B1: Diversifying assessment

APP PAR Project Cycle 3 2021-2022

Appendix: Staff Survey Questions

1. Background information		
Topic	Assessment	
Strand	A: Black British perspectives	
	B: Disability/Mental Health perspectives	x
Specific research question	What are staff members' perceptions of diversifying assessments in their disciplines at Cambridge: lessons learnt from the pandemic and scope for the future.	
Student co-researchers	*Name, course, year, college*	
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2. Executive summary
This project intends to explore staff perspectives on the opportunities for and the barriers to diversifying assessment at Cambridge University. It expands on a previous report on students' perceptions of diversified assessments conducted by the Cambridge Students' Union in 2021. Upon surveying and interviewing staff members from multiple departments and roles, the majority had an appetite for provision of well-designed, diversified assessments (both formative and summative). Main reasons included better showcasing of student ability and improvement of student mental health. However, there was no consensus - the burden of designing new assessments and perhaps teaching, the plethora of ways students learn versus the simplicity of a traditional exam, and proving academic standards, were some of the hurdles that were unveiled. Training for more staff on what constitutes diversified assessment (modes; conditions) and on design and implementation approaches to ensure fairness, rigour, and pertinence (with regard to teaching and Intended Learning Outcomes), would likely be beneficial. Giving staff the time away from other work to develop new assessments can be one strategy to facilitate this.

3. Rationale
Assessments matter. They affect how one learns, what one learns, and how talented and competent one is perceived to be. Calls for diversified assessment are longstanding. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a rapid change in exam conditions (e.g. open book exams, longer time frame) but did not necessarily change the mode of assessment, in that the traditional timed essay/short answer exams remained the norm - assessment was not truly 'diversified'. However, the pandemic led to many changes that had

previously been rejected as impractical or impossible, such as widespread lecture recording and remote learning, and this expansion of horizons has also applied to assessment. The university is now investigating diversifying the conditions of examination (Vice-Chancellor gives evidence to The Times Education Commission, 2022) with potential for expanding the *modes of assessment* as the University has approved a programme for the Future of Assessment which incorporates a 5 year plan for incorporating diversified assessment.

It appears this is a unique moment as a University to make substantial changes to assessment, which the CCTL should take full advantage of. As will be shown in the literature review, student support for diversifying assessment is strong across the board. However, staff willingness and ability are also necessary for any significant change, and assessment design must balance the needs of students and the capacity of staff, whilst also retaining the rigorous nature of assessment at Cambridge. Understanding of staff perspectives is needed if enactment of university aspirations on assessment is to be successful.

References

1 .University of Cambridge. 2022. *Vice-Chancellor gives evidence to The Times Education Commission*. [online] Available at: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/vice-chancellor-gives-evidence-to-the-times-education-commission?utm_campaign=alumni&utm_medium=email&utm_source=886008_M14849%20May%202022%20Alumni%20e-newsletter&dm_i=6DCH,IZNC,3FZIIR,2BMSV,1> [Accessed 5 August 2022].

4. Contextual information (literature review)

Diversified assessments

What is a diverse assessment? Universal design for teaching and assessment is an approach where different assessment and learning modes and conditions are used, to provide an inclusive environment to students with different learning styles and to students with disabilities, so that they can all showcase themselves at their best (Pearson, 2003). Diverse assessment also allows a broader range of skills to be tested and showcased to future employers or fellow academics, and facilitates assessment alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes (Diversifying Assessment, 2022). During the pandemic, assessment modes underwent a transition by adopting non-invigilated, open-book exams, some with a 24-hour period for submission (Buckley et al., 2021, p.127).

Cambridge assessment and the road to diversification

The transition to any university presents a significant stress event for most students, which many do not rebound from throughout their degree (Cage et al., 2021). Students face challenges like high workload, loneliness, financial struggles, ambivalence, imposter syndrome, and, of course, assessments. The challenge of assessments can help a student to learn and grow - and they are necessary - but they are also threats to self-worth and, if inadequately devised, give a poor reflection of actual knowledge and work ethic. Anecdotal evidence has long shown the problems of the exams in Cambridge (Brundle, 2021). And there now there is increasing evidence supporting the need to revisit the modes of assessments.

Following concerns raised in 2014 regarding traditional examinations, in 2017 the University published an examination review in which they noted that, going forward, it is important that "all Faculties and Departments are encouraged to be creative and innovative by considering other modes and methods of examination, which are suitable to the particular discipline that is being examined".

These recommendations began to be implemented during the pandemic via incorporation into an assessment framework. The framework noted that, to establish permanent future diversified assessments, the time is now to give "fuller consideration of the assessment infrastructure (e.g. the

service, resource and financial model) required to deliver [such] assessment" – a common barrier cited by staff as shown in this report. They also noted the importance of inclusive assessment for closing the awarding gaps for Black British students and the increasing number of those with declared mental health disabilities (Framework for Assessment for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes 2021-2022, 2022).

Disabled students voice on diverse assessments
The Cambridge report on Diversified Assessment in Cycle 1 of the APP Participatory Action Research Project found that disabled students were strongly supportive of diversifying assessment, both due to the negative mental health impact of traditional Cambridge exams, and positive factors of diversified assessment; greater ability to perform to their potential and developing transferable skills for employment. (Strand B | Assessment Guidance | Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning, 2022).

