



Teaching Large Classes in History

Prof. Jamie Wood

School of History and Heritage

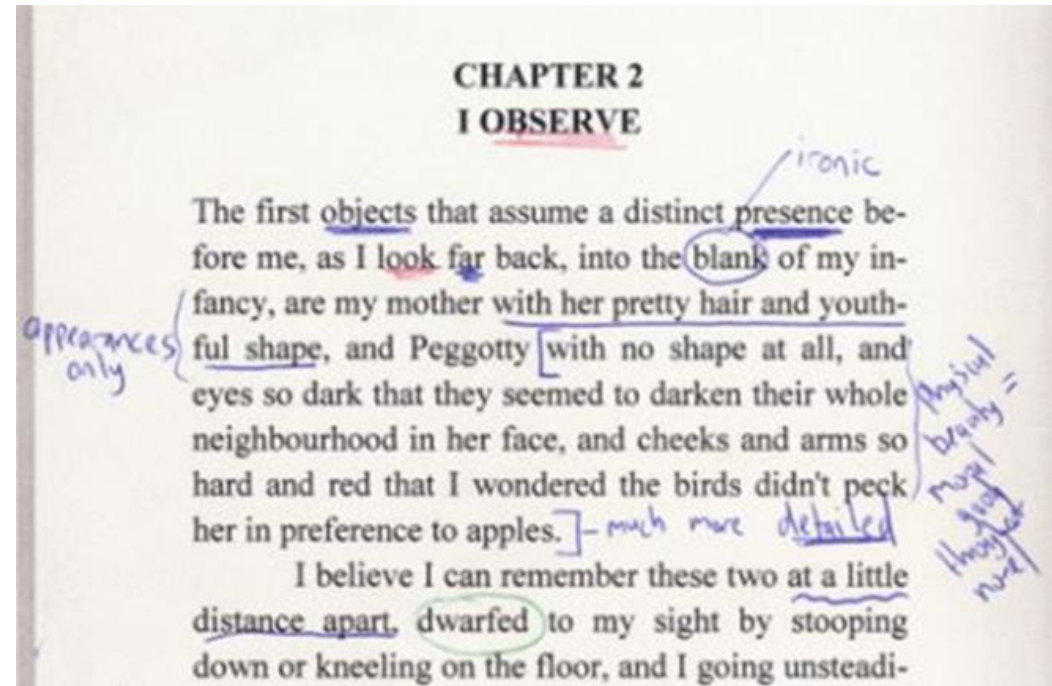
University of Lincoln



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Today

- Context at Lincoln
- Approaches
 - Asking questions
 - Worksheets
 - Making Digital History
 - Active Online Reading
 - Peer Mentoring
- Pedagogies:
 - Being active
 - Collaborating
 - Digital methods and platforms



There is no such thing as a 'digital native'

**You're a young person,
YOU will know everything
about everything!**

... yes ...

**Yes! You are born
a technical genius!**

**Not ALL young people
are technically confident,
some need support**

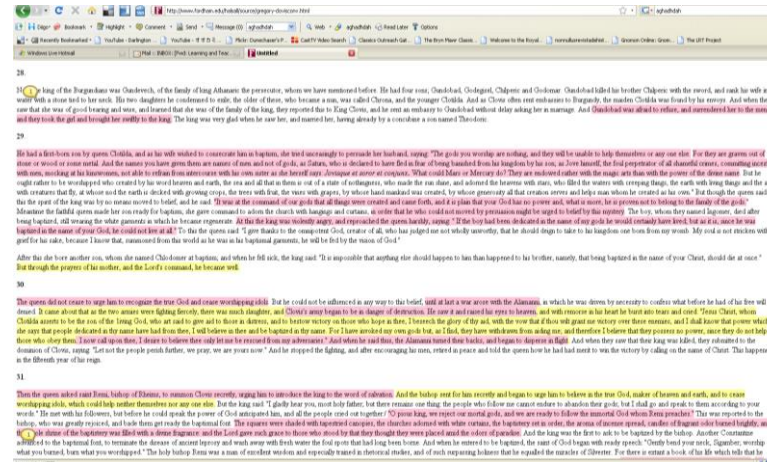
Context

- 2013-14: 70 UG historians
- 2016-18: 180-200+ students
- Now: 120-140 students
- Diversification of programmes
- Parity of student (and staff) experience
- New staff
- Supporting associate lecturers (PhD students/ ECRs)



Social bookmarking and questioning (2008-2009)

- L1 History students at Sheffield
- Finding and annotating readings
- Asking questions
- Improved research skills
- Posing questions and:
 - **Engaging with sources:** 'it makes you think about what you're reading a lot more, and opens up the area of reading to different paths of thought.'
 - **Learning from others:** 'I've found being able to see other people's questions helpful, as it brings up new points that I might not have previously thought about.'



to belief by this mystery. The boy, whom they named Ingomer, died after being baptized, still wearing the white garments in which he became regenerate. At this the king was violently angry, and reproached the queen harshly, saying: "If the boy had been dedicated in the name of my gods he would certainly have lived!" To this the queen said: "I give thanks to the one who should deign to take to his kingdom one born from the dead, summoned from this world as he was in his baptism."

After this she bore another son, whom she named Clovis. Nothing else should happen to him than happened at once." But through the prayers of his mother, and

30.

The queen did not cease to urge him to recognize the

way to this belief, until at last a war arose with the Alamanni, in which he was driven by necessity to confess what before he had of his own will decided. He was about that time the most powerful king of the Franks, and the most powerful king of the Alamanni.

