Using Cadmus to Scaffold Higher Education Assessments

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Key research interests: Psychological predictors of achievement; Student motivation and engagement; Impact of social processes within the classroom

Session Overview

Consider the gap between academics' expectations and student reality

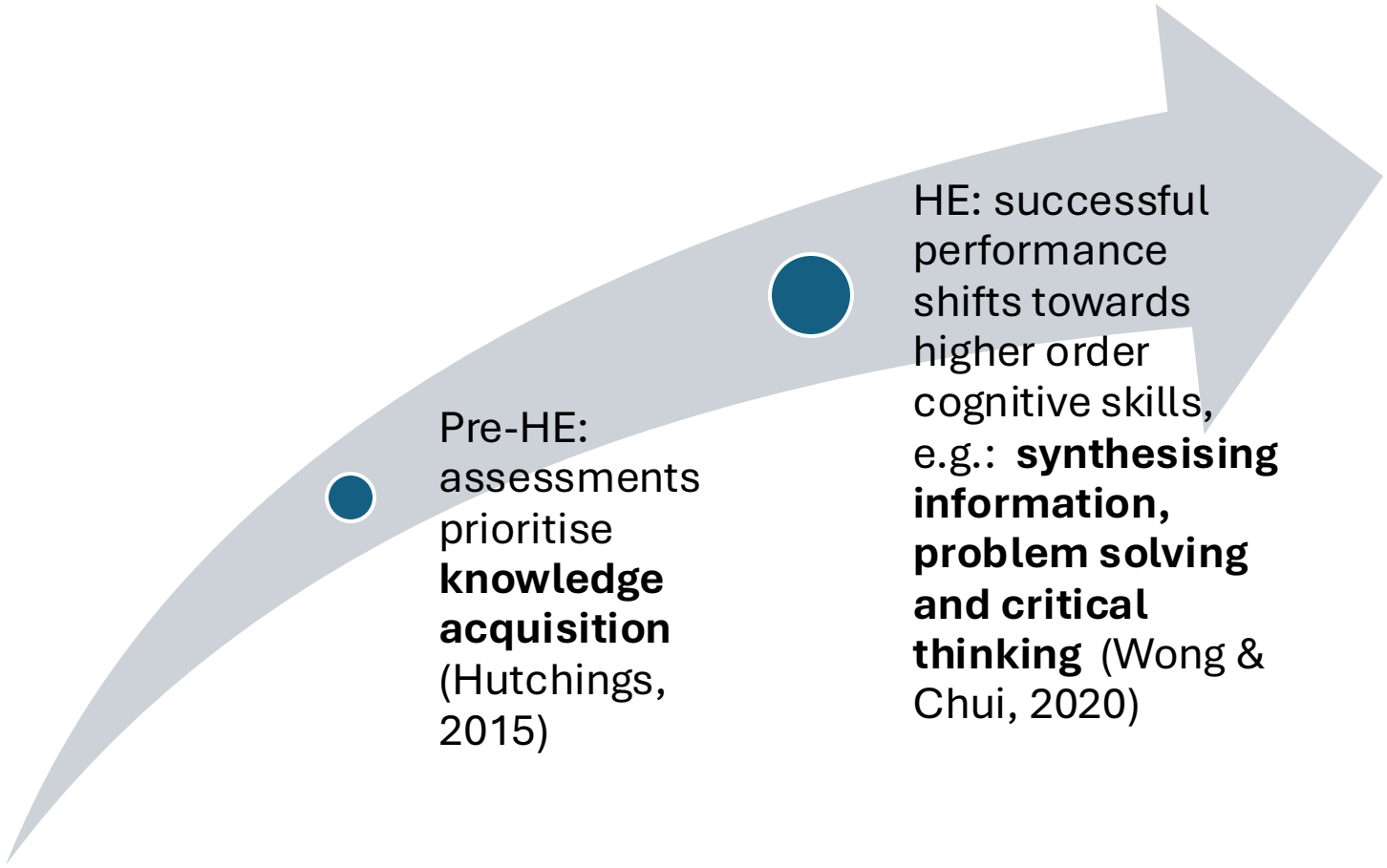
Identify how we can support students in the transition into HE learning and assessment

Outline how the 'check-list tool' in Cadmus can be a useful way to scaffold this

Present student feedback on Cadmus

Reflect on the Cadmus experience as an academic

Transition to HE: Academic Expectations



Students entering higher education face a transition in their studying and assessments experiences (Lowe & Cook, 2003)

Academics can develop 'tacit knowledge' in relation to these skills – viewing them as 'simply common sense' and 'obvious' – but for novice students, these processes can be opaque and difficult to understand (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020)

Promoting Success

For successful engagement in assessment-related activities, students need to feel:

Competent

- Understand what steps are required to complete assessments

Confident

- Feel assured in their ability to undertake these steps

Wilkinson, 2024

How can we support students in understanding how to develop and demonstrate these skills in their assessments?