Student voice on shifts in assessment during the pandemic
These findings were mirrored in a 2021 report by the Cambridge Student Union which examined student perspectives regarding pandemic-induced changes to assessment modes and conditions. The qualitative data in this report, with 475 respondents, showed significant student appetite across subjects for more non-exam assessments – still of course closely aligned to in-depth learning, ILOs and degree prospects/graduating competencies. Only 19% of students wanted a return to traditional exams, with 44% wanting online open book exams (an assessment condition) and 59% wanting a variety of assessment modes throughout their degree.

A 62% majority indicated that the impact of traditional exams on mental health was either negative or very negative. Whilst, of course, some exam stress is natural, the alarmingly high-stakes format of these exams has a disproportionately deleterious effect on student wellbeing. Furthermore, when students were asked to predict the impact of diverse modes of assessment on mental health, 80% predicted a positive or very positive impact.

Despite all this, there is no absolute consensus. Whilst 51% felt their online remote assessments improved their experiences, 23% felt it was worsened, perhaps as they are used to working towards a traditional exam format, or because of the dire global circumstance with which these changes were brought. A concern was that bulk and in-depth memorising, a key to most Cambridge degrees, became less important than the ability to rapidly search notes and having an eloquent writing style.

But issues are not limited to the new. More than half of students did not agree that the types of assessment currently in their course measure skills that will serve them beyond university, and two-thirds did not agree that the end-of-year exams they faced were an accurate representation of their ability. They also worried about failure to incorporate non-exam assessments into teaching – new assessments need to be well-planned.

Disabled student voice on shifts in assessments during the pandemic
The assessment shifts had particular effects for disabled students. The move for all students in Covid-19 was from in-person, invigilated, short, and handwritten essays to remote, typed, longer-timeframe and sometimes open book assessments, requiring alterations akin to those only previously given to students with declared disabilities after a lengthy application process. Still, awarding gaps narrowed (perhaps as these students did not have to spend as much energy and time seeking adjustments), but have since widened again, perhaps due to some return to traditional assessments. Carefully designed diverse and authentic modes of assessment will not only help to showcase the best of student ability overall, but could also help to close awarding gaps (Cambridge Student Union, 2022).

Staff voice

Staff play a pivotal role in student experience and degree outcomes, but they have limited time and have more experience with traditional exams, so when sweeping educational reforms are mandated staff need adequate consultation, time, and training. Prior studies at other institutions have shown that logistical issues, stigma, and inadequate training contributed to delays in inclusive reasonable adjustments for disabled students, and, crucially for this report, in weaknesses in overall assessment and curriculum design. (Bunbury, 2018). This report looks at staff perspectives on the opportunities for and the barriers to diversifying assessment at Cambridge University.

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5. What do you hope to achieve with this qualitative research project?

A key aim is to uncover the barriers to implementation of diverse assessments.
The outcomes of this project are anticipated to provide both a broad survey of staff (to clariy their perceptions of diversifying assessments), alongside two in-depth interviews from Veterinary Medicine and History and Philosophy of Science. The aims are a broad overview of what types of assessment are currently undertaken by faculties, staff perspective on the ability of current assessment to develop useful skills and measure student capabilities, alongside its mental health impact, and then assessment in the pandemic. Next considered are the awarding gap, and forms of assessment staff would like to see in their discipline. The ultimate goal is to put forward recommendations that tackle the hurdles found.

6. Methods: generation of evidence

Data was collected using an online staff survey and follow-up interviews with staff.

The survey

An online survey was developed on Qualtrics and circulated by email to mailing lists of three cohorts (2019 - 2021, 2020-2021, 2021- 2022): Undergraduate Supervisor Training, PGCTLHE, Teaching Associates Programme. Staff were also approached at the Diversifying Assessment Forum hosted by the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning on 21 March 2022. Participants were first approached at the Diversifying Assessment Symposium, where the project was explained in person, including what it aimed to investigate and its potential impact on assessment at Cambridge, to encourage people to complete the survey and to hopefully elicit more productive responses. Attendees at the Diversifying Assessment Forum were approached as, by virtue of their attendance at the event, it was believed they were interested in diversified assessment and more likely to complete the survey. Furthermore, they were also likely to be people involved and/or invested in curriculum and assessment design and administration and could thus give informative responses whilst providing a manageable number of responses for analysis. 45 participants responded. After removing blank and incomplete responses, a final dataset of 29 staff members was used for further analysis.

The staff survey covered a broad range of disciplines and roles, so that any general consensus and overall perspectives could be uncovered. Repondants to the survey covered different disciplines: Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences, and STEMM. These included disciplines with national requirements for assessment, such as Veterinary Medicine and Law. Respondents occupied a variety of positions in teaching at Cambridge at both a faculty and college level, including: Course Director, UTO, Senior Examiner, DoS, Supervisor, Senior Teaching Associate, Deputy Senior Tutor, Foundation Year, Disability Advisor, Tutor and Examiner.

The survey had 37 questions and incorporated a variety of closed and open questions (see Appendix on the website), which were then thematically analysed by the project team. The questions were split into 3 sections - what assessment was done in the pandemic and its impact, what forms of assessment they wished to see more of, and the perceived impact of diversified assessments on gender, disability, and race (specifically Black students).