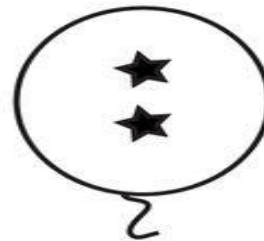
J. Wood, N. Taha and A. Cox, Social Bookmarking Pedagogies in Higher Education: A Comparative Study, *International Journal of Information Systems in the Service Sector*, 6.1 (2014), 24-36.

J. Wood, Helping students to become disciplinary researchers using questioning, social bookmarking and inquiry-based learning, *Practice and Evidence of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 6.1 (2011) [online].

Worksheets (2013-present)

- Guiding questions with sources (or extracts) and other tasks
- Preparation for class
- Adjusted by level:
 - more guidance and shorter sources at L1
 - scaffolding stripped away at L2 and above
- Preparatory, then work through in class

Count the stars on each balloon.
Match with the correct number.



- Standardises student experience
- Shifted online during pandemic
- Depends on the nature of the questions
- Students need opportunities to feed back
- Students like reading the thoughts of others (and sharing their own, a bit less)
- Replication of elements of the seminar environment

6

4

5

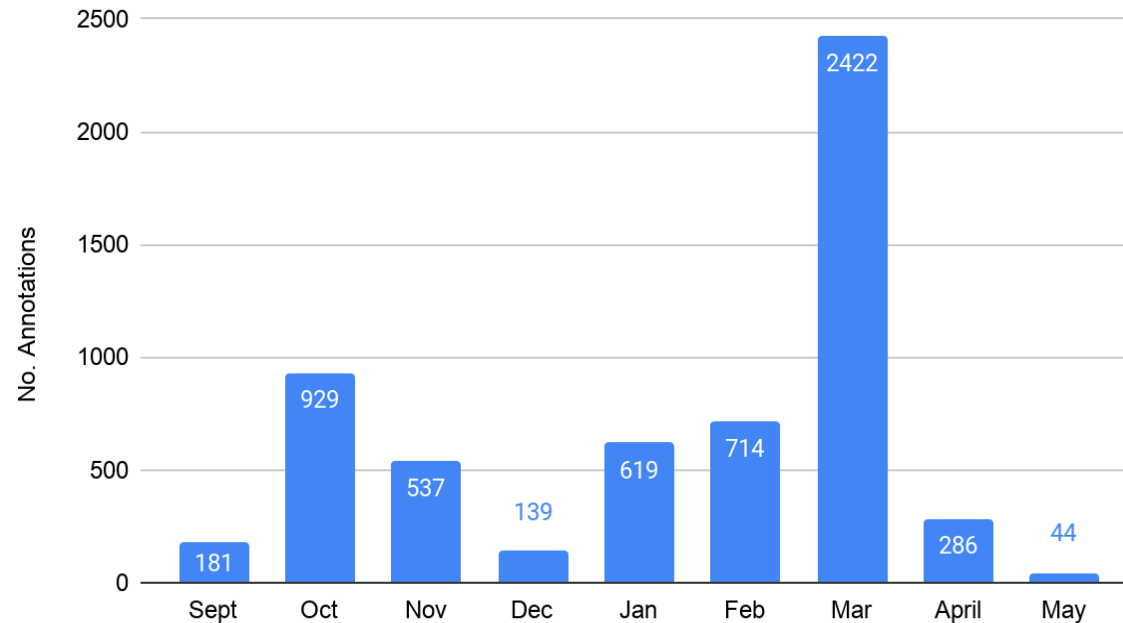
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3

Online worksheets the first year (2020-present)

93% felt that annotation had helped their learning

Number of Student Annotations



- **Accessibility, interaction and engagement:** ‘we could still access sources and comment directly on them and our seminar leader replied. This allowed us to have a more detailed discussion and it gave an opportunity for people who are less inclined to speak in front of others to get engaged with the sources more thoroughly’
- **Understanding and confidence through reading other’s thoughts:** ‘By viewing what others had already written it allowed me to grasp the work quicker and made me feel more confident in my answers.’
- **Accessibility, building a knowledge bank together:** ‘It was strange to change at first but I liked the different approach to learning and being able to go back to points other people made as well because you can’t always get everything down in a seminar. It affected my learning in a positive way.’
- **Interaction (with peers and tutors), understanding together:** ‘I feel like I have learnt other people’s views and ways of understanding the text, which allow you to see a different thought process. It is also really nice to get individual feedback, so you know if you are on the right track and where to expand from that.’

Making Digital History (2013-16)

The approach

- Online tool to make digital 'objects' to share (using a tool called Xerte)
- Level 1, 2 and MA
- Individual and group projects
- Compulsory and optional use
- All were assessed

Challenges

- Using a new technology
- Offline problems transferred online:
 - Writing, presentation, groupwork
- Digital literacies?

The Medieval Mediterranean

- Core L1 module
- Numbers of students
 - 2013-14: ca. 100
 - 2014-15: ca. 130
- Work in groups of 3-5 to produce a Xerte object that teaches an audience (of their choosing) about a primary source we looked at in class

Competencies	2013-14 (n = 81)	2014-15 (n = 90)
Team working	67	77
Ability to find and use primary and secondary sources	60	67
Knowledge of the subject	59	61
Ability to present information in a concise and interesting way	57	53
Ability to use the Internet for research	33	42

Yes maybe, I could do a lot more than I expected

Do you think your creativity developed as a result of developing the artefact?