General Practices

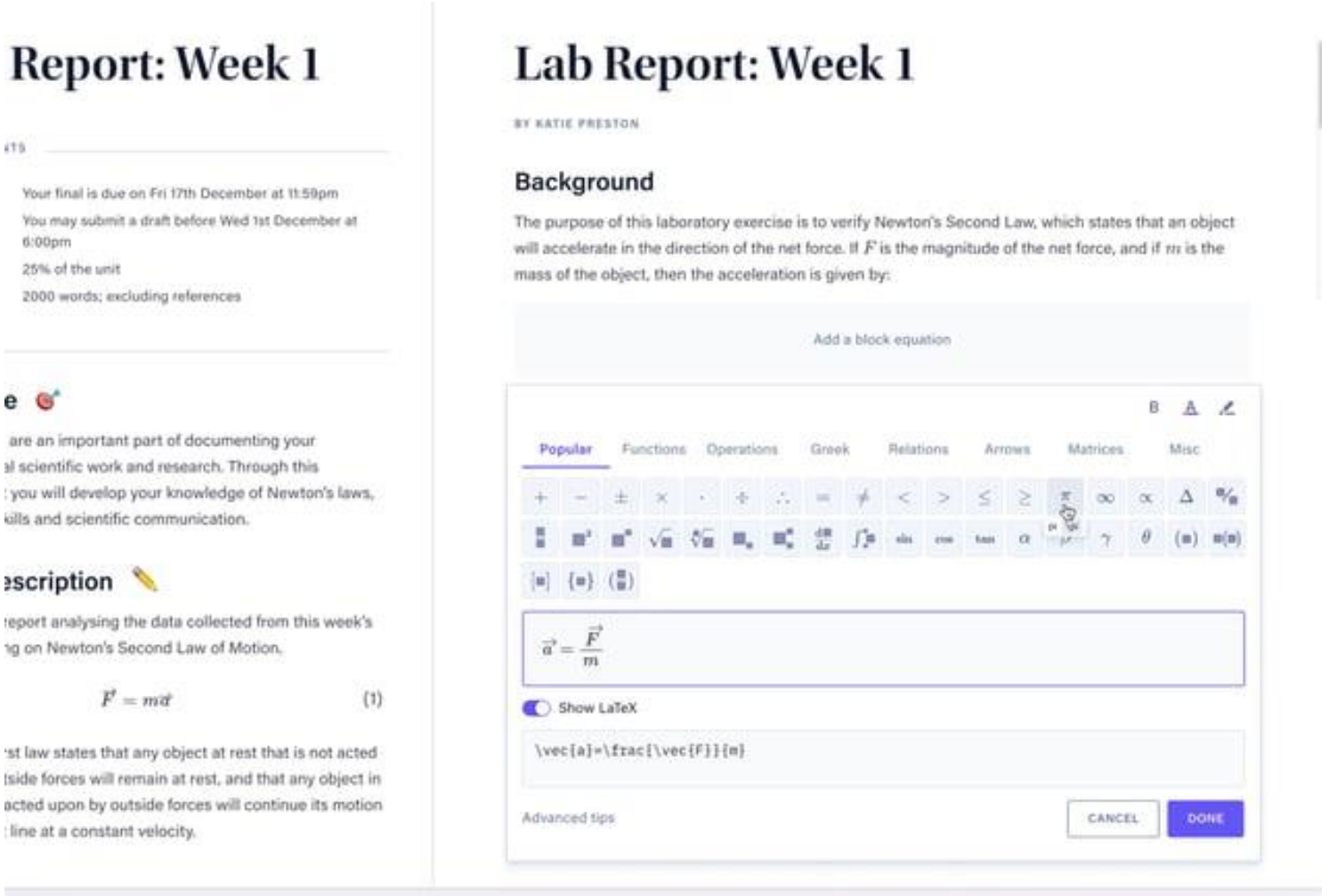
 Scaffolding learning	Offer guidance and support; Help students develop problem-solving skills; Encourage independent reflection and identification of gaps in understanding (Acosta-Gonzaga & Ramirez-Arellano, 2022; Stanier, 2015)
 Provide support and encouragement	Boosts students' confidence and motivation (Alcott, 2017; Pajeres, 1997)
 Boost student academic self –efficacy (beliefs about themselves as learners)	Provide constructive feedback; Give opportunity to practice skills; Challenge self-limiting beliefs (Bejtic, 2024; Schunk & Ertmer, 2000)
 Provide rationale for skill development	Emphasise *why* strategies are useful and *how* they will help students when it comes to their assessment (Wilkinson, 2024)

Cadmus Overview

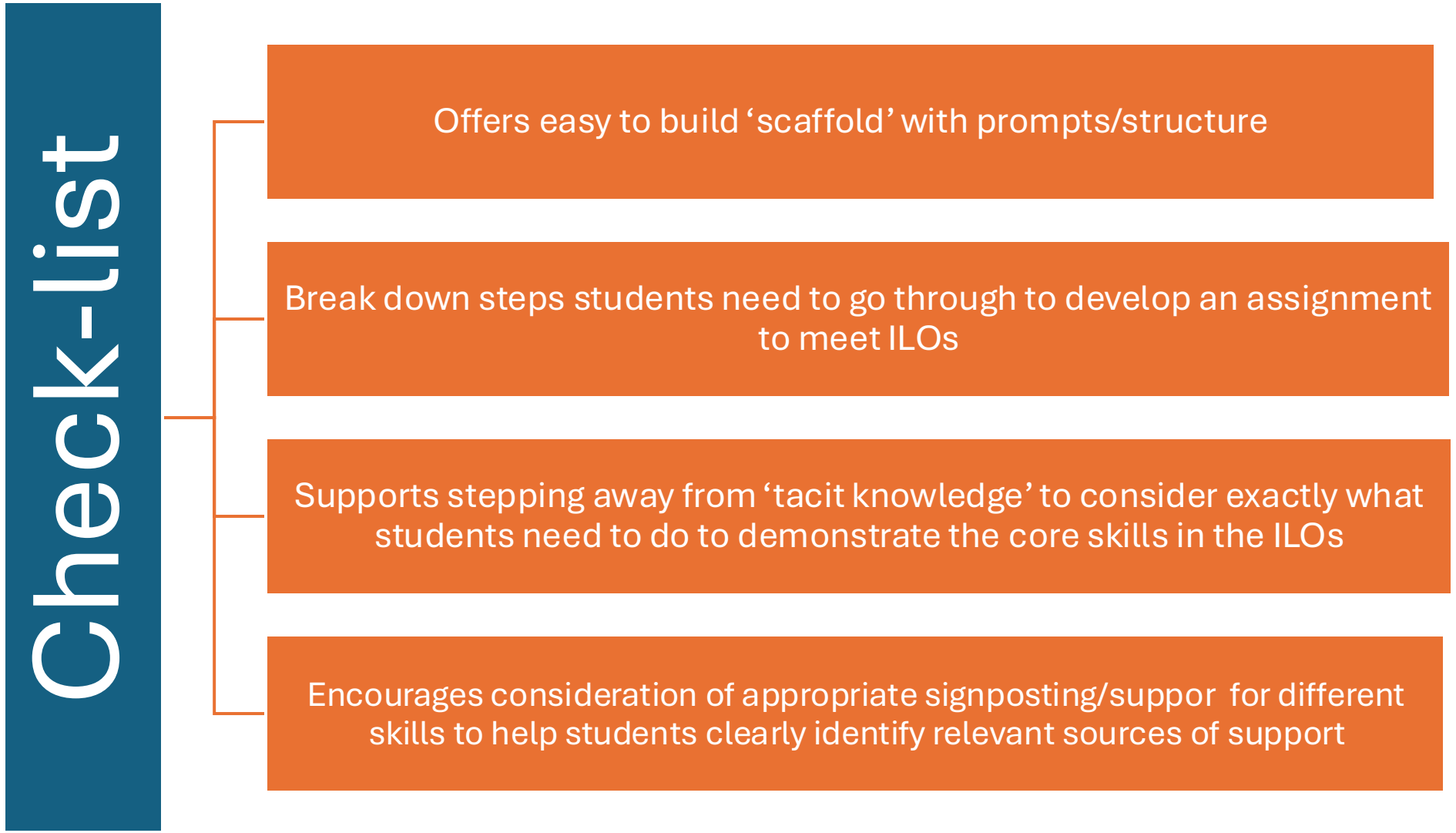
End-to-end online assessment workflow

‘Supportive and scaffolded assessment experience’

Integrates with VLE & Turnitin



Cadmus: Checklist Function



Cadmus Checklist Example

Year 1, Semester 2 Module: Development and Childhood
Assessment : optional format ‘advice for teachers’ on chosen topic

Checklist: Development and Childhood Assignment ✅

Copy + paste this checklist into the Notes section in Cadmus and tick off items as you complete them.