The data is anonymised and key take-aways are outlined in the next section. Given the length constraints of this report, not all data is analysed in detail here. However, it is available for further analysis for future work. Analysis will begin looking at current assessment practices - namely the common traditional examinations - before turning to alternative (diverse) assessments delivered during and since the onset of the pandemic.

The interviews

In the survey, it was asked whether staff would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Of those who responded, two staff members were contacted so that different department voices could be examined in depth, whilst preventing an excessive workload for the student researchers (authors of this report). The analysis of these interviews is beyond the capacity of this report, but are available for further analysis.

Ensuring that the interviewee understands their rights over the data, by providing a participant consent form and an information form, is a vital ethical consideration that was adopted. The interviewees were given a week following the interview to withdraw their answers; neither chose to do so. However, their responses are still anonymous. In future work they will be referred to as VMi (veterinary medicine interviewee) and HSi (History and and Philosophy of Science interviewee).

Interviewees were informed that topics of discussion could be sensitive, and that they could pause or leave the interview at any time. Each interviewee was given an estimated time of interview of 20 minutes, but was also given the space to expand on answers and take longer if they so wished.

7. Small project research findings

Assessment practices currently used - including traditional exams

Before we begin, it should be noted that almost half the respondents had not been involved in supporting students with a diversified assessment task. Those who did, were primarily involved with supporting students with coursework, dissertation, practical work, project work, and presentations. Additionally, half the participants said that they were aware of non-exam based assessments in their departments while the half were unsure.
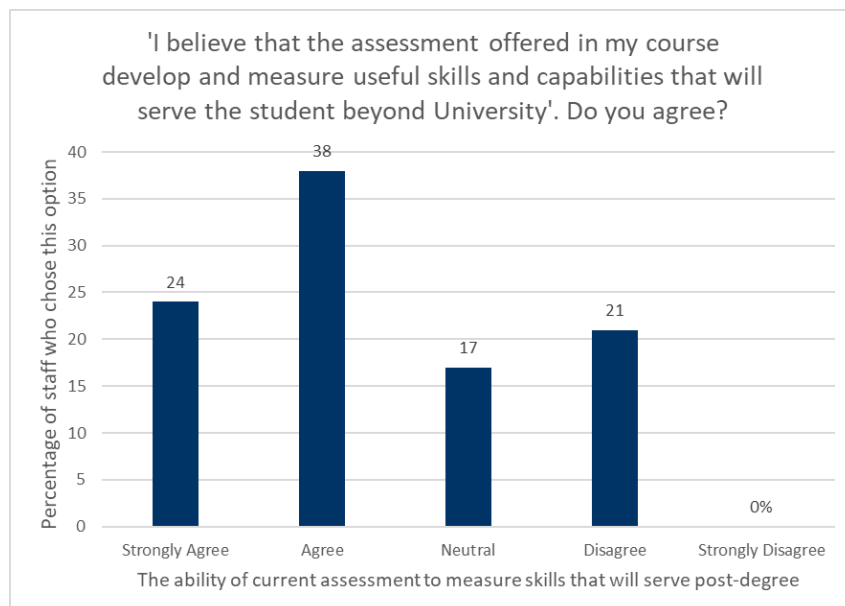

Figure 1: Staff perspectives on the ability of current assessment to accurately report student grasp of relevant post-degree skills

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the respondents mostly agreed that the assessments offered in their course were a useful measure of skills and capability required beyond university. It is worth noting the disparity between the student and staff perspectives at this point - 62% of staff are happy that current assessment measures employable characteristics, which is higher than the number of students (see Student Union report) by some margin.

Whilst it seems a concern that 38% of staff do not believe that current assessments (largely still traditional exams) measure such skills, this is rectifiable as assessments can be altered. However, given the high percentage of staff content with current assessment in this regard, it may prove difficult to convince departments to change, despite other evidence for the need to diversify (see Figure 3 and Figure 6 below).

It should be noted that some of the 38% who did not agree may have done so due to pedagogy surrounding learning rather than a focus on assessment mode, condition or content.

For example, a belief that teaching should be about knowledge for its own sake rather than assessment, despite assessment (which must by its nature cover a set range of standardised material) being of critical importance for self esteem, progression from one year of a degree to the next, and life prospects (whether in academia or a career beyond). Later, when the survey asked, "In the activities beyond the university which are most closely related to your discipline, what kind of tasks might students in your course be expected to do? Please … list some of the activities or tasks you might expect your graduates will be required to do in their future careers" a response was "*This is a rather naive question. … Most careers, however differentiated they appear, require only one quality: obedience. A successful student of [my course] will lack this quality*".

Even in regulated professions in which assessment of employable skills beyond the traditional exam would logically seem useful, there is a belief that deviation from such traditional modes would be impossible and/or unnecessary. For example, a respondent stated: "*I do not believe there is reasonable scope for alternative assessments in [professional degree]. We do not first and foremost teach skills, but focus on imparting a particular way of thinking about the world … our role as a university is to teach basic knowledge and the toolbox to students not the practical application*".

Whether due to assessment design, cynicism, disjointed teaching and assessment, unrealistic expectations of students, or simply course design not favouring 'employable' assessable knowledge or skills, there is a significant, even deliberate, university-wide issue with current assessments.