It has allowed me to think in other formats than just an essay and made me think more about presentation

Not really, I think the program was just complicated and wasn't fair that it was new and part of the assessment. Don't think that it was just me that felt this

Thinking outside the box more. Making more of an effort to satisfy the audience's needs in creative/ interesting/ interactive ways

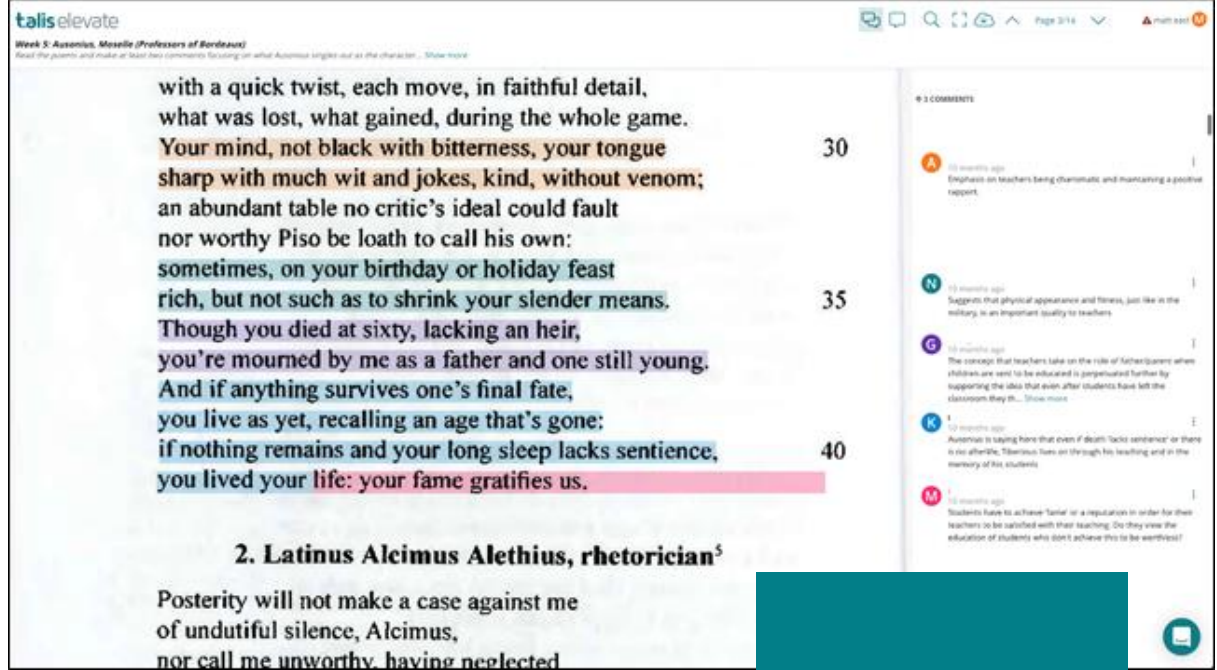
Yes: 11

Somewhat: 11

No: 2

Active Online Reading (2018-present)

- L3 UG module
- Students required to post 2-3 online comments on weekly reading(s) in the Talis Elevate platform
 - Points of interest
 - Questions
 - How materials (and weeks) inter-relate
- Informed/ structured seminars
- Knowledge bank



The screenshot displays the Talis Elevate interface. The main text is a Latin passage with several lines highlighted in different colors (orange, blue, green, pink). To the right of the text are numerical scores: 30, 35, and 40. A sidebar on the right shows a list of comments from other users, each with a profile picture and a timestamp. Below the main text, there is a section titled '2. Latinus Alcimus Alethius, rhetorician⁵' followed by a paragraph of Latin text. At the bottom right, there is a large teal square with the word 'talis' in white lowercase letters.

J. Wood, M. East and H. Williard, Collaborative Annotation to Support Students' Online Reading Skills, in: S. Hrastinski, ed., *Designing Courses with Digital Technologies: Insights and Examples from History Education* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 66-71.

J. Wood, M. East and L. Warriner-Wood, Reading online during lockdown: insights from History and Heritage, in M. G. Jamil and D. Morley, eds., *Agile Learning Environments amid Disruption: Evaluating Academic innovations in Higher Education during Covid-19* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2021).

CLASSICS
Illustrated
JUNIOR

No. 508

25¢

Goldilocks

AND THE THREE BEARS



Types of annotation/ reading/ learning

Most common types of comments

Commentary (= “this says x”)

Analysis (= “this implies or means y”)

Posing questions (asking for clarification/ opening out from text)

Discussion, indirect (clustering comments dealing with similar topics)

Making connections (e.g. mentioning other readings)

<https://makingdigitalhistory.co.uk/read/active-online-reading/>

- Kalir, J., Morales, E., Fleerackers, A. and Alperin, J., When I saw my peers annotating’, *Information and Learning Sciences* 121 (2020), 207-230.
- See also: Bostock, 2021 for a summary.