Step 1: Task Understanding

- [ ] Read the *Instructions* and *Checklist* carefully
- [ ] Attend Assignment Preparation Seminar (Week 7: Tuesday 18th March)
- [ ] Read the *Guide: Rubrics* (in Cadmus Manual) and then your *Marking Rubric*
- [ ] Analyse the assignment question
- [ ] Decide on which topic you wish to focus on
- [ ] Decide on which theory you wish to focus on (remember: it can help to be specific and narrow this down rather than trying to cover multiple theories for a given topic)

Step 2: Topic Research

- [ ] Read the *Library Search Tips* guide in Cadmus Manual
- [ ] Identify a set of potentially useful resources
- [ ] Survey, skim, and scan to find the relevant articles, and parts of articles

Step 3: Critical Reading

As you read resources, jot down notes considering the following ideas:

- [ ] What evidence is provided for the relevance of this theory in the educational setting?
- [ ] Does this resource provide evidence for teachers' practice?
- [ ] Are there any limitations of this research?

Break down the skill:
- We often over-assume the level of understanding/experience students possess
- If instructions lack enough detail, students can feel overwhelmed and confused.
- Giving students smaller steps to complete within a larger skill will support their learning and build confidence

Look for opportunities to add feedback/review:
- Consider where feedback and reflection be embedded into teaching/practice
- Cadmus has a useful draft/formative feedback function

Step 4: Assignment Plan (bring to Week 10: Tuesday 1st April)

Create an assignment plan. Ask yourself the following questions:

- [ ] What topic am I covering?
- [ ] What format am I producing?
- [ ] What theory am I focusing on?
- [ ] What sections should my assignment include?
- [ ] Have I considered a balance between theory and application?
- [ ] Have I asked any questions I have on the Padlet?

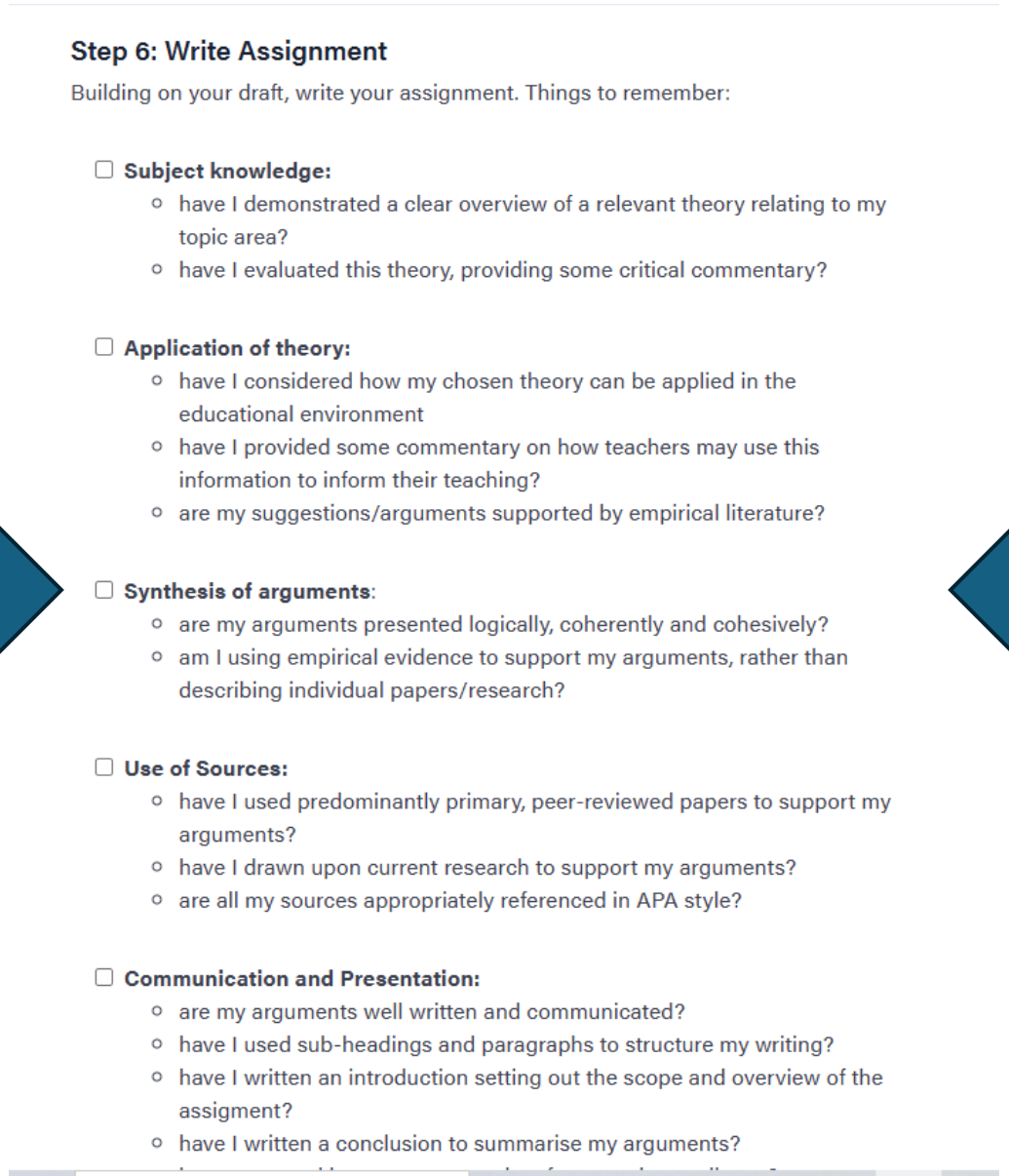
Step 5: Self-Reflective Review (Week 10: Tuesday 1st April)

- [ ] In week 10, you will have the opportunity to review your essay draft and consider how to utilise feedback from previous assignment to consider how to improve this. More instructions will be provided in class
- [ ] Consider whether there are any modules from the *MyLearningEssentials Library* which may support your learning and assignment writing
- [ ] Write up any reflections from the week 10 reflection activity

Add dates next to checklist items:
Helps students develop time management skills and encourages consistent work on assessment

Encourage self-reflection:

- Encouraging students to ask themselves reflective questions can help them assess their understanding of the task
- This may prompt them to seek help and advice when there is a gap



Step 6: Write Assignment

Building on your draft, write your assignment. Things to remember:

- ☐ **Subject knowledge:**
  - have I demonstrated a clear overview of a relevant theory relating to my topic area?
  - have I evaluated this theory, providing some critical commentary?
- ☐ **Application of theory:**
  - have I considered how my chosen theory can be applied in the educational environment
  - have I provided some commentary on how teachers may use this information to inform their teaching?
  - are my suggestions/arguments supported by empirical literature?
- ☐ **Synthesis of arguments**:
  - are my arguments presented logically, coherently and cohesively?
  - am I using empirical evidence to support my arguments, rather than describing individual papers/research?
- ☐ **Use of Sources:**
  - have I used predominantly primary, peer-reviewed papers to support my arguments?
  - have I drawn upon current research to support my arguments?
  - are all my sources appropriately referenced in APA style?
- ☐ **Communication and Presentation:**
  - are my arguments well written and communicated?
  - have I used sub-headings and paragraphs to structure my writing?
  - have I written an introduction setting out the scope and overview of the assigment?
  - have I written a conclusion to summarise my arguments?