So, it has been established that a small majority of staff believe current assessments examine some employable skills. But do staff believe that current assessments mirror the degree's teaching, or are there disjoints?
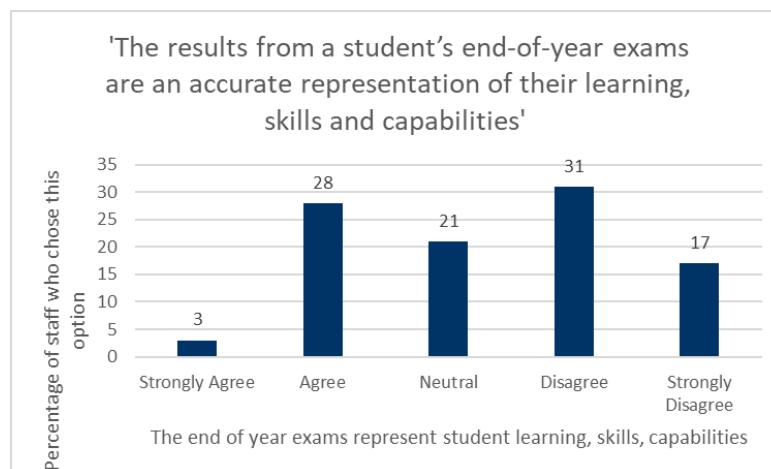

Figure 2: The perspective of staff on the ability of current assessment to reflect student ability

These results are starker. It was shown earlier that 18 of the 29 staff may have agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment develops and measures useful skills, but Figure 2 shows only 8 agreed or strongly agreed that current exam results are an accurate representation of actual skills and learning. This means that the majority of staff believe, from their experience with students, that the learning, skills and capabilities of students are not well tested. Whilst there are some who believe that teaching or assessing employable skills is not required for a university like Cambridge, it is unequivocally important for assessment to reflect what students are studying.

When staff were asked the "In the activities beyond the university which are most closely related to your discipline, what kind of tasks might students in your course be expected to do? Please … list some of the activities or tasks you might expect your graduates will be required to do in their future careers" question spoken of earlier, it is important to note that 90% of respondents were able to note common

post-graduate activities and tasks. A range of skills such as writing critical analysis, lab skills, reporting, policy briefs, teamwork were noted. As 62% did agree that assessment covered some post-graduate skills (Figure 1) and 69% did not agree that current assessment reflects what a student learns (Figure 2), one conclusion is that *teaching* in many departments does not encompass many post-graduation skills. However, given that 38% of respondents did not agree that current assessment tested these skills (Figure 1), this provides some basis to consider diversification of assessments to incorporate testing of such skills.

So if exams often do not reflect skills and capability, and sometimes test skills that have no post-degree use, do they at least help to contribute towards student growth and positive mental health? The answer, according to these staff work with students day-in-day-out, was a resounding no.
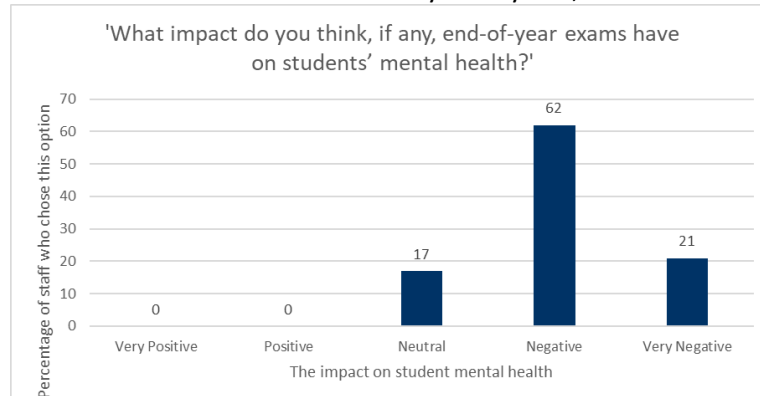

Figure 3: The perspective of staff on how current exams impact student mental health

None of the staff who responded to the survey believed exams had a positive impact. This may come as no surprise to most students, and indeed some assessment-induced stress may be acceptable and inevitable. However, it is still concerning that 21% staff note a 'very negative' impact which, to this author, seems beyond what exam designers should be expecting students to cope with.

Assessment practices that are not traditional exams - i.e., diversified assessment
There is some ongoing work across the university in providing several types of non-exam assessment. Looking at staff involvement (indicating the effect such assessment has on teaching) - it is shown that approximately half of staff are involved.
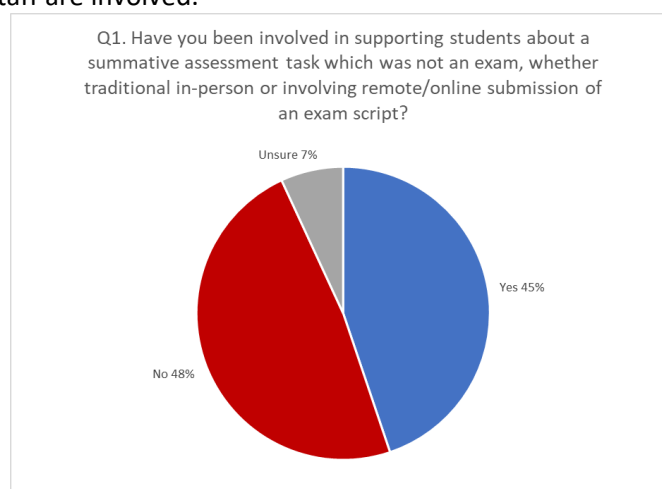