Active online reading survey

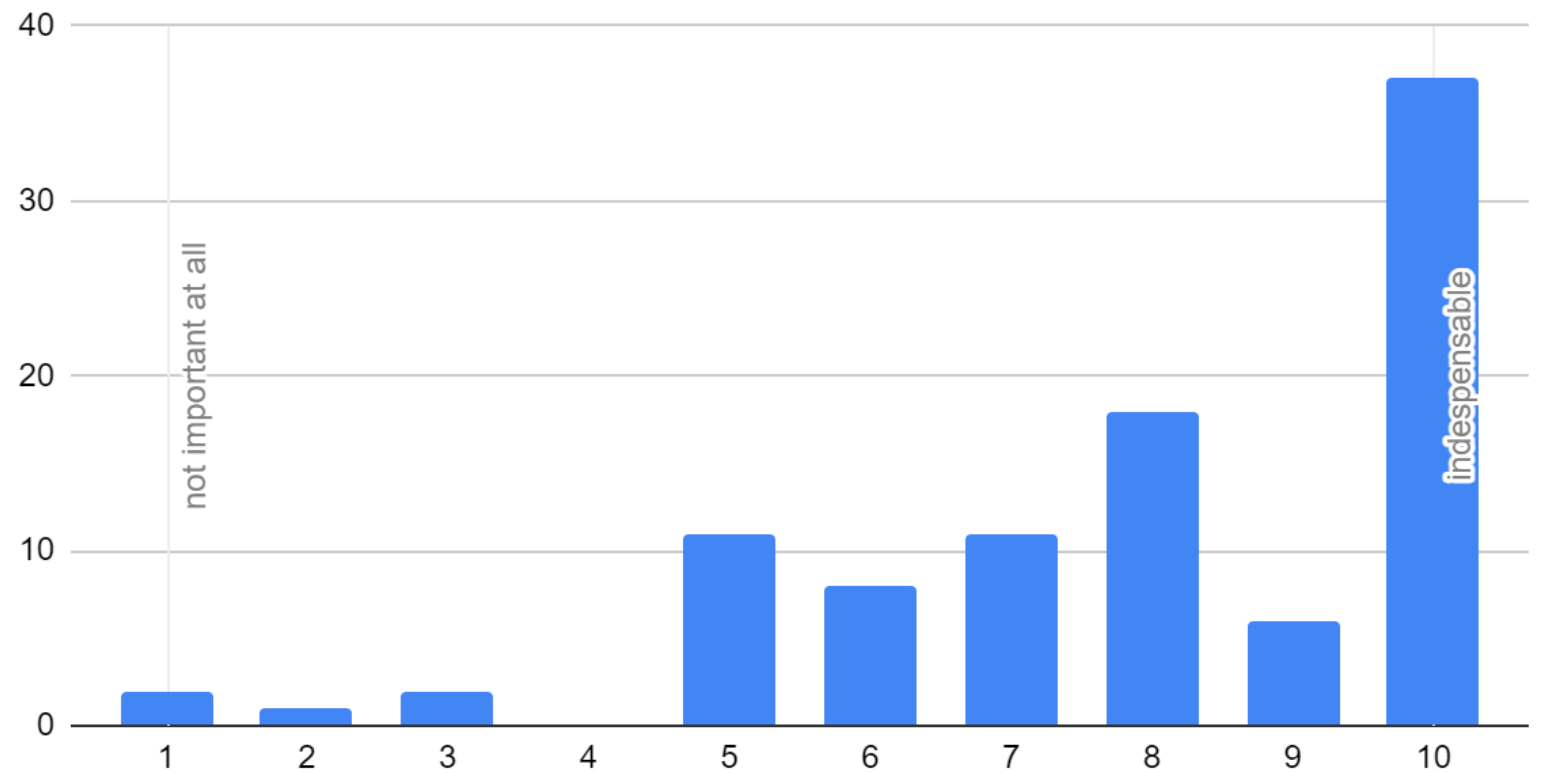
(November 2021-January 2022)

- Student survey: 442 responses
 - 15% self-identified as having a disability that affects their ability to read
- Staff survey: 98 responses
- 10 countries
- 50+ institutions