Reflections here centre around ILOS:

- Only 22% students looked at the rubric for this assignment - - Embedding and breaking down ILOS within the checklist can support their understanding of what they are being assessed against and what is required of them for each aspect

Step 7: Review

When you have completed your assignment:

- [ ] Review your work carefully for spelling, grammar or other errors
- [ ] Check that citations and references match
- [ ] Read the Marking Rubric again to check that you have met the criteria
- [ ] Review the Module lead reflections on what makes a stronger and weaker assignment again to check you have utilised learnings from these
- [ ] Review your *Reflective review notes developed in Week 10* to check that you have effectively utilised feedback from your previous assignments in this draft

RESOURCES

- www.library.manchester.ac.uk
- livemanchesterac.sharepoint.com
- manchester.padlet.org
- **good vs weaker assignments** PDF · 79.97KB
- **Development and Childhood Rubric 24-25** PDF · 39.57KB
- **Development and Childhood Assignment Preparation Slides** PDF · 2.30MB
- **Tips for Effective Synthesis of Information** PDF · 42.92KB

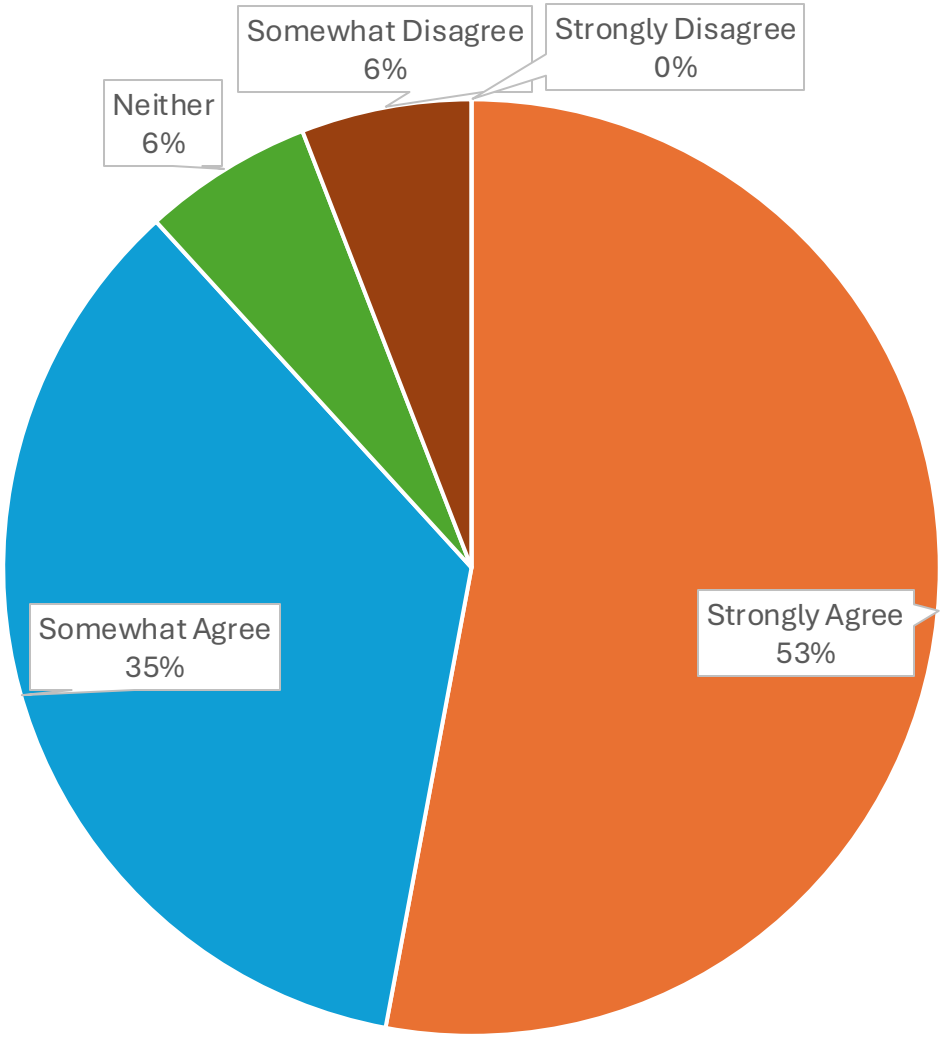
Step 8: Submit Final Assignment

- [ ] Submit your completed assignment before the final due date
- [ ] ***Remember:*** *You can* submit your work as many times as you like before the due date.
- [ ] Check your email for a submission confirmation email
- [ ] Once graded, review feedback in Cadmus

Add links to resources:
Students can easily understand what document referring to

Student Experience of Cadmus

Check-list function helped students to better understand what they needed to do for the assignment