Figure 4: A graph on the involvement of staff in diverse assessment support provision
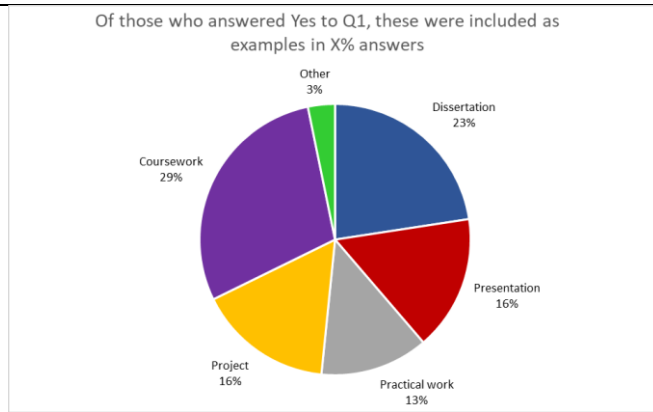
Figure 5: Of the staff involved in supporting diverse assessment, what modes are most common?

Of the staff not involved, 7 of them were aware of diverse assessments - their examples included the same as the above, plus reflective exercises. This shows that 69% of staff are aware that there are non-exam assessments in their subject (perhaps an indicator of the prevalence of diverse assessments across the university), but only 45% have supported students to showcase their ability in that format. This could represent an area for improvement.

Staff were also asked about the effect of pandemic-induced assessment changes on their students. More were positive than negative, but nearly half of staff chose 'unchanged' , but a common theme - when asked to give detail to this answer - was that "it's complicated". Staff felt uncertain, that some aspects were good and others not, that it would have been better if there had been time to incorporate the assessment approaches into teaching, and/or that it differed between students (67% of those who chose 'unchanged' elaborated to say this).
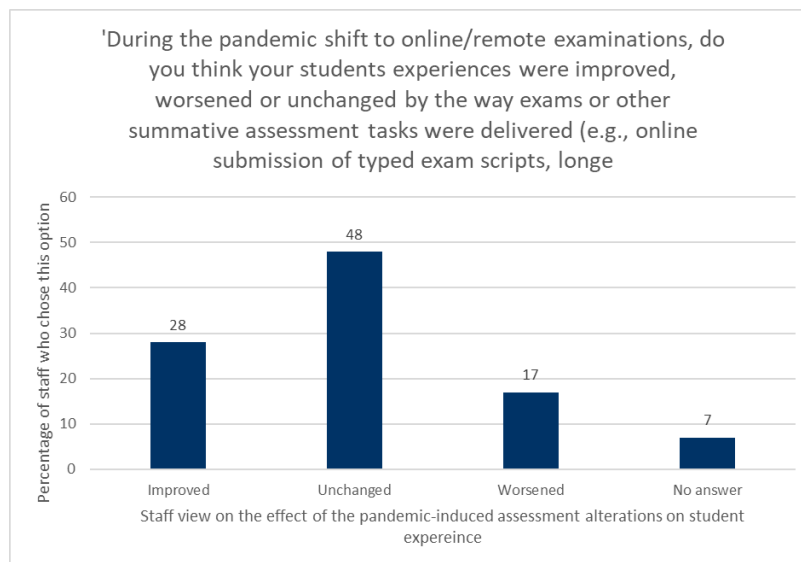

Figure 6: Pandemic era shifts in assessment could have had a variety of effects.

Of the 28% who felt that the pandemic led to assessment shifts that benefited students, reasons included both different modes, and different conditions.
Typed scripts were considered a benefit in 88% of the 'improved' answer explanations because they provided

- *"word limits"*

- *"improvement in accessibility and inclusivity, perhaps in part via allowing changes in structure once all the key points are written down and/or preventing poor handwriting obscuring good content (allow better expression of knowledge and ideas)"*
- *"the chance to use what many students normally do during the year (one stated that handwriting is "old-fashioned")"*

Open-book was considered a benefit in 75% of the 'improved' answer explanations because it allowed
- *"student "time to demonstrate skills beyond recall of facts" / memorisation"*
- *"specific details" to be checked"*

Longer window of time (than the traditional 2-3 hours) was considered a benefit in 63% of the 'improved' answer explanations because it gave

- *"more time to reflect/write considered response"*
- *"improvement in accessibility for those with, for example, slower processing or writing time"*
- *"improvement in mental health / decreased stress"*

However, similar modes and conditions were also considered a drawback by those who felt that pandemic-induced alternate arrangements worsened student experience:
40% of those who chose 'worsened' cited open-book as a reason. Some gave no further detail, but one argued

- *"Assessment time frames not altered to reflect "researching time"". It is possible that not all modes and conditions will be suitable for each subject, and even when they have potential, creating well-thought through and authentic assessment takes time."*

The same percentage felt the longer window of time (than the traditional 2-3 hours) was a contributing factor to the issue.

- *"Students felt that they had to work in all the time made available otherwise they'd be disadvantaged compared to others" / "A lot of my students were quite stressed about how long they should spend on the work e.g. should they spend the full 24 hours on a 24 hours assessment - even though the recommendation was only to spend 3 hours, students were worried that others would spend longer and that they should too"*

20% in part blamed Typed Script, due to '*speed of typing*' concerns.

