under 'Help & support'.

### 6.1 LEARNING ABOUT QMPLUS

#### 6.1.1 Introduction

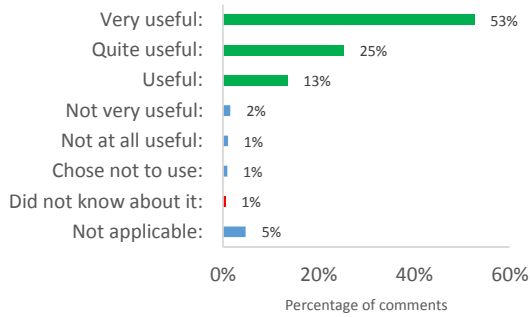
With respect to training and orientation, respondents were asked to rank the usefulness of the seven main methods available to learn about QMplus (including teaching themselves). Respondents were asked to rank usefulness on a five point scale: 'Not at all useful' to 'Very useful'. They could also indicate whether they were aware of the method but 'Chose not to use it', they 'didn't know about it' at all, or it was 'not applicable' to them (e.g. face-to-face orientation for a distance learning student).

We then asked two optional open questions about what they found useful about the training/orientation they had received and any suggestions they would make for improvement (see section 7.1.3)

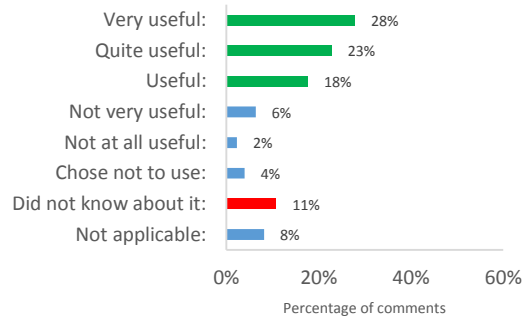
The results for the usefulness rankings are presented in the bar charts below in order of overall usefulness (indicated in green).

**Figure 15: How did you learn about QMplus and how to use it? How useful were the training and orientation opportunities provided?**

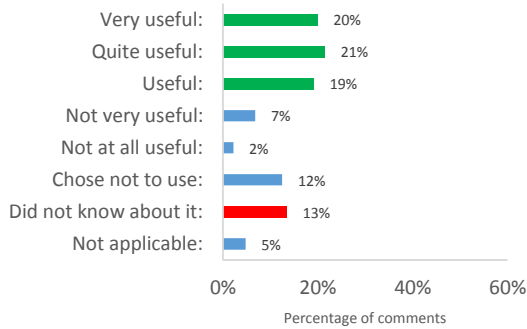
**Figure 15a: I taught myself**



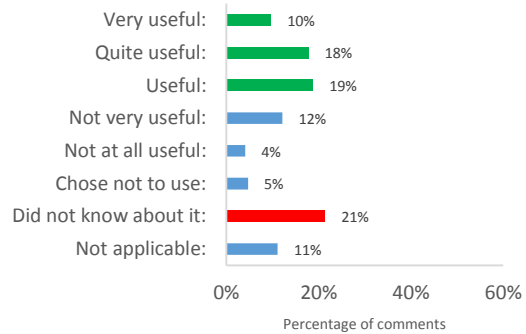
**Figure 15b: Online material developed for your module or school e.g. handouts**



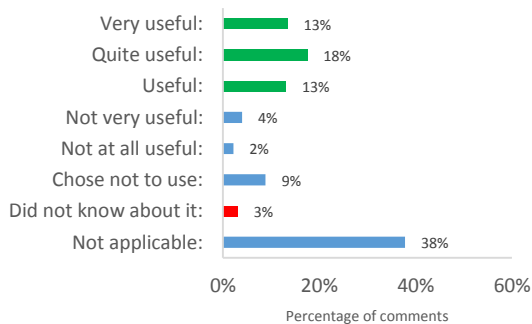
**Figure 15c: Online material in QMplus (Help for students)**



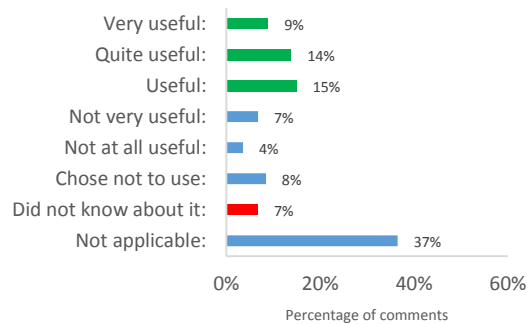
**Figure 15d: Orientation session – general (e.g. during welcome week)**



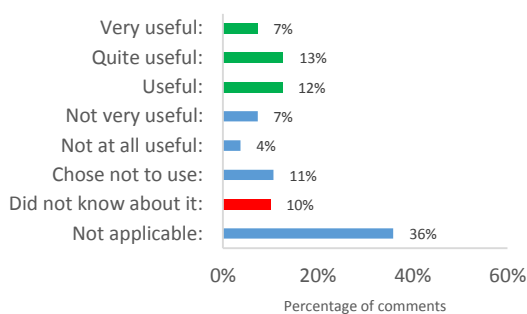
**Figure 15e: Another student showed me**



**Figure 15f: My Module leader / organiser showed me**



**Figure 15g: My department or school IT/E-learning support showed me**



The most useful type of training and orientation received was respondents teaching themselves how to use QMplus with 91% (712) of all respondents finding this *'useful'*, 53% of respondents found it *'very useful'*. Online material that was contextualised for the module or school was seen as useful by 69% of respondents (533) while 60% (471) found the online material provided through QMplus itself to be useful. 47% of respondents (362) found the general orientation sessions provided during Welcome Week to be useful and 44% (344) found another student showing them how to use QMplus to be useful. Finding out about QMplus from their module leader or their department or school IT/E-learning support person was seen as useful by 38% (295) and 32% (253) respectively.

With respect to *'awareness'* of the different kinds of training and orientation offered, 21% of respondents (167) did not know about the general orientation sessions offered during Welcome Week and 13% did not know about the online training and orientation materials provided in QMplus.

Apart from being self-taught the bespoke online materials developed by module leads or schools were the most widely known about (69% of all respondents) with only 4% choosing not to use them. The more general online materials developed by the E-Learning Unit and made available through QMplus were known about by 60% with 12% choosing not to use them.

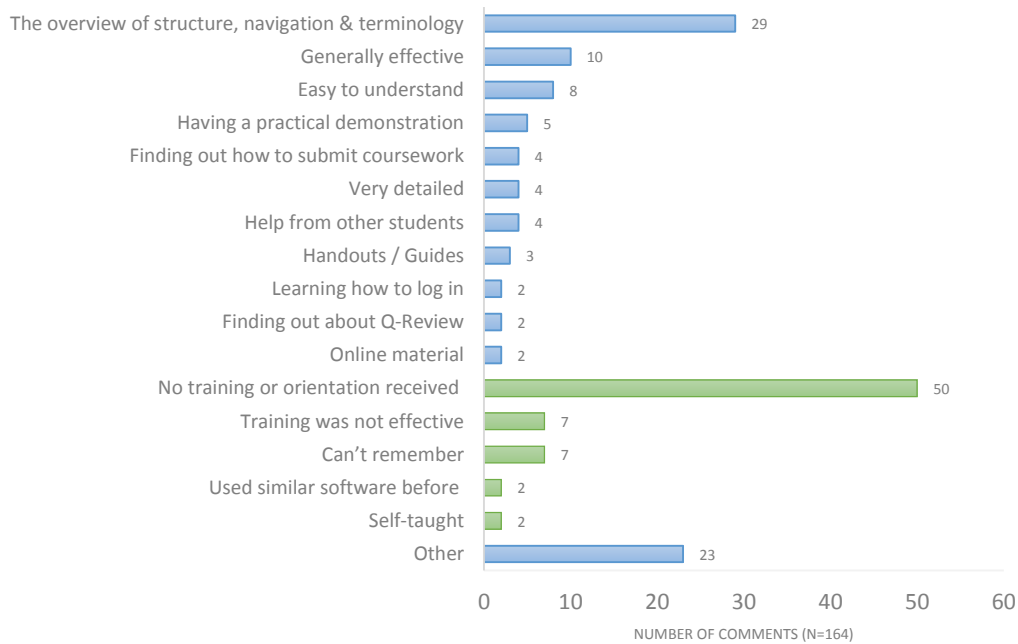
### 6.1.2 Comparison to 2012/13 survey

In the 2012/13 survey the order of usefulness of the various orientation/training methods was exactly the same as in 2013/14 with *'Online material in QMplus'* seen as the most useful with a 16% drop from 76% to 60% seeing it as useful. In this year's survey we split online materials into those developed by Schools or programmes (bespoke) and those made available online through QMplus. We also added *'Self teaching'* as a method as so many respondents had mentioned it in 2012/13. Online materials have therefore been overtaken in 2013/14 by self-teaching and bespoke material development as the most useful forms of training and orientation. Other significant changes between the two years were an increase in perceived usefulness of being introduced to QMplus by a module lead (up from 33% in 2012/13 to 38% in 2013/14) and a decrease in the usefulness of the local E-learning or IT support officer showing respondents how to use QMplus (down from 42% in 2012/13 to 32% in 2013/14).

6.1.3 Most useful aspects of the training

After the compulsory question on training and orientation respondents were given the option of answering two short answer questions about their training. The first asked them to comment on the most useful parts of the training/orientation they received. 164 comments were grouped by theme and are presented below in order of popularity. If more than 1 respondent mentioned a particular point these are presented. The comments that actually answered the question are presented first in the bar chart. The green shaded bars represent comments that did NOT answer the question, but present useful comments nonetheless.

Figure 16: What did you find most useful about the training/orientation received?



Providing an overview of the structure of QMplus, the terminology employed and “the basics required to get around” was the most useful part of the training received for 29 respondents (18% of all comments received on this question) whilst 18 respondents mentioned how the training was easy to understand and effective (11%). Having a practical demonstration of QMplus in a PC lab or equivalent was noted as useful by 5 respondents and drilling down into the detail of submitting coursework was valued by 4 respondents.

52 respondents (32%) felt the need to reiterate that they had not received any formal orientation or training on the learning environment and despite the fact that respondents were asked about the most useful aspects of the training 7 respondents reported that it was not effective mentioning the fact that it was not “course specific” that it “dragged on” and that it “felt like a waste of time..” 7 other respondents couldn’t even remember whether they had had training or not!

Student voices
<b>What did you find most useful about the training/orientation received?</b>
<i>“I thought it taught the bare basics well and ensured I could gain an initial footing in using the system.”</i>
<i>“Coming from a different country I learnt the about different approaches to a teaching environment.. Friendly and extremely useful..”</i>

*"It was okay. Considering I'm a disability student it was a little challenging for me but I appreciate having learned a new way."*

*"shows what is possible, but this is not always utilised by the staff"*

*"This was a bit overwhelming to understand in the first week of starting university, but the significance of it was later made apparent. There was information overload and a confusing mixture of IT info with departmental info - which, as a new student, was hard to digest and initially make use of."*

*"We had a presentation given to us during Welcome Week, but QMplus didn't work!"*

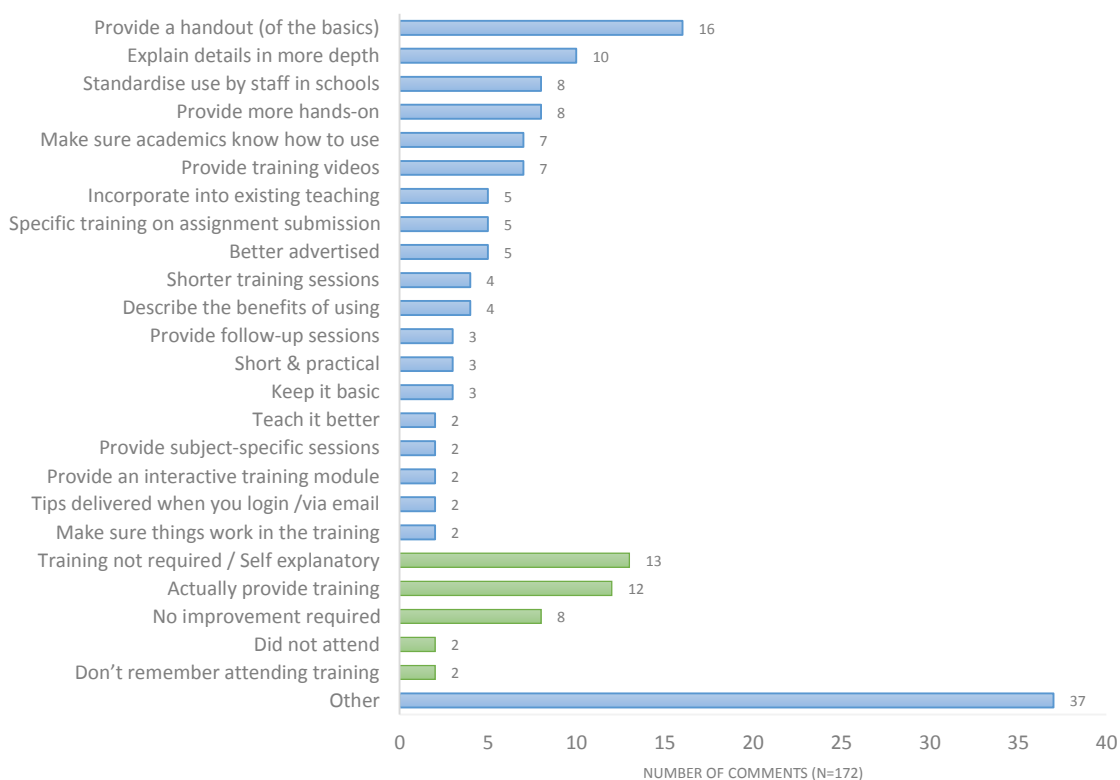
*"It wasn't that useful, to be honest with you I don't actually remember what was said because it did drag on and may have been confusing I just found that with time I learnt how to use QMplus by myself"*

### 6.1.4 Suggestions for improvement of the training

Survey respondents were then asked if they had any suggestions for how the training they received could be improved. In all 172 suggestions and comments were received. These were then grouped into common themes and those with more than 1 comment received are presented below (figure 16). The green bars at the bottom represent those comments that did not give 'suggestions for improvement' per-se.

Suggestions could roughly be divided into those focussing on the 'content' of the training/orientation being delivered (e.g. describe the benefits or provide more depth), those focussing on 'materials or format modes' (e.g. provide tips when you login) and finally those which focussed on more general advice (e.g. advertise it better).

**Figure 17: How could the training/orientation have been improved?**



The most popular suggestions were to provide a hand-out (16 comments): *“a list of vital actions and how to use them”* immediately after the training or online. 10 respondents suggested that the details should be explained in more depth *“how to access grades/timetable/module information”* or *“how you can join groups...”*, on the other hand 3 respondents wanted a basic overview session only. There were a cluster of comments around the standardisation of usage across schools (8 comments) and the necessity of ensuring that academics actually know how to use QMplus before they start teaching with it so that they may represent a source of help.

Providing more practical hands-on training *“show us while we are online ourselves”* and simple effective training videos were suggested by 7 respondents commenters with a video that is available on the homepage being one popular suggestion in this area.

Student voices
<b>How could the training/orientation have been improved?</b>
<i>“Handouts would have been useful. The online videos take too long when what I usually need is something very procedural and would be best accessed by written instructions with screen dumps (thus enabling the user to skip ahead). The system itself is easy to use but the procedures are constantly changing and this isn't always communicated.”</i>
<i>“perhaps a handout with everything you need to know about QMplus with easy bulletpoints and screenshots, given out in the first lectures of term”</i>
<i>“Have received very little training indeed. I had a sheet of A4 e-mailed to me with numerous passwords, and no proper induction. I would recommend that part-time lecturers in the law department are appraised of the skills to set up their modules online. We are entirely dependent on this for our module, and with some course leaders the module set up has been non-existent (e.g. us logging into chatrooms which are not set up on the module page, tasks not set up on the module page for submission). It has been extremely poor given the high fees being charged.”</i>
<i>“It couldn't. The two men from the E-learning support explained it in a very clear and straightforward way and answered every question we as first year students had”</i>
<i>“Show us whilst we are online ourselves so we can practise. It was quite hard to find things after only being shown once in a lecture using screen shots.”</i>
<i>“More focus on standardising use by all staff so that each student receives the same sort of interaction via QM+ Any student or staff's difficulty with technology shouldn't be an excuse not to use it. Paperless communication/ notices and work submissions should become standardised.”</i>
<i>“and please give it to the teachers as well, they don't use this because they don't know how!”</i>
<i>“They became quite repetitive sometimes, I seem to remember the same bit of information was said three or four times. Not the end of the world though.”</i>

### 6.1.5 Discussion

The results in this section demonstrate that the balance of approaches we have employed for orientating students to the learning environment is about right. On the whole self-directed methods to learn about QMplus have proved most useful with students learning as they go along or accessing handouts or online material available through QMplus itself. This year we have seen an increase in the development of handouts on QMplus at School level and these have proved popular too. The E-learning Unit could assist in the provision of training materials for orientation by developing an online ‘Welcome pack’ for students. This might consist of a curated set of guides and videos but might also involve writing some new material from scratch with particular emphasis on more advanced use of the system (e.g. developing portfolios or publishing online CVs).

The structure of orientation sessions in welcome week seems appropriate with the focus on structure, navigation and common terminology though more emphasis may need to be made on



how course submission works, where Q-Review lectures can be found, where to go if help is required and more school specific features.

There was also a call for more hands-on training opportunities and for either follow-up training after the initial basic session or possibly orientation sessions in week 2 or three as some students, particularly those with visa problems, are not actually able to participate in orientation week. Students studying on other years apart from first year also wondered why there was no further training on using the system. This could be something followed up by the E-learning unit where we could provide a series of online orientation webinars for students in the first three weeks of Semester A (and possibly the start of semester B too for Erasmus and other associate students).

The software is not particularly difficult to use, however, we need to ensure that students can understand the ways that modules are presented and delivered and that they know enough about the parts of QMplus that are designed specifically for them to use (i.e. the Groups & Portfolios area frequently not covered in the training).

### 6.1.5.1 Academic training

There was a call by respondents to ensure that academic staff know how to use QMplus. Comments such as these were received last year but not by so many respondents. Launching a new VLE to many programmes in two faculties presented an opportunity to engage with academic staff in a two hour compulsory training session. Unfortunately two hours is not enough time to cover all the ways that a VLE like QMplus could be used, many were also not able to attend a face-to-face session. Although an online training module was also provided it was not accessed as often as we would have hoped. We need to ensure that we provide a variety of opportunities for development of skills in using QMplus for academic staff on an ongoing basis.

We run monthly 'Getting started' courses which are popular at the beginning of the year but less so as the year proceeds. This year we are experimenting with shorter 1 + 1 formats (1 hour presenting and discussing and 1 hour hands-on) and short facilitated online modules so that busy academics can learn at their own pace and in their own location. We have also extended our development programme by offering bespoke sessions for schools. These have proved popular this year particularly in early September.

There was also a call for better standardisation of use across schools as students find it difficult to locate similar course materials on different modules in the same school or encounter varying degrees of usage or disorientating rearrangement of content. Some students also complained about an inability to locate important information. Currently we do not have any prescriptive policies around the pedagogical uses of QMplus. We have faculty-level strategies in HSS and S & E which prescribe a core set of information that must be present in all modules in these faculties. This core set of information has been built into templates in QMplus from which all new modules are created. As it is now more than two years since these original templates were created it would be worthwhile to get the content of these templates reviewed by the respective user groups.

From a pedagogical perspective we are working on an enhancement framework that we can use to help underpin conversations around the college on what is effective course design and how to implement it. We will continue to do this and at the same time disseminate results of this survey to schools re-emphasising the importance of being consistent wherever possible to make the student experience easier and more enjoyable.

### 6.1.6 Recommendations

- Develop an online 'Welcome pack' for students.
- Trial an online drop-in for students during the first three weeks of the year.
- Provide an online orientation webinar that any student can sign up to.
- Work closely with schools to tailor the orientation offering to their requirements.
- Create a series of self-paced learning modules for academics.

### 6.1.7 Already actioned in 2014/15

- Launching a Getting Started with Q-review for academics – online course in March 2015.
- Launching a trial of online drop-in during Semester B 2014/15.
- Bespoke workshop or training sessions now being offered to schools, tailored to specific needs.

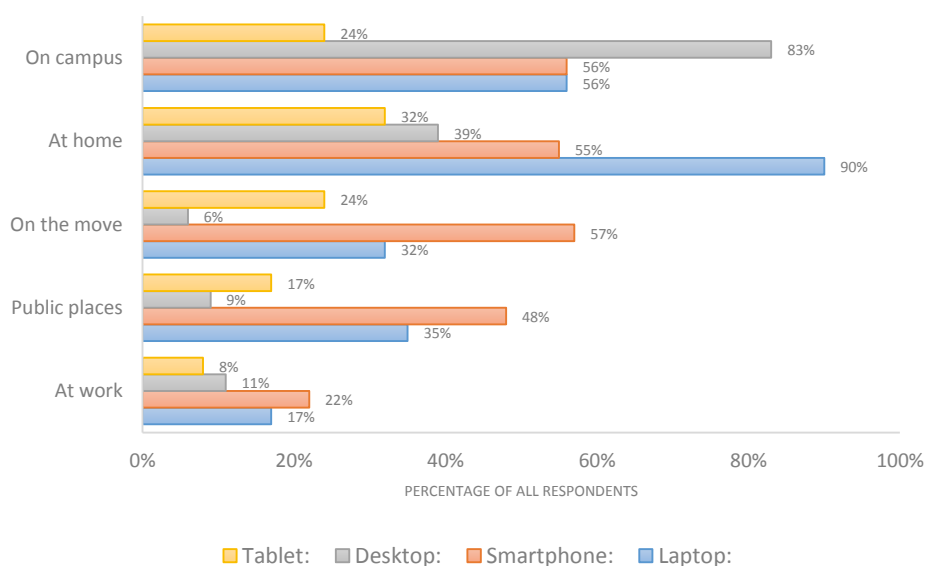
## 6.2 ACCESSING QMPLUS

### 6.2.1 Location & Device

Respondents were asked to select all the types of devices they used to access QMplus from a list of 16 of the most popular devices and platforms. They were then asked to select where they usually accessed the system from, from a choice of five possible places. It was possible to choose more than one location.

In the first bar chart below (figure 17) the 16 devices have been divided into the four main categories for summary purposes: tablets, desktops, smartphones and laptops. The chart is ordered by most popular access location. In the charts that follow a more detailed breakdown is provided of each device and operating system for each location (Figure 18-22).

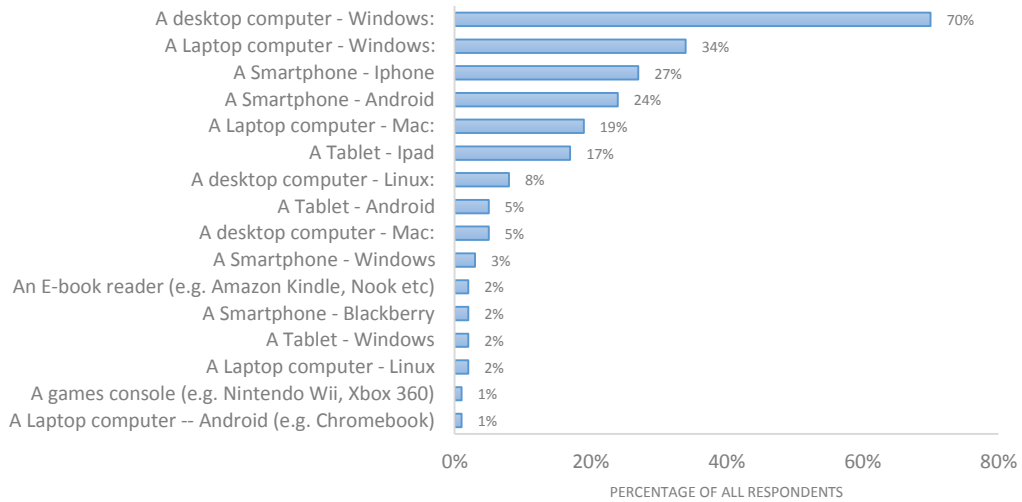
**Figure 18: Typical devices used to access QMplus at different locations (Summary)**



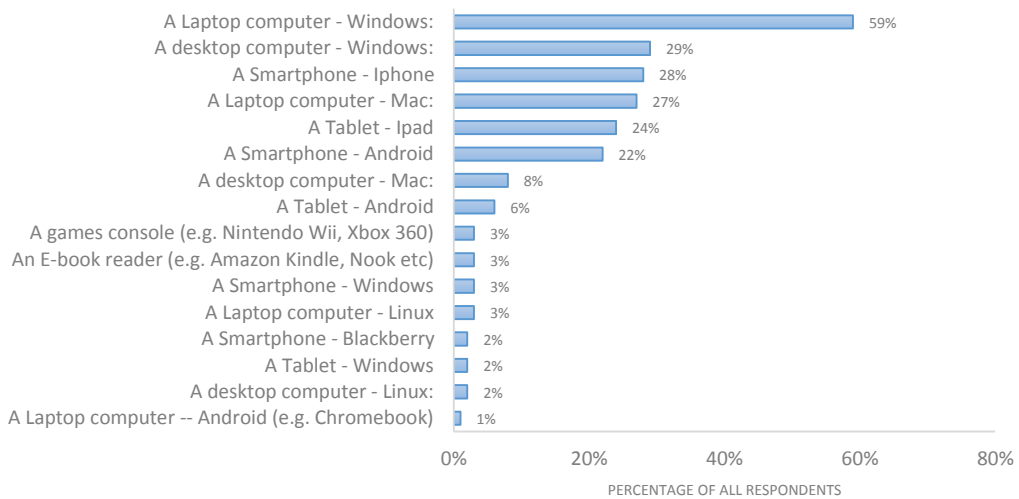
The most common location chosen for all device types was 'On Campus'. When examining those on campus devices, by far the greatest use for accessing QMplus were desktops (83% of all respondents), then smartphones and laptops 56% and finally 24% usually accessed it from tablets. In contrast the most popular device type for accessing QMplus at home was a laptop with 90% of respondents using this method. Smartphone access to QMplus proved similar across location types with around 56% accessing QMplus on their phones on campus, at home and on the move. Most students do not access QMplus from their workplace but when they do smartphones tended to be the most popular device used.