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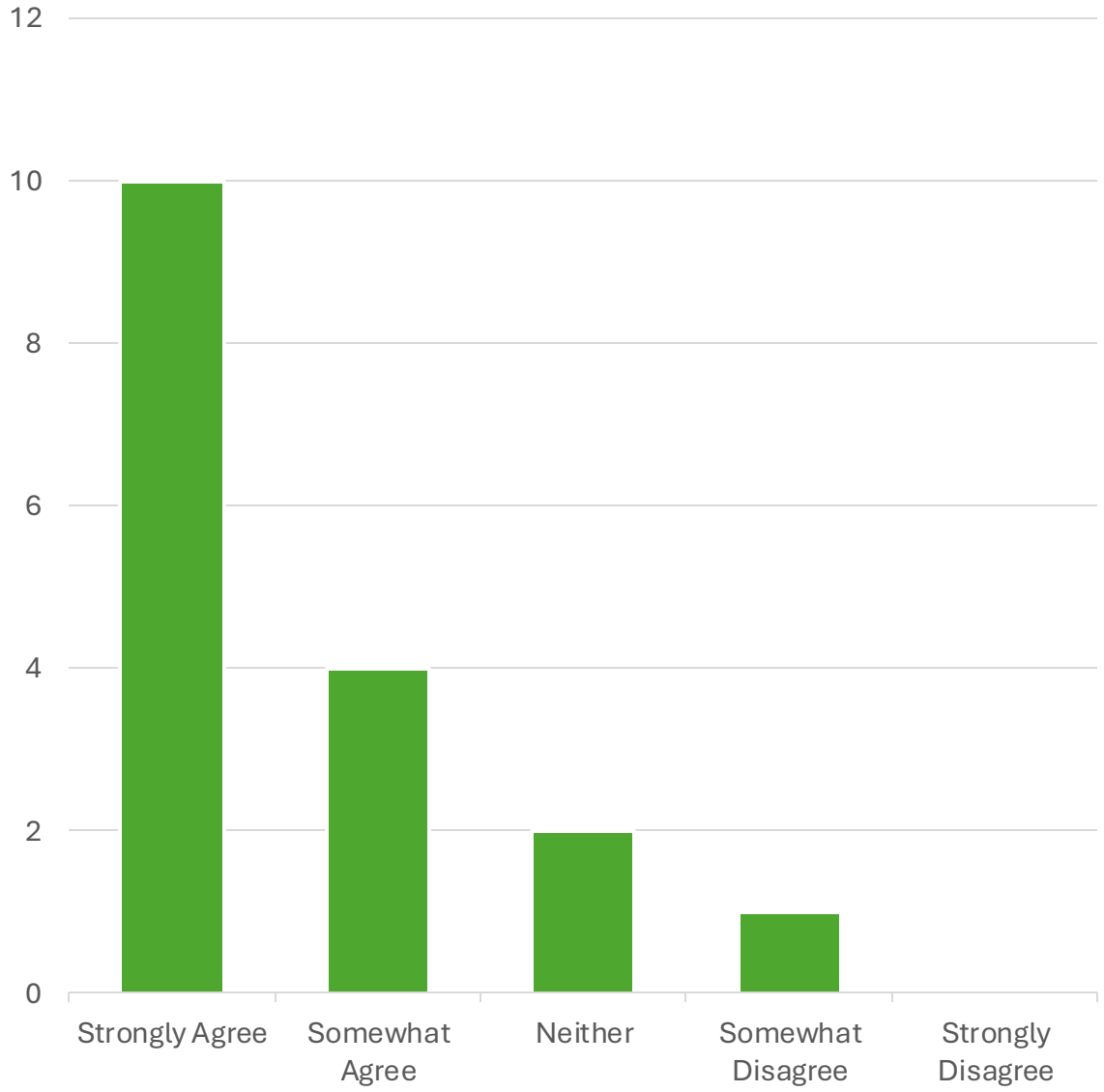
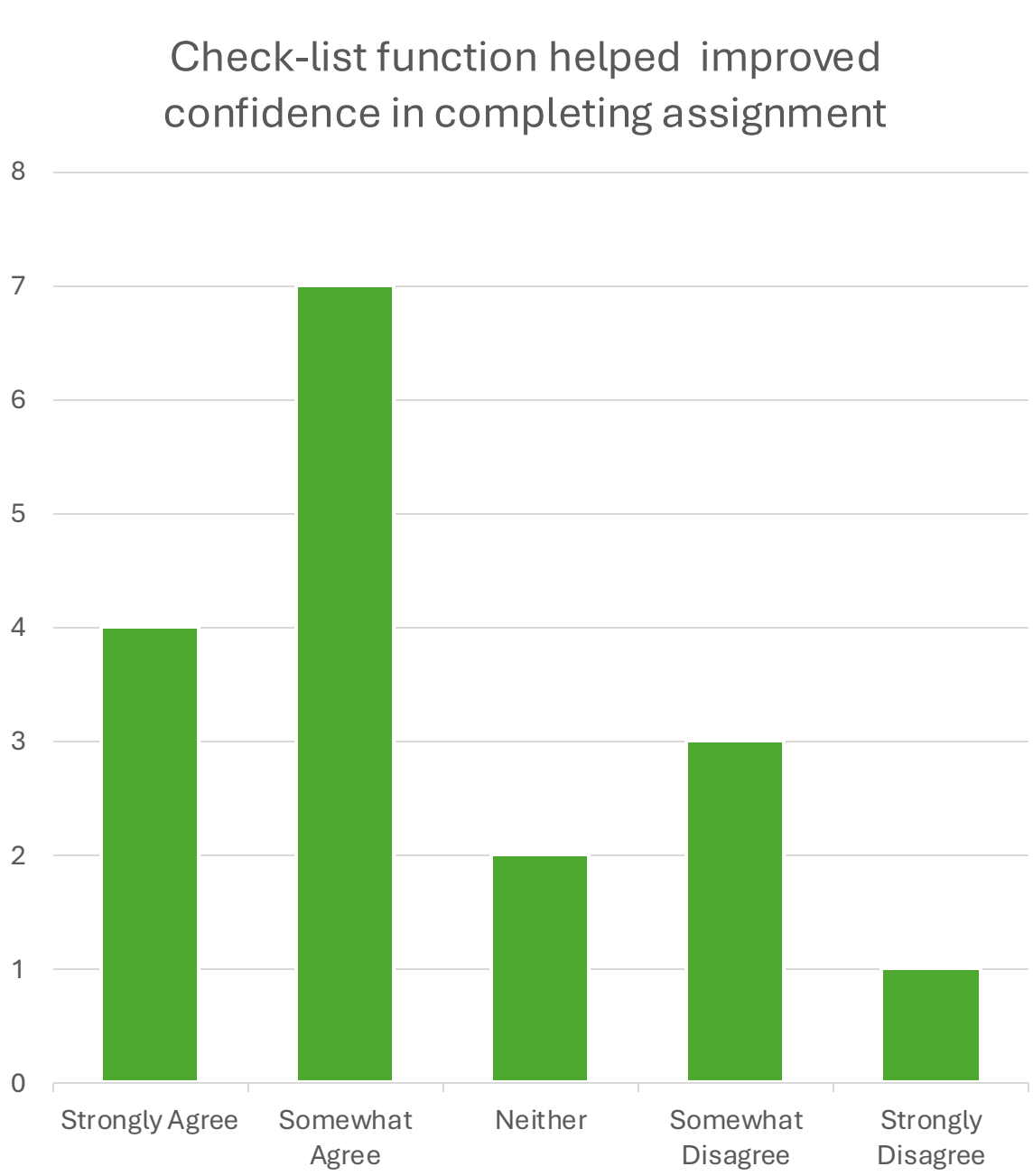
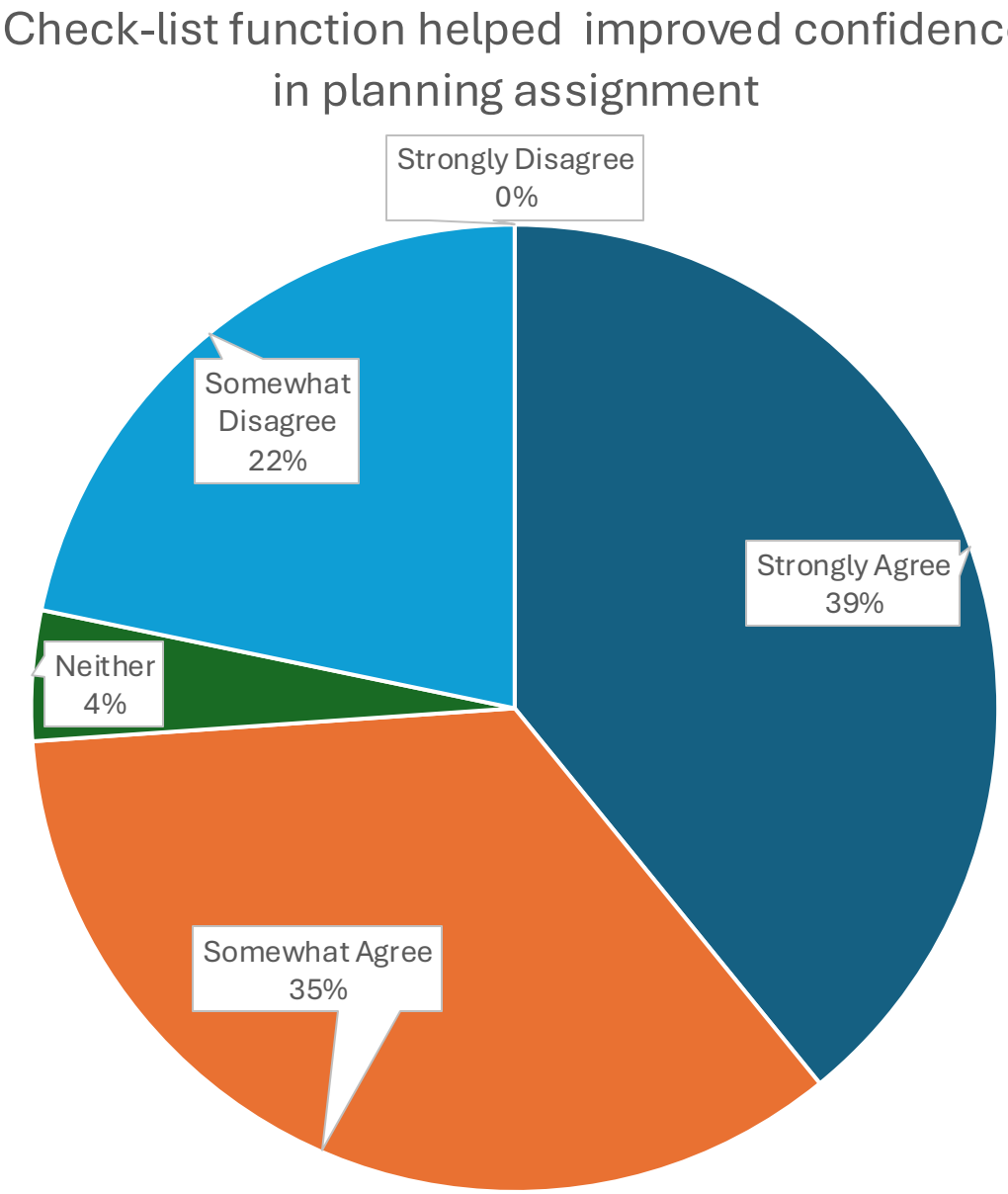