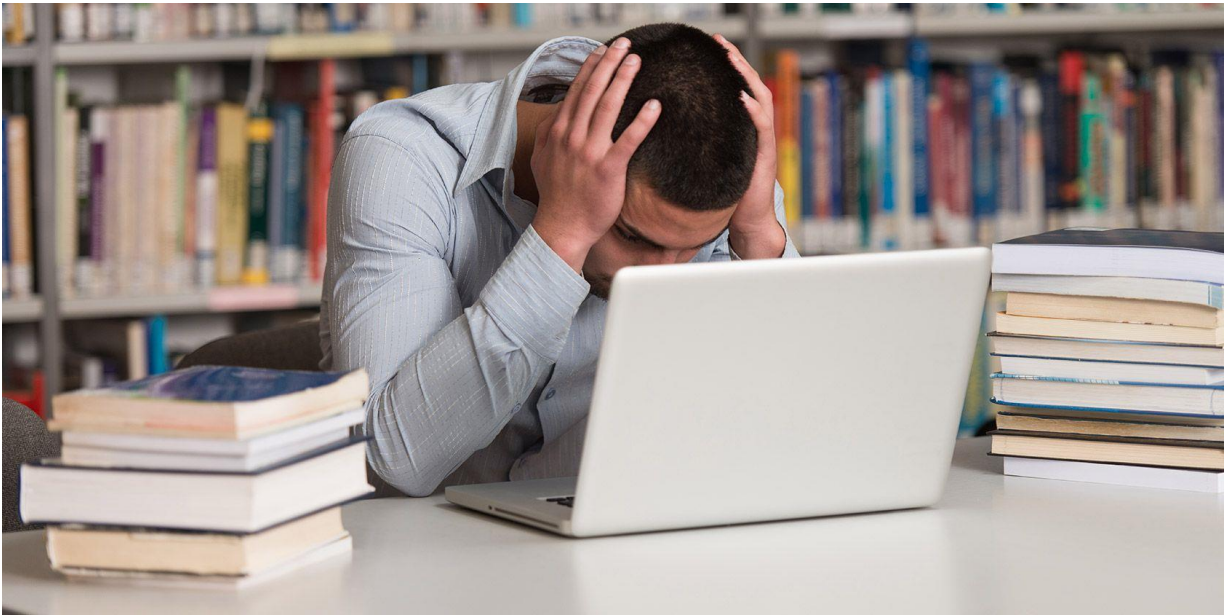
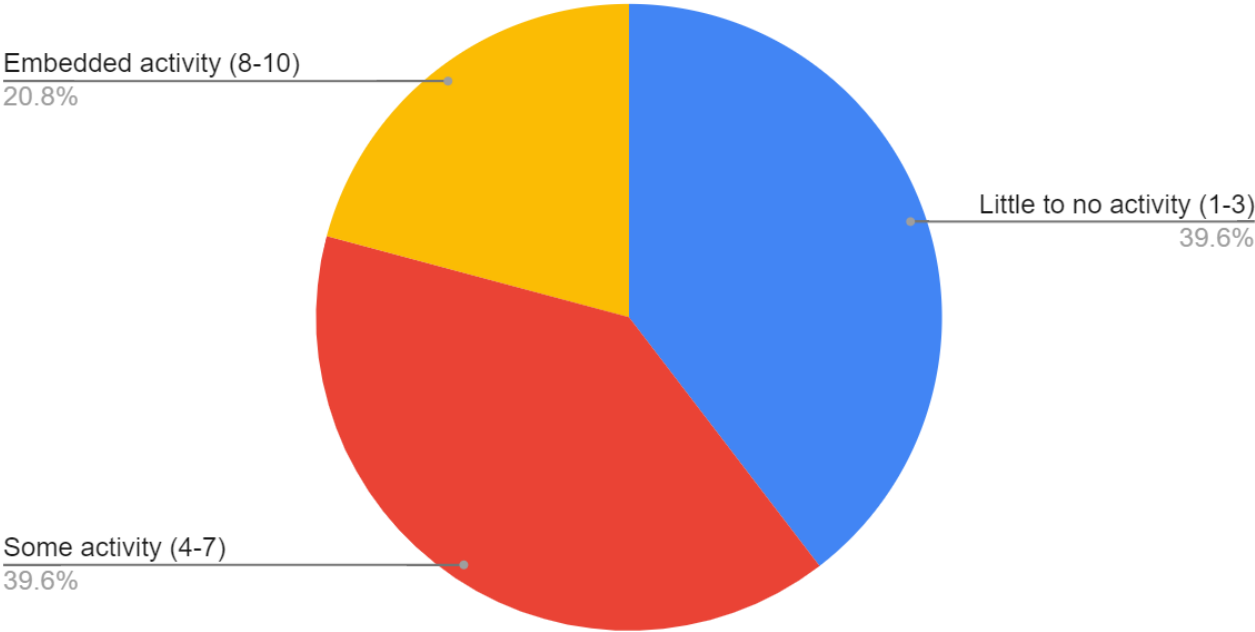




How important is online reading to students' learning in your discipline?



In general, how much attention do you devote in your own modules to developing students' ability to read online?



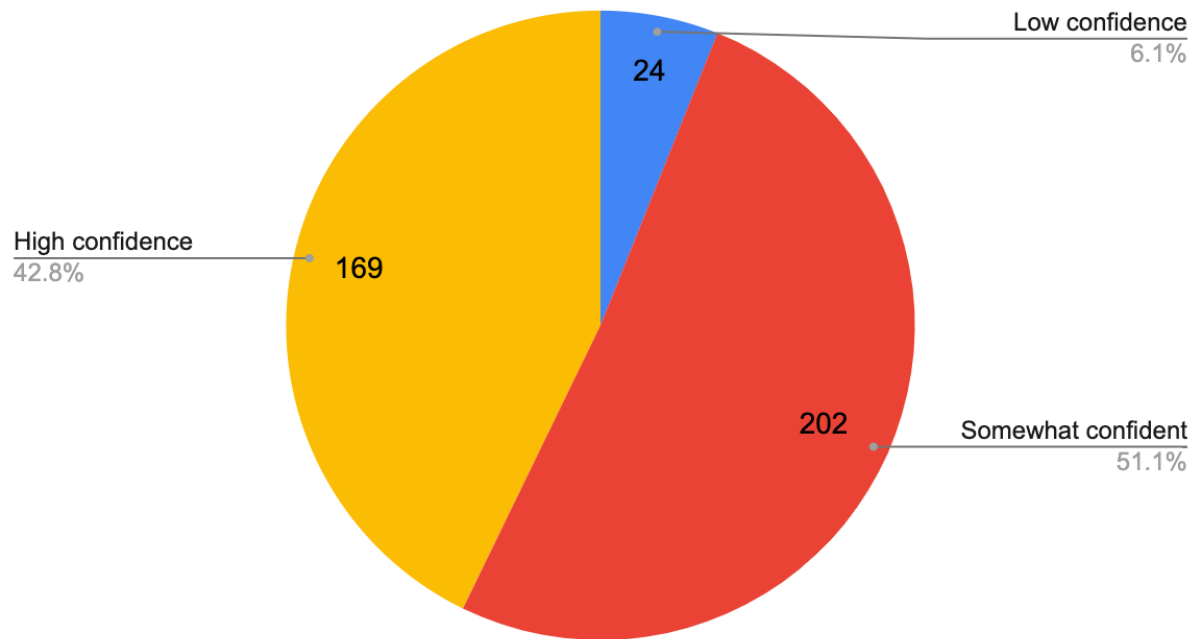
*'It's simply their responsibility as students. **It's entirely up to them,** frankly. Their marks will reflect their reading.'* (History, UK)

*'I outline the set reading for the following week at the end of the seminar, and email again midway through the week to remind them. **For broader, curiosity-driven reading outside of summative assessments, I confess I don't see much evidence.**'* (Media, UK)