There was also a range of other reasons for believing that the alterations worsened student experience - in fact 80% of those who selected 'worsened' gave other suggestions, such as:

- *"Unable to undertake [exams]in the normal way." This could mean that students had been taught towards a different assessment style and so were less equipped to showcase themselves well, or it could mean that the department's assessment alterations were insufficient in other ways."*
- *"Students absorbed material less deeply, thereby preparing them less for future study." This suggests that, likely due to an open-book assessment being offered, students did not memorise material to the same extent as pre-pandemic (instead perhaps focusing on other aspects of their degree or extra-curricular life), though the skill of memorisation and/or the material they should have memorised will be necessary for a future at Cambridge University."*
- *"Opportunity for collusion." Though intertwined, this is an issue surrounding invigilation rather than the assessment mode and condition itself. It is worthy of note that this (and*

standardisation) are perceived, especially by those teaching accredited/professional courses, as a significant barrier."

- *"The processes involved are not necessarily problematic and could be easily managed to make their use positive. However, the information provided was/is not always clear." This suggests that, with proper planning time and resources, alternative assessment could be improved, but that they currently fall short of the traditional exam in this department."*

Building on this, staff were asked about the effects *future* diverse assessment could have on student performance.

'What impact do you think that the introduction of more diverse modes of assessment would have on your students' overall academic performance or degree outcomes?'

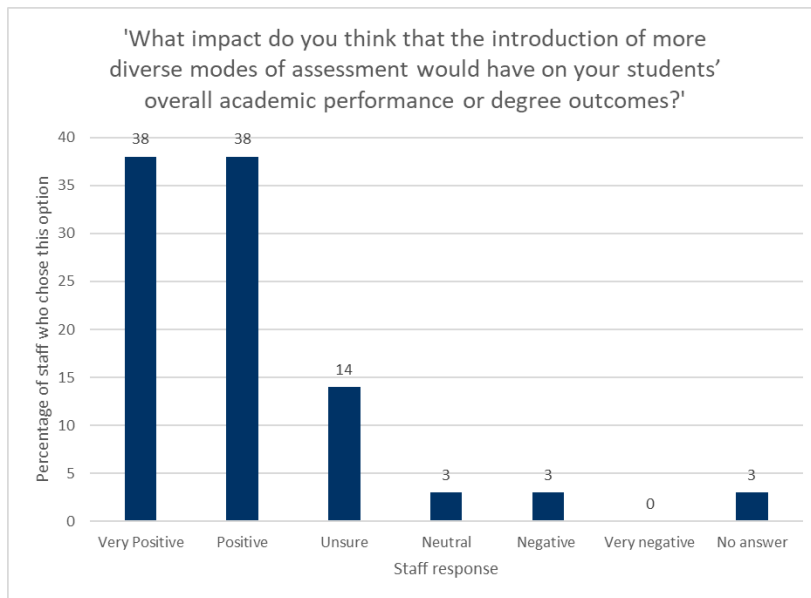| Staff response	Percentage
Very Positive	38
Positive	38
Unsure	14
Neutral	3
Negative	3
Very negative	0
No answer	3

Figure 7: The overwhelmingly impact staff predict diverse assessment modes could have academically for students.

Despite any issues staff had with the specific, pandemic-induced alternative assessments, they broadly do believe that diversified assessment could have a positive impact on academic performance. What about mental health?

What impact do you think that the introduction of more diverse modes of assessment, along with clear instructions and marking expectations, would have on your students' mental health? Select an option

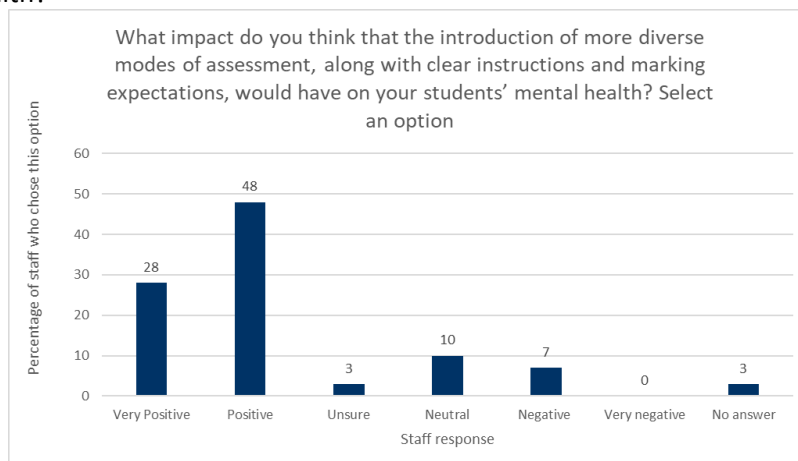| Staff response	Percentage
Very Positive	28
Positive	48
Unsure	3
Neutral	10
Negative	7
Very negative	0
No answer	3

Figure 8: The staff opinion on the effect of assessment mode on student mental health. 76% of staff believe diverse assessments could improve student mental health.