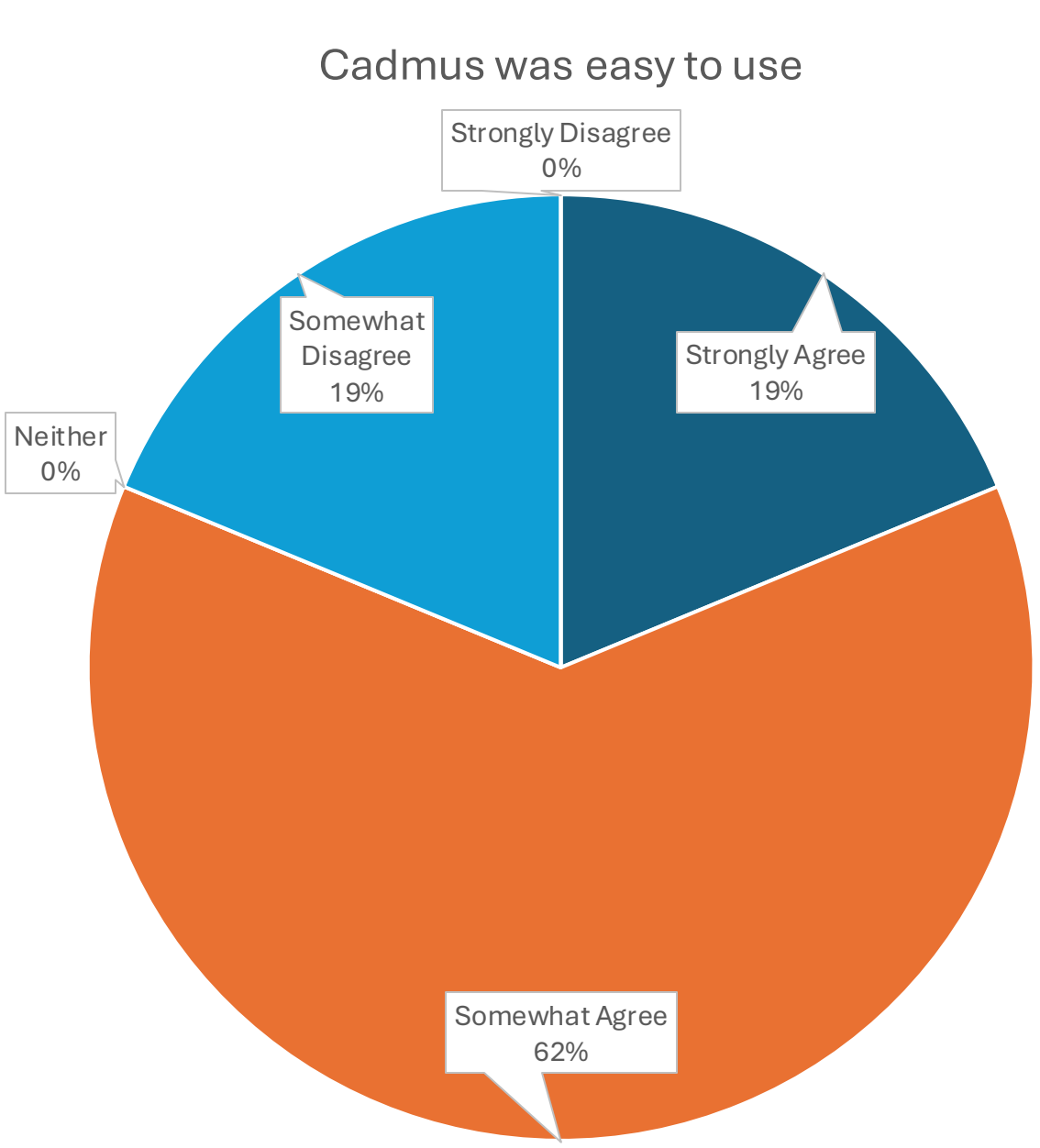
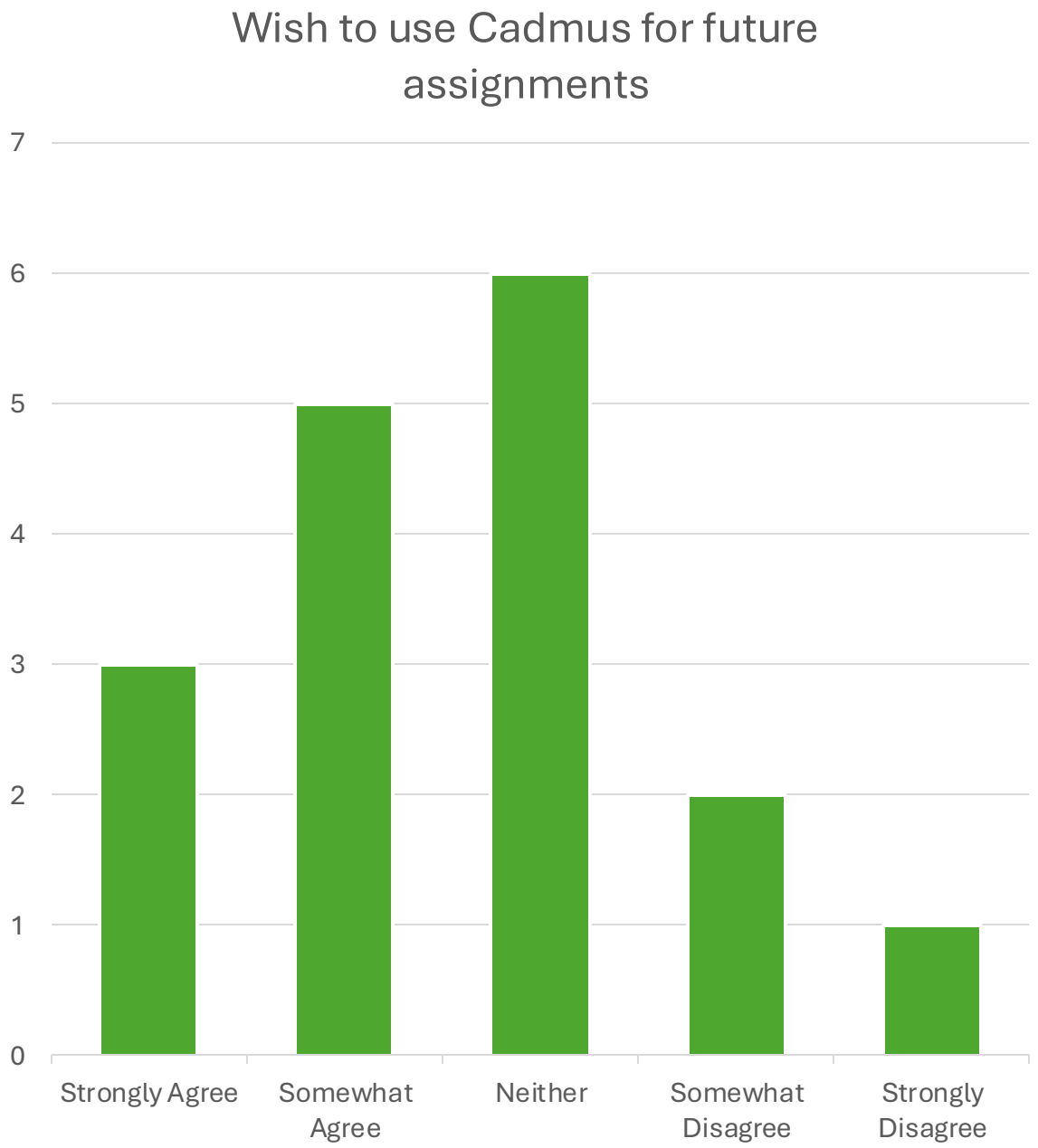
Having additional resources in one space was helpful