**Figure 19: What devices do you use to access QMplus and where do you usually access them?**

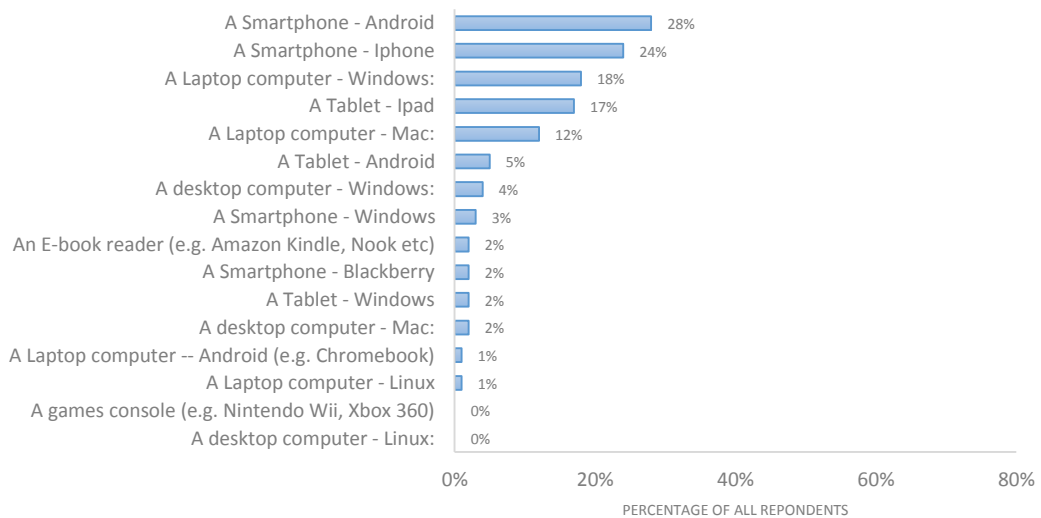
**Figure 19a: Devices used to access QMplus *on campus***



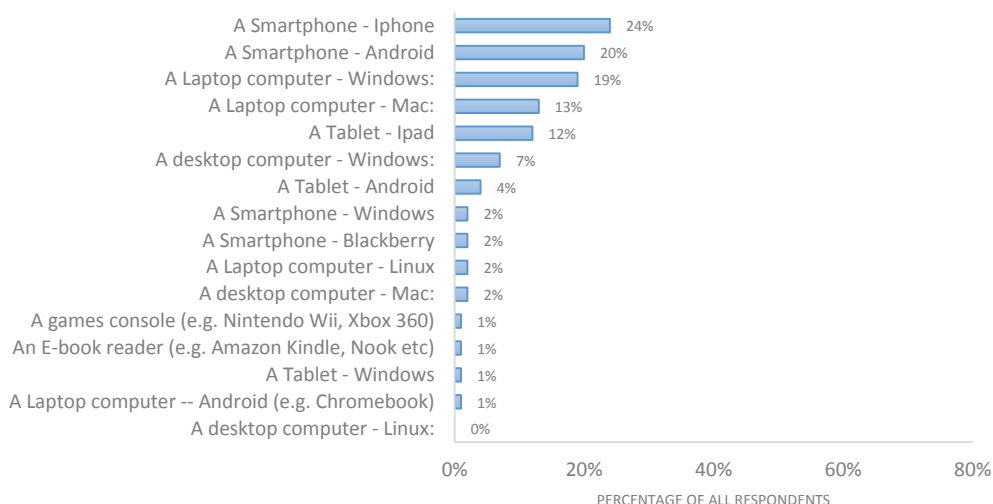
**Figure 19b: Devices used to access QMplus *at home***



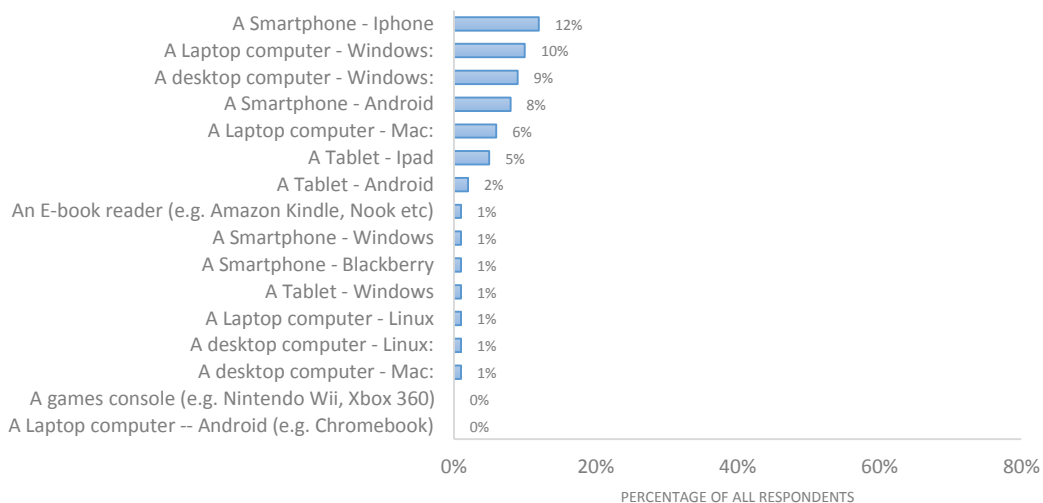
**Figure 19c: Devices used to access QMplus *on the move***



**Figure 19d: Devices used to access QMplus in public places**



**Figure 19e: Devices used to access QMplus at work**



The most popular type of equipment used to access QMplus on Campus were Windows desktops with 70% of all respondents using them, while Windows laptops were much less popular with 34% of respondents regularly using them. At home the situation was reversed with Windows laptops used most regularly by 59% of respondents while only 29% used the Windows desktop followed closely by Apple and Android smartphones on 28% and 27% respectively.

Mobile devices are the most popular devices for accessing QMplus in public places (like cafes etc.) and when at work. In public places 24% used an Apple smartphone while 20% used Android. This was followed by Windows and Apple laptops at 19% and 13%. At work Apple smartphones were the most popular device with 12% of respondents usually using them followed by 10% and 9% respectively using Windows laptops and desktops.

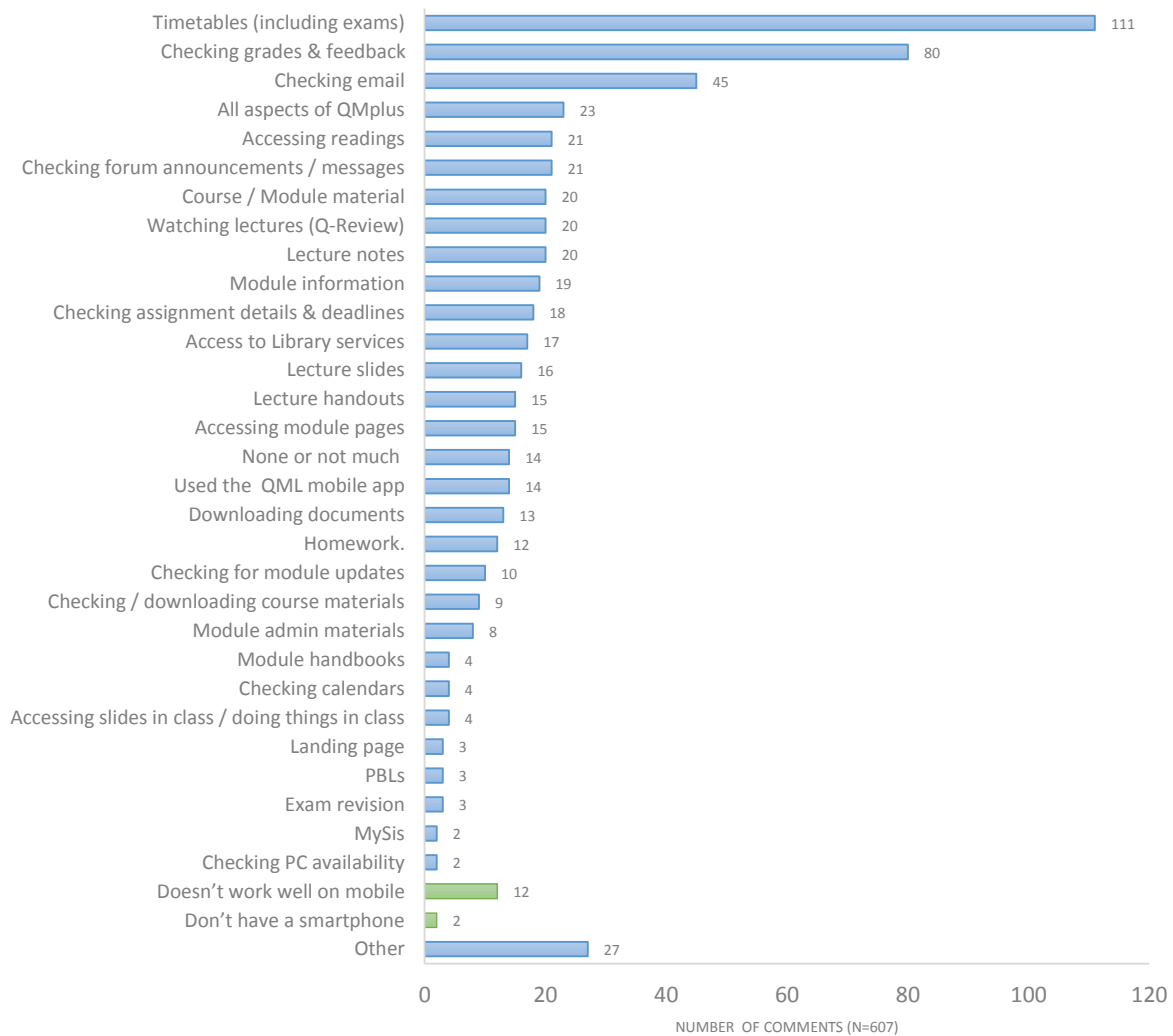
### 6.2.2 Comparison with 2012/13

In the 2012/13 survey we asked respondents the typical location they accessed QMplus and then the device they typically used to access it. 90% chose home as their typical location (with 70% choosing on campus). 86% told us they used a laptop most often followed by smartphones (52%) and desktops (47%). Unfortunately this information did not help us to understand the patterns of usage in each location. This year we combined the questions to give us a more nuanced pattern of usage. The use of desktop computers on campus is still very high as one might expect with the provision of PC equipment throughout all campuses.

### 6.2.3 Types of use on Mobile Phones

In the final question about device usage respondents were asked an optional question about what aspects of QMplus they actually use on their mobile phones. The question resulted in the highest number of comments for the whole survey - 607 comments i.e. 78% of all respondents had something to say. Comments were grouped into common themes and all themes with more than 2 comments are presented in figure 23 below. The bars in green do not specifically answer the question.

**Figure 20: What aspects of QMplus do you use on your mobile phone?**



The most popular use of QMplus on a smartphone was to access timetables and check grades & feedback, 105 comments (17% of all those who commented) and 80 comments (13%) respectively. Checking email was also popular (45 comments or 7%) though this is not specifically a QMplus function - respondents are referring to the emails sent from QMplus when news is posted to their module forum. There were a cluster of aspects that about 3% of respondents (20-21) identified as the next most important including: all aspects of QMplus “*everything I would use on a PC*”, accessing readings “*read up stuff from my modules*”, checking announcements, accessing course materials more generally particularly recently uploaded materials, watching Q-Review lectures and finally accessing lecture notes.

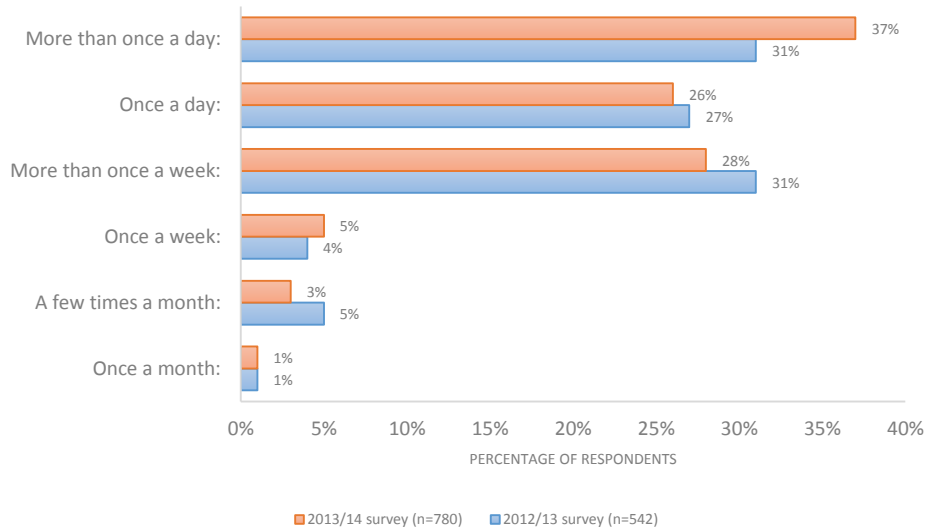
It is also interesting to note that the QMUL mobile app was launched in January 2014 and many respondents mentioned functionality available through that app (e.g. access to library services “renew library books” by 17 respondents and Mysis by 2) and using the app more generally 14 comments. This suggests that some students may have confused the QMUL app as a version of QMplus, or rather appraise their learning technologies without semantic distinctions. Some respondents also noted that they didn’t have a smartphone or that QMplus simply didn’t work on a mobile device.

Student voices
<b>What aspects of QMplus do you use on your mobile phone?</b>
<i>“where/when a lecture is if I've forgotten or it changes”</i>
<i>“Also to see my results if I'm not at home and know they've been released.”</i>
<i>“All available. I use QMplus on my mobile the same way as I do using it on a desktop computer or laptop, the screen is just smaller making it a bit more inconvenient but still useful where other means of accessing QMplus are not available.”</i>
<i>“Well everywhere I go I tend to use all of Qm+, However, it barely works for me. I was constantly unable to get the readings for class which dragged me down a lot! I told my teachers who would occasionally send it straight to me, but that is not really acceptable as it takes time away from both parties and I lost a lot of confidence too.”</i>
<i>“To check the forums to see if lecturers have posted reasons as to why they haven't shown up to lectures”</i>
<i>“and download one or two PDFs for reference / reading while commuting”</i>
<i>“To gain access to lecture slides. However, the mobile interface of QMplus still needs a lot of improvement. Currently it is still very difficult to navigate on a mobile phone/tablet.”</i>
<i>“Downloading lecture notes, so I can use it during the lectures rather than printing everything out.”</i>

#### 6.2.4 Frequency of access

In the final question in this section we were interested in how often respondents logged into QMplus. Respondents were asked to select a frequency from a 7 point scale ranging from the frequent (more than once a day) to the infrequent/sporadic (less than once a month).

**Figure 21: Comparison of the frequency of access to QMplus – 2013/14 vs 2012/13 survey**

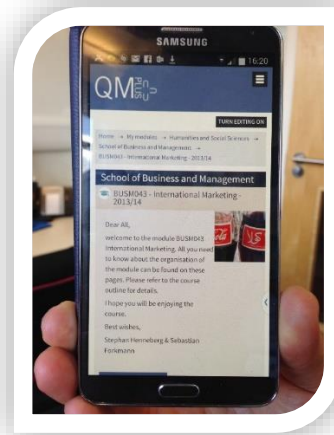


With respect to frequency of access 63% of respondents (485) are accessing QMplus at least once a day up from 58% in 2012/13 (313 respondents). Of those, 37% are accessing QMplus more than once a day (285 respondents) up 6% from the previous year. 95% (741 respondents) are accessing QMplus at least once a week a 2% increase on the previous year.

### 6.2.5 Discussion

The results of this year’s survey provide a wealth of information about how, when and where students are accessing our VLE. We learn that mobile device usage has grown compared to last year particularly for off-campus access. We also see that the vast majority of students are accessing QMplus at least once a day (93%).

It is no longer possible to make assumptions about standard access methods and standard browsers / operating systems as the landscape is so diverse and varies depending on context e.g. on the move versus on campus. The trend for laptop and mobile use reaching and overtaking desktop use is continuing this year despite the fact that direct comparisons are tricky as we changed the questions. Statistics across all device types showed that more than 50% of respondents are using mobile devices on campus, at home and on the move.



*The new responsive (Mobile friendly) theme implemented on QMplus in July 2014)*

Looking more closely at what functionality respondents are using on their phones it appears that checking for information is the most popular function: timetables, grades and feedback, forum announcements and messages, assignment details are all regarded as important. Course materials themselves are also important and Q-Review lectures. All of this has important implications for the design of the learning environment. In 2014 we launched a mobile-friendly version of our existing theme. This enabled us to satisfy the largest concerns expressed in the 2012/13 survey about the



performance of QMplus on the mobile stage. We were not able to do a fundamental redesign for mobile and that is a project that is gathering in importance as we collect more data on mobile usage from this year's survey. In particular the ability to check key pieces of information simply and easily has emerged from this study. We will work to incorporate functionality such as this into upcoming enhancements to the system. In addition we will run focus groups with students, perhaps with the assistance of the student union, to enable us to understand better how students are using their mobile devices and how we can ensure we provide learning software that matches their needs.

The move to mobile devices to access the VLE can also be viewed as a great pedagogical opportunity for educators. Mobile devices can more easily be integrated into teaching experiences whether in labs, seminar rooms or out in the field and offer a host of tools that can be employed by students when working on coursework or developing e-portfolios.

The fact that students are accessing QMplus so frequently would suggest that they already regard it as being integral to their studies. In future evaluations it would be useful to enquire as to the nature of the engagement in more depth. For course developers it will be interesting to note how often students are checking the system and what opportunities this level of interest may provide when designing learning activities etc.

#### 6.2.6 Recommendations

- Continue to develop and evolve our mobile offering incorporating feedback and suggestions from this year's survey.
- Find out more about how and why students are using their mobile devices by running focus groups possibly through the student union.
- Make all those who support QMplus aware of the ways that QMplus is being used on mobile devices.
- Work to understand more about what students are doing on their mobile devices, what they find easy and more difficult? What they expect to be able to do?
- Interrogate analytics data for the website.
- Promote the pedagogical opportunities offered by mobile devices during workshops and training sessions with staff

#### 6.2.7 Already actioned in 2014/15

- In July 2014 we launched an upgraded version of Moodle which contained a new mobile-friendly version of the theme. The Moodle side of QMplus now adjusts depending on screen size.
- QMplus Phase III project is working on making the Mahara software mobile friendly due June 2015.
- Student focus groups will be taking place in February and March 2015 to explore the usability of the current mobile interface. The results will inform the ongoing design and development of the system

## 7 SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING

In this section we were interested in respondents' attitudes towards features within the system designed to support their learning. The main features of QMplus which support student learning were divided into five sections:



*The student café was created as a social discussion space for students on the distance taught MSc Burn Care – Blizzard Institute*

1. *General information and administration*
2. *Types of teaching materials*
3. *Assessment tools, methods & approaches*
4. *Functionality within the 'Groups & Portfolios area (Mahara)*
5. *Collaborative tools*

While the majority of questions looked at core VLE functionality to support learning (e.g. discussion forum use), some focussed on the more advanced pedagogical tools or student-centred activities within QMplus such as peer assessing a classmate's work (*the Workshop tool in Moodle*) or uploading a CV (*the CV tool in Groups & Portfolios – Mahara*) as we are keen to see how this functionality is being adopted by academics compared to the first survey last year and the students' reaction to their use.

The final set of questions in this section looked at other technologies respondents found helpful in their learning. The first mandatory question consisted of a list of the most popular external tools grouped into thirteen categories; respondents could also list other tools they used. The second invited respondents to tell us more generally about other ways they felt QMplus could be used to support their learning.

### Note on reading the charts in this section

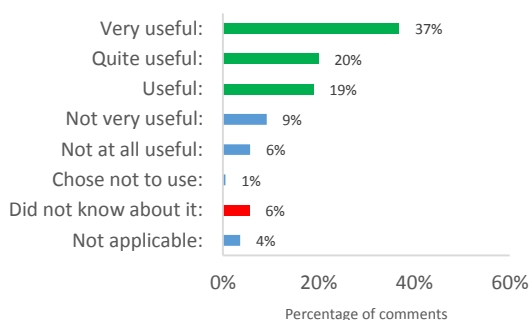
For ease of analysis the respondents who had never used a tool are coloured red in the bar charts that follow. Those who accessed the tool frequently (i.e. daily or every week) are coloured green. The individual charts are presented in order of frequency with the most frequently used first. In the discussion percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number. The quotes included in the 'student voices' section are taken verbatim from long answers provided by students.

## 7.1 GENERAL INFORMATION AND MODULE ADMINISTRATION

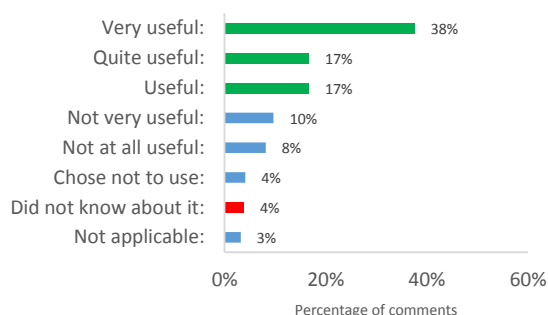
Respondents were asked to assess in order of usefulness eight different ways that QMplus can be used to provide general information and aid in the administration of their modules. The charts are presented in order of perceived usefulness.

**Figure 22: Usefulness of administrative tools in QMplus to support learning.**

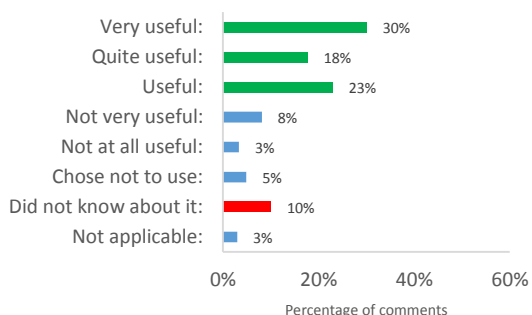
**Figure 22a: Finding out about assessment and feedback on my module**



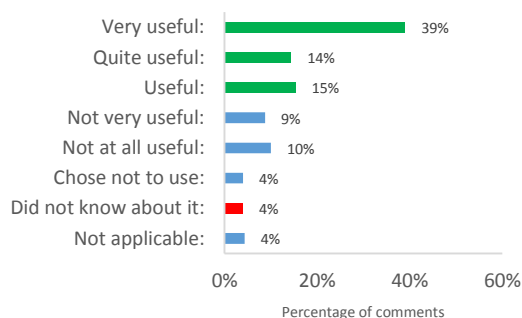
**Figure 22b: Accessing my module timetable**



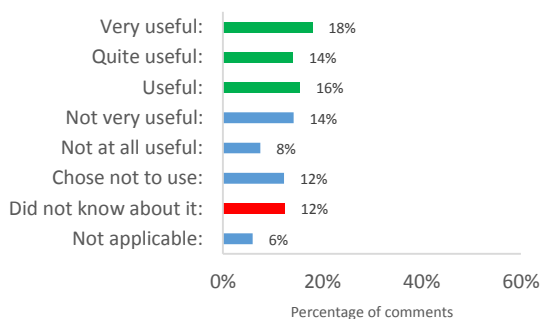
**Figure 22c: Finding out contact details of teaching staff**



**Figure 22d: Accessing my personal timetable**



**Figure 22e: Communicating with teaching/admin staff**



**Figure 22f: Accessing my old courses from the QMplus 2013/13 archive**

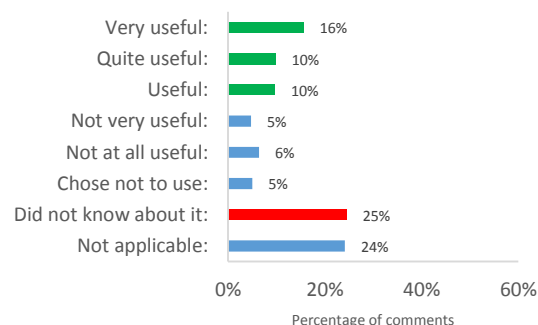


Figure 22g: Signing up to seminar or tutorial groups

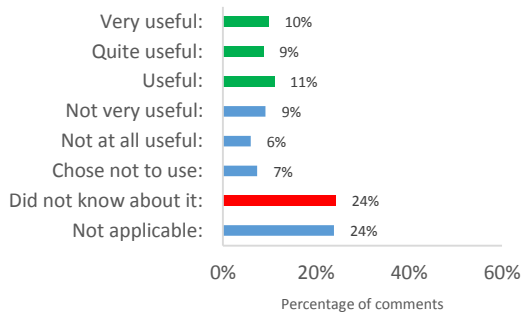
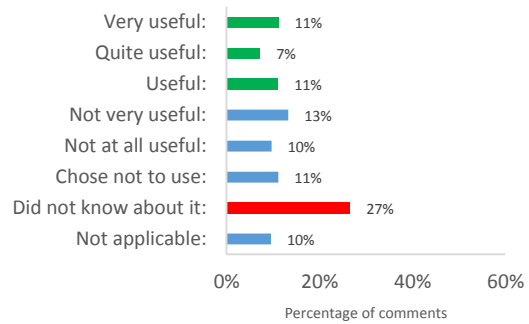


Figure 22h: Providing feedback to staff via QMplus



The aspect that respondents found most useful was using QMplus to find out about assessment and feedback on their modules with 76% indicating that this was useful (588 respondents), 37% of those found this information very useful (286). Around 70% of respondents (534) found it useful to access their personal or module timetables and the contact details of teaching staff. 48% (368) found communicating with teaching or administrative staff useful while 36% (272) found accessing the new archive service useful. Finally, around 30% of respondents (228) found QMplus useful for signing up to seminar or tutorial groups and for providing feedback to staff.

The aspect 178 respondents (23%) found least useful was providing feedback to staff via QMplus, a further 27% did not even know it was possible to do this or did not have the opportunity to do so. 168 respondents (22%) did not find communicating with teaching or admin staff useful and 19% of respondents (148) did not find accessing their personal timetable useful at all. 24% (188 respondents) did not know they could use QMplus to sign up to seminar or tutorial groups and 25% of respondents (190) had never heard about the new 2012/13 archive service made available for students and staff in the summer of 2013 for the first time.

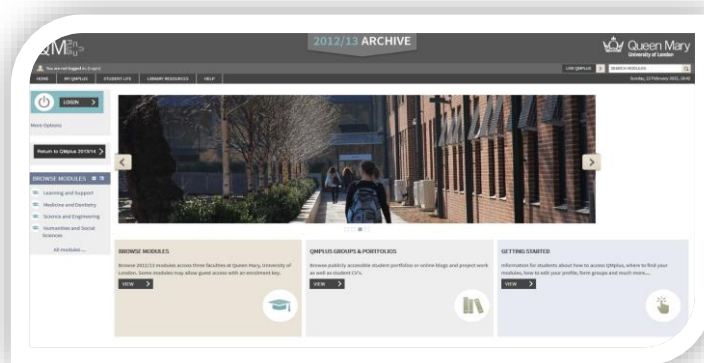
### 7.1.1 2012/13 comparison

In the 2012/13 survey only 4 kinds of information and administrative functionality were asked about and 'frequency of use' rather than 'usefulness' was the perception measure. Interestingly, of the four, 'Finding about assessment & feedback' was most frequently accessed, corresponding to this year's high usefulness ranking. 'Checking & managing a calendar' was second (dropped from this year's survey) and finding out about contact details was third most accessed, again matching the ranking on usefulness this year.

Student voices
<b><i>Of all the ways used to provide general information and module information which was the most or least useful and why?</i></b>
<i>"the personal timetable could be much better, and much more accessible. It's SO difficult to read and understand. There must be a simpler way to convey the information than with codes and numbers."</i>
<i>"Also have staff details more obviously accessible, as I find myself going around in circles when trying to look for contact details"</i>
<i>"Be able to allow students to select seminar times. Not being able to do this means that a lot of students will find their allocated times to be inconvenient and decide not to attend seminars, which takes away from the depth of discussion in the seminar."</i>

## 7.1.2 Discussion

Most of the administrative functionality in QMplus that supports student learning was regarded as useful by more than 50% of respondents. The top four items investigated in the survey: Assessment information, personal / module timetables and contact details of staff all ranked quite highly and were known about by almost all respondents. As these results tally with the 2012/13



Screen grab of the 2012/13 QMplus archive

survey it would suggest that the inclusion of this basic information in school QMplus templates is providing a reasonable, consistent level of information which students are finding useful.

Contact details for teaching staff again proved popular though some students in the latter part of the survey mentioned that this data was not kept up-to-date. These details are available through the Module Info block. This block was enhanced for 2013/14, drawing two more pieces of optional data from the staff member's Moodle profile (office hours and location). This proved useful for those staff members who were aware of it but information about incremental enhancements to QMplus administrative functionality such as this are often not passed on to academic staff in schools. The ELU needs to ensure that enhancements to the system are promoted to our key contacts and more widely.

Personal and module timetables, whilst being seen as very useful by students, were also seen as having accuracy and design issues "*Personal timetables were not correct for either semester.*", "*The timetables were never accurate so I had to keep checking with people every other week for timetable.*" Students also found them cluttered and difficult to access on mobile devices. The E-learning Unit will pass on the feedback from this survey to the timetabling team in IT services to ensure that it informs development of the timetabling system.

