An 'early-intervention' metacognitive skills workshop for academically 'at-risk' students

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Background

Withdrawal from undergraduate study can cause emotional and financial distress and the drop-out rate is high among those who fail summative assessment in first year. Therefore it's important to identify those who are 'at-risk' of failing summative assessment and attempt to address any transitional issues that may have an impact on their studies. Using the Transit tool we can successfully identify students who are 'at-risk' of academic failure *before* they sit summative assessments. However, it is not clear how to help these students. This workshop is an attempt to address and overcome transitional issues in first-year.
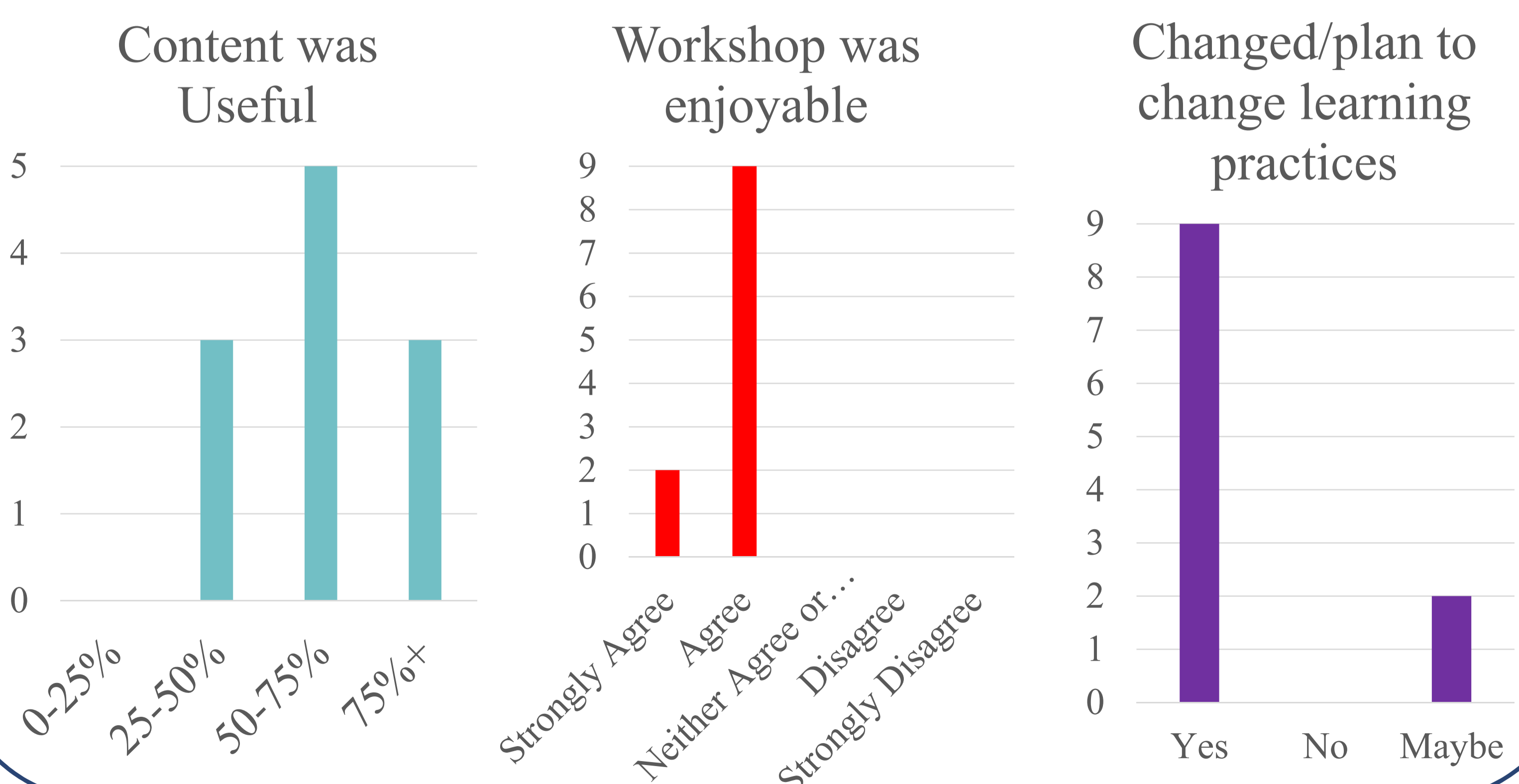

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Methods

We identified the 20 most 'at-risk' students from Maths, Medicine and Veterinary Sciences and invited them to a two-hour near-peer led workshop 4 to 12 weeks before exams, depending on the school. For the workshop we:

- Developed content with near-peer tutors focussing on developing metacognitive skills to improve learning.
- Conducted a systematic review of literature pertaining to remediation students 'at-risk' of academic failure.

Following the workshop, participants were asked to complete an evaluation and were invited to a follow-up interview.

Results

- All students found the workshop enjoyable and many changed their study habits as a result of attending
- Attendees felt the project had been helpful and were not distressed by being identified as 'at-risk'
- No significant differences were observed in immediate summative performance of attendees vs. non-attendees
- Subsequent analysis of later exam performance suggests no long-term improvement, however several of the students who failed the first diet of exams have withdrawn from their courses.

Conclusions & Take-home Messages

- Identifying students who are 'at-risk' can be done sensitively
- Addressing metacognitive skill development alone does not seem to have significantly improved performance
- There is still work to be done to identify 'at-risk' students' needs and how to address them.
- The workshop and training materials/guidance notes will be available on a free-to-use basis at http://sefce.net/en-gb/page/transit

References

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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