Check-list function helped improved confidence in completing assignment
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Strongly Agree
Somewhat Agree
Neither
Somewhat Disagree
Strongly Disagree


Check-list function helped improved confidence in planning assignment
Strongly Disagree 0%
Somewhat Disagree 22%
Strongly Agree 39%
Neither 4%
Somewhat Agree 35%


Cadmus was easy to use
Strongly Disagree
0%
Somewhat
Disagree
19%
Strongly Agree
19%
Neither
0%
Somewhat Agree
62%


Wish to use Cadmus for future assignments
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Strongly Agree
Somewhat Agree
Neither
Somewhat Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Student Qualitative Feedback

Aesthetically appealing

Clear and easy to use

Separates references out

Liked resources in one place

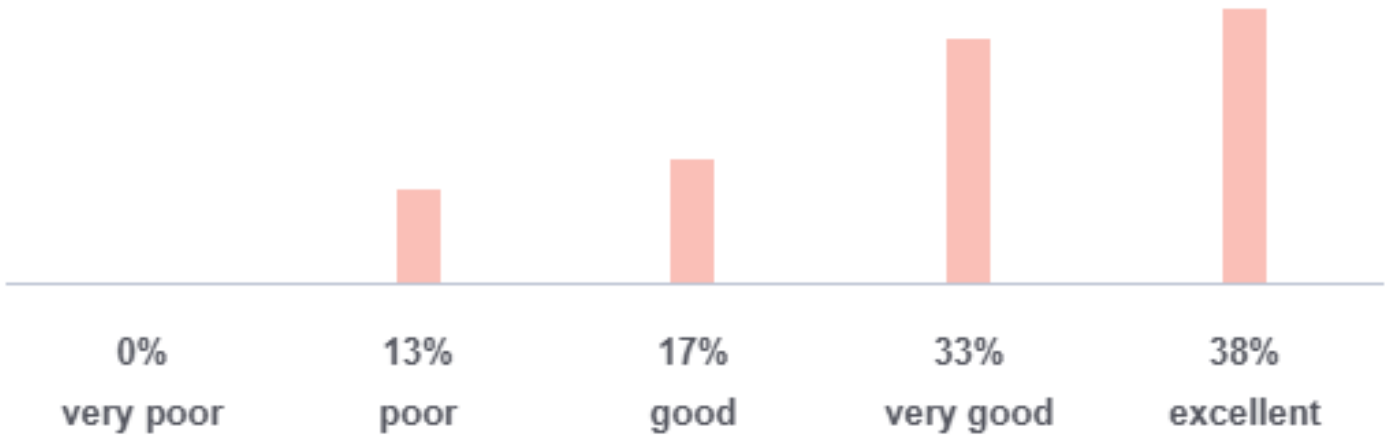
Spelling/Grammer check not as good as Word