The survey also revealed that features offered through QMplus to communicate with staff or administrators or about feedback or otherwise were not commonly used and less known about. This might suggest that opportunities for module-based student discussion are set up but are not used, or that opportunities to communicate within QMplus are just not being provided. The E-Learning Unit needs to work closely with its administrator network to ensure that Academic and administrative staff are aware of the various communication methods available to use in QMplus and what might be the most effective.

Launching an archive of taught modules from the previous year and making it available as a teaching resource for students and staff was a key requirement of the original QMplus project. This survey was our first opportunity to evaluate the value of this service from a student perspective. A quarter of survey respondents did not even know about the QMplus archive while of those that did 36% found it useful.

As this was the first time that an archive of the previous year's modules was available in QMplus it is not surprising that it was not more widely known about. We now display a prominent link to the

archive at the top of the QMplus home page and in September 2014 we launched the archive of the second year of teaching. We need to ensure that this is also signposted during training with students and staff and will expect to see a rise in usefulness in our next survey.

### 7.1.3 Recommendations

- Continue to ensure that faculty and school templates include key administrative information presented consistently.
- Discuss issues of reliability, design and display of timetabling information with the SMART timetabling team.
- Publicise the availability and potential value of the QMplus Archive to staff and students
- Highlight the benefits to staff of adding key contact information and the simplicity of doing so.
- Educate staff about communicative capabilities in QMplus.

### 7.1.4 Already actioned in 2014/15

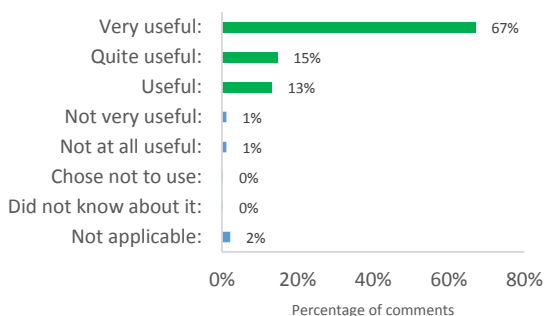
- Created a prominent archive link on the QMplus homepage.
- The 'Module info block' is now easier to edit and now takes contact information from the QMplus profile of the module convenor automatically where it exists.
- A college-wide Learning Technologist group has been established. This group meets monthly and shares good e-learning practice and provides a forum for publicising incremental enhancements to QMplus, thus spreading the message across the college.
- Many schools have recognised the need to standardise their display of assessment information in topic zero e.g. maths.

## 7.2 TEACHING MATERIALS

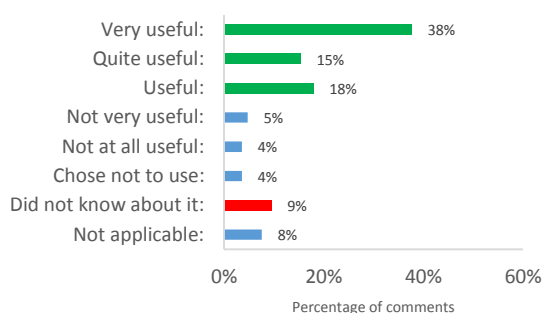
Respondents were asked about seven different kinds of teaching materials created in other software packages and uploaded or linked to within the QMplus module area (e.g. Microsoft Word for handouts or Echo 360<sup>11</sup> for lecture capture). They were asked to assess these materials in terms of usefulness in supporting their learning.

**Figure 23: Usefulness of various teaching materials in QMplus to support learning.**

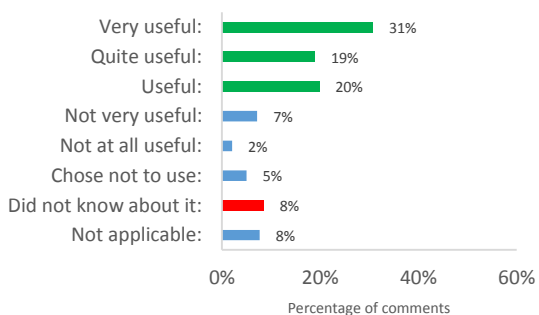
**Figure 23a: Accessing lecture notes and/or slides**



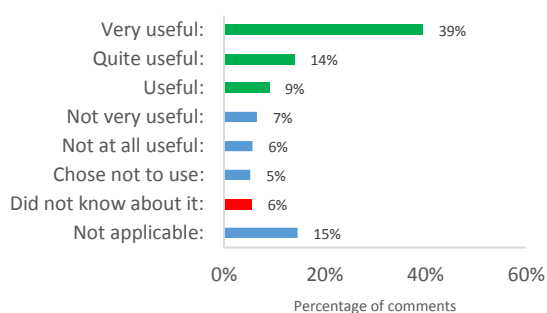
**Figure 23b: Accessing a reading list within my module**



**Figure 23c: Accessing other websites via a hyperlink in QMplus**



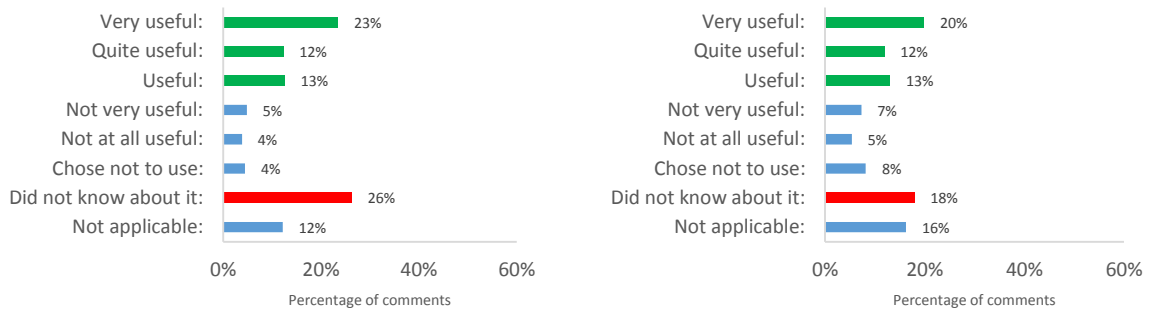
**Figure 23d: Watching recordings of your lectures**



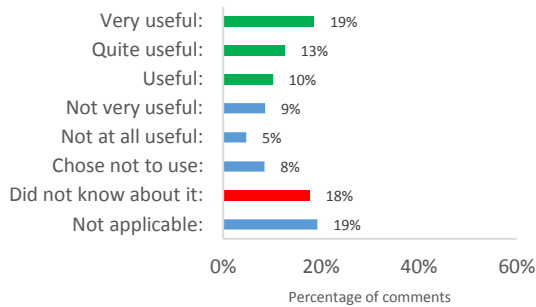
**Figure 23e: Accessing a reading list for my module/course using the Library reading list software (TALIS)**

**Figure 23f: Watching videos e.g. YouTube, Vimeo etc**

<sup>11</sup> Echo360 is the official brand name of the Lecture capture system at Queen Mary – We call it ‘Q-Review’



**Figure 23g: Listening to audio files or podcasts**



The overwhelming majority of respondents (95%) found both lecture notes and lecture slides useful. 67% of those (523) found them very useful.

Online reading lists, a staple of blended teaching, were broken down into the ‘standard’ reading list i.e. created as a ‘page’ or ‘label’ within QMplus itself or sometimes a downloadable ‘file’, and the *Talis Aspire*<sup>12</sup> reading list. 71% of respondents (554) found standard reading lists useful whilst 48% found the Talis reading lists useful (377 respondents). 70% of respondents found the ability to access curated weblinks in QMplus useful (543 respondents) whilst watching recorded lectures (Q-Review) was found useful by 62% of respondents (487).

Of all the teaching materials included in this section only 3 were considered ‘not useful’ by more than 10% of respondents. 14% did not find listening to audio or podcasts useful (104) whilst 13% did not find watching lecture recordings useful (95). Finally watching videos embedded or linked through QMplus was not considered useful by 12% of respondents (99).

26% of respondents did not know about TALIS Aspire reading lists (205), 18% (140) had never watched a video through the learning environment and 18% had also never listened to audio files through QMplus.

### 7.2.1 2012/13 comparison

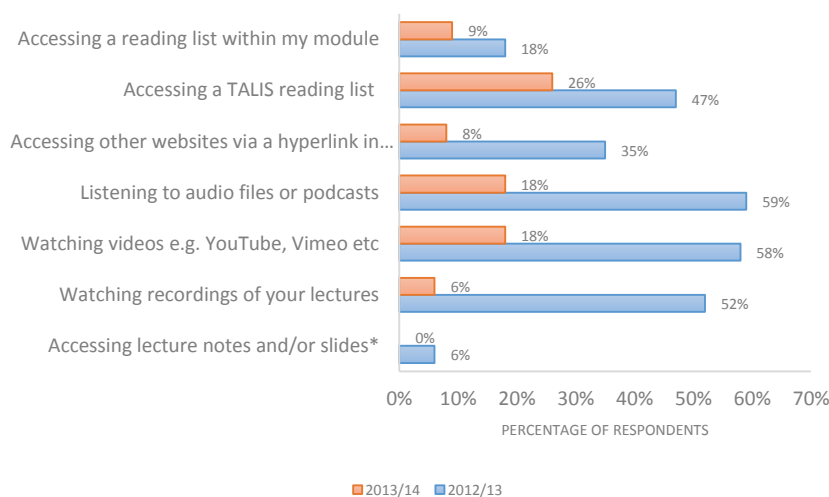
‘Accessing lecture notes’ and ‘accessing lecture slides’ were asked as two separate questions in the 2012/13 survey and they were ranked first and second in terms of frequency of use in that survey, matching this year’s first for usefulness. Accessing a reading list was second for frequency of use last year as it was for usefulness this year. The rest of the rankings were almost exactly the same except for the use of hyperlinks in QMplus which rose to third most useful from 5<sup>th</sup> most frequently used last year.

<sup>12</sup> Talis Aspire is reading list software [supported by the library](#) that integrates into QMplus.



Of more interest was the increasing awareness by students of the variety of teaching materials offered through QMplus. As can be seen in the bar chart in figure XX. The overall trend across all the different types of teaching materials being investigated was increasing awareness across all categories of materials i.e. more respondents had encountered them or knew they were there in this survey compared to the last. Awareness of lecture capture (Q-Review) had increased from 48% of 2012/13 respondents to 94% of the 2013/14 respondents. Awareness also grew steeply around the inclusion of multimedia (either audio only or video) with around 41% growth in awareness of these types of materials. More respondents too are seeing and potentially using the TALIS reading list software with 53% awareness in 2012/13 growing to 74% in this year’s survey.

**Figure 24: Comparison of respondents who had never heard of different teaching materials in QMplus 2013/14 survey vs 2012/13**



\* Asked as two separate questions in 2012/13 survey

Student voices
<b>Of all the teaching materials used to support your learning mentioned above which was the most or least useful and why?</b>
<i>“QMplus could also provide more links and tips to resources relevant to the module other than the reading list, say linking to podcasts and videos relevant to study subject..”</i>
<i>“The reading lists under each collapsible week was extremely useful.”</i>
<i>“Q-Review is excellent. Please record all lectures.”</i>
<i>“I like the features overall mainly because it is very organised. So accessing most of my lecture notes and getting information to access the teaching staff was made much easier.”</i>
<i>“a great idea is to add a feature where the student can add notes to the original lecture notes”</i>
<i>“upload lecture videos and hyperlinks to journals to save us the time of searching for them”</i>

### 7.2.2 Discussion

Perhaps the most important message coming out of this section is that the core teaching materials made available through QMplus i.e. lecture notes and slides, reading lists, links to external websites and access to videos of lectures (Q-Review) are all seen as useful by students, in fact in the case of notes and slides 67% found them very useful. As was noted in last year’s survey these resources

constitute the backbone of good blended teaching and students clearly regard them as valuable in their learning. There were, however, a lot of comments in the optional questions about the consistency, quality and provision of those teaching materials *“Not all lecturers are using the system fully. e.g. some lecturers put assessment details, revision slides and lots of other useful information on there whilst others put up a bare minimum of lecture slides.”* Comments such as these suggest that the ELU needs to continue to emphasise in its literature and workshops the purpose behind blended teaching and how the materials provided in a module area combine to constitute the ‘blend’.

Reading lists are seen as pretty useful by respondents but they were equivocal about the specialised reading list software itself (TALIS). A much smaller proportion of respondents actually knew about this software too suggesting that further promotion of the benefits for staff of investing time in building TALIS reading lists is necessary.

The college is continuing to invest significant amounts of money in infrastructure to support lecture capture, this investment is purported to be driven by student demand. It is therefore somewhat surprising to see this resource ranked fourth for usefulness with 39% of respondents ranking it very useful. Many students told us how useful it was *“Q-Review is very handy”* though we also received a substantial number of comments about reliability and quality of the provision as well as desire for more of it and making its availability more prominent in the module layout.

Links to multimedia content did not rate as useful as the other teaching materials investigated, though many respondents had not encountered these kinds of materials at all either. This may be due to the fact that curating a set of multimedia materials and linking them to key areas of the curriculum takes time and energy, it may be due to the lack of quality external resources worth linking to or it might be a question of awareness of the ease with which resources such as this can be included in QMplus. In the February 2015 the E-Learning Unit will be launching a new college-wide Media Server. This will be a place where module convenors can store multimedia content for a module, design student activities around video and link to external content from YouTube etc relatively easily and without the associated advertising and comments. We expect this will lead to a growth in the use of such content across the college and will be working to promote it. We are also developing two video booths where academics can develop and produce their own videos for use in teaching.

### 7.2.3 Recommendations

- Develop resources for staff around the effective and engaging use of external teaching materials in QMplus and highlight them in our workshops.
- Continue to work with the library to promote the benefits of using the TALIS Reading list software.
- Promote the benefits of lecture capture to staff and ensure the service is reliable and valued.
- Provide easy ways for staff to upload media into QMplus.
- Showcase best practice in the use of video and audio in teaching, particularly within QMplus.

### 7.2.4 Already actioned in 2014/15

- The ELU launched a new website in May 2014 which includes a rich variety of resources for staff on how they can develop their blended learning.
- More rooms equipped with lecture capture hardware and many more lectures being captured as HSS and much of SMD capture all lectures where possible.

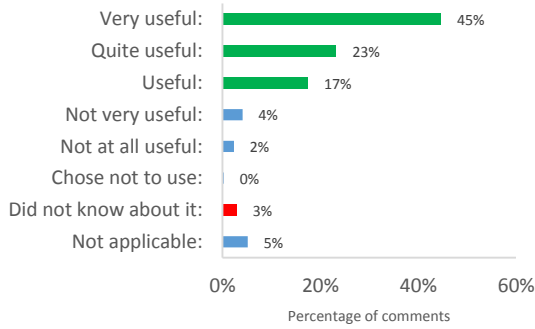
- Lecture capture software has been upgraded and now supports mobile use and better analytics.
- Two video recording booths (Mile-End and Whitechapel) to be launched in spring 2015 enabling easy production of high quality content.
- New Video specialist employed in spring 2015 to work closely with academic staff on the use of video in teaching & learning.
- A new media server (QMplus Media) to store video and audio files will be launched college-wide in March 2015.

### 7.3 ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK TOOLS, METHODS AND APPROACHES

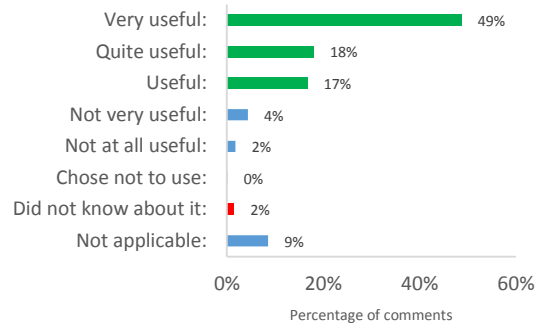
In this section we examined seven different tools and features of QMplus whose main purpose is to facilitate assessment and feedback. Respondents were asked to assess each of them for usefulness. Two new features were added to the survey for investigation this year: *Receiving grades* and *Viewing a Turnitin report for an assignment*.

**Figure 25: Usefulness of assessment and feedback tools, methods and approaches in QMplus to support learning.**

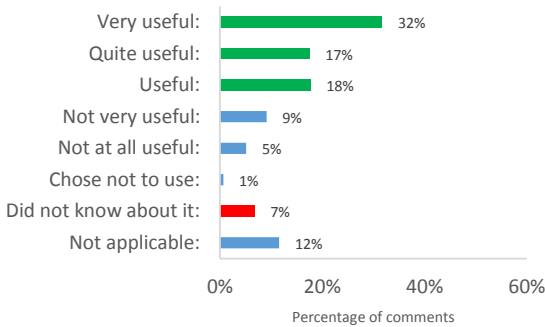
**Figure 25a: Accessing assessment documents (e.g. criteria etc)**



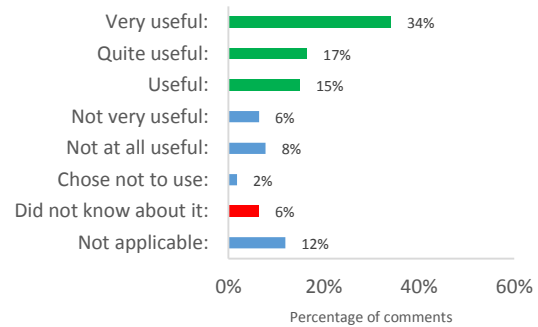
**Figure 25b: Submitting work/assignments**



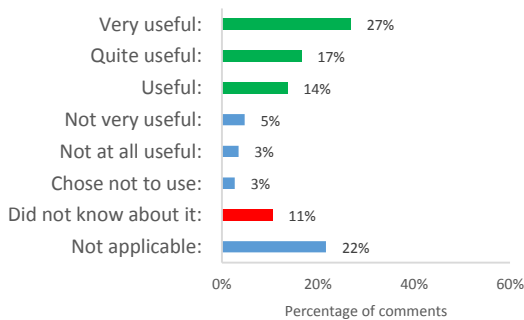
**Figure 25c: Viewing feedback**



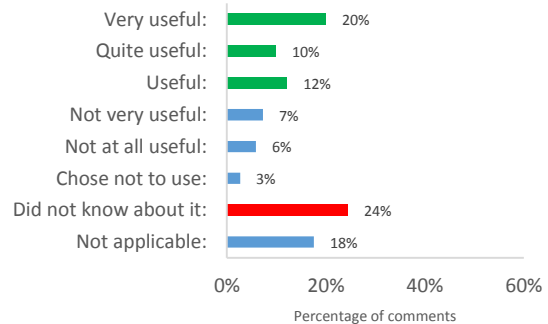
**Figure 25d: Receiving grades**



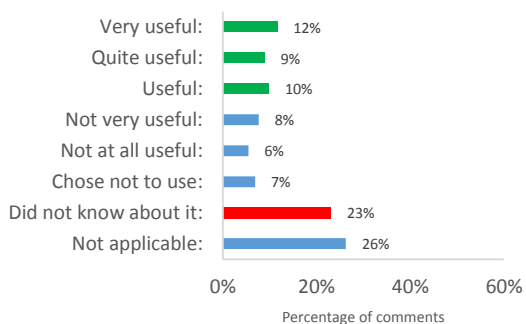
**Figure 25e: Taking online tests or quizzes**



**Figure 25f: Viewing a Turnitin report for an assignment**



**Figure 25g: Developing an assessed e-portfolio for my module/programme**



With respect to these seven tools and features 85% of all respondents found accessing assessment documents useful (665 respondents) whilst almost the same number (84%) found the ability to submit coursework through QMplus useful with almost 50% of them finding it very useful. Viewing feedback and receiving grades were seen as being similarly useful by 67% of respondents (521). 58% of respondents found taking online quizzes useful, whereas viewing Turnitin reports and using Mahara (Groups & portfolios) to develop an assessed portfolio were only judged useful by 31% of respondents (238).

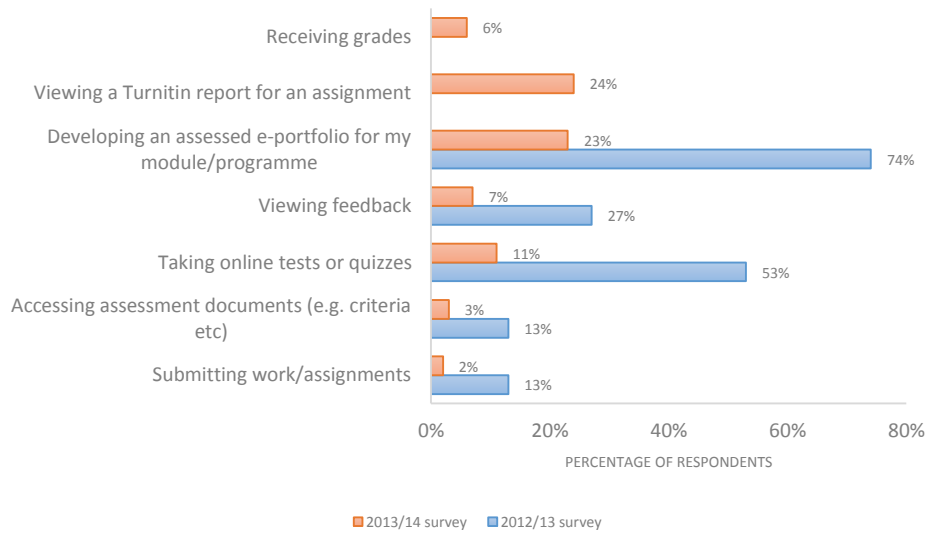
Four of the assessment methods and features investigated were judged as useless by more than 10% of respondents. 14% (111 respondents) did not find viewing feedback, receiving grades or developing an assessed e-portfolio useful while a similar percentage (13%) did not find viewing a Turnitin report useful.

Finally 24% of users (191) did not even know they could view a Turnitin report and 23% didn't know about the possibility of developing an assessed e-portfolio.

### 7.3.1 2012/13 comparison

The rankings for frequency of access from last year's survey are exactly the same as this year's with 'Access to assessment information' viewed most often last year (34% every week) and seen as most useful this year (by 85% of respondents). Of more interest as in the previous question is the increase in awareness overall of the different assessment types as can be seen in the bar chart below.

**Figure 26: Comparison of respondents who had never heard of various assessment methods in QMplus 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



There were increases in awareness across all categories but the greatest increase in 2012/13 came with the assessed e-portfolio rising from only 26% of the 2012/13 respondents being aware of it to 77% in 2013/14. A similar scale of increase was seen with online quizzes where 53% of respondents in 2012/13 had never heard of them but only 11% were unaware in 2013/14.

Student voices
<b><i>Of all the assessment &amp; feedback methods used to support your learning mentioned above which was the most or least useful and why</i></b>
<i>"The assessment criteria page and feedback when used is very helpful."</i>
<i>"More model answers or example answers for assessments/exams.."</i>
<i>"The submission feature is very hard to use and a source of significant stress.."</i>
<i>"The problem is that sometimes it does not work properly - I submitted my assignment in .rtf and my seminar leader could not open it, so they lowered my grade. If there is problem with the format, just do not tell us we can upload it in it."</i>
<i>"We used to get detailed feedback on our exams - a histogram of how the cohort did, with average scores and standard deviations - it's all gone now! I wish I had that because a score is quite useless if you don't know where you stand among your peers."</i>
<i>"Many students would appreciate if there was a notification on QMplus when feedback for an assessment had been uploaded. Otherwise we end up frequently going in and out of each module area into the grade tab, anxiously looking for updates. If there was a notification on the main page that would be extremely useful."</i>
<i>"We didn't use many of the functions offered by QMplus such as assessment, feedback, contact with professors etc. Instead, grades were sent by email etc. The only functionality we used was to have a place where we could get our slides. That was too bad because the system seems useful."</i>
<i>"When uploading assignments, it would be hugely useful if a message such as 'Assignment successfully submitted' appeared, as currently assignments just appear to be floating in space."</i>
<i>"Most modules did not use the grades section to report grades and that was unfortunate it is a very good feature that should be used all the time."</i>
<i>"I don't get to see my marks or feedback in QM Plus because SBCS still uses its old Control Panel for that. It would be nice to integrate the two so that we only need to go on one website for all our needs."</i>

### 7.3.2 Discussion

Assessment and feedback are two of the most important aspects of the student learning experience and if we can get them right in QMplus then we can make a huge impact on the way students perceive their experience at Queen Mary. There are lots of variables that make up the lifecycle of assessment & feedback and the VLE is only one part of it. Every school, department and institute has their own processes and finding alignment can be tricky. Bearing all that in mind, the results in the 2013/14 survey around some of the key assessment methods and tools in QMplus are extremely positive and build on a similar set of results in last year's survey.

During the migration period of QMplus phase II we worked closely with schools to implement module templates that built on the lessons from phase I. Students had already told us they valued the assessment information and course work submission capabilities but they did want consistency, reliability and clarity about processes and functionality. Unfortunately we were unable to upgrade QMplus in the summer of 2013 and this meant another year of bugs and issues that proved difficult to resolve and for which we have received some criticism in this year's survey. Assignment submission proved useful for most but many students commented about the lack of assignment receipts, the mixture of buttons on screen or the lack of information about what to do if something went wrong. Since the survey closed we have been able to upgrade QMplus and the provision of coursework submission tools. The E-learning unit and our networks across the college of people with similar roles, need to be able to help academic staff to navigate through all the opportunities/options now available to develop formative and summative assessment in QMplus. We should also publish on the ELU website examples of good practice in online assessment.

Assessment information is rated as most useful in this section and when the optional comments are analysed throughout the survey we can see that students are also looking for up to date information, they would like to have links to worked solutions or past exam papers and they would like that consistently across modules.

Grades and feedback were widely commented on too. In this section they have been rated as useful for the majority of students but what they are also asking for is school wide decisions about where the grades are going to live: QMplus? MYISIS? They are also asking for the grades to be more accessible on the module homepage. As far as feedback is concerned there is a call for it to be provided, provided more consistently and for students to be notified when it is available. As noted in the previous section, checking assessment & feedback is also popular on mobile devices (see xx).

It is pleasing to see recognition of more advanced assessment features in QMplus such as *online quizzes* and completing an *assessed e-portfolio*. The increase in awareness is promising but more research needs to be carried out into what exactly is happening here.

We would also recommend that we do not carry out any further development of assessment and feedback tools in QMplus prior to the college carrying out a full examination of the requirements of assessment across the college and whether current systems for supporting those processes are fit for purpose. When we understand what is required in a clear and consistent fashion we should align our e-learning systems to match those needs.

### 7.3.3 Recommendations

- Implement a college-wide evaluation of assessment & feedback with a view to aligning QMplus tools more effectively.
- Profile the range of formative and summative assessment methods possible in QMplus and provide examples of their use around the college.

- Improve the reliability of electronic assignment submission generally.
- Work with schools to develop and implement consistent online assessment & feedback information
- Improve visibility and design of grades and feedback on the Module homepage.

#### 7.3.4 Already actioned in 2014/15

- The ELU has run college-wide events and many bespoke sessions for academics and administrators profiling the various assessment options available in QMplus.
- Assignment submission processes have been streamlined in the QMplus summer 2014 upgrade.
- Introduced assignment submission receipts.
- Currently developing enhanced integration of grades between QMplus and MySIS.

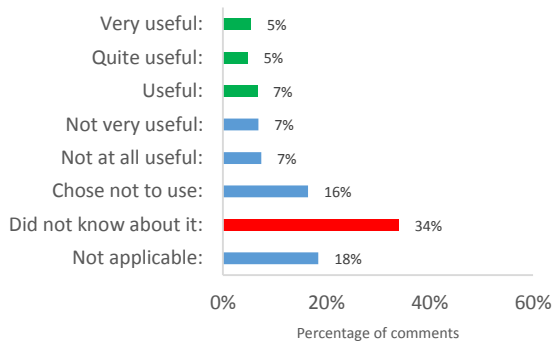


## 7.4 GROUPS AND PORTFOLIOS

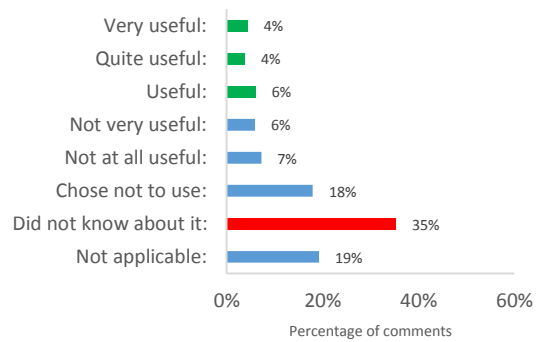
In this section we explored the usefulness of functionality within the Groups and Portfolios (or *Mahara*) area of QMplus. Five ways the tool could be used to help support learning were assessed for their usefulness by respondents as can be seen in the bar charts below.