These results mirror the Student Union report (see literature review). So, if diverse assessments are broadly considered potentially positive (if they are well planned etc.), what changes do staff wish to see?
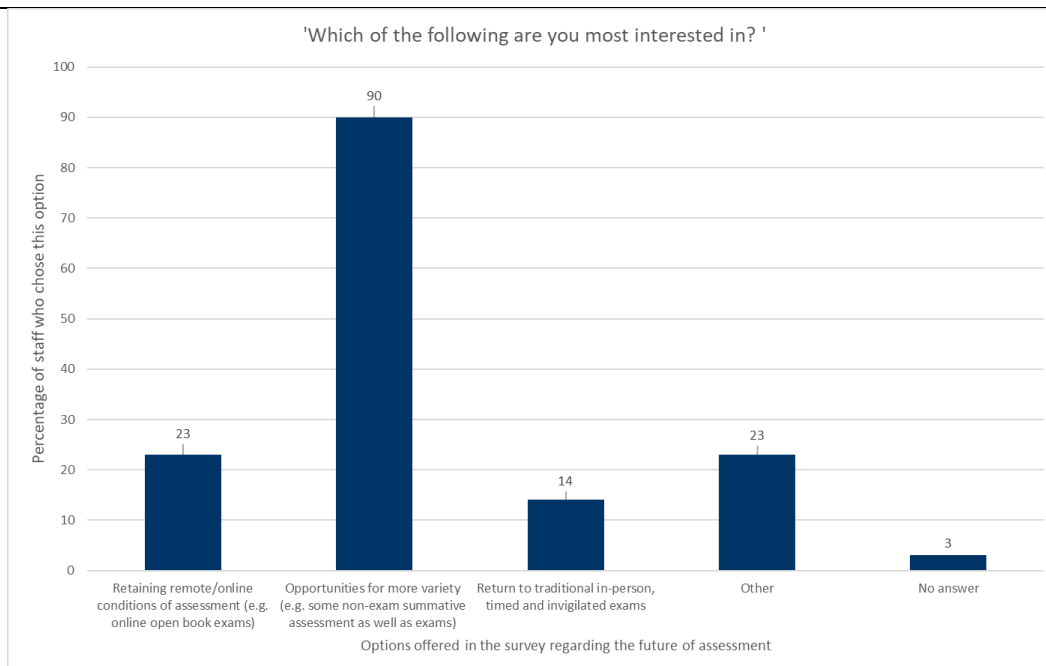
Figure 9: Staff preferences for assessment. Only 14% of staff would prefer a return to traditional exams. (It is noteworthy that 83% of those who selected 'other' in Figure 9 actually did so to access a box to allow them to explain the specific variety in mode and method they seek.)

The majority defined 'opportunities for more variety' as having multiple assessments (of different modes) in the course that all students do (to showcase relevant ability and skill set). But, one respondent defined it as "*being able to choose a mode of assessment which suits your personal circumstances*", which is an interesting concept (different students will thus do different assessments in a way they feel best showcases them).

Three wrote about method (rather than mode); one of whom focused on "*electronic delivery*" of "*timed, invigilated exams*" whilst the other two touted the benefits of open book and take home exams both on students and staff (less time spent marking exams of "*junior students*"). These may be beneficial alterations, buy may highlight a misunderstanding of what diversified assessment (commonly about modes not conditions) It suggests that it would be useful to have more university guidelines on what constitutes truly diverse assessment (different modes authentic to the skills and knowledge key to the field) rather than rebranding the traditional exam with different conditions to suit the "*diversification trend*".

Despite the staff being all from different fields and/or roles, when asked to exemplify what further 'variety' (i.e., diverse, authentic assessment) they would like to see, a relatively small pool of options emerged. They were:
- *"lab reports"*
- *"data handling / data analysis"*
- *"presentations"*
- *"journal article critique"*
- *"projects"*
- *"group work"*
- *"practical skills"*

This suggests that the university will need only to produce detailed guidelines and inter-departmental training on a small number of assessment modes.

Focusing on students with declared mental health disabilities

The APP PAR Project Cycle 1 report, internal work of the CCTL, and the Student Union report show that there is an awarding gap for students with declared mental health difficulties, and the gap narrowed during the pandemic. This indicates that the gap is, in part, related to assessment inclusivity. Staff were thus asked whether they believe there is a correlation between the two.
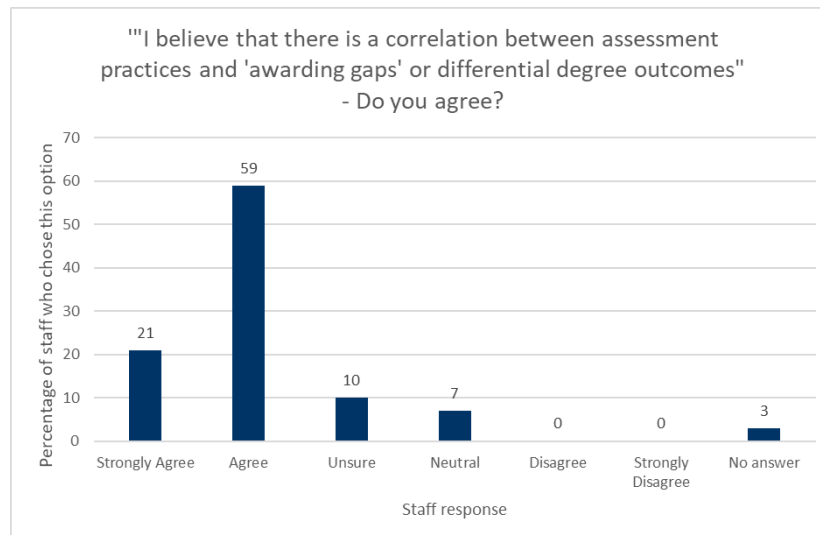

Figure 10: This shows that staff do believe that assessment and awarding gap are in some way linked.

