

Students' Perception of Relevance of Modules on the Civil Engineering FdSc Course at West Suffolk College, March 2010

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A foundation degree is a work based higher educational programme, the aim of which is to encourage and widen participation and fill the skills shortage.

Quote from Student about FdSc

“Was not what I expected. Some parts of course are helpful, others aren't really relevant to my work.”

Background and data collection



Students' informal comments: “Some modules are not relevant”

The objective of the action research is **to improve the students learning experience** using data collected by **investigating the students perception of relevance of the modules to their careers.**

Data collection by questionnaires.

	Number of students		Questionnaires returned	
	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time
Year 1	7	2	5	1
Year 2	9		8	
Year 3	13	1	12	1
	32		27	

Quantitative data collection

Cohort year 2 - Ranking order of relevance

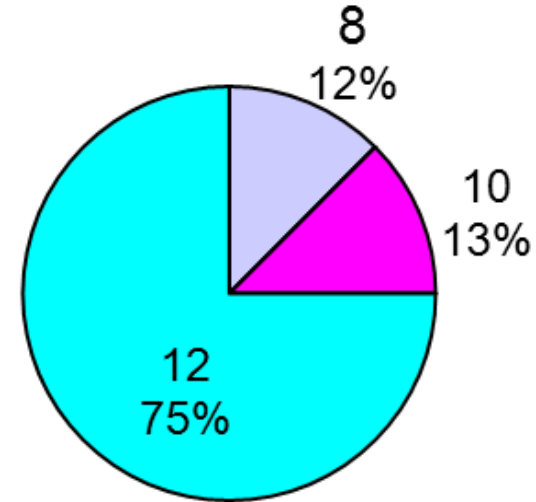
MODULES	RANKING ORDER
Year 1 Modules	
Civil engineering techniques 1	
Numeracy and statistical skills	
Personal development	
Science and materials	
Management of health, safety and welfare	
Computer aided design	
Year 2 Modules	
Civil engineering techniques 2	
Group project	
Surveying and levelling	
Measuring, tendering and estimating	
Environment	
Structural design principles	