**Figure 27: Usefulness of aspects of the QMplus Groups & Portfolios area to support learning.**

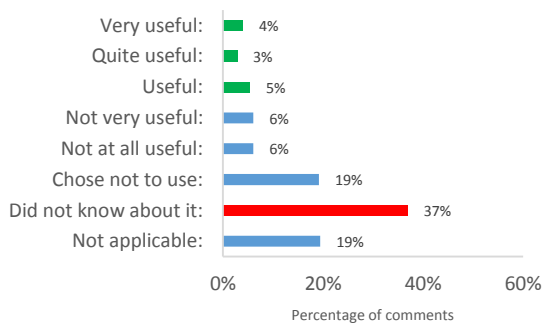
**Figure 27a: Carrying out group work**



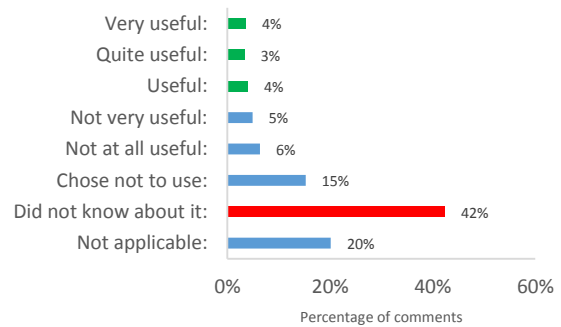
**Figure 27b: Setting up a group**



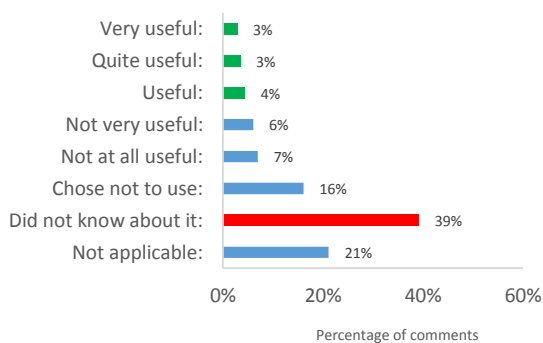
**Figure 27c: Developing my own personal portfolio**



**Figure 28d: Uploading and/or presenting my CV**



**Figure 28e: Keeping an online journal**



The most useful aspect of Mahara to the respondents is the ability to carry out group work, which was considered useful by 17% (125). This was followed by setting up groups (14%) and developing a personal portfolio (12%). Keeping a journal or blog was only seen as useful by 10% of respondents (83).

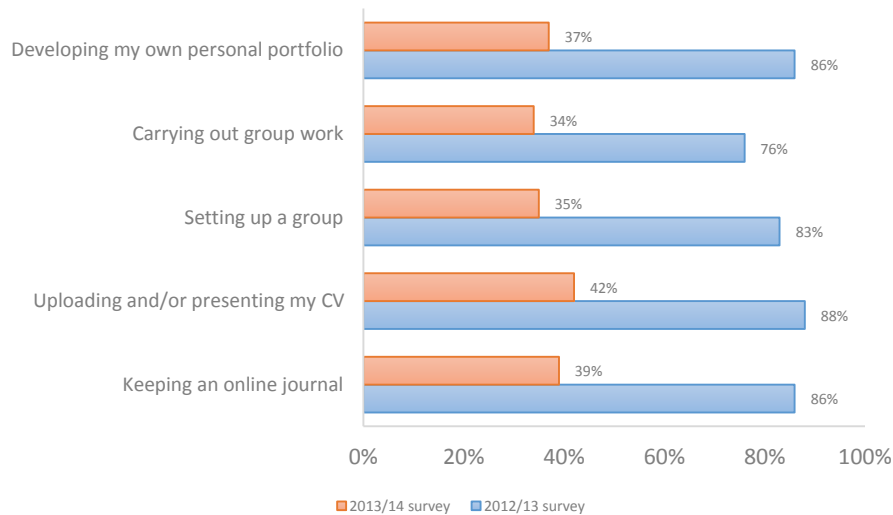
On the other hand 14% of all respondents did not find carrying out group work useful and 42% had never heard of the capability of uploading and/or presenting a CV. Lack of awareness of what is possible in the Groups & Portfolios area was also high for keeping an online journal at 39% (304) and developing a personal profile (37% or 285 respondents). High numbers of respondents were also not aware of the ability to set up groups or carry out group work (35% and 34% respectively).

### 7.4.1 Comparison to 2012/13

The numbers of respondents indicating some frequency of access last year were equally as low as this year, however, keeping an online journal was accessed most frequently in 2012/13 but perceived as the least useful in 2013/14.

What is perhaps more revealing is the increase in awareness of the Groups & Portfolios area from 2012/13 to this year as can be seen in the bar chart below:

**Figure 29: Comparison of respondents who had never heard of Groups & Portfolios functionality in QMplus 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



All five categories saw a marked increase in awareness. The greatest improvement was seen in keeping personal portfolios and online journals with a 49% increase in awareness between the 2012/13 and 2013/14 surveys. A similar increase (48%) was seen with setting up groups.

#### Student voices

**Of all the ways used to support your learning in the Groups & Portfolios area of QMplus which was the most or least useful and why**

*"By enhancing communication between students, e.g. automatically creating groups that included all students of a course (i.e. MSc Software Engineering one group)"*

*"I think that if each module had like a chat/forum on its page where each student can quickly ask question and others or the teacher can reply... something like groups on facebook but on each module site; so you don't have to look for it, go different windows/websites. Something like the teachers have for messages for us, but more open for others."*

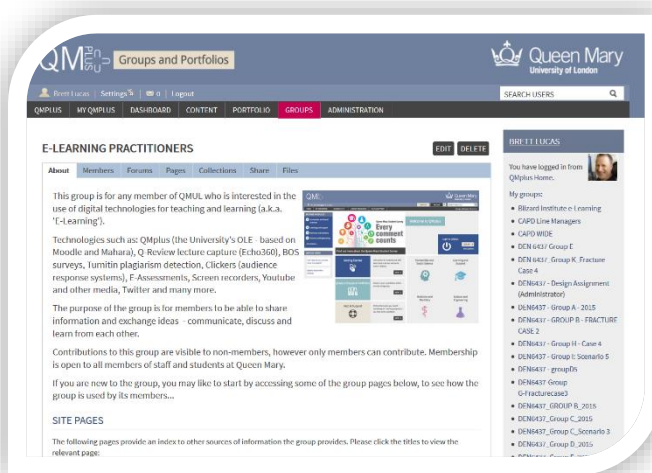
*"I did not realise it was possible to create a group chat for group work."*

*"The portfolio and journals section - the whole Mahara section - is not user-friendly."*

## 7.4.2 Discussion

The Groups and Portfolios (Mahara) area is quite different to the QMplus module area (Moodle). This difference is not just restricted to the interface itself (look and feel, file upload mechanisms etc) but the ownership and control of the system, where, for the most part, the student owns the space and can set it up to work as they see fit. This might be guided by schools or module leads to achieve particular learning outcomes, but more often relies on the student themselves.

In the second year of QMplus we are still not seeing as much use as we might have expected, in fact the survey results suggest that it is the part of the system that students are being requested to use the least in their studies. This may be due to lack of awareness of the potential of using it to support teaching and learning and it may also be the fault of the software itself i.e. lacking particular functionality. Certainly students are suggesting that communication is important: *“Communication should be encouraged e.g. QMPlus is great for accessing material and information, but still seems to be mainly going one direction in terms of communication”* Mahara is certainly the place where this kind of communication could be facilitated. Students also commented about the whole learning environment itself: *“I would prefer it to be more like social media such as linkedin for the communication where you have your own profile etc.”* indicating that it might be useful to integrate the two systems more closely at module level rather than just leave the Groups & Portfolio area on its own waiting to be discovered.



[The E-learning Practitioners Group](#) in QMplus Groups & Portfolios

Using the system to facilitate group work is the part that is seen as most useful now and this can clearly be seen in the system with project work being visible from third year SEMS students, the Language Centre and Geography to name a few.

## 7.4.3 Recommendations

- Profile the benefits of using Mahara for such things as reflecting in an e-portfolio, sharing work with colleagues and supporting group work and interaction.
- Investigate what people are doing with e-portfolios.
- Develop an online 'Getting started with groups and portfolios' course in QMplus, similar to the existing Moodle course area, for students to learn about how the software can be used to support their learning journey at Queen Mary in formal and informal ways
- Solve technical problems and usability issues around the integration of Moodle and Mahara that are affecting usability.

- Integrate new features into Mahara such as cloud services, more embed functionality to include the new media server and Q-Review
- Provide a notifications block in QMplus that allows users to easily view activity in their Mahara groups and pages.

#### 7.4.4 Already actioned in 2014/15

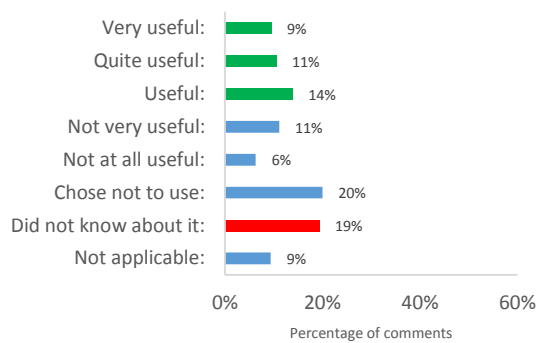
- Mahara is the focus of a work package within QMplus phase III project. The work package will deliver a responsive themed Mahara, better integration with QMplus – Moodle, new page layouts, a full user database and many more features.
- Launch of the new look Mahara in June 2015 will be surrounded by college-wide promotion of the educational possibilities of the system.
- Upgraded Mahara to version 1.7 in late spring 2014 and applied some theme enhancements in September 2014.
- Developed a suite of video and text-based support materials for students showing them how to take advantage of the key features of Mahara.
- Launching an e-portfolio in year 2 and 3 Dentistry in February 2015.

## 7.5 COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

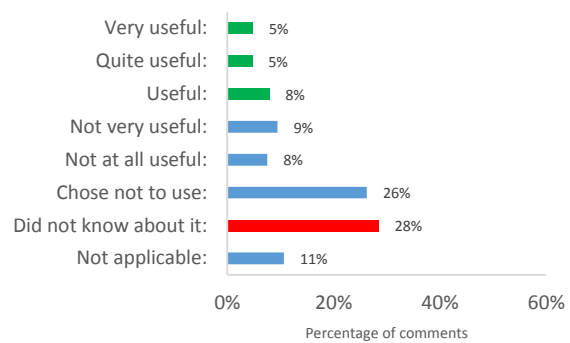
In this set of questions we explored the frequency of use of five of the main tools that help facilitate collaborative learning within QMplus. Use of these tools by students would generally represent more advanced use of the system. This question was divided over two sections in the previous survey and was simplified this time around to avoid repetition and confusion.

**Figure 30: Usefulness of types of collaborative activity in QMplus to support learning.**

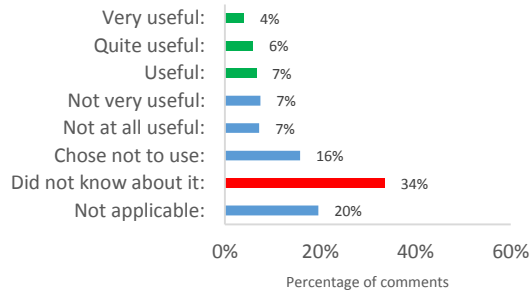
**Figure 30a: Communicating with classmates and tutors in forums**



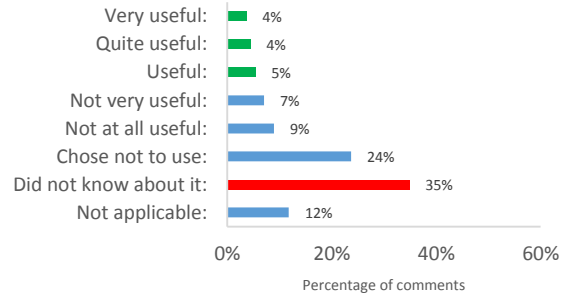
**Figure 30b: Participating in online chat**



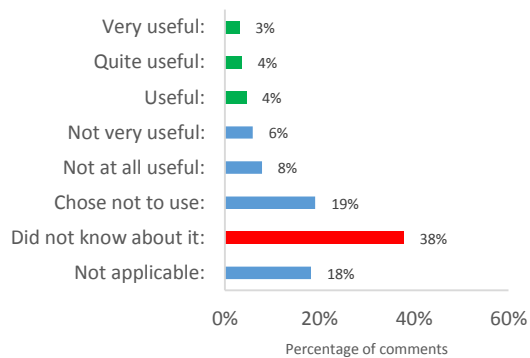
**Figure 30c: Peer reviewing other student's work**



**Figure 30d: Communicating with other QML friends (via QMplus messaging or Quickmail)**



**Figure 30e: Maintaining a class blog or wiki**



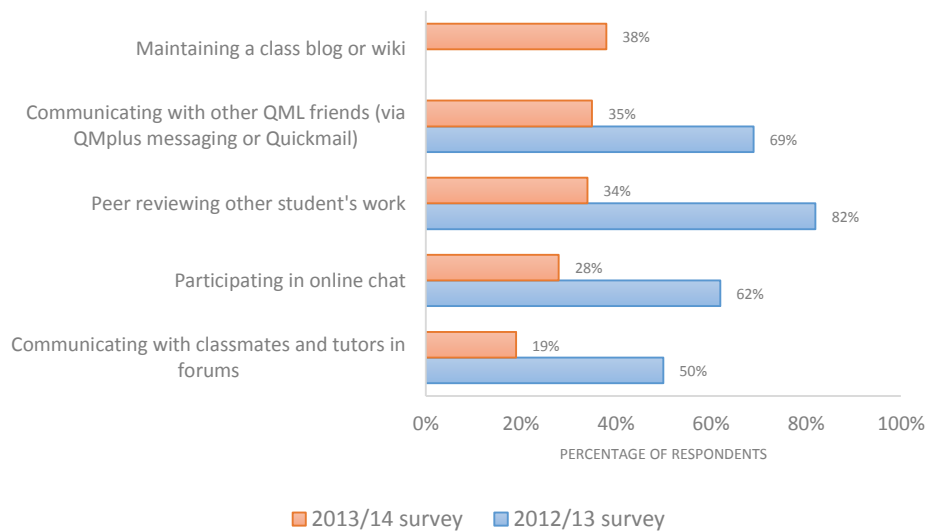
The most useful collaboration tool was the discussion forum with 34% of respondents (264) seeing it as useful means of communicating with classmates and tutors. There was a significant drop in numbers after this to 18% of respondents (137) regarding online chat as useful, 17% (128) appreciating the ability to peer review their colleague’s work and 15% seeing the messaging and Quickmail tools useful for personal communication in QMplus (106).

In contrast 17% of all respondents did not find forums or online chat useful (133) and 16% (125) did not find the email and messaging side of QMplus useful either.

38% of all respondents (295) did not know about blogs or wikis, 35% (272) did not know about advanced messaging features like Quickmail or the messaging capabilities in Mahara. 34% had never heard about the peer reviewing capabilities within QMplus (262) and 28% didn’t know that there was an online chat capability.

7.5.1 2012/13 comparison

**Figure 31: Comparison of those survey respondents who had not heard of Collaborative features in QMplus – 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



\*The OU Blog tool was added to QMplus in September 2013

As has been noted in other comparisons in this survey, the findings for this question are very similar to last year’s results with participation in online discussion being the most frequently accessed ‘interactive feature’ and ‘online chat’ third in that section. The bar chart above points to increased awareness of the capability of the system around peer-review, messaging and email capability and online chat.

## Student voices

**Of all the collaborative learning methods mentioned that could support your learning which was the most or least useful and why?**

*"I think that if each module had like a chat/forum on its page where each student can quickly ask question and others or the teacher can reply... something like groups on Facebook but on each module site; so you don't have to look for it, go different windows/websites."*

*"The ability to choose what emails we receive - the mass email we get (so often!) clog up my inbox and I miss important emails (ie. module announcements) because I keep getting emails that aren't relevant to my course or gender etc."*

*"Sections where students can post information (e.g., wikis, group discussion) are too formal and therefore students do not use this feature very much. This area could be improved by a different user interface."*

*"Making features such as the QM+ forums more prominent, they would be very useful if lecturers were encouraged to use them more often for pre-seminar discussions etc."*

*"I would like to see student generated content such as blogs or videos."*

### 7.5.2 Discussion

It was interesting to note that the collaborative tools in QMplus are still not being used as widely as we might have thought. Building collaborative activities in QMplus that work can take considerable time and effort. When they work they can be particularly enjoyable for all involved. A persistent group of respondents simply do not know about some tools like blogs and wikis, messaging and peer reviewing capabilities. We would like to aim for a situation where every module was using at least one of these tools in their teaching.

Blogs, journals and messaging are available outside the module structure and control of academics within the Groups & Portfolios area of QMplus so the results here might suggest we need to promote these communicative tools more widely. On the other hand we might have to accept that the tools available in QMplus are not as slick and integrated into the lives of the modern student. Why communicate in QMplus when Facebook, WhatsApp etc. are already available and are easy to access and use?

It is pleasing to see that forums are being used and perceived as useful by 37% of respondents to the survey but it may also be considered somewhat surprising that forum use is so low. Asynchronous discussion is one of the bedrocks of blended teaching viewed by many as a relatively easy way to extend the classroom conversation into the virtual space, include unheard voices in the classroom, allow for more thoughtful response to questions etc. The results suggest that we need to find out more about what is happening in this area in a staff survey.

The E-Learning Unit could also work on more ways to support the development of forums by dedicating an area of their website to a Good Practice Guide in this area. In relation to the other tools in this area we could also support their use by helping academics and course teams to think through why they might be useful.

The technical integration of Moodle and Mahara has not reached the point where communication or notifications can be transferred between the two. Therefore communication chains are easily broken. In addition email links to discussion forum posts in Mahara can often take the user to error pages if they are not authenticated, hardly conducive to promoting communication.

Students should be free to choose whatever communication channel they like to chat and email friends. However, there may be specific learning contexts where communication between classmates,

group members or between a student and their personal tutor or module lead should be done in a password protected environment that is close to the materials being discussed, free from advertising or more 'private'. For this reason we must ensure that the tools provided are fit for purpose and we should continue to inform users of their presence and how to use them.

### 7.5.3 Recommendations

- Continue to provide opportunities for staff to discover the communicative features of Moodle and Mahara.
- Develop a good practice guide for staff in the use of Discussion forums.
- Ask a question in the staff survey about the usefulness of communication tools in QMplus from their perspective.
- Provide better technical integration between Moodle and Mahara particularly around notifications.

### 7.5.4 Already actioned in 2014/15

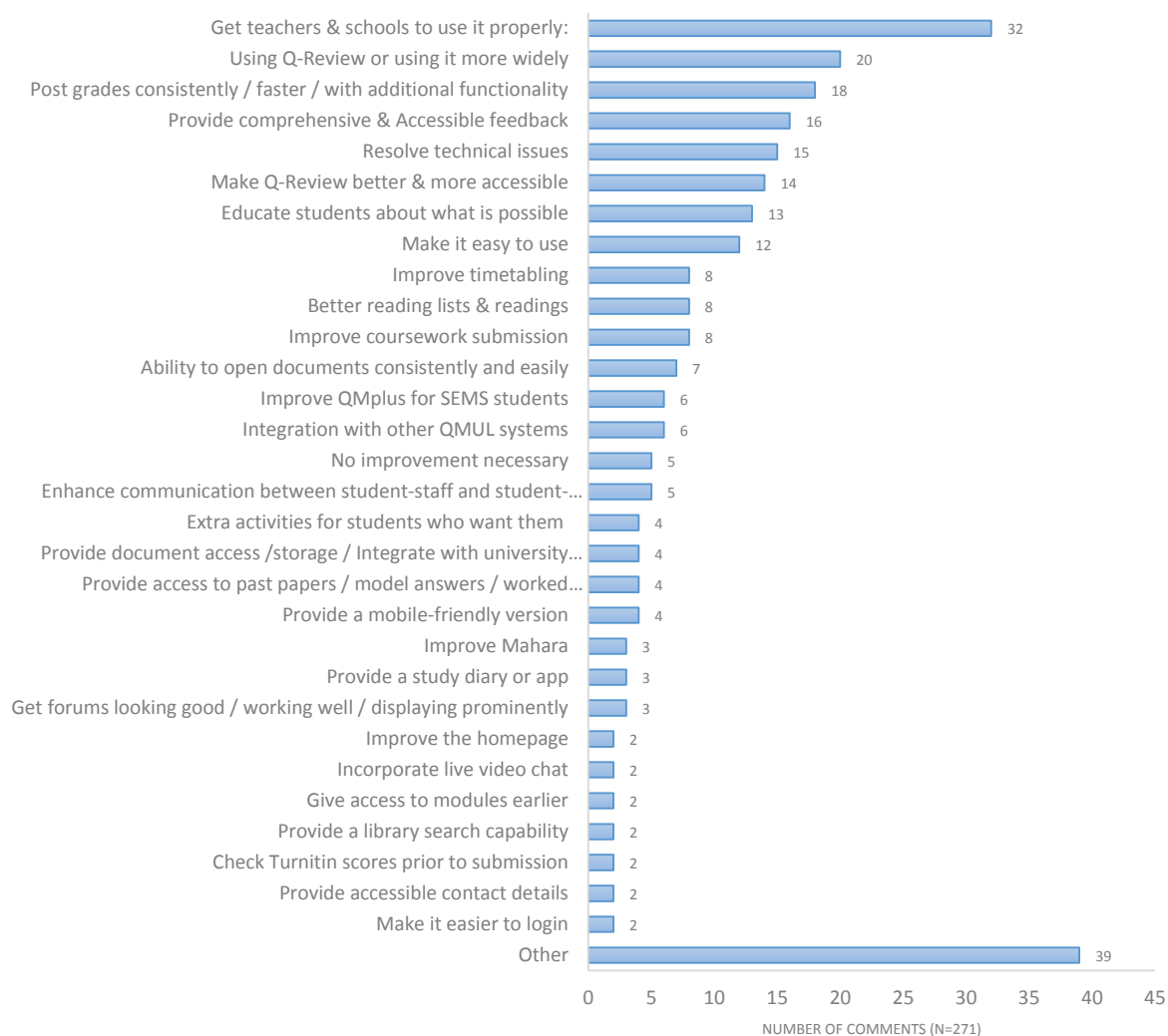
- The new ELU website has a guide for staff on enhancing communication.
- The Phase III Mahara enhancement project is hoping to surface Mahara activity in Moodle through a notifications block.



## 7.6 OTHER WAYS QMPLUS COULD BE USED TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

In the final question in this section respondents were asked to comment on any other ways they felt that QMplus could support their learning. 271 comments were grouped into themes and are presented in the bar chart below in order of frequency.

**Figure 32: Are there any other ways that QMplus could be used to support your learning?**



The comments can be divided into those that answer the question directly and more general comments about QMplus.

The most common suggestions centred on getting teachers and schools to use QMplus properly with 32 comments such as: *“not all lecturers are able to use it well nor seem bothered to enhance the module pages”*, and using Q-Review or using it more widely *“make lecture videos for all modules available”*. Providing grades and providing them consistently across a programme was desired by 18 respondents *“Show the final grades on QMplus, rather than having to access the intranet or mysis to see the relevant grades”* and a further 16 respondents wanted to see better feedback provided through QMplus and notification that that feedback was available *“Similarly, only some upload marks and feedback, others don't”*.

Resolving technical issues was also seen as an important way to support learning by 15 respondents *“Not going down the day before exams or work is due”*. This theme of reliability and visibility was also picked up in comments about Q-Review by 14 respondents *“The quality of the videos in Q review are very poor”*.

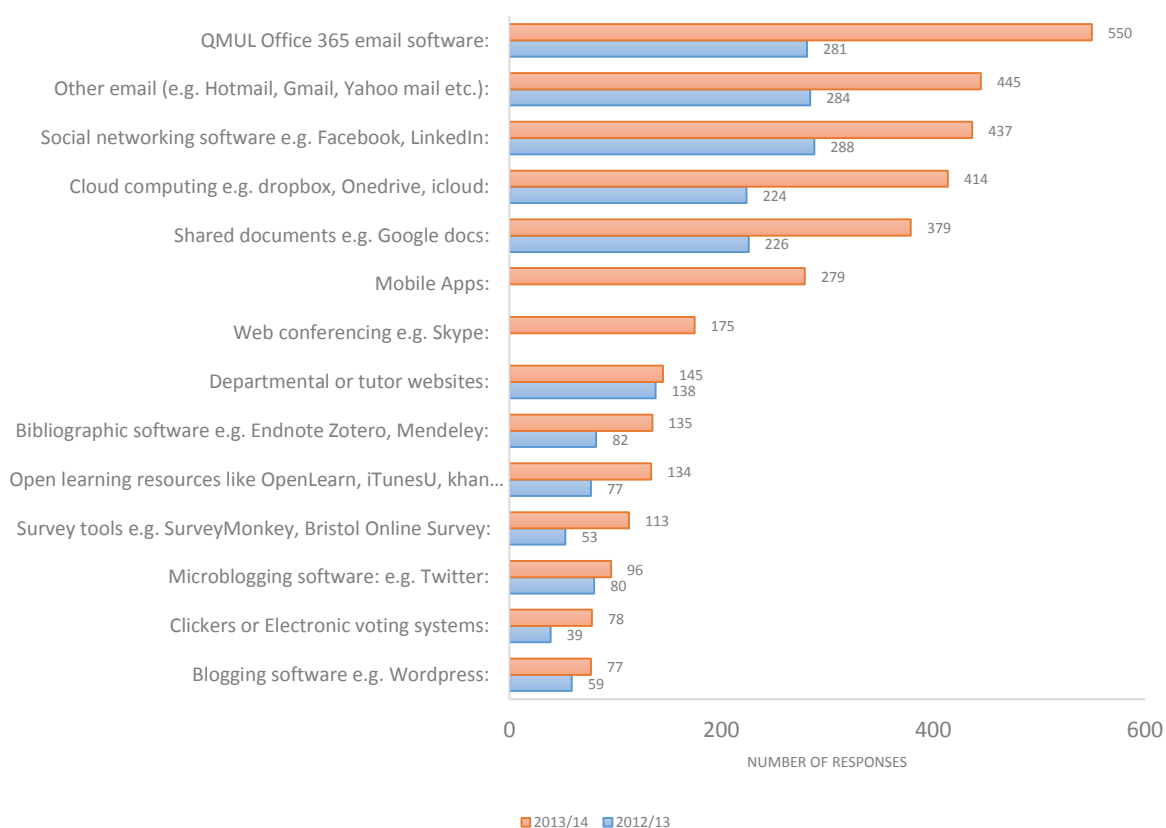
Other comments of note were the call to educate students better as to the potential of QMplus *“Some of these things sound great, but I did not know about them”* (13 comments) and improving the usability of QMplus itself (12 comments) *“The usability is awful compared to most modern systems I use at work and have used for learning previously.”* Timetabling and course submission were both regarded as needing improvement by 8 respondents and 8 respondents also felt that the provision of reading lists needed to be more carefully implemented.