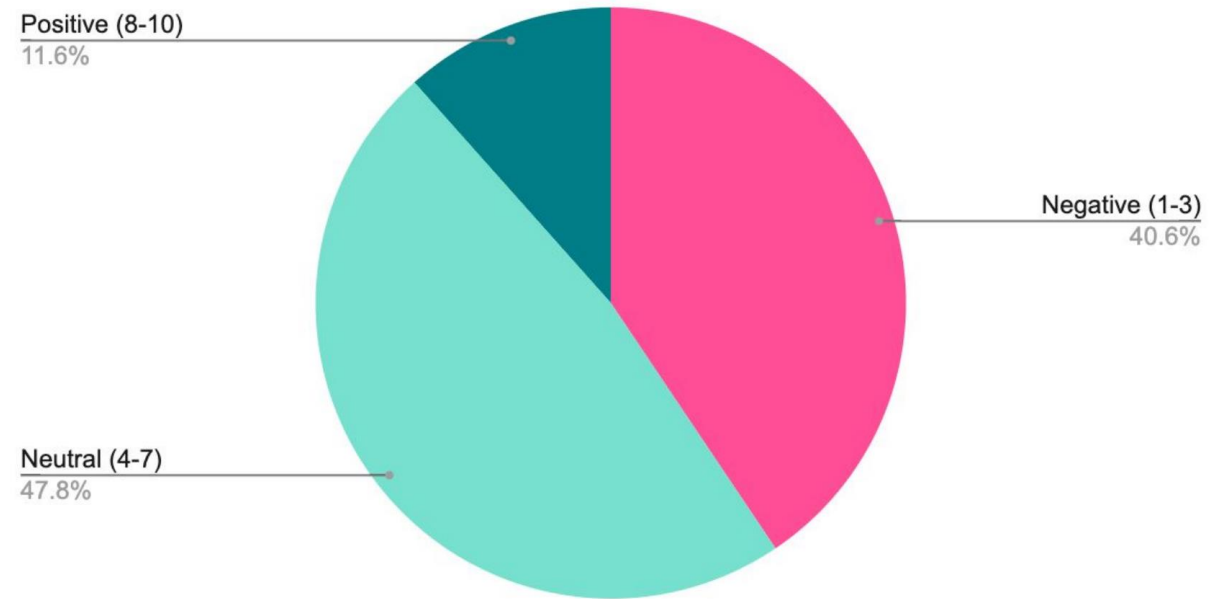
*'Endless exhortation that they need to do independent reading to get a First, descriptions of the assessment criteria showing how importantly reading is, etc. This motivates maybe a third of the class. Another third to a half have decided they are happy with whatever grade they will get with minimal reading as we do not see their reading practices change from year to year. **The remaining third feel perpetually overwhelmed and often disengage. Without transitioning to a non-reading subject, I don't know what we can do.**'* (History, unknown)

Student vs. staff ratings of skills

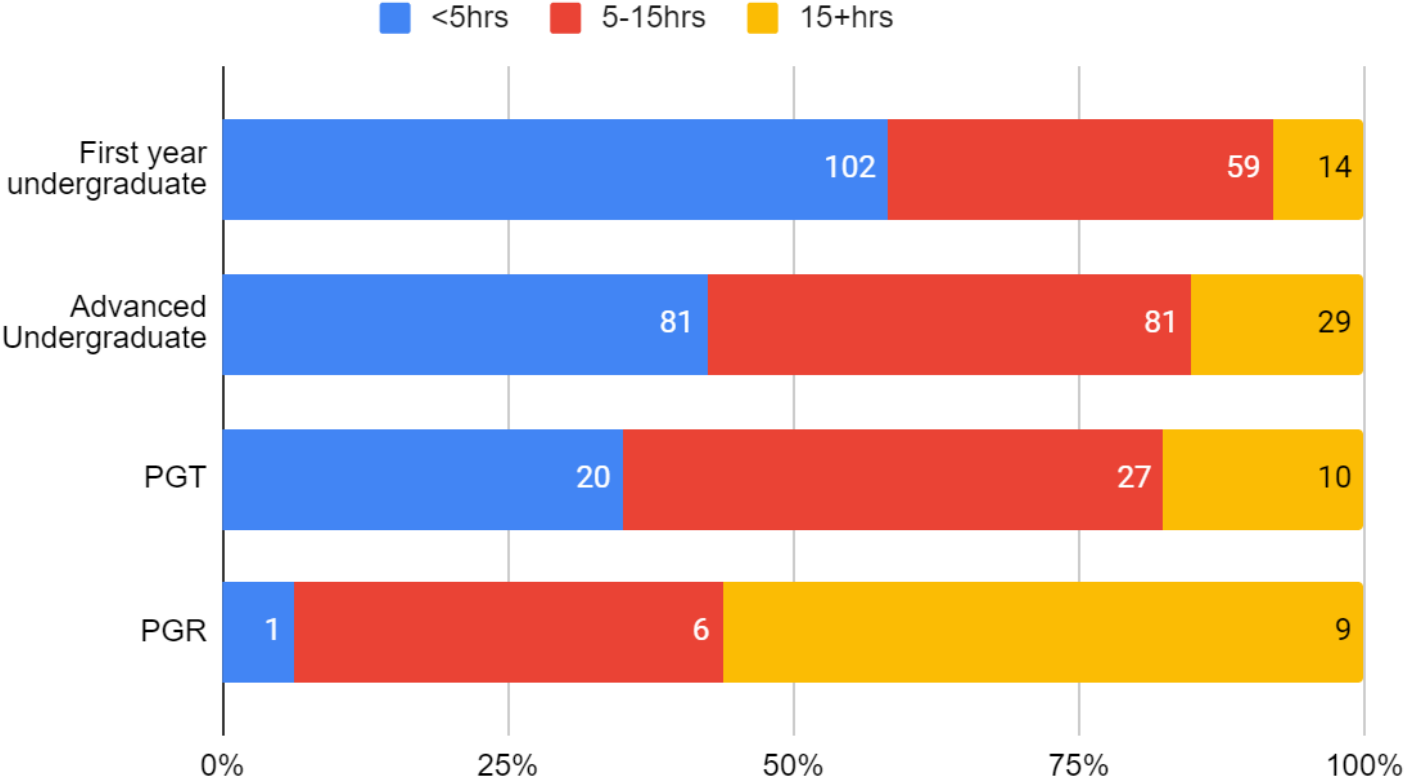
Student confidence in reading for studies (online and offline)