Some found difficult to use/no better than other options

Cadmus-Reported Student Feedback

Student Experience

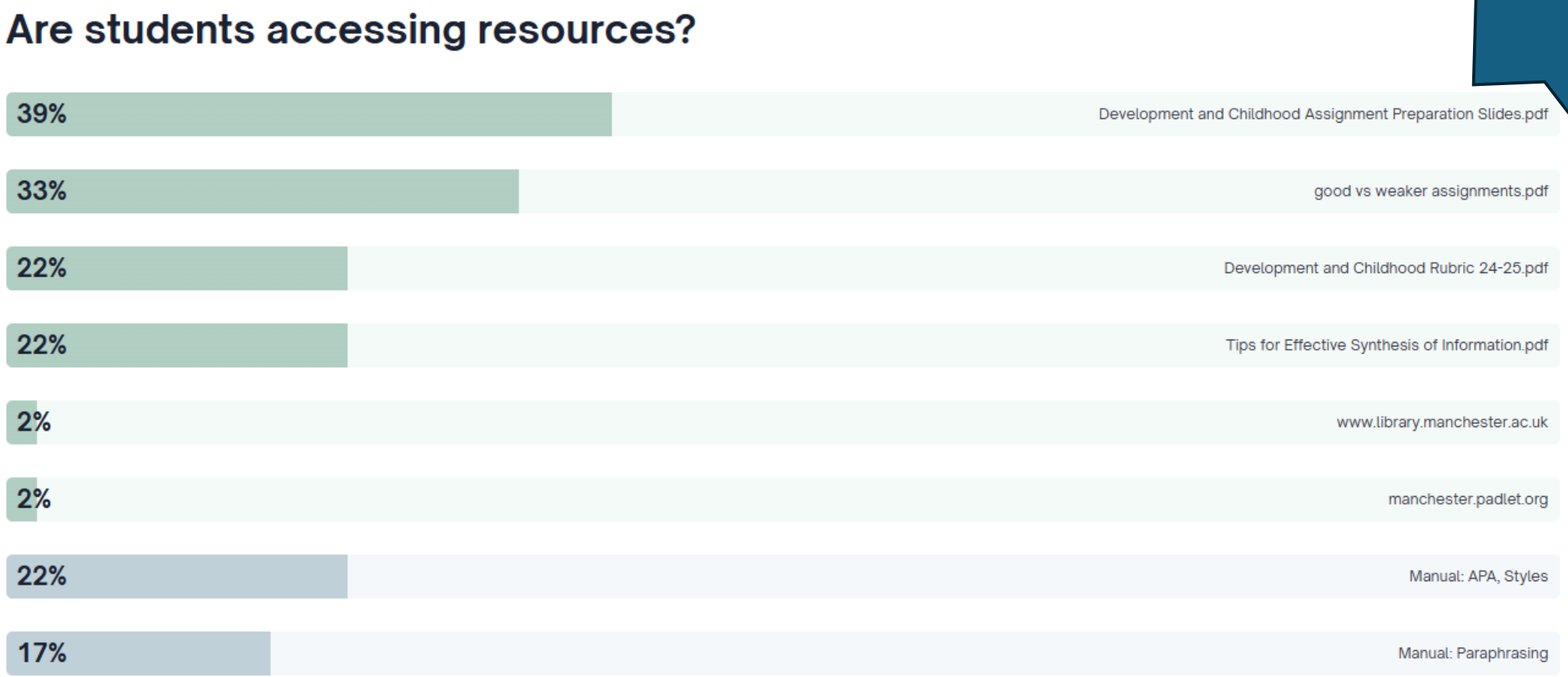
24 students provided a rating of their Cadmus experience. **88%** scored Cadmus between Good and Excellent. Here's a breakdown of all the responses:



Cadmus Reflections: Academic Perspective

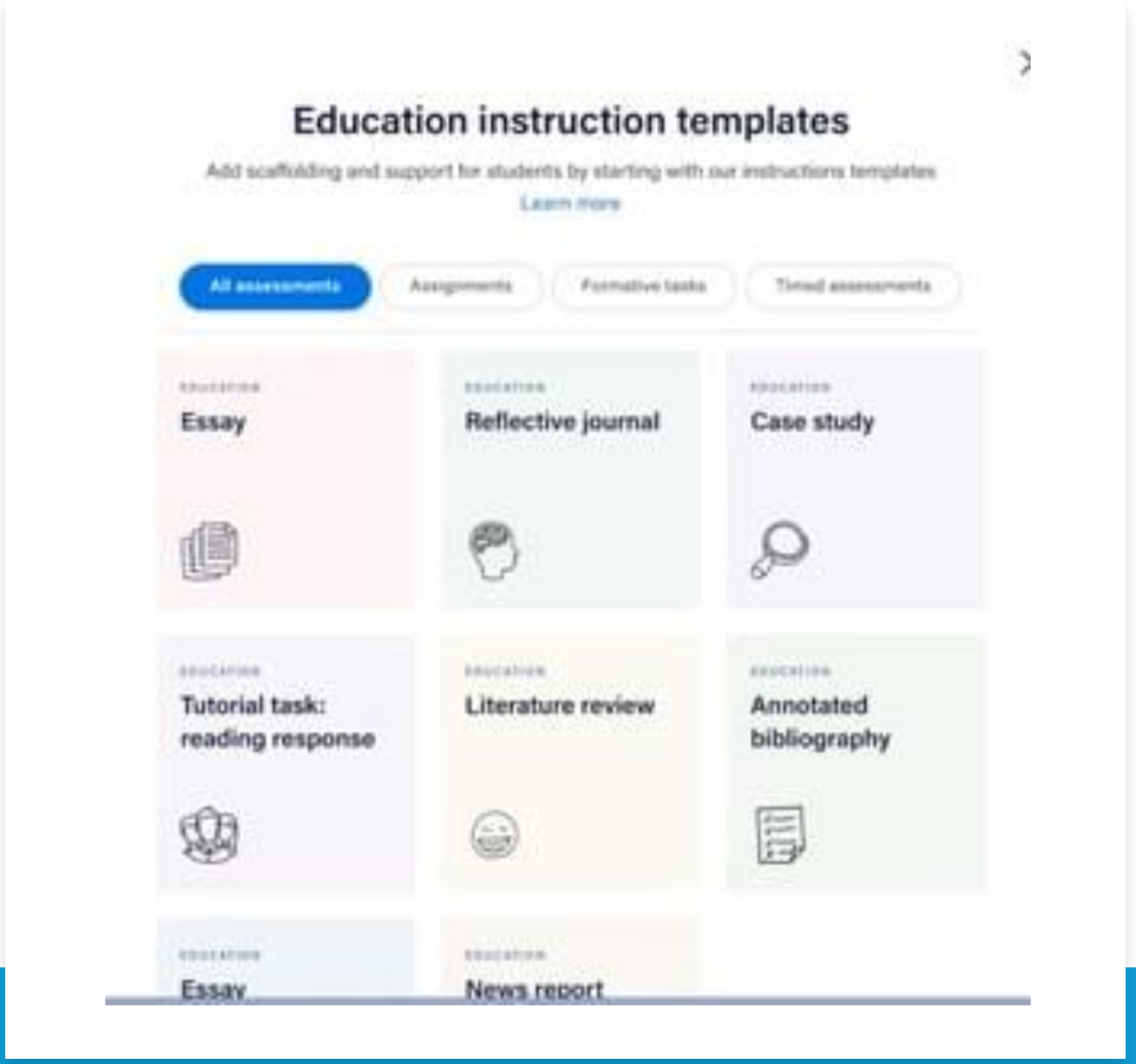
Cadmus Reflections: Insights Function

Group and Individual level Insights



Cadmus Reflections: Hiccups

- Ensure select most appropriate ‘assessment activity’ is selected from start – had to find work-around for optional format assignment
- Issues with some students’ submissions (Cadmus support fixed)
- Best advice: **seek support from e-learning team** (Cadmus support function also very efficient)



Summary

As HE educators we need to appreciate the gap between our expectations and students' current skill level

Cadmus check-list is useful tool for academics to reflect and break down the stages and steps students need to undertake to successfully achieve ILOs

Can prompt consideration of which sources of support can be offered for different skill development (prompted me to develop my own too!)

This process can be achieved through other tools, if Cadmus is not right for your unit

References

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Wong, B., & Chiu, Y. L. T. (2020). University lecturers' construction of the 'ideal'undergraduate student. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 44(1), 54-68.

Useful Resources

https://cadmus.io/guides/understanding-cadmus-templates

https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/curricula-development/education-mental-health-toolkit/scaffold-design/explicitly-prepare-students-learning-assessment-tasks

Any Questions?