Student voices
<b>Are there any other ways that QMplus could be used to support your learning?</b>
<i>“Yes, if it the professors were consistent in using QMPlus. What was challenging is trying to find the readings and course material needed for each of the modules. Each professor did it differently and others didn't use it at all.”</i>
<i>“Lecture recording systems are present, but are often unused. While I can appreciate the problem of students who choose not to attend lectures, restricting study resources affects "good students" too. I would have loved for my lectures to have been recorded in supplement to my notes and lecture slides for revision.”</i>
<i>“If recordings of lectures could be made easier to find and uploaded in a more accessible form of file, I would have been able to review the ones I missed and the ones I wanted to revise better. As of such, I have not managed to access a single one, which makes me sad. Well not sad, not really, but it would be cool to be able to catch up. I tried to find out how to get to them, but it seemed very complicated so I kind of gave up.”</i>
<i>“I believe it is not understood by the majority of the student population, and is currently massively under-used.”</i>
<i>“Also, it could be more aesthetically appealing and easier to navigate around, because at present there are a lot of links on one page and it makes it very difficult to remain patient when you're trying to access a specific thing.”</i>
<i>“The problem is that sometimes it does not work properly - I submitted my assignment in .rtf and my seminar leader could not open it, so they lowered my grade. If there is problem with the format, just do not tell us we can upload it in it.”</i>
<i>“The scans of books for required readings should be done properly, not in the way that there are lines missing/unreadable/loads of black blocks/front page with content and publishing info missing etc”</i>
<i>“Mysis, webmail and QMPlus should all be integrated. It's crazy I have to log in to one thing to one task and then something different from another. I studied previously at College of Law and their Online learning environment is VASTLY superior to QM's. Absolutely everything I needed including all course content (to a much deeper and wider degree) was in one place.”</i>

## 7.7 OTHER DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES USED

In the final question in this section we wanted to find out about other types of software, websites or technologies students are using to assist their learning. Thirteen popular technologies were presented in a table and respondents were asked to select as many as they found helpful. They were also able to tell us about any other technologies they found useful.

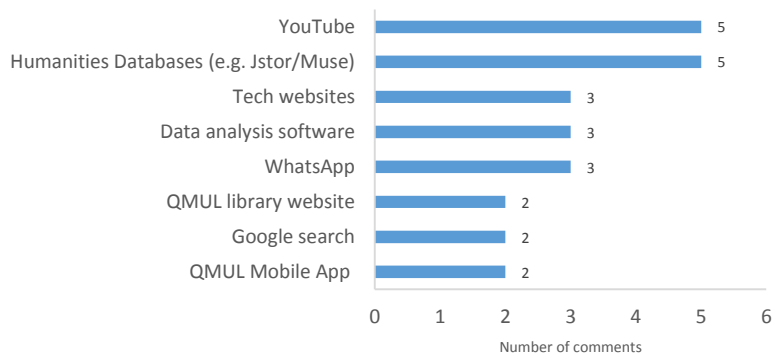
**Figure 33: Comparison of other technologies respondents found helpful for their studies – 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



Interestingly, outside of QMplus, it is the communication tools that respondents find the most helpful with 71% (550) mentioning college email and 57% (445) mentioning other email software. Social networking sites like Facebook also proved popular for supporting learning with 57% (437) rating them helpful. Being able to share documents in the cloud was seen as helpful by 49% of respondents (379) and mobile apps (a new category for 2013/14) was 6<sup>th</sup> most helpful with 279 respondents (36%).

In the 'other' category where respondents were invited to tell us about any other useful tools, we received 45 different tools, websites and technologies. Those with more than 2 comments are included in the bar chart below.

**Figure 34: Any other software / technologies you find helpful to support your learning**



## 7.8 FINAL COMMENTS

Students have commented for two years in a row now that they would like to see better and more consistent use of QMplus across their modules. Whilst we must celebrate the achievements we have made in extending VLE usage to all corners of the Queen Mary teaching schedule, both local and distance, we must keep our eye on the way the system is being used with a view to maintaining standards and enhancing what we do or ‘taking it to the next level’. To achieve this we must continue to provide opportunities for basic training in the use of the tools within QMplus and we must put particular focus on the opportunities these tools can provide to extend and enhance the excellent teaching that is already taking place.

Another important approach will be to work with faculty E-learning user groups and School administration and management teams to help develop and promote local e-learning strategies that support disciplinary pedagogical needs as well as school-wide priorities. We have chosen a 4E enhancement framework for E-learning that we hope can be used to start informing our work in one-to ones with academics and schools. The framework helps blended learning practitioners to think through how, when, where and why they are doing what they are doing.

At the same time all of those involved in providing support for QMplus need to ensure that reliability concerns are addressed and that the tools we provide within the system are fit for purpose for 21<sup>st</sup> century multi-platform blended learning. This is not by any means an easy task but it is achievable if we continue to listen to our entire user base – academic staff, students, administrators, professional services staff.

On the student side it would be useful to understand more about what students are doing with the technology and how they want the tools to integrate. We propose working with the student’s union on an exploration of the digital practices of students, perhaps running a workshop which drills down into the usefulness of an activity.

### 7.8.1 Recommendations

- Framework for enhancement of e-learning.
- Work with schools to develop strategy.

## 8 TECHNICAL SUPPORT

To gain an understanding of how the technical help and support provided for QMplus is viewed by the students at Queen Mary, we asked respondents to rate the usefulness or otherwise of this help and support. We also asked respondents for any overall comments or suggestions about technical support.

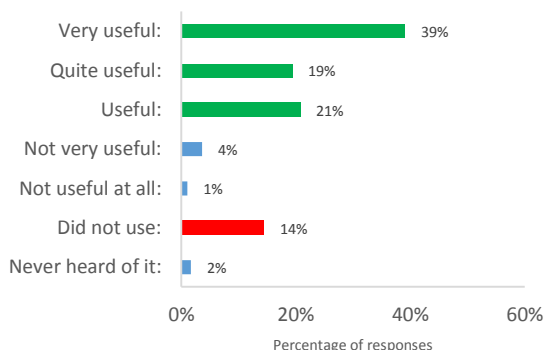


### 8.1 SOLVING TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

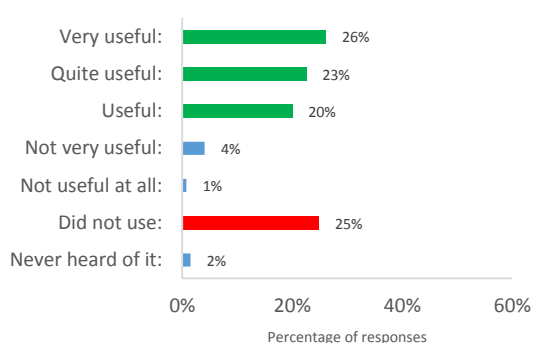
In this section we were interested in how useful students found eight different methods of solving technical problems. Each of the methods was assessed by respondents using a five point scale of usefulness (*very useful to not useful at all*). The results presented in the bar charts below have been shaded to show respondents who found the method useful (green), not useful or had never heard of it (blue) and red if the method was not used at all.

**Figure 35: Usefulness of various methods of solving a technical problem with QMplus.**

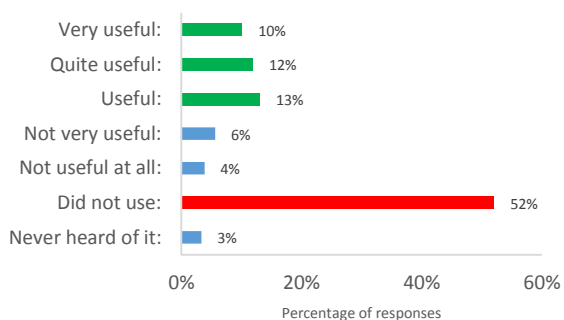
**Figure 35a: Resolved it myself**



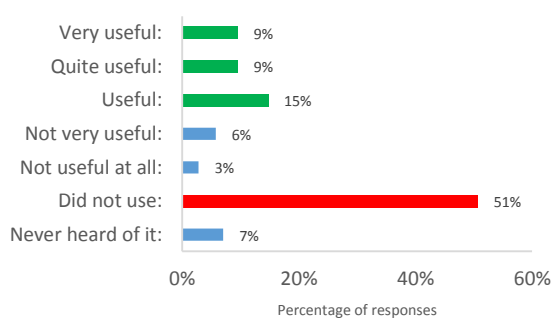
**Figure 35b: Asked a friend/classmate**



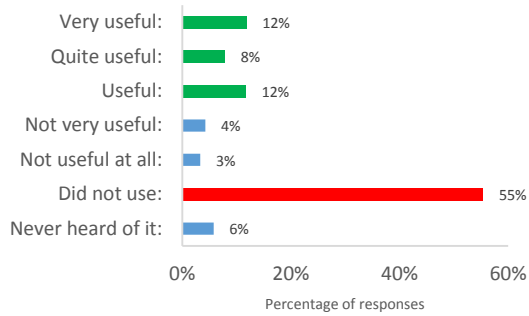
**Figure 35c: Asked your module leader/convener**



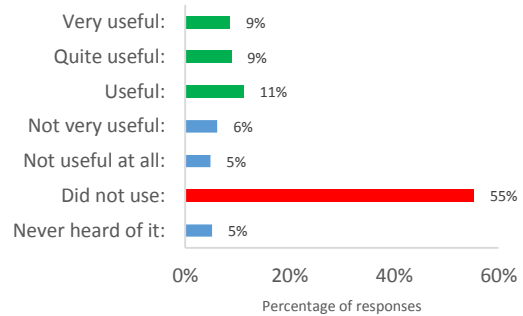
**Figure 35d: Online support material in QMplus**



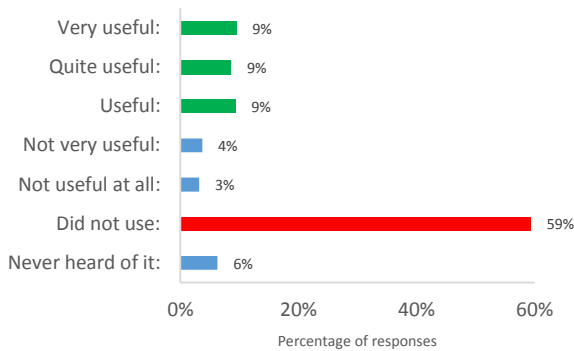
**Figure 35e: IT Helpdesk - face-to-face in Queen's Building Mile End**



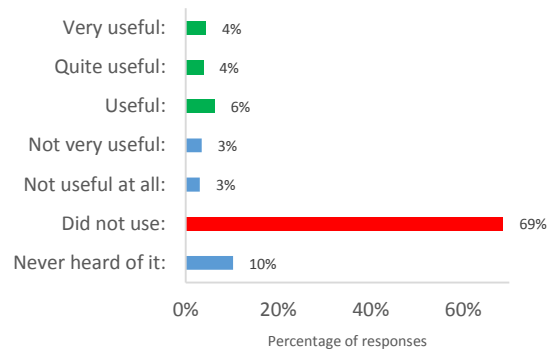
**Figure 35f: IT Helpdesk -- Email support (its-helpdesk@qmul.ac.uk)**



**Figure 35g: Used my department/school IT, E-learning or admin support**



**Figure 35h: IT Helpdesk - Phone support (ext 8888)**

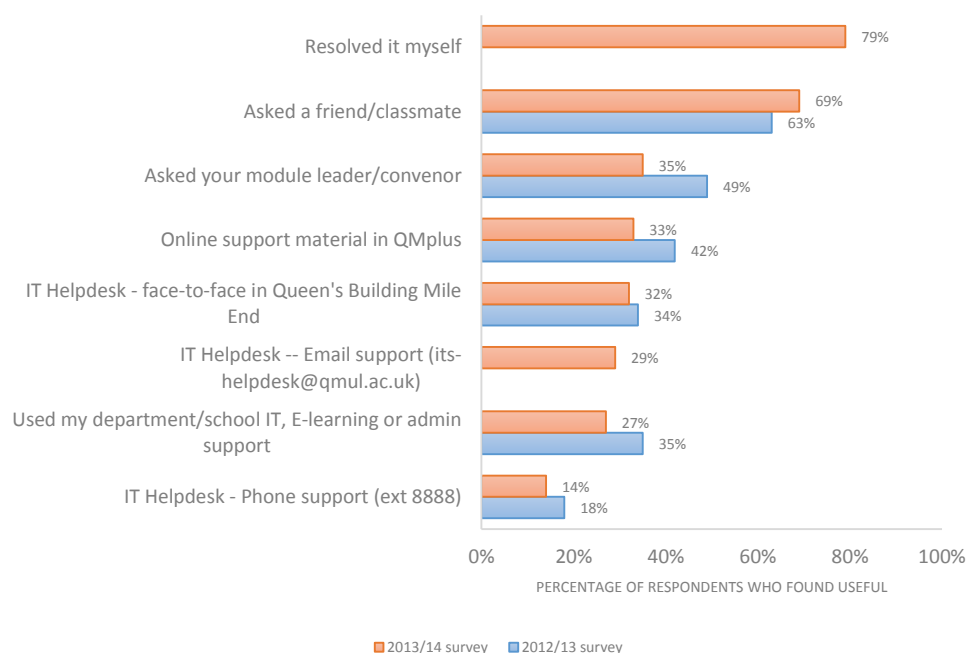


Resolving technical problems alone was identified as the most useful method with 79% of all respondents (618) finding this useful, whilst 69% (536) found asking friends or classmates useful. These are followed by asking their module lead which 35% of respondents (274) found to be a useful way to solve a problem while 33% found the online support materials available through QMplus useful. 32% of respondents (263) found the face-to face support available from the IT helpdesk useful and 29% (223) found the email support available useful.

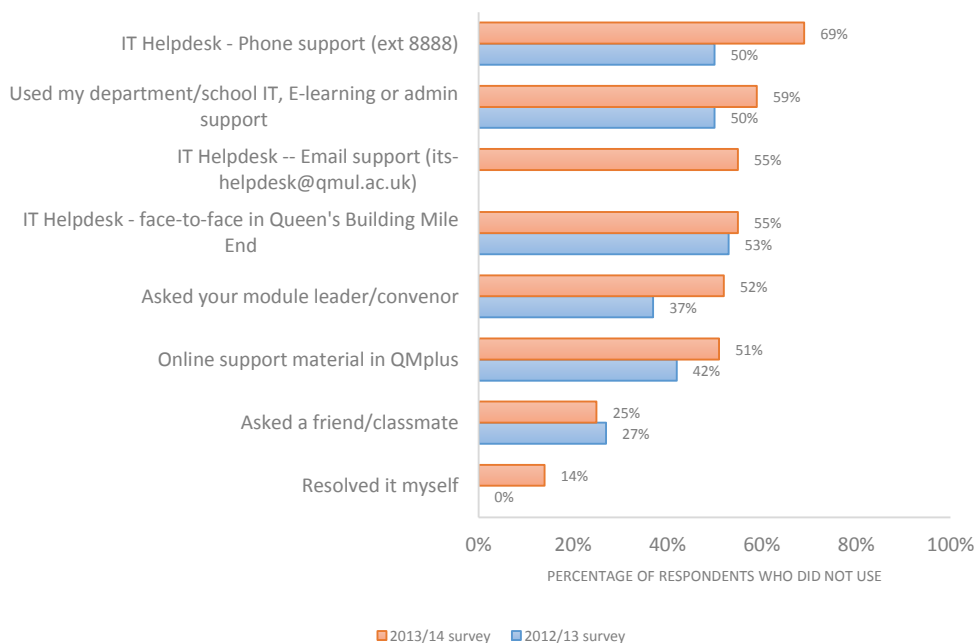
Of the ways to access support mentioned in the survey, the formal support methods were used the least with 69% of respondents not using the phone support offered by the IT helpdesk (536) and 59% (463) not using local support offered by their School. A further 55% (431) did not use Helpdesk support via email or face-to-face. In contrast, the informal methods of asking classmates or trial and error, are most used with only 25% and 14% of respondents not using these channels.

8.1.1 2012/13 comparison

**Figure 36: Comparison of the overall ranking for usefulness of technical support methods – 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



**Figure 37: Comparison of those who did not use various support methods - 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



The rankings of usefulness of the various support methods used is almost exactly the same as those in the 2012/13 survey. However there are significant drops in perception of overall usefulness between 2012/13 and 2013/14 with regard to asking your module convenor (down 14% to 35%) and

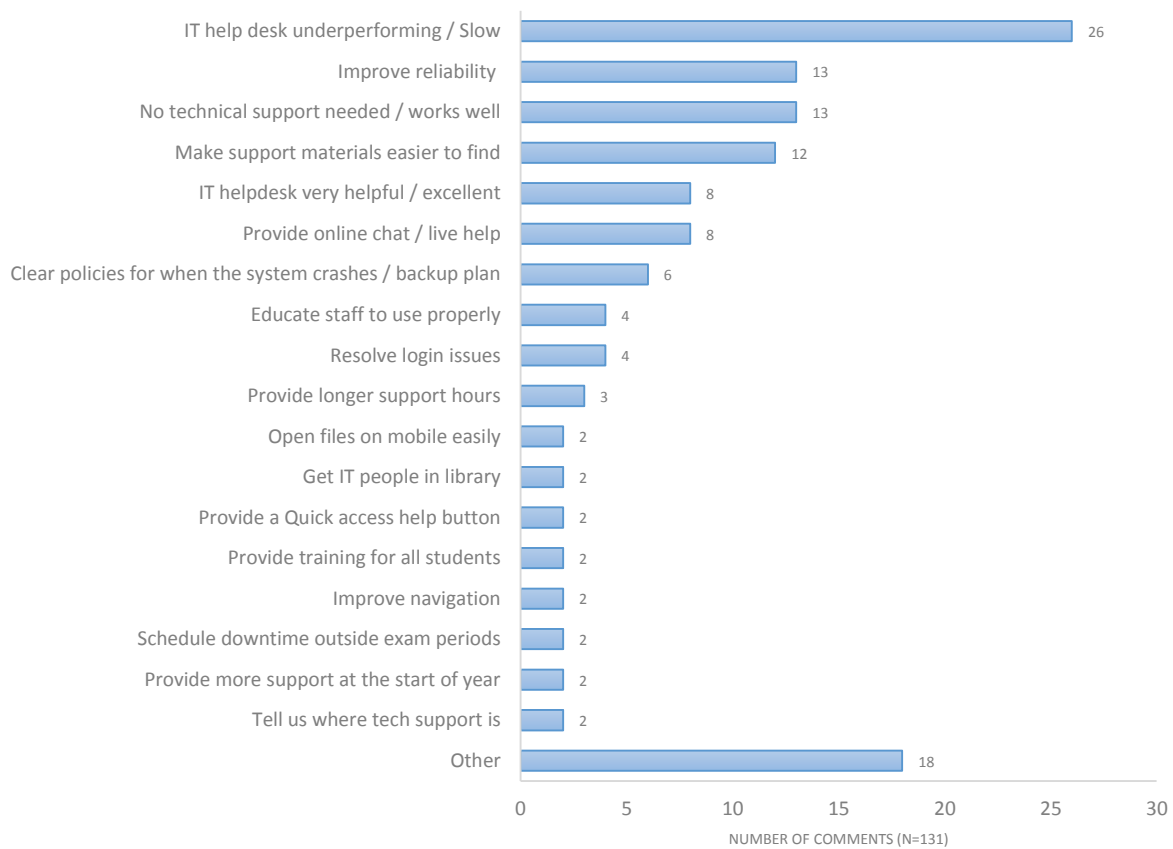
using local e-learning support (down 8% to 27%). More respondents found it useful to seek support from friends and classmates (up 6% to 69%).

When looking at methods that were not used at all the results overall remain similar between the years though notable is the decrease in use of phone support (up 19% to 69% in 2013/14), using local support (up 9% to 59%) and asking the module lead (up 15% to 52%).

## 8.2 GENERAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT TECHNICAL SUPPORT

In this section respondents were asked to comment or make suggestions on anything to do with the technical support of QMplus. In all 131 comments were received and these have been grouped into themes. Those themes with two comments or more are presented in the bar chart below and ranked by frequency.

**Figure 38: Do you have any comments or suggestions to make about technical support?**



The most common theme mentioned was about the quality of the service received from the help desk (20% of all comments). These comments centred on the general knowledge of the staff “No one seems to know how it works” and the overall speed of response “Slow in responding to issues”. 13 respondents (10%) commented on the need to improve the reliability of QMplus “make sure things don’t crash”, although in contrast 13 respondents (10%) felt that technical support wasn’t necessary “It always works well and whenever it is down for updates there is always clear messaging”. 12 respondents (9%) mentioned that signposting of technical support options needed to be clearer whilst 8 respondents (6%) found the level of service provided by the helpdesk excellent.



On the improvement side, 8 respondents (6%) suggested the idea of having an online chat facility to solve technical issues and 6 (5%) suggested clearer policies when things go wrong.

Student voices
<b>Do you have any comments or suggestions to make about technical support?</b>
<i>"IT Helpdesk are extremely rude. Students are paying £9,000 a year, we do not expect during exam period to be told that 'its not our problem' when QMplus is down during exam period. The university stresses science students out especially with eight exams in a three week period, least we could get is a bit of support when QMplus doesn't work. Some lecturers just don't reply to students asking valid questions about examinable topics via email or QMplus. This is unsatisfactory. Staff should not be allowed to use QMplus to make students feel bad, patronise us or any other negative way. Yet again, science students have experienced too much of this is year and its unacceptable."</i>
<i>"QMplus has gone down several times this year and the IT department is always rude and unsupportive about the situation. Yes, I appreciate the most of the university is phone/emailing when it goes down but that's because there is no back-up system or alternative source of information for our degrees. Don't blame us when it's your department's fault."</i>
<i>"Make sure it's highlighted on the front page clearly because not many of us know about it."</i>
<i>"Perhaps there could always be someone online on QMplus or Twitter who answers queries about QMplus or technological problems. This is what our department has done, and it has been very useful"</i>
<i>"I've found the IT Services people very friendly and they have solved my problem each time I've visited!"</i>
<i>"Make it more clear what the procedure should be in the case that QMplus crashes for those who need to upload essays."</i>
<i>"have support on weekends"</i>

### 8.3 DISCUSSION

The results in this section overall suggest that QMplus is becoming more reliable and that fewer respondents are seeking out help from any of the support channels we investigated. When they do need help the informal channels of asking friends, colleagues or their module convenor, as well as the online help are all seen as being useful. When help is required and the preferred channels are not available, or they cannot resolve the problem themselves, then the more formal support provided by the helpdesk is sought with face-to-face or email support seen as being the most useful, compared with the Helpdesk telephone line.

The awareness levels of all the support offerings provided was also extremely high: the IT Helpdesk's phone line having the lowest awareness level, and still 90% of students were aware of it. This is a good result and shows that the promotional effort on the part of IT services and the E-Learning Unit have been successful. However, the survey has revealed some issues with the provision of support through the helpdesk itself. These issues centred on the speed of responses to queries and the technical knowhow of the staff. It is difficult to make judgements about the underlying problems here as dealing with any technical query always requires a delicate balance between timeliness and quality of response. It may be worthwhile to monitor the KPIs around the speed of response to queries on the helpdesk or to make more transparent how priorities are assigned.

During the 2013/14 academic year QMplus did experience some major outages at critical times (e.g. during the first week of teaching), there were also some major bugs with the version of the Turnitin plagiarism detection software we were running at the time. These two problems resulted in a degradation of service for some respondents and a justifiable sense of anxiety about the robustness of our systems. Over the spring and summer of 2014 we worked hard to address many of the issues

identified by respondents and have now streamlined and simplified coursework submission, improved the plagiarism detection tools, upgraded QMplus to a more reliable and stable version (Moodle 2.6) and introduced some new design features enabling us to deliver important messages to students quickly through the interface. We also redesigned our online 'Help and support' into a landing page on QMplus that integrates with the new ELU website. We repatriated the technical FAQs from the helpdesk into our website too giving us more flexibility in making them available to students.

## 8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to ensure that QMplus remains clear and simple to navigate and use
- Surface KPIs for the IT Helpdesk based on speed and quality of responses.
- Continue to promote the support offerings available.
- Pilot a live online support service through chat.

## 8.5 ALREADY ACTIONED IN 2014/15

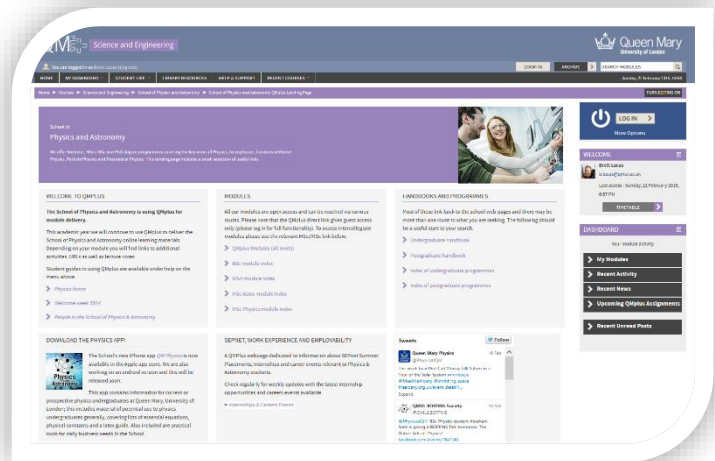
- New ELU website launched with FAQs and enhanced student support materials.
- Help and support area renamed, redesigned and highlighted in QMplus.
- Online chat support being piloted in Spring 2015.
- Increased the liaison between the E-Learning Unit and the IT Helpdesk to ensure service levels remain high.

## 9 LOOK AND FEEL

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section we were interested in finding out views on the usefulness of some of the important design features incorporated into QMplus. The questions focussed on the design of a standard QMplus module home page and a school landing page.

We asked respondents to assess the seven key parts of a typical module layout for usefulness against a five point scale: 'not useful at all' to 'very useful'. A screenshot was included in the questionnaire as an aide memoire (figure 39 below). We then asked three detailed questions about the usefulness of the school landing page and asked respondents an open question asking for further comments.



The School of Physics & Astronomy landing page in QMplus

**Quick key to design elements**

**a. The Module info Block:** basic details about the module, contact details of the teaching team as well as a schedule or basic timetable.

**b. News and announcements area:** ability to display the latest class news announcement or alternatively some static text.

**c. The module image:** ability to display an image which represents the module or a theme within it.

**d. The Course menu block:** navigation links to the topic sections of the page.

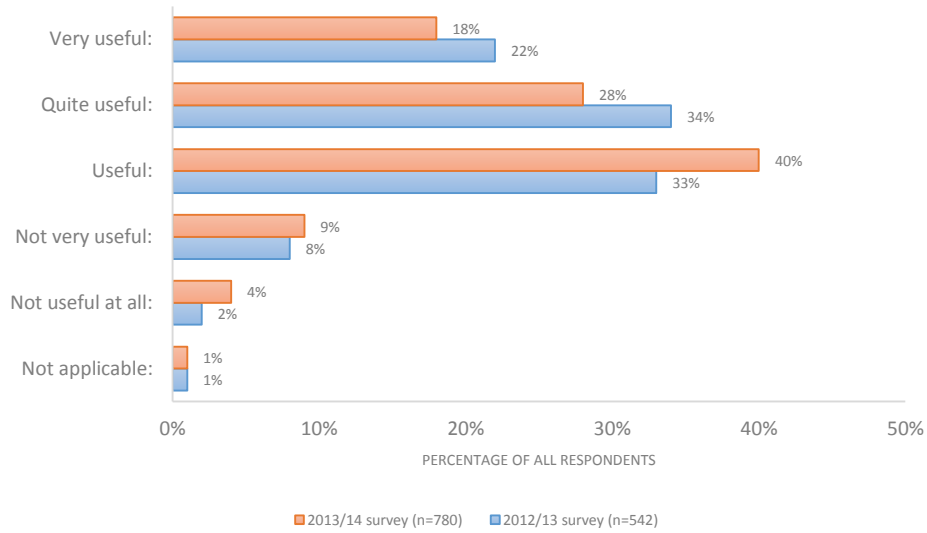
**e. The assessment information area:** Often two columns containing links to assessment criteria, learning & teaching profiles, assignments submissions areas etc.