Staff ratings of students' academic reading (online and offline)



How much time do you spend reading a week for your studies?



Reading = note-taking

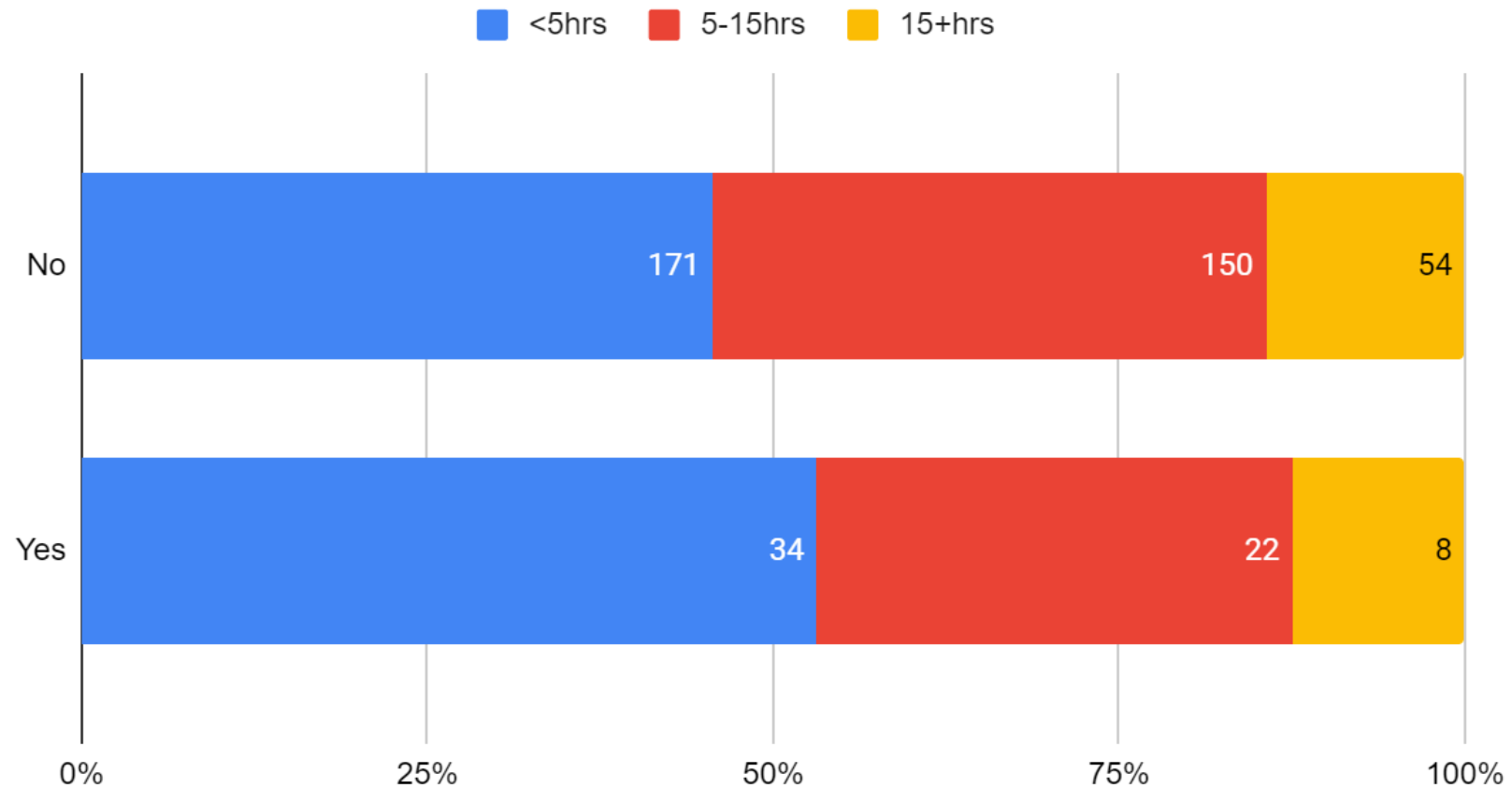
Students use technology to access texts, whether or not reading takes place online or offline

Many students mention preferring hard copy, struggling with eye strain

Many mention reading while travelling

By disability

How much time do you spend reading (by disability y/n)