**1 = most relevant
12 = least relevant**

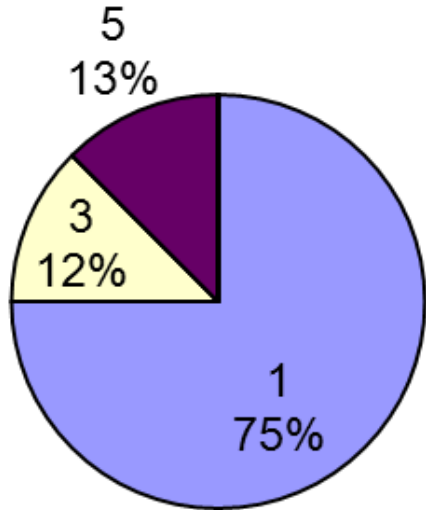
Quantitative data analysis

Examples of year 2 module pie charts

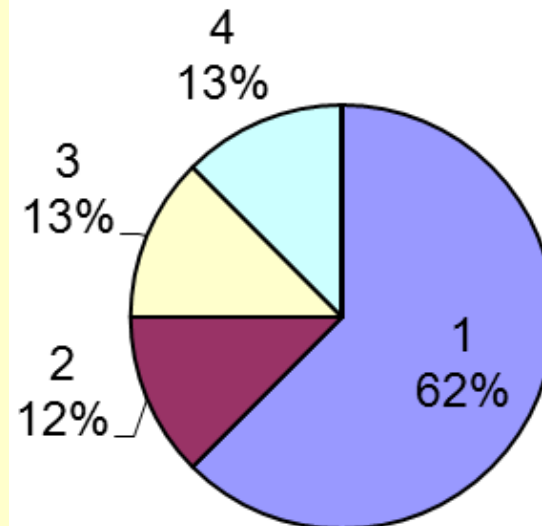
Personal development



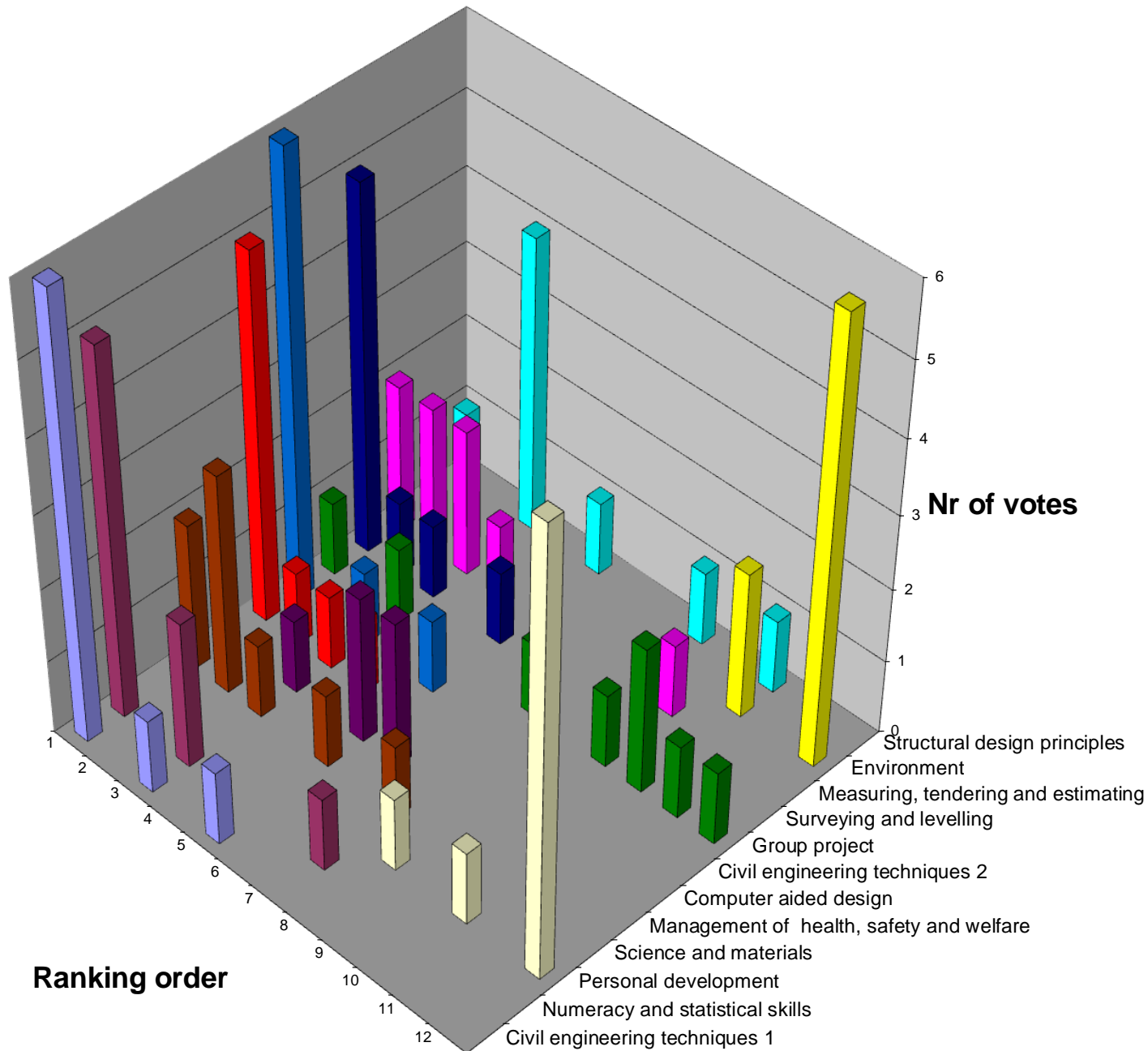
Civil engineering techniques 1



Computer aided design



Quantitative data analysis



Least relevant and most relevant 25% of modules per cohort

Cohort	Results from the Survey	
	25% least relevant modules	25% most relevant modules
Year 1	Sustainability	Civil engineering techniques A
Year 2	Group project	Civil engineering techniques 1
	Personal development	Civil engineering techniques 2
	Environment	Computer aided design
Year 3	Environment	Civil engineering techniques 1
	Work based research project	Surveying and levelling
	Group project	Civil engineering techniques 2
	Research methods	Structural design principles
	Personal development	Geology and soil mechanics

Distribution of employment type in each cohort

Cohort	Traffic Eng.	High - way Eng.	Site Eng.	Gas & Electric Eng.	Struc- tural Tech.	CAD, Draughts person	Civil Eng.	Other
Year 1	1	1	1	2				1
Year 2	3	2	2		1			
Year 3	1	4	2			3	2	1
Total	5	7	5	2	1	3	2	2

Number of students completing questionnaire = 27

Number of traffic and highways engineers = 12

44% are traffic or highways engineers

Qualitative data analysis

The questionnaire asks “Now you are on the course, does it meet your reasons for choosing this course?”

Examples of Qualitative answers

Yes

- “It will allow progression to next degree”
- “I am using techniques that I can use in my job”
- “it is steadily teaching me the skills I need to further my career.”

NO

- “Lack of direction, disappointed in standard of teaching”
- “Does not match level of HNC/D”
- “no relevance to traffic signals. Some engineering knowledge is useful but mostly irrelevant to me”
- “Too broad really needed more civil engineering subjects”

Yes and NO

- “Was not what I expected. Some parts of course are helpful, others aren’t really relevant to my work”
- “Some courses are better than others, personal development and environment had nothing to do with civil engineering”

Conclusion

In March 2010

- 44% of civil engineering students surveyed are either traffic or highways engineers.
- The modules which the students perceive as relevant are those which are more applicable to the work they do.
- The modules that have work based assignments are not considered as most relevant.
- Personal development, research, group project and environment / sustainability are perceived as the least relevant.

Recommendations

- Provide a dedicated tutorial programme which focuses on the specific professional practice of the individual student.
- Make modifications to the validated modules' learning outcomes to allow flexibility.
- Similar surveys should be carried out after changes to the students learning experience.