**g. icons:** graphical representations of the most common resources & activity types

**h. Collapsible topic sections:** Learning materials are placed in topic sections which can then be collapsed to save screen space.

Figure 39: Screen shot of a module homepage from HSS

**Figure 40: Comparison of the overall usefulness of the design of the module/course homepage – 2013/14 vs 2012/13**



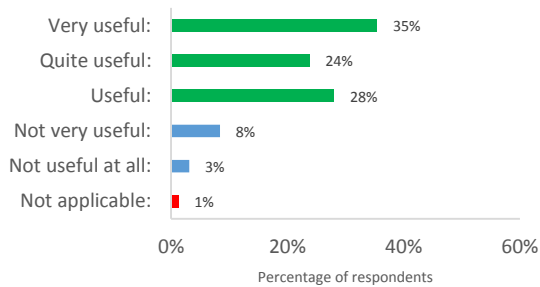
With respect to the overall design of the module page 86% of respondents (662) found it useful, of those 18% (136) found it very useful.

Seven components of the design of a typical module page were then examined for usefulness in more detail. The letters in brackets above each chart correspond to the image in figure xx on the previous page - they each represent major parts of the template for most schools, departments and institutes.

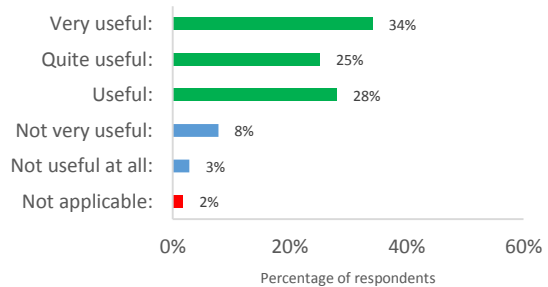
The design elements are presented below in order of usefulness. Green is used in the bar charts to indicate those responses that were judged 'useful' to 'very useful' on the scale.

**Figure 41: Usefulness of different areas of a QMplus module homepage.**

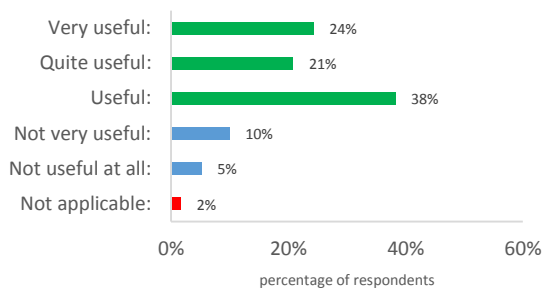
**Figure 41a: The Course menu (top left) (d)**



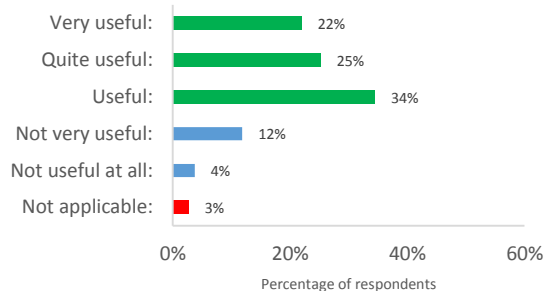
**Figure 41b: The collapsible topic sections (h)**



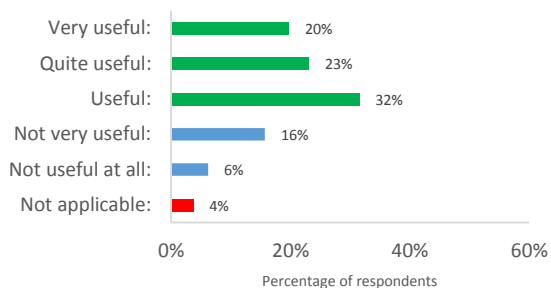
**Figure 41c: The Module info block (top right) (a)**



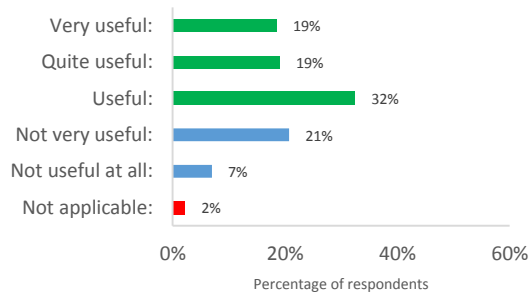
**Figure 41d: The icons (e.g. book, quiz, assignment) (g)**



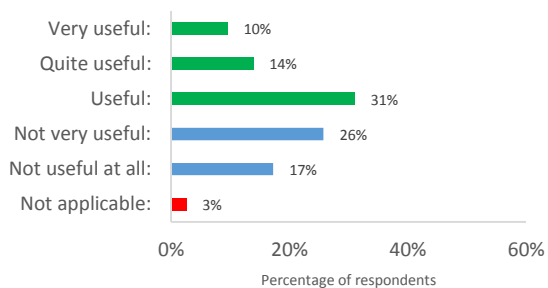
**Figure 41e: The show/hide assessment information (or General Info) area at the top of the page (e)**



**Figure 41f: The news and announcements area at the top of the page (b)**



**Figure 41g: The Module image (c)**



87% of respondents (675) found the course menu and the collapsible topic sections useful with 35% finding the course menu very useful. The Module Info block was considered useful by 83% of respondents (645) and 81% of respondents (628) found the icons useful. The assessment information located at the top centre of the module page in many school templates, was seen as useful by 75% of respondents (573), whilst the news and announcements area was found useful by 70% of respondents (544).

In contrast, 43% of respondents (334) did not find the Module image useful and 28% of respondents (215) did not find the news and announcements area useful.

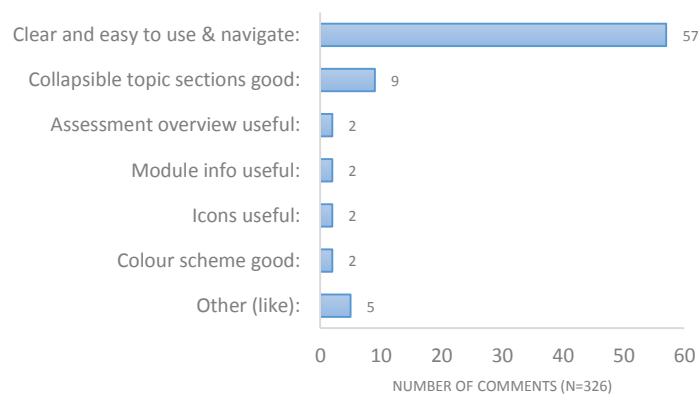


A topic section with a module on QMplus with a week of resources and activities.

## 9.2 FOCUS ON DESIGN FEATURES

In this year's survey one general question was asked about the overall design and whether respondents particularly liked or didn't like features of it. In all 326 comments were received which were split into three common themes: features that were liked, not liked and suggestions for design improvements. They are presented in three different bar charts below.

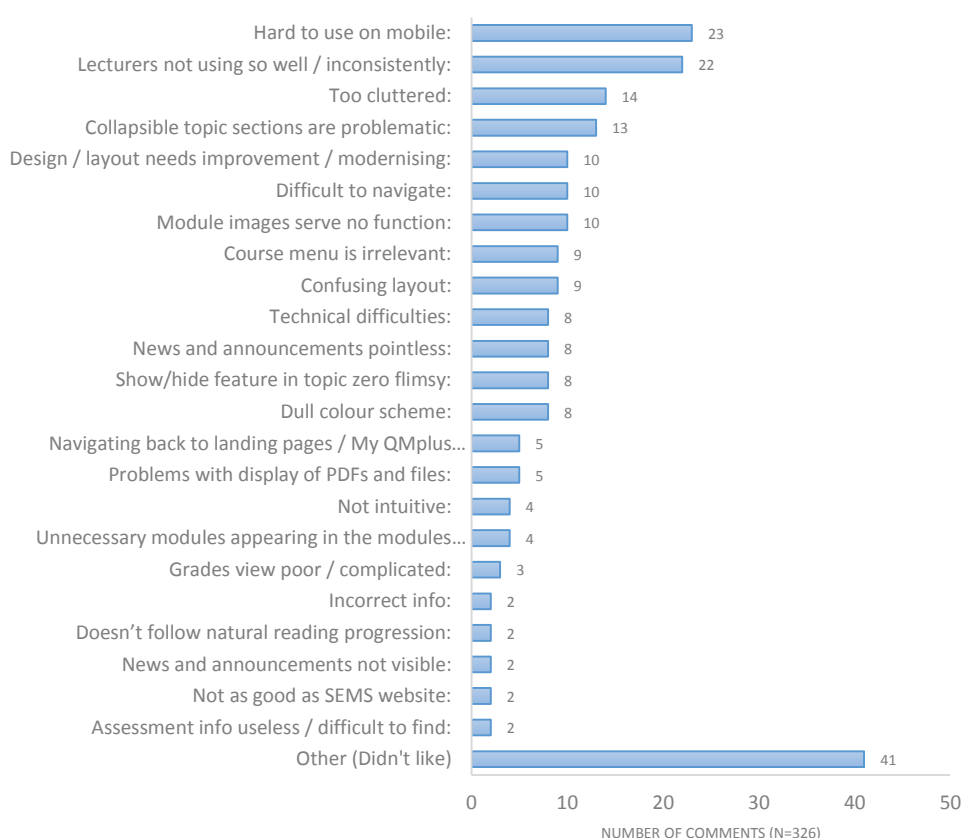
Figure 42: Why did you like certain features of the design?



24% of all the comments received (79) were positive about design features in QMplus. By far the most popular, was a general point about the clear interface and the ease of navigation overall (57 comments or 17%) "QMplus is very pleasant to use as well as to look at". The collapsible topic sections were also liked by 9 respondents (3%) "The collapsible topic sections were a lifesaver". The assessment overview, module info block, icons and overall colour scheme also rated a mention by more than 1 respondent.

Student voices
<b>Why did you like certain features of the design?</b>
<i>"It's a clean user interface to use. Completing a task is easy as the layout is split up in sections and once you get used to it, then doing tasks becomes easier."</i>
<i>"I think it all works really well, I think the GUI has been well thought out and well designed. I think it lends itself to be redesigned as trends demand but I think at the moment it currently an up-to-date and does what it needs to."</i>
<i>"I liked the week by week breakdown so you can view just one at a time rather than clogging up the front page."</i>
<i>"The icons are useful because they let you know what type of file you are downloading, if you are worried about size etc."</i>
<i>"The colours are really well chosen and very eye-comforting."</i>

**Figure 43: Why did you not like certain features of the design?**



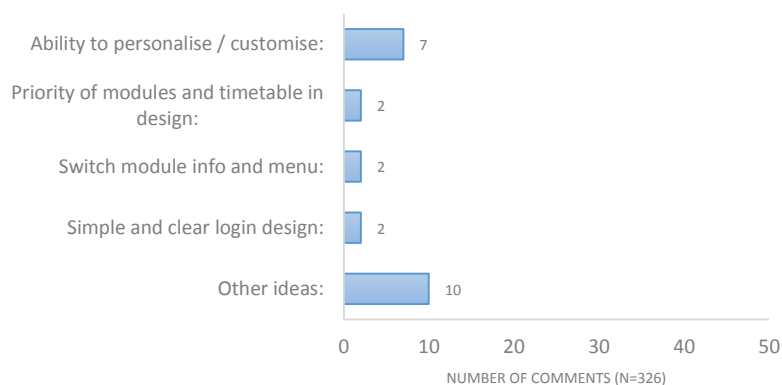
On the other hand 68% of comments (224) focussed on what they did not like about aspects of the design. 23 respondents (7%) found the interface difficult to navigate on mobile devices: *"the site does not adapt to mobile resolutions and you end up scrolling all over the place on your smartphone"* and 22 respondents (7%) were not so much unhappy with the design but with how lecturers were using it, particular emphasis was made on consistency and accessibility: *"Some lecturers did not use the module page's features in a way that made the content easily accessible"*. The layout of pages themselves were seen as being too cluttered by 14 respondents (4%): *"I find it a bit cluttered with lots of things I don't need to click on"* and the collapsible topic sections that 87% had described as useful were identified as being problematic by 13 respondents (4%): *"they fail to load properly, feel like they slow up the process of getting to the material"*.

A cluster of comments (10 or 3%) were also received around problems with navigation and layout: *“It’s not a laid out in an obvious way to use”* and the lack of real need for a module image *“pointless”*. 9 commenters continued the theme of overall design issues by describing the layout as confusing: *“Some things come up at side, some things collapsible”*.

Student voices
<b>Why did you not like certain features of the design?</b>
<i>“I have problems signing in on my kindle fire and when i open QMplus on my android motorola xoom tablet the internet closes down completely.”</i>
<i>“Some lecturers did not use the module page’s features in a way that made the content easily accessible, i.e. I think the functions of each section were unclear for some of them or did not know how to use them because the information became more disorganised as a result of the multiple sections and tools.”</i>
<i>“Too many messy and too many different blocks with different information, should be less blocks, clearer information.”</i>
<i>“The collapsible topic sections are just annoying. It would be better if another window opened instead as there is too much going on if clicked, large sections moving rapidly and sometimes I don’t even realize that it has changed.”</i>
<i>“On the top bar where the, Home &gt; my modules &gt; module title was, you could not click to my modules in a similar fashion as you would to a windows document environment. By this I mean that you could not click through the chain of links you had taken to reach the modules and would again have to click HOME, and go back down the same route. this was not a very efficient website in terms of link connectivity.”</i>
<i>“However, features such as the news and announcements area was very vague and not eye catching enough, it also sounded monotonous - a bit of colour and images should do the trick.”</i>

### 9.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR DESIGN ENHANCEMENTS

**Figure 44: Do you have any suggestions for improvements or enhancements?**



With respect to suggestions for improvements or enhancements 23 comments (7%) were received. The most popular suggestion was the ability to customise QMplus (7 comments): *“we can add and remove different components and place them where and how we like”*. Other respondents suggested prioritising modules and timetables in the design, switching the module info block and course menu on the module homepage and simplifying login.



Student Voices
<b>Do you have any suggestions for improvements or enhancements?</b>
<i>"Would be good to be able to save quick links on a personalised homepage."</i>
<i>"There should be a massive login button; it's ridiculous."</i>
<i>"I only struggled finding my schedule at first, I think it should very central position - opening as a first page after logging in would be great!"</i>
<i>"All the documents in the collapsible topic sections were all uploaded as separate files. It took me HOURS AND HOURS to download everything and then restructure it. PLEASE PLEASE add a 'download all' or 'download whole section' as an option."</i>
<i>"There should be links to other modules taken on each module page so you don't have to go back to the homepage each time."</i>
<i>"I would prefer it to be more like social media such as linkedin for the communication where you have your own profile etc."</i>

### 9.3.1 Discussion

Drawing conclusions about the design of a piece of software like QMplus from a survey can be problematic as design is a subjective thing. However, the results from this section do suggest that in terms of usefulness the various components that make up the design of most module templates rate highly. In fact, the responses received in this section rate the features higher in terms of usefulness than any other question we asked.

When looking at the optional comments we can see that on the whole students find the look and feel of QMplus clear and simple. However, there are a number of concerns expressed about the software that require closer investigation. The ability to use QMplus on mobile devices was a persistent issue with difficulties in downloading files and viewing content expressed by many. We worked hard on this issue over the summer of 2014 and have been able to deliver a new theme for QMplus, launched in July 2014 that adjusts to suit the screen size being used to access it.

From a design perspective the students who commented talked of too much 'clutter' within the user interface, problems with navigating around QMplus and a sense that it might look a bit 'dull'. There are aspects of the look and feel of QMplus that are outside the control of those responsible for maintaining and developing the system at Queen Mary. Some are dictated by the software itself e.g. the difficulty of navigating to My QMplus, others by the customisations we have made to the software e.g. navigating back to your school landing page if you have made it your home page means the in-built navigation doesn't make sense, and finally there are aspects of module design that are under the control of the module convenor and/or the departmental administrators or learning technologists. The central e-learning team can assist is by providing best practice guidelines on how to design and use QMplus effectively to avoid cluttered, unwieldy module areas. Schools might decide that it would be worthwhile to develop a consistent look and feel across their modules and ensure that ALL modules adhere to this design. We also need to take on board the feedback about navigation and include it in our ongoing development of the system.

Module pages have been designed in Moodle to support a single module but where they are used in clusters to support an entire programme of study, problems can arise when navigating within and

between sections or searching for materials. It would be useful to explore the possibility of introducing an effective search capability inside QMplus and to improve navigation generally.

In response to the 2012/13 survey, we made the modifications for mobile access described above as well as some enhancements to the main theme. This included a major refresh of the homepage, the introduction of more colour and a new navigation drop-down giving students access to their most recent courses and a more prominent login button, all of which address concerns raised in the survey.

### 9.3.2 Recommendations

- Improve the experience of the QMplus offering across mobile devices.
- Provide best practice guidelines on designing QMplus module/course areas.
- Run a student focus group to better understand how to improve navigation and reduce clutter.
- Investigate the possibility of providing a search capability on the content within QMplus.
- Continue to focus on improving the look and feel of QMplus where appropriate.

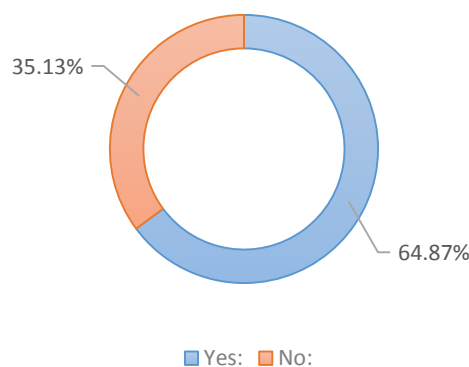
### 9.3.3 Already actioned in 2014/15

- Implemented a new 'mobile friendly' theme in QMplus in July 2014.
- Redesigned the home page and some aspects of site-wide navigation during September – December 2014.
- Implementing a 'mobile friendly Mahara' theme as part of QMplus phase III (June 2015).

## 9.4 LANDING PAGES

Landing pages were a new design feature introduced into QMplus in 2013/14 and a departure from the standard 'Moodle' design. The rationale behind their introduction came from the desire to have a more effective school or departmental presence in the learning environment and a link between the Institutional and the personal within QMplus. Landing pages were not compulsory in 2013/14 and 10 landing pages existed in that academic year. Students would 'land' on this page after logging-in to QMplus, rather than the QMplus homepage. We were particularly interested to see how the landing pages were perceived by students at the end of their first year of use. 65% of all respondents to the survey said that they did have a landing page.

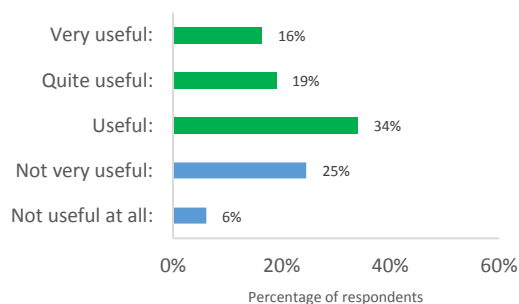
**Figure 45: Does your school/department/institute have a landing page in QMplus?**



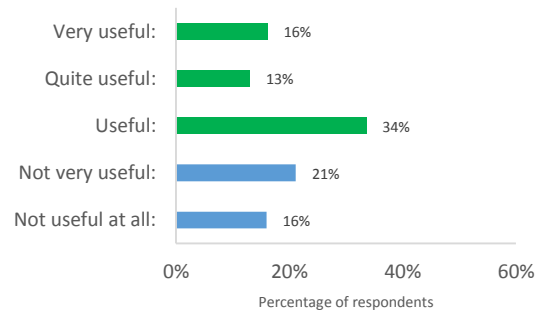
We asked those who did have a landing page to rank the usefulness of three aspects of landing page functionality. These are presented in the bar charts below in order of usefulness. Green indicates useful and blue is not useful.

**Figure 46: How useful is a QMplus school landing page**

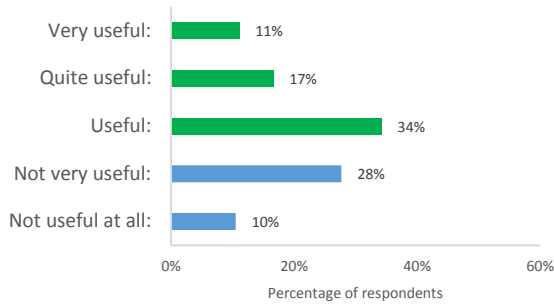
**Figure 46a: Providing news and information about your school**



**Figure 46b: Providing access to your personal timetable**



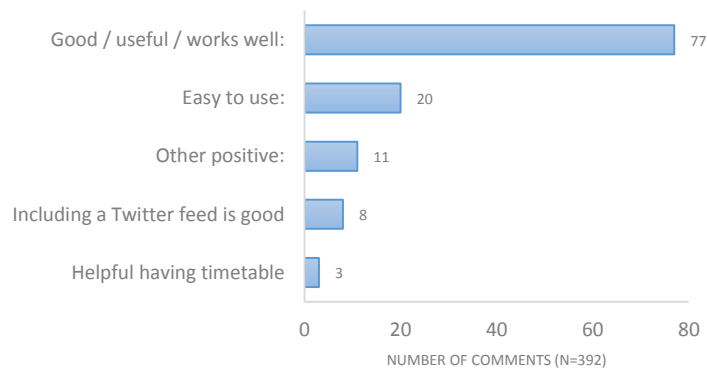
**Figure 46c: Providing info about activity on your various modules including forum posts and assignment due dates (through the module dashboard)**



69% of all respondents to the survey who used a landing page (351) in 2012/13 rated the provision of news and information useful, 63% (318 respondents) found the access to a personal timetable on the landing page useful and 62% (313 respondents) found the module dashboard – a block that summarises module activity across all modules a student is registered on – useful.

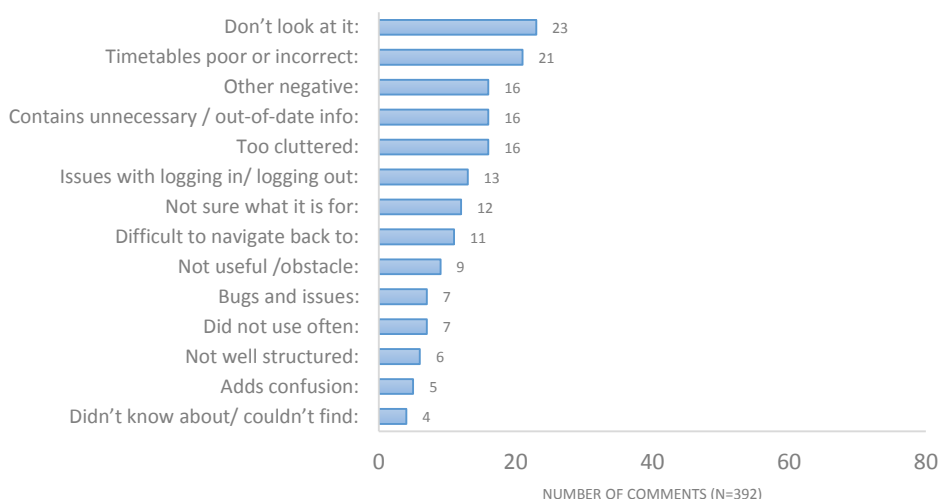
We then asked respondents if they had any further comments to make about their landing pages. In all we received 392 responses to this optional question. These comments have been grouped into three sections: those with positive comments to make; those that were generally negative; and finally those that contained constructive suggestions for improvements or enhancements.

**Figure 47: Positive comments about landing pages**



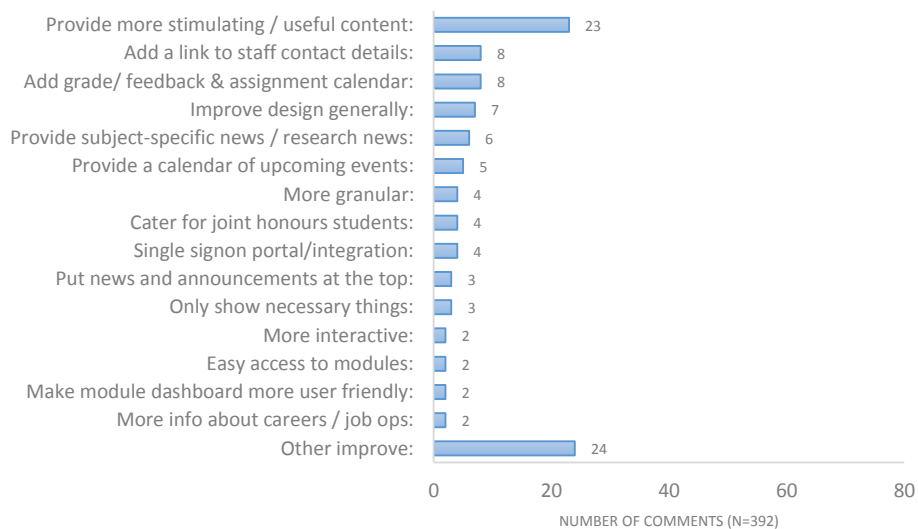
By far the largest number of comments received in this section (77 or 20% of all comments) mentioned that the landing page worked well: *“It’s fine - does the job”* whilst 20 respondents specifically mentioned that it was easy to use: *“Very straight forward to navigate”* There were also specific remarks around the inclusion of a Twitter feed on the landing page by 8 respondents: *“I like the Twitter feed. It is a nice touch”*, while 3 respondents mentioned the helpfulness of the timetable.

**Figure 48: Negative comments about landing pages**



On the negative side 23 respondents (6%) did not look at the landing page: *“To be honest, i never actually stayed on that page at all”* many describing it as unhelpful. 21 respondents (5%) commented on the poor implementation of timetables with many errors and issues: *“The timetable didn't work all year. There is so much potential for QMplus to be a decent source of information, except that half of the info on there is just plain wrong.”* 16 respondents (4%) mentioned the amount of out-of-date and unnecessary information on the landing page or the fact that it was too cluttered. 13 respondents (3%) had issues with logging in and 12 respondents (3%) simply did not know what the landing page was for. 11 (~3%) respondents mentioned the difficulty of navigating back to the landing page once you had left it (the home button took you to the main home page rather than the landing page).

**Figure 49: Suggestions for enhancements & improvements of landing pages**



In all we received 107 suggestions for enhancements and improvements to the design and functionality of landing pages (27% of all comments). 23 respondents wrote about providing more stimulating content including more up-to-date news, better links, subject-specific research news, info about PASS or even: *“Motivation to the students to study and be more passionate and authentic about the degree they're doing.”* Other improvements of note were the suggestions to add staff

contact details and some kind of grade/feedback or assignment calendar to the landing page (8 comments for each). 7 respondents wanted the overall design to be improved and 6 respondents wanted more subject specific news.

Student Voices
<b><i>We would welcome any further comments about landing pages</i></b>
<i>"The landing was an amazing tool for me to use. It displayed all information relevant to me (timetable, results, due dates) and displayed perfectly on mobile devices (where I used it most)."</i>
<i>"would be very very confused without a landing page."</i>
<i>"I think it is very user friendly and accessible. To be honest, I find pretty much all of QMplus user friendly and accessible."</i>
<i>"I never spent much time on this page, perhaps by extension this means page wasn't particularly engaging to me."</i>
<i>"The module timetables were not accurate at all and did not match our real timetable despite having a fixed schedule."</i>
<i>"The landing page is messy, the relevant information is difficult to spot."</i>
<i>"Needed more information. The original detail remained there for the duration of the year and was never updated."</i>
<i>"There is currently no convenient 'Back' button to access the landing page. One has to constantly press the 'HOME' button,"</i>
<i>"..should have some interesting things posted up about the subject we are studying (like new research that's happening etc.)."</i>

### 9.4.1 Discussion

Landing pages were a new innovation for QMplus in the 2013/14 academic year. They were not something that Moodle itself could provide so we developed them as a local customisation by working closely with the Schools in Science & Engineering and Undergraduate Medicine during the migration process in summer 2013. This survey is the first opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness in delivering a School-level 'identity' and information area to the otherwise 'Queen Mary-wide' and 'faculty' look of QMplus.