B

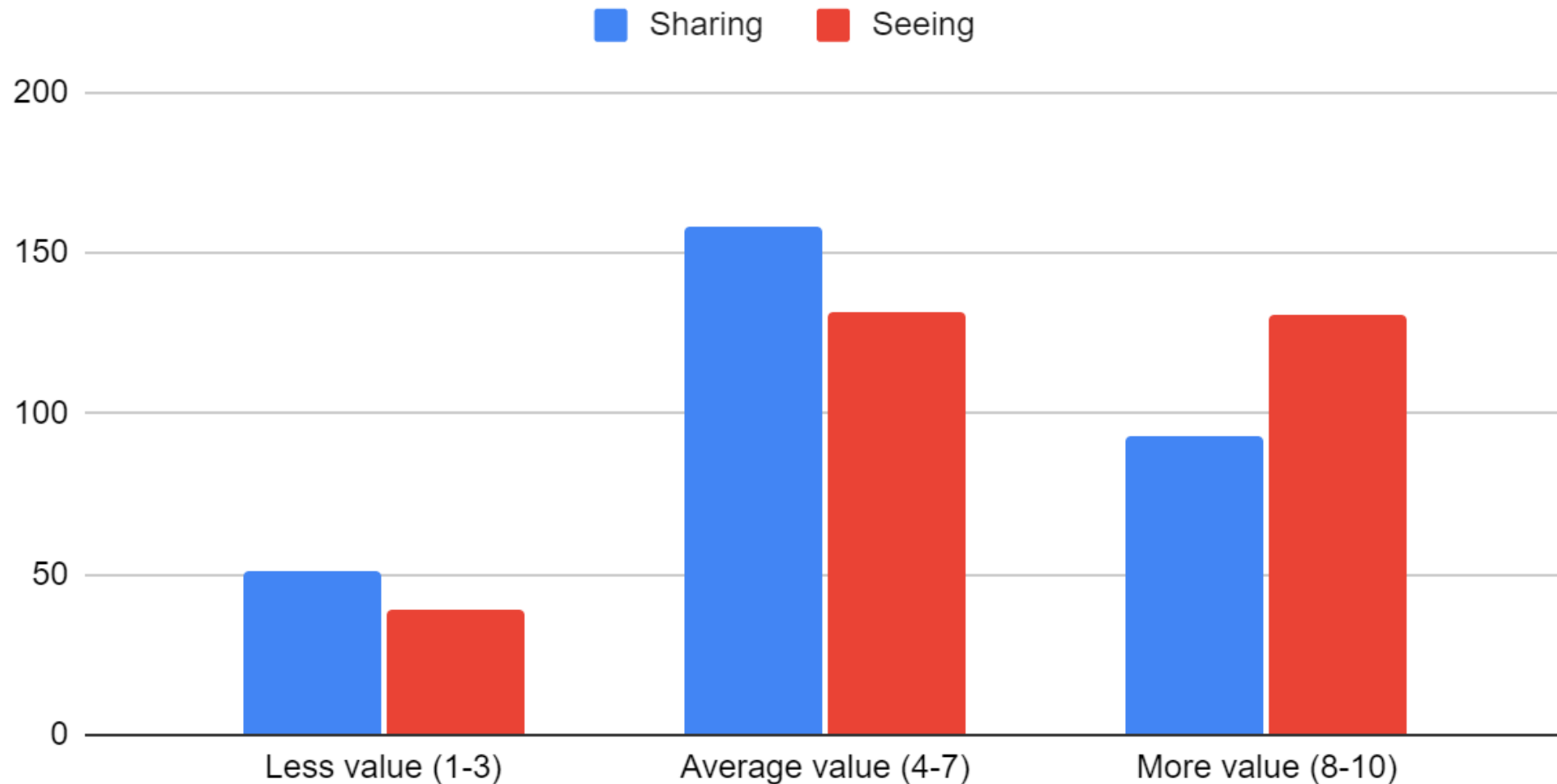
'I think it would have been very helpful if there was a programme or module designed to help us with our own reading practices in the first year, because without that help, we often develop bad and unhealthy reading habits that lead to frustration and dissatisfaction with the practice of learning.'

N. R.

☐ ON ☐ OFF

NORMAL POSITION

How useful is it to share your thoughts about online reading with your fellow students? How useful is it to hear or see what your fellow students think about what they have read online?



Usefulness of sharing thoughts on readings and seeing those of others (L1 responses)

- Collaborative reading a significant aid to understanding
- Discussion improves confidence, making students feel 'validated and verified' by peers
- Diversity of opinion deepens understanding and engagement with reading: *'forces me to evaluate my opinions'*
- Engagement with peers enables sharing and development of skills
- Social benefits



Peer mentoring

- PASS scheme: Peer Assisted Student Support
 - 2016-present
 - L2 and L3 students facilitate sessions for L1 students
 - Student coordinators
 - Volunteer PASS leaders
 - Optional: not all students engage
 - Started in History, but now in Philosophy, Conservation and Classical Studies
- Different models according to discipline
 - Shifted online during the pandemic
 - *Not* about students 'teaching' one another – collective sharing of experiences and problem-solving
 - 'Attendance'
 - Timetabled, with VLE site
 - Depends on the topic
 - PASS coordinators/ leaders get A LOT out of it

Summing up

- Pedagogy comes first, not technology
- Designing in from the start, rather than tacking on
- Power of collaboration
 - Sharing the load
 - Sharing and thinking
 - Learning
 - Socialisation
- Assessment
- Building skills and knowledge from the ground up
- Subject knowledge
- Key (disciplinary) skills
 - Information literacy
 - Asking questions
 - Writing
 - Problem-solving/ creativity
 - Thinking

Thanks!

Twitter: [@woodjamie99](https://twitter.com/woodjamie99) and [@MakDigHist](https://twitter.com/MakDigHist)

Project website: <https://makingdigitalhistory.co.uk/>

Email: jwood@lincoln.ac.uk