Given this, do staff believe that traditional exams or diverse assessment would be more inclusive (help to close the awarding gap)?
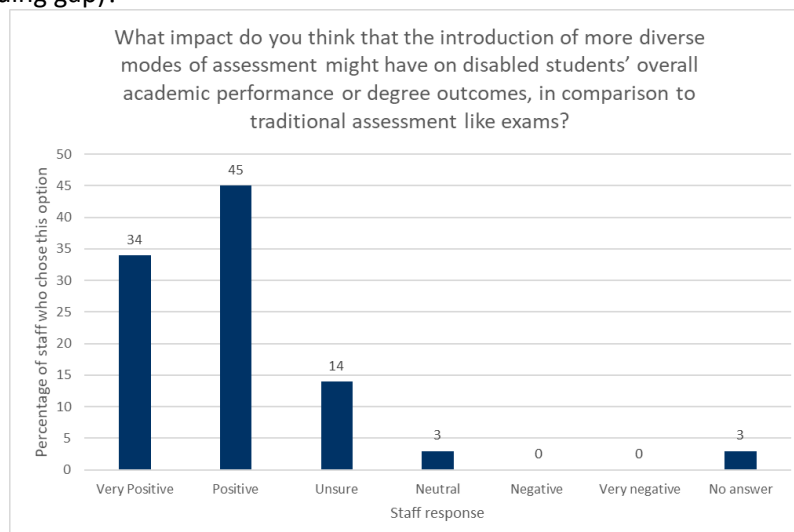

Figure 11: This shows that 79% of staff believe diversified assessment modes will improve the performance of disabled students (i.e., traditional exams are disadvantageous), and none of the other staff disagreed.

The staff perspective on assessment and awarding gaps surrounding gender and Black British students was also covered in the survey, but is beyond the scope of this report.

Staff - the crux of successful teaching and assessment
The authors' overall impression of staff perspectives regarding diverse assessment was 'cautiously optimistic'. Many staff did see potential advantages to students both overall, and specifically for disabled students. But, many also cited caveats epitomised by the comment "*The devil's in the detail*!". If diverse - indeed any - assessment is to be utilised then it needs to be right for the course. Like all

assessments, diverse assessments need to be aligned to teaching and Intended Learning Outcomes. Any changes to assessment also need to be supported by training and sufficient staffing levels to mark and invigilate it. Staff welfare is important.

Staff were also asked for their final comments, which included:
- *"Need to think about staffing levels…"*
- *"Like many interventions, change can be done well or badly. It is hard to predict the impact without knowing the exact suggestions."*
- *"I think having an assessment system that adapts to the students' (mental health) needs and best prepares them to their future careers is far more important than sticking to tradition, whatever the reason might be."*
- *"For me, as we know that the 'standard' mode of assessment disadvantages disabled students and students from other protected characteristic groups we need to move from a system where we try and remove the barriers we have designed into our assessment modes, by designing them out in the first place, and offering students choice (as what works for one student might not work for another for a whole range of reasons).*
This mirrors a move from the medical model of disability, to the social model approach (i.e. removing barriers and recognising that the 'problem' is not with the student but with the context they find themselves in) to a more affirmative model approach where we recognise and anticipate difficulties some groups of students may face and use the principles of Universal Design for Learning to allow multiple means of engagement, representation and expression (assessment)."
- *"... I really believe that traditional exams are out of date and disadvantage students with mental health conditions, from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds, students with care responsibilities, those with additional support needs, impairment, or disability, and those whose learning styles are not accommodated by a 2-3 hour exam. In line with other UK universities - for [my subject]... traditional exams are not best practice."* However, they go on to also state that some traditional exam components are worth keeping (in conjunction with other modes of assessment).
- *"If we don't [diversify assessment] then the University cannot really claim to be at the forefront of education."*

8.   Outcomes of research/implications for Cambridge practices and processes.

Staff know that traditional assessment has negative mental health impacts, and agree that diversified assessment would help to alleviate this. They overwhelmingly agree that it would be better for disabled students but also note that there are formats of diversified assessment that can more negatively affect disabled students (24hr exams, unfamiliar assessments sprung without warning) and further adjustments may still be needed. There is overall a recognition that traditional assessment privileges a certain skill set that may not be suited to the world of work, though other skill sets are valuable. Emphasis on choice and applicability to each department is clear.

9.   RECOMMENDED ACTION/FUTURE DIRECTION

Some action(s) the university/departments/colleges could take to follow up with these findings include:

- Staff to have clear ideas on diverse modes and conditions of assessment for their disciplines. To turn these into practice, a consultation on pedagogy and creating clear, usable mark schemes for diversified assessment with internal and outside experts. These findings should be shared with heads of faculties to be disseminated to their education committees.
- Compensate/count as teaching hours time taken developing diversified assessment - innovation should be supported, and will otherwise be discouraged or simply impossible on top of a high-pressure workload, particularly for ECRs.
- Consultation of students within each faculty on what forms of assessment they would find useful for employment-related skills, building on the wide Cambridge SU data.

Appendix: Staff Survey Questions