On the whole, landing pages have been regarded as generally useful, though there were not high numbers who regarded them as very useful. Landing pages are managed by a person within the school who feels reasonably comfortable with updating content using the 'HTML code' that underlies the page. The E-learning Unit provides video tutorials and a start-up guide to assist. The school is responsible for promoting the page and updating the content. The technical literacy required to manage a page may be a factor holding back the ongoing maintenance of landing pages. We must continue to simplify the ways in which the page can be updated and schools must explain to students the rationale behind the landing page and why it is useful.

The personal timetable appears in the 'welcome block' on the landing page and many students expressed frustration with the usability of this function. Although not a QMplus tool per se we need to ensure that systems that interface with the learning environment and thus impact learning and teaching are fit for purpose. Information gained in this survey will be shared with colleagues in IT services to inform development of partner systems.

Clearly some students struggled to see the usefulness of the page and would have preferred a direct route to their learning materials. This was compounded by the fact that for many the page never seemed to change and therefore felt redundant. Other students were more enthusiastic but wanted to see richer, more stimulating and up-to-date content including such things as news and

information about what is happening in the school, careers advice and job support etc. The E-learning Unit can expand its current guides on landing pages to include best practice in design and content tips for schools.

#### 9.4.2 Recommendations

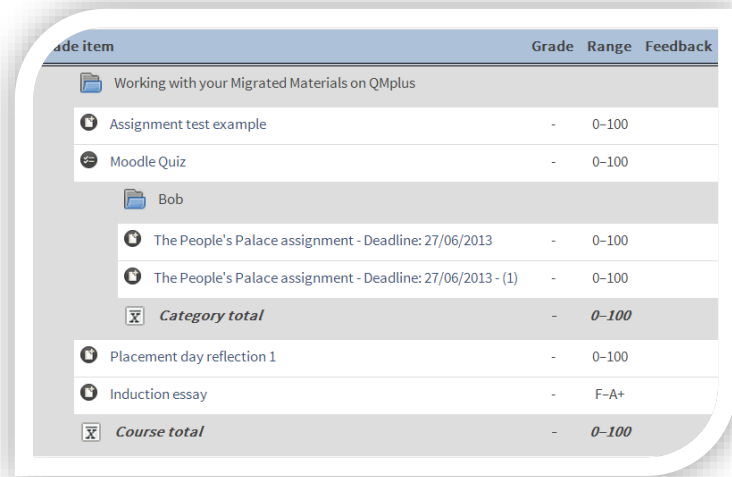
- Develop a best practice guide in landing page design and implementation including examples and ideas for content.
- Assist schools in explaining to students what their landing page is and why it is useful.
- Communicate survey results to the timetable team in IT services.
- Refresh the design make it easier to update.
- Point the 'Home' button in QMplus to the user-selected landing page rather than the QMplus home page by default.

#### 9.4.3 Already actioned in 2014/15

- Landing pages have now been successfully rolled out across schools in HSS in September 2014
- An optional news 'ticker' allowing schools to promote local news and the capability of adding a Facebook group feed was added to the functionality in December 2014.
- Help & support documentation has been developed for schools.
- Home button navigation (redirecting to Landing page) to be resolved in the forthcoming upgrade (July 2015)

## 10 USABILITY

In this section we were interested in finding out how easy respondents found it to use the core functionality that supports the student learning experience within QMplus. Respondents were asked to assess the ease of using twelve key aspects of the system on a five point scale from 'very difficult' to 'very easy'.



The student view of grades and feedback in QMplus 2012/13.

### 10.1 EASE OF USE

The green bars in the charts below show responses for a feature that was 'easy' or 'very easy' to use. Red indicates the number of respondents that had not tried this feature. The bar charts are presented in order of 'ease of use'.

Figure 50: Ease of use carrying out various QMplus tasks.

Figure 50a: Downloading a file (e.g. pdf or ppt)

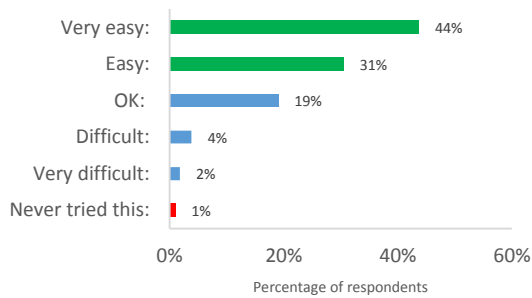


Figure 50b: Logging in

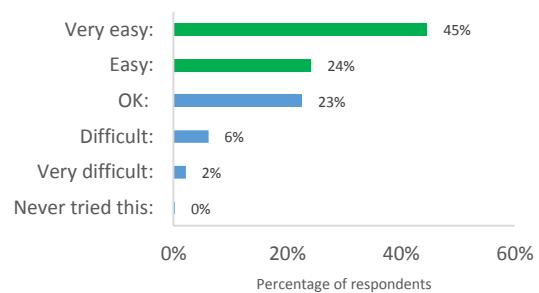


Figure 50c: Uploading an assignment

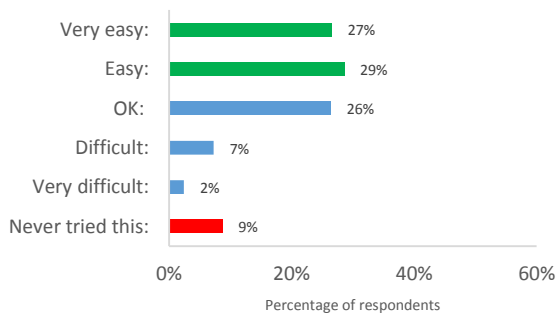


Figure 50d: Moving around and locating the content you need

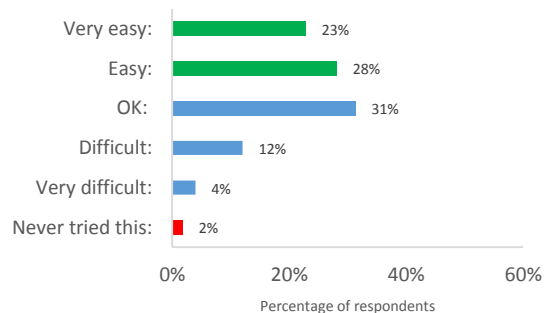
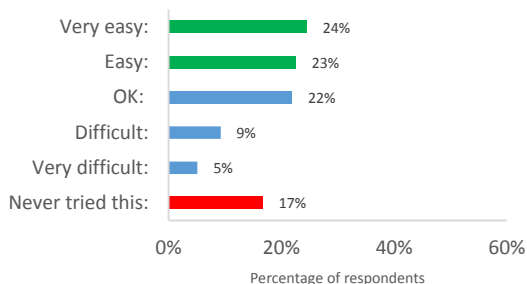


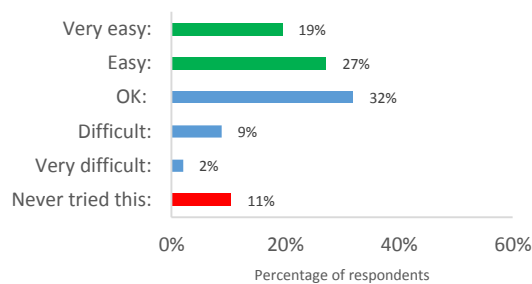
Figure 50e: Accessing your grades and feedback

Figure 50f: Accessing news and announcements from the module/course organiser

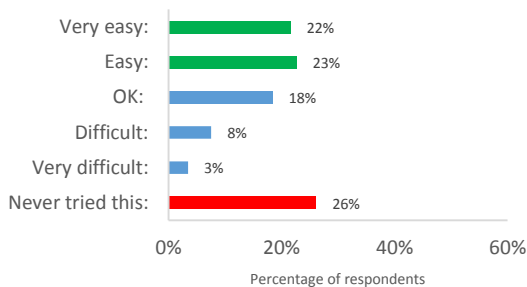




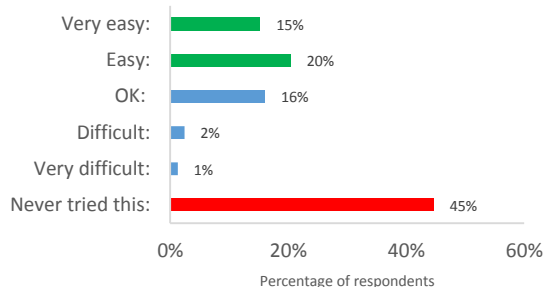
**Figure 50g: Accessing audio/video content (e.g. Q-Review)**



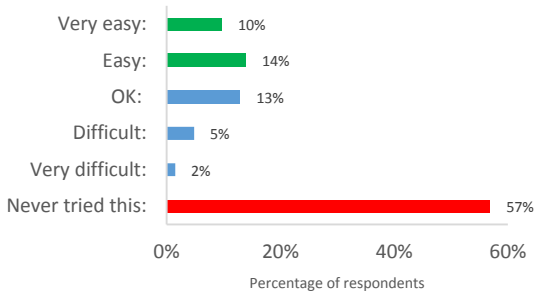
**Figure 50h: Doing a quiz**



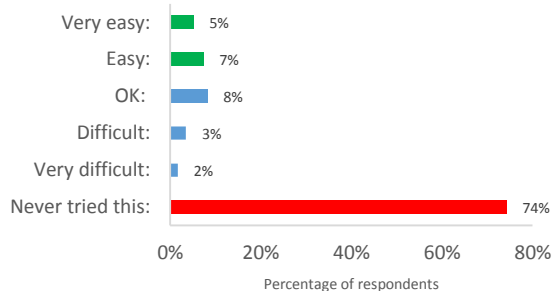
**Figure 50i: Posting to a forum**



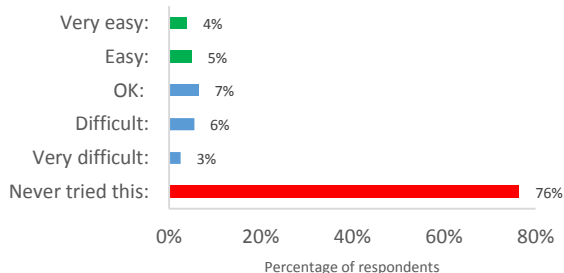
**Figure 50j: Doing a workshop activity**



**Figure 50k: Starting a group**



**Figure 50l: Creating a portfolio page**



75% of respondents (579) found downloading a file easy in QMplus (with 44% finding it very easy). 69% of respondents (537) found logging in easy and 56% (430) found uploading coursework easy with a further 26% finding it OK.

51% (397) had no problems with moving around QMplus and locating the content they needed it, while 47% (367) found it easy to access their grades and feedback and 46% (364) found it easy to access news and announcements from their module convenor. Accessing audio and video content (including Q-Review lectures) was regarded as easy by 45% of respondents (346).

These seven activities and functions were also used by the vast majority of respondents (as indicated by the “smaller” red bars on each chart), however, 26% of respondents had never accessed audio or video content (204) and 17% of respondents (130) had never tried to access their grades or feedback. Thankfully everyone had logged in!

Results for the other 5 activities and functions were much lower. 35% of respondents (278) found doing a quiz easy while 24% (185) thought the same about posting to forums. Doing workshop activities (a kind of peer assessment in QMplus), creating portfolio pages and starting groups were all perceived as easy by less than 15% of respondents.

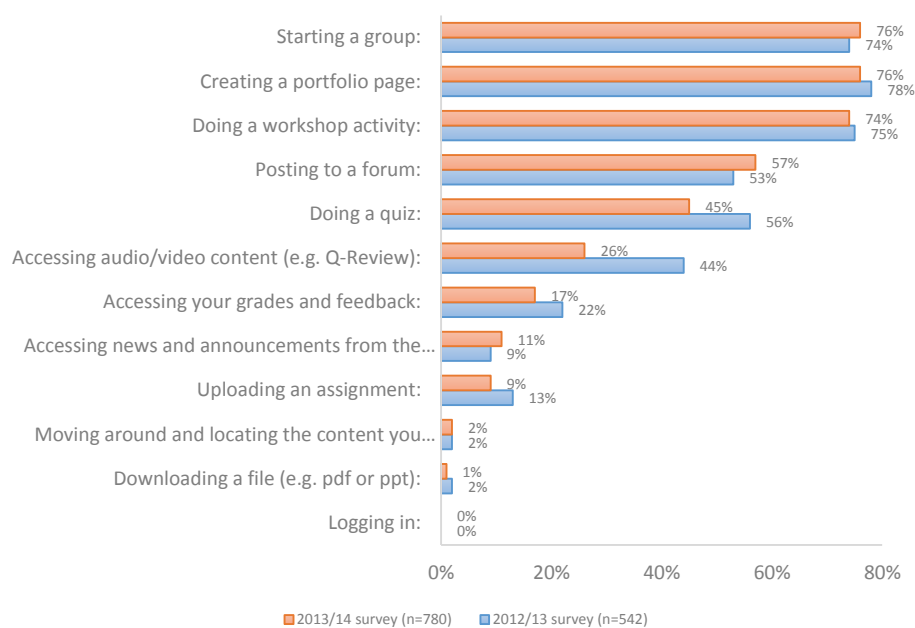
Many respondents had not tried these last 5 activities. For example, 77% had not tried to create a portfolio page nor start a group (596 respondents), both of these features are available in the Groups & Portfolios (Mahara) area of QMplus. 74% (579) had never done a workshop activity and 57% had never posted to a forum in QMplus (396). Finally 45% had never done a quiz (348).

From a usability perspective, where they had actually used it, most respondents did not find any of the features and activities listed in the question difficult to use, with navigating to content and uploading assignments registering the greatest difficulty (about 16% and 14% of all respondents respectively)

### 10.1.1 Compared to 2012/13

Compared to last year’s survey the frequency with which respondents rated the various aspects of QMplus ‘easy to use’ was exactly the same. There was a 3% increase in those rating the Uploading of assignments easy (from 53% of respondents to 56%) and a 5% decrease in those who found navigating around easy (from 56% to 51%). Finally 10% more respondents found accessing Q-Review content easy (35% to 45%).

Perhaps more interesting is the comparison of data on those features that respondents informed us they had ‘never tried’. Starting groups, creating portfolio pages and doing a peer assessment task using the workshop facility were never tried by 75% or more of respondents and these figures have remained almost unchanged from the 2012/13 survey. Slightly fewer respondents had accessed discussion forums (down from 47% to 43%). More respondents had accessed quizzes, however, with an 11% increase from 44% to 55%. There was also a significant increase in the number of respondents who had tried the Q-Review lecture capture system with a 28% increase from 56% of respondents in 2012/13 to 74% in 2013/14. There was also a small increase (5%) in those who accessed their Grades and feedback (78% to 83%).

**Figure 51: Comparison of features of QMplus that respondents had never tried 2013/14 v 2012/13 survey**

## 10.2 DISCUSSION

It is pleasing to see that the results in this section continue to suggest that students find it easy to use the core QMplus functionality required on a daily basis i.e. logging in, accessing and downloading files, getting news and announcements etc. In fact only two of the features and activities we explored (Accessing grades and feedback and navigating around) were difficult to use for more than 14% of respondents. As has already been mentioned in section 10, we need to ensure that it is simple to move around QMplus and locate the content you need. In addition we need to look at how grades and feedback are displayed in module templates and look at ways to make this information more accessible where applicable.

What was perhaps more interesting was the fact that four of the features and activities that we asked about had not been tried at all by 75% of respondents and this was unchanged from the first year of QMplus use. Two of these features are part of Mahara – Groups and Portfolios (starting groups and setting up portfolio pages) and thus not usually part of formal teaching and another, the workshop tool, is an advanced feature. However, the fourth – discussion forums - is somewhat surprising. Clearly it is not possible to try an activity type if it is not present in the learning material and in only the second year of use, it is unlikely that advanced features would be heavily used, but discussion forums are considered a standard tool in blended teaching so it comes as some surprise to see how little they have been utilised. The E-learning unit has created some new resources on its website in this area which we should now publicise more widely.

On a more positive note, progress has been made in a number of areas and more students are encountering a richer variety of learning materials in QMplus including Q-Review lectures, quizzes and audio and video content. The E-learning unit will continue to capture examples of the ways in which these tools are being used effectively to share with colleagues college-wide.

As the features and tools within QMplus and the blended teaching it supports become more familiar to academic staff it is natural that they will start to engage with more of the capabilities of the system. Designing online quizzes and navigating the relative complexities of peer assessment using the workshop tool are obstacles in an environment where online teaching can be viewed as peripheral.

### 10.2.1 Recommendations

- Run a student focus group exploring navigation generally and accessibility of key features like grades and feedback.
- Enhance and expand our guidance and support around advanced features of QMplus including the development of peer assessment and use of discussion forums.
- Ensure that in all the ongoing technical development work, usability continues to be of the utmost importance.

### 10.2.2 Already actioned in 2014/15

- Development of a 4E framework to assist in the development of e-learning around the college.
- Increased the number of sharing practice events and presentations both college-wide and within the QMUL learning technologist network.

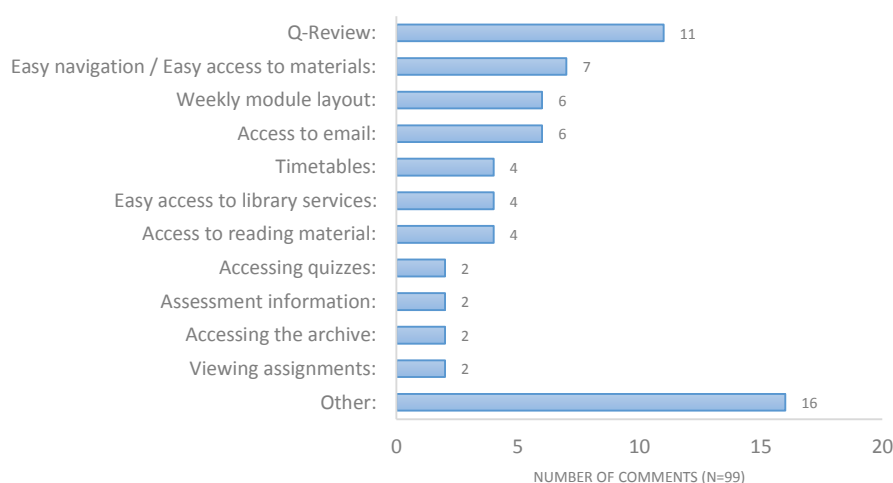
## 11 USEFUL TOOLS, ENHANCEMENTS & GENERAL COMMENTS

In the closing section of the survey we sought ideas from respondents about other tools and functionality they may have found useful in QMplus, general enhancements and features they would like to see in QMplus and finally any other comments they had.

### 11.1 OTHER USEFUL TOOLS

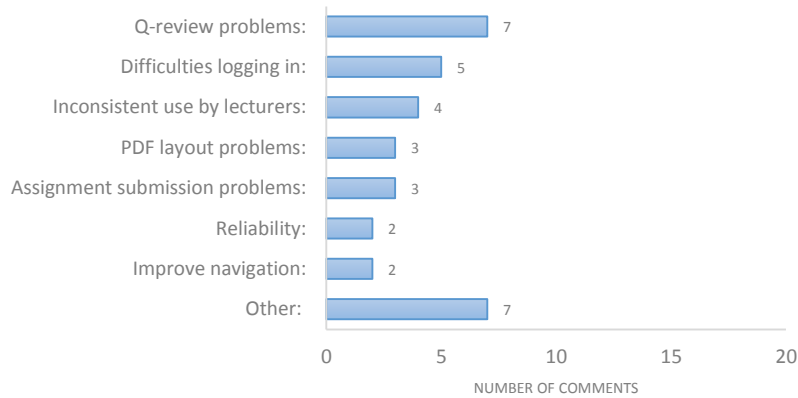
Respondents were asked to let us know about any other tools and functionality they found useful in QMplus. In total 99 comments were received. Unfortunately many of these comments were not about useful features per se, so the results are presented in two general areas: those features respondents did find useful; and those where they had experienced problems. Comments in these two areas are grouped into common themes and presented in order of frequency in the two charts below.

**Figure 52: Tools or functionality respondents found useful in QMplus**



11% of those who commented mentioned the usefulness of Q-Review “*Q-Review is very handy*”, 7% mentioned the ease of moving around and finding their teaching materials “*Everything is in one place - library, e-mail...*”. The weekly module layout was found useful by 6%, and access to email “*The email informing of announcements posted in QMPlus*”, was viewed as useful by 6% of commenters. Easy access to timetables, teaching materials and library resources were seen as useful by 4% of those who commented.

**Figure 53: Tools or functionality respondents had problems with**



In contrast 7% were not happy with Q-Review, their issues centred around visibility of the lectures on the QMplus module page, technical issues with access and quality of the recordings: *“Q-review timings being screwed up and so cutting lectures in half or missing lectures.”* Problems with logging in to QMplus were mentioned by 5%: *“You have to input your Username and Password 2 or 3 times to log in!”* and 4% mentioned inconsistent use by module convenors once more, in this question it was in relation to grades: *“Grades were rarely uploaded”*.

**Student voices**

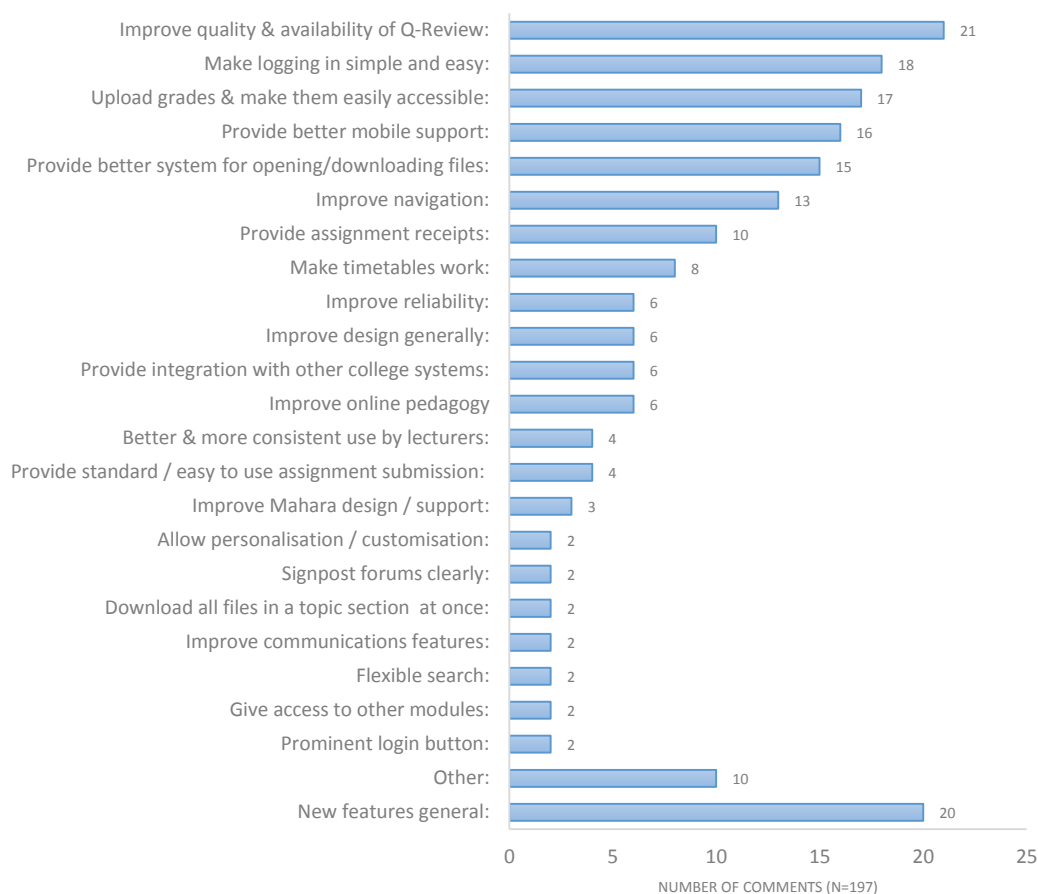
**Any other tools or functionality you found useful or had problems with in QMplus?**

<i>“Q-review was invaluable for more difficult modules”</i>
<i>“I did not know about Q review until the end of exam period! Nobody else on my course knew either!”</i>
<i>“The email informing of announcements posted in QMplus is a very useful tool.”</i>
<i>“The link to the library is great but it doesn't take you directly to the page where we can search for books but instead it directs us to the homepage. It would be easier to be directed to the search section.”</i>
<i>“Sometimes I had a problem with logging in and Q-Review didn't work well.”</i>
<i>“Would be useful to log-in to QM+ without having to click Log-In and load another page. Just put the login inputs on the page to begin with; what's the point of being on the site if you don't want to log in?”</i>
<i>“It would be good if every teacher used QMplus. however this is not the case. None of my teachers upload our grades that we get for assignments etc., so either enforce them to upload grades &amp; feedback or just scrap the function. There is no point of having it if none of my teachers use it! (Or maybe they have not been shown that these features exist?)”</i>
<i>“Assessment feedback was never providing through QMplus! But I feel it should have been as this would have been extremely useful!”</i>
<i>“I don't get to see my marks or feedback in QM Plus because SBCS still uses its old Control Panel for that. It would be nice to integrate the two so that we only need to go on one website for all our needs.”</i>
<i>“The groups were absolutely useless!”</i>

## 11.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS OR ENHANCEMENTS

We were interested in finding out what ideas respondents might have for improvements or enhancements to QMplus. In all we received 197 comments. These comments were grouped into themes and are presented in order of frequency in the bar chart below.

**Figure 54: Suggestions for improvements or enhancements to QMplus**



Although the question asked for QMplus improvements, 11% of all comments (21) were directed at improving the quality and reliability of Q-Review. These comments were similar to those received for the previous question, about the sound quality, external noise on recordings and problems with streaming on phones: *“Q-review is a bit temperamental”*. Logging-in issues were mentioned again too, this time by 9% of commenters (18). There is significant frustration around the need to log-in multiple times to college systems: *“Logging in should be easier across all platforms”* as well as specific issues with the QMplus login system: *“improve the login because it has become annoying to login as it displays a page with orange writing and you have to go to the previous page and sign in again, it's been happening since the attack on anonymous”*. Providing grades was again a significant theme with 9% (17) mentioning various issues such as the lack of consistent use in schools *“Grades are often found in different places”*, the desire for more advanced grading information: *“Would be nice to get a histogram of the results we get to see how our grades compared to others in our year”*, and an improvement in the overall design of the grades screen.

Provision of better mobile support was mentioned by 8% of those who commented with many of the issues having already been mentioned previously in this survey. There were also a large number of comments about problems with downloading and opening files, particular examples cited were the erratic behaviour of PDFs on phones and tablets: *“Opening PDFs on my iPad was a pain”,* the uploading of old or inconsistent file types into module areas, and the random choice of either ‘embedding’ or ‘forcing the download’ of files: *“Make downloading of documents optional, not automatic. It clutters up the computer unnecessarily.”*

7% of commenters (13) wanted to see clearer, simpler navigation in QMplus with fewer clicks to reach or go back to their modules: *“When in a module page it is difficult to find out where to go to find “my modules”. The website could definitely be more intuitive”*. 5% talked about the lack of assignment receipts: *“When submitting an assignment it would be amazingly helpful and reassuring if we got an email confirming it had been submitted”*. Problems with the reliability of timetable information was mentioned once more by 3% of commenters as was the need to improve the teaching through QMplus by e.g. *“making it more interactive”* or even providing course materials at all as one distance student commented: *“The course materials are almost non-existent”*. Technical reliability, a ‘sleeker’ design and standardising assignment submission were other ideas mentioned in this section which stood out.

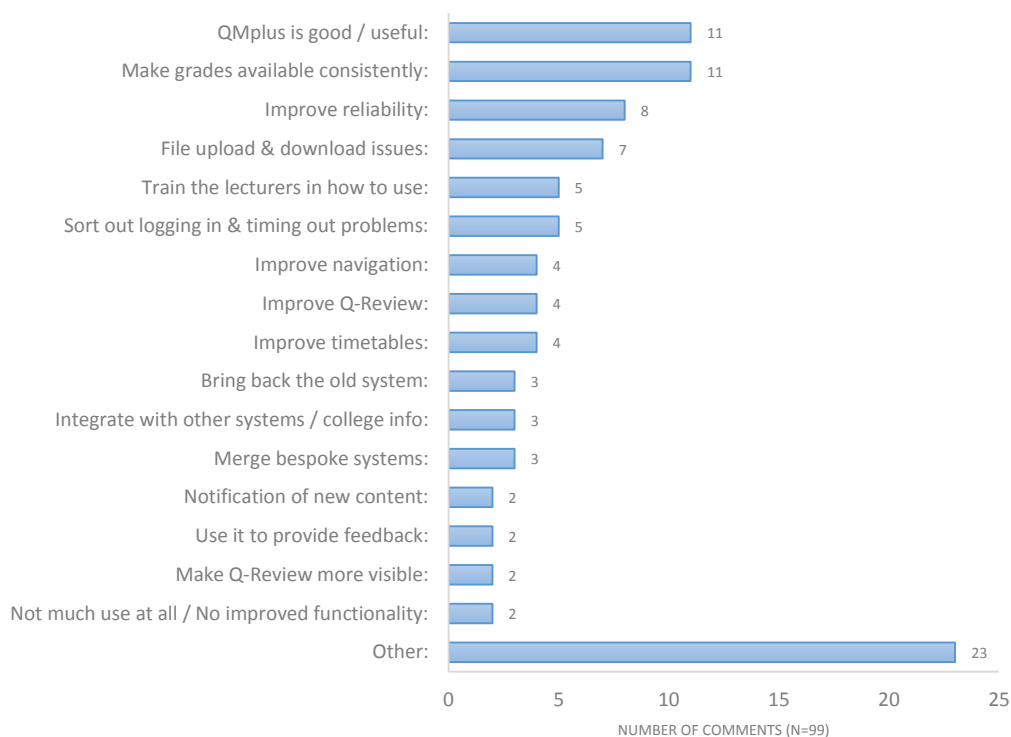
Student voices
<b>Do you have any suggestions for improvements or enhancements?</b>
<i>“Q Review needs seriously improving. It crashes a lot meaning you need to refresh nearly every 2 minutes to view a past lecture.”</i>
<i>“Logging into the university account, should mean QMplus recognises this and so take you straight in without having to retype passwords/usernames. Similar situation regarding the e-mail and QMplus.”</i>
<i>“The login page sometimes gave me an error and I had to refresh the page several times to access the content.”</i>
<i>“The grades section is a complete mess, very difficult to figure out how to get to the info I'm trying to see.”</i>
<i>“More homework results uploaded onto QMplus over the semester to allow progress tracking Would be nice to get a histogram of the results we get to see how our grades compared to others in our year. We used to get this with Blackboard and I think this is the one thing that many students miss; you aren't aware of how you are performing relative to your year. In the past, it was useful to know if you were below or above average for a particular ICA, and roughly what sort of decile you were on target for. It's a shame this is lost on QMplus!”</i>
<i>“Opening PDFs on my iPad was a pain. You could never make it full screen or turn to the next page - there was complete disfunctionality here. It meant I couldn't be as productive as I would've liked in between classes at uni.”</i>
<i>“too many clicks required to go into a module, then week, then videos and then start content - difficult to find grades and feedback, no consistency where they can be accessed (sometimes top of the page, sometimes in grades section, sometimes under particular week.”</i>
<i>“stop changing the assignment submission system - it has been completely changed three times in the three years i have been here, including the time of submission, which should be kept constant so that the student is always completely sure of the process.”</i>
<i>“Sections where students can post information (e.g. wikis, group discussion) are too formal and therefore students do not use this feature very much. This area could be improved by a different user interface.”</i>
<i>“And communication with teaching staff and other students of the modules could be improved (or created, I never found such communications!).”</i>
<i>“It would be good if we could have a customisable toolbar which stays on say all the pages and in that toolbar you could put "favorite links" from QMplus just to make it easier to navigate to more frequently visited pages within your course. Kind of like a bookmarks bar which will be there on every computer you log into once your logged into your own QMplus.”</i>
<i>“I think there should be special ways of accessing QM Plus for those with learning difficulties or dyslexia.”</i>



### 11.3 GENERAL COMMENTS

The final question asked respondents to make any other general comments. In all 99 comments were received. Comments on a similar theme were grouped together and are presented in order of frequency in the bar chart below.

Figure 55: General comments received



Most of the themes raised in this final section of the survey have been recurrent themes in the comments sections in other parts of the survey. 11% were very positive about QMplus finding it clear and easy to use : *“Generally i think it is a lot better than blackboard”*. Making grades available clearly and consistently was also important to 11%. Technical issues with QMplus including – Overall reliability (8%) and the specific issues around file download (7%), logging in and out (5%) and Q-Review (4%) were also seen as important: *“make it work”*. Another common concern was the perceived lack of training of teaching staff: *“Train the lecturers!”*. There was a call for better integration with other college systems by 3%: *“There should be a link from QM+ to e-mails. I am not the only person who, when not on a computer where it is saved as a favourite, struggles to find the Office 365 login page”*..and even a cry to bring back the old VLE by 3%. Students who work with more than one VLE/System (e.g. SEMS and EECS) also suggested merging them: *“I believe the top priority is to make QMPlus the only web portal that students have access to.”*

Student voices
<b>Any other comments?</b>
<i>"Consistency of use is the main issue. Sometimes grades are found under the original essay submission link. Almost never under the grades link on the left of the page, it happened once in my 3 years at QM."</i>
<i>"Significantly easier to use and nicer to look at than the system I had to endure at the University of York."</i>
<i>"Overall, QMplus was very useful in accessing our files from any pc or a laptop. Hope it doesn't go down during the exams period as it happened this year (on the night before my exam, and I was in the library and didn't save the files on the library pc due to small free space)."</i>
<i>"Should standardise a way to upload a file, when I download a file sometimes it would open the pdf directly or open a page for me to download it. Which becomes a hassle when I need to download multiple files. Not a massive deal though."</i>
<i>"Going through Log in and identity check again and again is tedious. Especially as I get logged out every time I'm on Q-Review for half an hour."</i>
<i>"I didn't enjoy using QMPlus and evidently the lecturers do not either. It would be ten times better if procedures were standardised for all classes."</i>
<i>Timetables should also be on the students main page, readily available without having to click a link, and also if possible they could be made more smartphone/tablet friendly when viewing."</i>
<i>"Q review, on the other hand, needs a lot of improvement. It gets stuck a lot, it has disturbances in the middle of recordings, there is no facility of only listening to the audio or downloading the audio to an mp3."</i>
<i>"I don't understand why the system was changed to QM+; the previous version although 'beta' in style was fully functional and simple to use. This has all sorts of unnecessary extras and complications."</i>
<i>"The functionality is generally poor and many of the functions seem useless. My MA group has set up a facebook group through which to communicate instead of QMPlus, as it works much, much better."</i>
<i>"East or West QMplus IS THE BEST ;)"</i>

## 11.4 DISCUSSION

It is heartening that we received so many thoughtful comments at the end of the QMplus survey and by raising similar concerns in every question, students have made it clear where they feel our priorities should lie in terms of fixing things that aren't working properly, improving the overall usability of the system and working to improve the systems that link into QMplus (timetables, Q-Review).

On the positive side there were some students that felt compelled to reiterate that they liked QMplus and found it did the job for which it was intended in a simple and easy way. The vast majority of the comments, however, were focussed on ways the system could be made to work better.

We are constrained in some aspects of developing QMplus by security concerns, the policies of our external host (ULCC<sup>13</sup>) and the underlying IT infrastructure at Queen Mary. Authentication is a case in point, we cannot easily make logging in any easier as it would mean overhauling a complex college-wide model from the bottom up. What we can do is ensure that the teams who work in this area are made aware of the concerns expressed by students in the survey. We can then report back to the student body the steps taken to ameliorate some of their concerns.

To some extent time has assisted us with many issues of technical reliability, navigation and mobile friendliness raised in this section. In the summer of 2014 we upgraded QMplus (to Moodle version

<sup>13</sup> University of London Computing Services

2.6) and this along with the other technical development and design work we carried out in QMplus Phase II in 2014 were not launched until after the survey had closed. In addition early previews of the results of this survey have also influenced the ongoing QMplus phase III project, meaning that solutions to many of the concerns raised in this survey have already been, or are about to be, implemented. These include upgrades to Q-Review, upgrades to assignment tools in QMplus, and the provision of submission receipts etc.

This is still work to do around the development of academic staff in both the basic use of the system but also in how the technology can be used to enhance learning in new and exciting ways. In this area the E-learning unit launched a new web presence and a suite of workshops, consultancy and one-to-one support options to help schools, module teams and individual academics to develop and enhance their blended and distance teaching provision.

#### 11.4.1 Recommendations

- Liaise with teams in IT services regarding technical issues with authentication.
- Work with academic schools on best practice in learning design.
- On the next upgrade work with our theme designers to ensure navigation, usability and prominence is given to those features deemed important by QMplus users.

#### 11.4.2 Already actioned in 2014/15

- Maintaining a regular upgrade schedule for both QMplus (Moodle and Mahara) and Q-Review, ensuring that we can take advantage of new functionality and other enhancements soon after they are made available.
- Book a Learning Technologist scheme launched
- E-Learning Production Scheme (Funding for small E-learning projects).

## 12 CONCLUSION

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The 2013/14 QMplus survey has provided an extremely valuable and informative snapshot of the primary tool provided for e-learning at Queen Mary and as such it will help guide its development over the forthcoming year.

780 students not only completed the mandatory questions but also spent a considerable amount of time providing commentary on many questions including an incredible 607 comments on aspects of QMplus they used on mobile devices. We had clearly touched a nerve! It is heartening to see that level of engagement so late in the year and suggests that just as students have told us they are using these tools on a daily basis, they also feel passionately about them as we do and are keen to work with us on ensuring that they are fit for purpose.

Students have commented for two years in a row now that they would like to see better and more consistent use of QMplus across their modules. Whilst we must celebrate the achievements we have made in extending VLE usage to all corners of Queen Mary teaching, we must keep our eye on the way the system is being used with a view to maintaining standards and enhancing what we do.

### 12.1 IMPROVED AWARENESS

The most pleasing trend that has emerged from this year's survey is the clear and significant increase in awareness of the tools and functionality available within QMplus compared to the first year of its rollout. Of particular note is the increase in awareness of the tools within the *Mahara – Groups and Portfolios* area. On the other hand, almost 50% of survey respondents had not used an online discussion forum, often considered a basic blended learning tool, so we still have some work to do in demonstrating to academic staff ways in which the system can be used to enhance learning and teaching.

It's one thing to have awareness of tools and functionality but a greater leap to actually engage with these tools and incorporate them into teaching and learning. In the survey this year, students indicated that they didn't just want to see stimulating online modules but they also wanted those modules to be designed and organised in consistent ways. If you are going to use Q-Review then use it all the time and make sure the lectures have been captured properly and are properly signposted in the course; if you are going to post grades and feedback via digital channels then post them for all assessments across all modules in the same way and let the students know at the beginning of the year the approach you are going to take.

### 12.2 CONSISTENCY

The 2013/14 survey has revealed that students are happy with QMplus when it is delivering course content but less so when it is being used as a communication tool. Emails received from announcement areas in QMplus are seen as useful but messaging, groups and other 'social' tools are either not known about or perceived as clunky or not fit for purpose.

There was a cry from the trenches that consistency in schools and policies are lacking:

*“Not all lecturers are using the system fully. e.g. some lecturers put assessment details, revision slides and lots of other useful information on there whilst others put up a bare minimum of lecture slides.”*

The survey has shown us how valuable it is to have a school strategy in place for using QMplus and to publicise this strategy as widely as possible. This strategy might be prescriptive about the types of content required in a course area, the layout of learning materials, provision of grades and feedback and the configuration of assignments. Once a strategy is in place then it can be demonstrated to students across all levels at the beginning of the semester so that expectations are understood by all parties.

### 12.3 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Students have indicated that we should not stand still, and we haven't. Since the 2013/14 survey closed, we have been working hard on improving and expanding the e-learning offerings to the college. This year as part of the QMplus Phase III project, we are working to provide an improved communication platform that meets the needs of students when they require the privacy and security that a college-supported system can bring. The lecture capture system (Q-Review) was expanded and upgraded in the summer of 2014, bringing HTML5 streaming capability to mobile and international audiences as well as better and more comprehensive analytics. Simultaneously, HSS has adopted an opt-out policy for the use of Q-Review across all schools with a subsequent leap in the volume of lectures being captured. Undergraduate medicine was already doing this and S & E may follow in 2015.

Video streaming capability is being further expanded in the near future with the launch of a college-wide media server (QMplus Media). This will be an effective but easy-to-use platform for staff and students alike to upload and store video content through QMplus. We are also launching two purpose-built video recording studios for staff to capture high quality video and/or handwriting for incorporation into their online teaching.

### 12.4 LOOKING FORWARDS

As we continue to enhance QMplus we need to ensure that all staff involved with using the system are kept up to date with changes and enhancements. Many staff will only have engaged in formal training during the migration into QMplus, and for some, that is almost 3 years ago; a lot has changed in 3 years. The E-Learning Unit must continue to provide opportunities for basic training in the use of the tools within QMplus as well as the more advanced capabilities and we must put particular focus on the opportunities these tools can provide to extend and enhance the excellent teaching that is already taking place.

Finally, an important approach will be to work with faculty E-learning user groups and School administration and management teams to help develop and promote local e-learning strategies that support disciplinary pedagogical needs as well as school-wide priorities. At QMUL we can and should continue to develop and enhance our e-learning and teaching through both ambitious strategies (e.g. SETLA<sup>14</sup> and ITTP<sup>15</sup>) and practical implementations of the spirit of these strategies. We have chosen a 4E enhancement framework that will help to stimulate conversations across the college in this area. With this framework, continued engagement with the QMUL community, and a commitment to improving the technical infrastructure, we will deliver QMplus as the effective online learning environment for all QM students.

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<sup>14</sup> Student Experience, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

<sup>15</sup> IT Transformation Programme

## 13 APPENDIX

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### 13.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Overview**

We need your help in shaping the future development of QMplus. This is the second full year of using QMplus at Queen Mary and the first time that it has been used in all schools and institutes around the college. The purpose of this survey is to find out how you are finding the new system, how much (or how little) you are using it in your studies and any suggestions you might have about improvements that could be made to it. There are a total of 27 questions. As an added incentive we will also enter your completed survey into a draw to win a Google Nexus 7 (16Gb, Wifi) tablet. Just leave us your contact details on the last page of the survey if you would like to be in the prize draw.

#### **How long will the survey take?**

The survey should take 15 - 20 minutes to complete. All questions are mandatory except long answers, however, we would still appreciate your thoughts if you have the time.

#### **Who should do the survey?**

If you have been a student at Queen Mary University of London in the 2013/14 academic year and you have used QMplus as a student then you can participate. We welcome contributions from ALL students either local to London, studying in Beijing, Nanchang or Paris and via distance learning around the world.

Individual responses will be anonymised. Paper versions of the survey can be made available on request. If you have any questions about the survey, or about QMplus more generally please contact the E-Learning Unit: [elearning@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:elearning@qmul.ac.uk)

#### **What are we going to do with the data?**

When we have analysed the data we will publish all findings in a report on our website. This will be made available to all students and staff at Queen Mary. We also aim to show you what improvements will be made as a result of the findings. You can view the report from the 2012/13 QMplus report on the ELU website (<http://www.learninginstitute.qmul.ac.uk/elearning/blogposts/results-of-the-201213-qmplus-student-survey/>).

*Please note: Once you have clicked on the CONTINUE button at the bottom of each page you cannot return to review or amend that page*

The survey should take 15 – 20 minutes to complete. All questions are mandatory except long answers, however, we would still appreciate your thoughts if you have the time.

## Section 1: About you

1. What is your current year of study?\*
- Foundation year
  - Undergraduate (year 1)
  - Undergraduate (year 2)
  - Undergraduate (year 3)
  - Undergraduate (year 4) e.g. BDS or MBBS
  - Undergraduate (year 5)
  - Intercalated (SMD)
  - Taught Postgraduate (e.g. MSc or PGCAP)
  - Research degree (e.g. MPhil/PhD)
  - Short course
  - Other? (please specify)

2. Which school, department or institute do you study in? (if more than one please select both)\*
- Barts Cancer Institute
  - Biological and Chemical Sciences
  - Blizzard Institute
  - Business and Management
  - Centre for Academic and Professional Development
  - Centre for Commercial Law Studies
  - Comparative Literature and Culture
  - Drama
  - Economics and Finance
  - Electronic Engineering and Computer Science
  - Engineering and Materials Science
  - English
  - Film Studies
  - French
  - Geography
  - German
  - History
  - Iberian and Latin American Studies
  - Institute of Dentistry
  - Language Centre
  - Law
  - Library
  - Linguistics
  - Mathematical Sciences
  - Medicine (MBBS)
  - Physics and Astronomy
  - Politics and International Relations
  - Russian
  - William Harvey Research Institute

- Wolfson Institute of Preventative Medicine
3. How are you studying?\*
    - Campus-based (Full time)
    - Campus-based (Part time)
    - Distance learning (Full time)
    - Distance learning (Part-time)  4. Which campus are you *mainly* studying at? \*
    - Beijing (BUPT), China
    - Charterhouse Square, London, UK
    - Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, UK
    - Mile End, London, UK
    - Nanchang (NCU), China
    - University of London Institute, Paris, France
    - West Smithfield, London, UK
    - Whitechapel, London, UK
    - Not applicable  5. Which of the following most closely describes how you feel about using technology generally in your learning?
    - I find it easy to use the range of technology required by my programme of study
    - I need some support when using the technology required by my programme of study
    - I struggle to use the technology required by my programme of study  6. Have you used an Online Learning Environment like QMplus in your studies before ***and if so where?***  
(*Select all that apply*)
    - Yes – BlackBoard at Queen Mary (the former online learning environment)
    - Yes- Faculty of Science & Engineering – School Control Panel/Intranet
    - Yes – Secondary school
    - Yes – Sixth Form or Further Education College
    - Yes – Other training including professional
    - Yes – another Higher Education Institution
    - No



## Section 2 - Orientation and use of QMplus

7. How did you learn about QMplus and how to use it? How useful were the training and orientation opportunities provided? Please select all the options you have used from the list below and rate them for usefulness where 1 is not useful at all and 5 is very useful.\*

	1= Not at all useful	2= Not very useful	3= useful	4 = Quite useful	5 = Very useful	Chose not to use	Did not know about it	Not applicable
General Orientation session (e.g. during welcome week)								
Online material in QMplus (Help for students)								
Online material developed for your module or school e.g. handouts								
Another student showed me								
My module lead/organiser showed me								
My department or school IT/E-learning support showed me								
I taught myself								

8. What did you find most useful about the training /orientation received?

9. How could the training / orientation have been improved?

10. What devices do you use to access QMplus and where do you usually access them?\*( please select any place that applies to you or if you don't use a device like this select 'Do not use')

	On campus	On the move	Public places*	At work	At home	Don't use
A desktop computer – Windows						
A desktop computer – Mac						
A desktop computer - Linux						

A Laptop computer - Windows						
A Laptop computer – Mac						
A Laptop computer – Linux						
A Laptop computer – Android (e.g. Chromebook)						
A Tablet – Ipad						
A Tablet – Android						
A Tablet - Windows						
A Smartphone – Iphone						
A Smartphone – Android						
A Smartphone – Blackberry						
A Smartphone - Windows						
A Tablet – Ipad						
A Tablet – Android						
A Tablet - Windows						
A Smartphone – Iphone						
A Smartphone – Android						
An E-book reader (e.g. Amazon Kindle, Nook etc)						
A games console (e.g. Nintendo Wii, Xbox 360)						

*\* Public places include cafes and bars, internet cafes, restaurants etc*

11. What aspects of QMplus do you use on your mobile phone?

12. **On average** how often do you access QMplus?\*

- More than once a day
- Once a day
- More than once a week
- Once a week
- A few times a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

### Section 3 - Supporting your learning

Below you will find a range of potential ways QMplus can be used to support learning. Tell us how useful you found these ways to support your learning. If you knew about the feature but did not use it select 'chose not to use'. If you did not know the feature existed select 'did not know about it'. If the feature did not apply to you e.g. local timetables for distance learners select 'Not applicable'.

	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Useful	Quite useful	Very useful	Chose not to use	Did not know about it	Not applicable
<b>General info and admin</b>								
a. Finding out about assessment and feedback on my module								
b. Signing up to seminar or tutorial groups								
c. Finding out contact details of teaching staff								
d. Communicating with teaching/admin staff								
e. Accessing my personal timetable								
f. Accessing my module timetable								
g. Providing feedback to staff via QMplus								
h. Accessing my old courses form the QMplus 2012/13 archive								
<b>Teaching materials</b>								
a. Accessin lecture notes and/or slides								
b. Watching recordings of your lectures								
c. Watching videos e.g. YouTube, Vimeo etc								
d. listening to audio files or podcasts								

e. Accessing other websites via a hyperlink in QMplus								
f. Accessing a reading list for my module/course using the Library reading list software (TALIS)								
g. Accessing a reading list within my module								
<b>Assessment</b>								
a. Submitting work/assignments								
b. Accessing assessment documents (e.g. criteria etc)								
c. Taking online tests or quizzes								
d. Viewing feedback								
e. Developing an assessed e-portfolio for my module/programme								
f. Viewing a Turnitin report for an assignment								
g. Receiving grades								
<b>Groups and Portfolios</b>								
a. Keeping an online journal								
b. Uploading and/or presenting my CV								
c. Setting up a group								
d. Carrying out group work								
e. Developing my own personal portfolio								
<b>Collaborative activities</b>								

a. Communicating with classmates and tutors in forums								
b. Participating in online chat								
c. Peer reviewing other student's work								
d. Communicating with other QMUL friends (via QMplus messaging or Quickmail)								
e. Maintaining a class blog or wiki								

13. What other technologies do you find helpful for your studies?\*(select all that apply)

- Blogging software *e.g. Wordpress*
- Microblogging software: *e.g. Twitter*
- Shared documents *e.g. Google docs*
- Cloud computing *e.g. Dropbox, OneDrive, iCloud*
- Social networking software *e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn*
- Bibliographic software *e.g. Endnote, Zotero, Mendeley*
- Mobile Apps
- Web conferencing *e.g. Skype*
- Departmental or tutor websites
- QMUL Office 365 email software
- Other email *e.g. Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo mail etc.*
- Clickers or Electronic voting systems
- Open learning resources like *OpenLearn, iTunesU, Khan Academy*
- Survey tools *e.g. SurveyMonkey, Bristol Online Survey*
- Other (please specify)

14. Are there any other ways that QMplus could be used to support your learning?

**Section 4 - Technical Support**

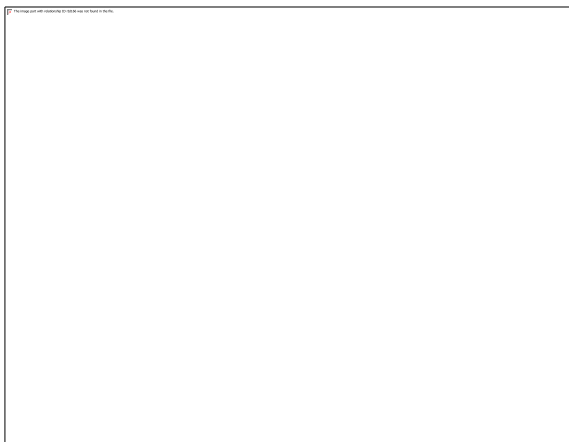
15. Have you used any of the following methods to solve a technical problem with QMplus?  
Please indicate which methods you have used and rate how happy you were with the help you received.\*

	1 = Not useful at all	2 = Not very useful	3 = useful	4 = Quite useful	5 = very useful	Did not use	Never heard of it
a. IT Helpdesk - face- to-face in Queen’s Building Mile End							
b. IT Helpdesk - Phone support (ext 8888)							
c. IT Helpdesk – Email support (its-helpdesk@qmul.ac.uk)							
d. Online support material in QMplus							
e. Asked a friend/classmate							
f. Asked your module leader/convenor							
g. Used my department/school IT/E-learning support							
h. Resolved it myself							

16. Do you have any comments or suggestions to make about technical support for using QMplus?

## Section 5 - Look and Feel

17. Thinking about the design and usability of QMplus, please rank the following areas of a QMplus module on a scale of usefulness where 1 represents not useful at all and 5 is very useful. If your course does not have a particular feature then please tick the box to the right. (use the image above as a guide if you are unsure of the names)



	1 = not useful at all	2 = not very useful	3 = useful	4 = Quite useful	5 = very Useful	Not applicable
a. The Module info block (top right)						
b. The news and announcements area at the top of the page						
c. The Module image						
d. The course menu (top left)						
e. The show/hide assessment information (or General Info) area at the top of the page						
f. The overall design of the module/course homepage						
g. The icons (e.g. book, quiz, assignment)						
h. The collapsible topic sections						

18. Why did you like or not like certain features of the design? (e.g. layout, working on different devices etc)

19. Did your school, department or institute have a landing page in QMplus this year?\* (An example landing page is pictured above)

- Yes
- No

	Very useful	Quite useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all
22a. How would you rate the usefulness of the landing page for providing news and information about your school?					
22b. How would you rate the usefulness of the landing page for providing info about activity on your various modules including forum posts and assignment due dates (through the module dashboard)?					
22c. How would you rate the usefulness of the Landing page for providing access to your personal timetable?					

22d. We would welcome any further comments you might have about your landing page in QMplus.



## Section 6 - Ease of use

20. We would like to know how easy you find it to use QMplus for learning. Please rate the following activities and functions on a scale of how easy or difficult you think they are to carry out \*

	1= Very difficult	2 = Difficult	3= OK	4= Easy	5= Very Easy	Never tried this
a. Logging in						
b. Downloading a file (e.g. pdf or ppt)						
c. Moving around and locating the content you need						
d. Uploading an assignment						
e. Accessing news and announcements from the module/course organiser						
f. Doing a quiz						
g. Posting to a forum						
h. Starting a group						
i. Creating a portfolio page						
j. Doing a workshop activity						
k. Accessing your grades and feedback						
l. Accessing audio/video content (e.g. Q-Review)						

21. Please let us know about any other tools or functionality you found useful in QMplus

22. Do you have any suggestions for improvements or enhancements (e.g. new features, device support etc)

23. Any other comments?

## Prize draw

### Terms and conditions

- The prize draw is open to all QML students who complete and submit the QMplus survey and leave their contact details below.
- The prize offered is as stated and is non-exchangeable or transferable. No cash alternatives will be provided.
- The E-Learning unit will randomly select and notify the winner.
- If we send out your prize we will post it using Royal Mail. We cannot be responsible for prizes that do not arrive.
- We reserve the right to pick an alternative winner if the original winner does not get in touch with us within 14 days of notification via email that they have won.
- Our decision is final on all matters and we will not enter into any further correspondence.
- By entering you agree to be bound by these rules in relation to the prize draw.
- If you would like to be entered into the prize draw please leave your name and email address below.

I want to be in the prize draw:

24. My details are (full name, email): for example John.Smith@qmul.ac.uk

- Please add any other contact information we may need for out of term contact e.g. a telephone number or address:

This is the end of the survey. Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the survey. We value your contribution to the ongoing development of QMplus.

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