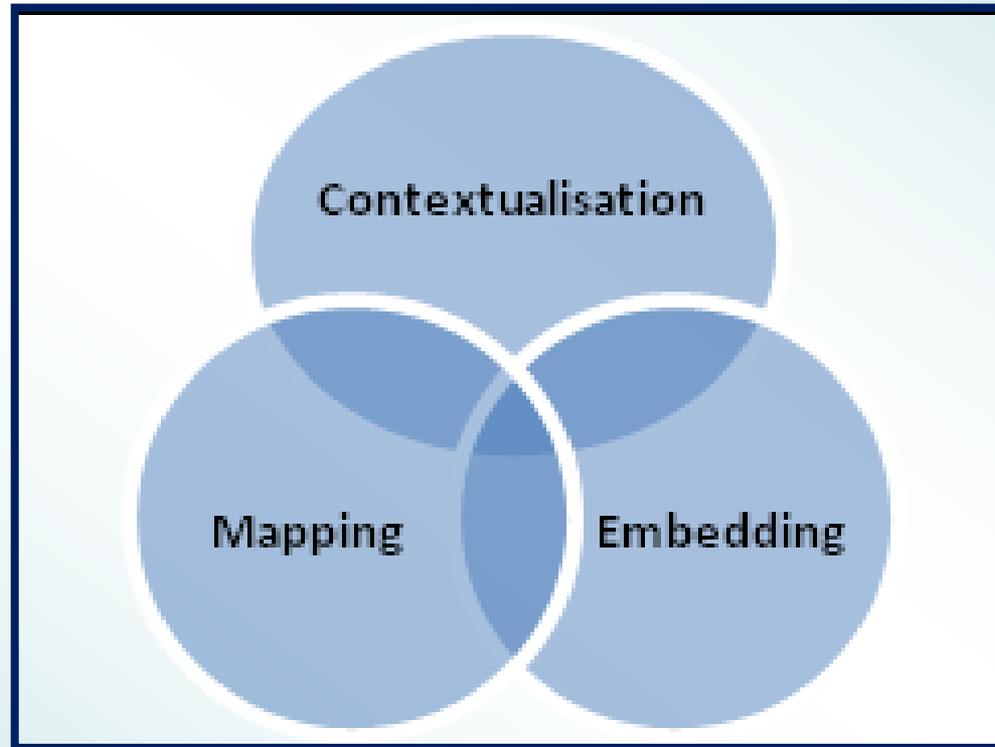


Identification of Students' Perceived Needs in terms of Academic Skills in Business Management, HWU



Olwyn Alexander (Director of EAP) O.Alexander@hw.ac.uk

Kate Hughes (Lecturer in SML) kate.hughes@hughes-scm.com

Stephanie Ashby (SML Recruiting, Administration & Marketing)

S.A.Ashby@hw.ac.uk

Aim: to determine students' perceived needs in terms of Academic Skills within a model of engagement



- **Overview** of in-sessional Academic Skills HWU
- **Strategic Framework** for syllabus:
 - Approaches to evaluation
 - Problems with these
 - Our project
- **Research Design:**
 - Best-Worst Survey
 - Semi-Structured Interviews
- **Results & Interpretation**
- **Key Findings**
- **Conclusion**

In-sessional Provision of Academic Skills



Since 2009 School of Management & Languages (SML) has provided Academic Skills classes for:

- Translation and Interpreting
- Strategic Project Management
- Logistics & Supply Chain Management
- International Fashion Marketing
- International Business Management
- Accounting & Finance

Funded by 5% top-slice of overseas students' fees

School of Management and Languages
Academic Skills Enhancement for MSc students

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY

"Academic Skills is a very important course for International students."

"The classes were helpful in understanding how to write for a masters programme."

"Academic skills was really useful. I strongly recommend to everyone to attend it."

"The examples of papers from other students were very useful to note what teachers want in an essay."

Your undergraduate degree has given you a range of academic skills. However, postgraduate study makes a whole new set of demands on you. For example, can you...

- understand how to read sources critically
- understand how to integrate what you read into assignments
- understand why you need to reference the source of your ideas
- understand how the plagiarism detection tool Turnitin will be used to monitor your work?

How can you benefit from Academic Skills workshops

1. You will gain a much better understanding of what your lecturers expect at masters level
2. Classes are based on texts and tasks from your degree coursework.
3. This will help you approach your assignments and exams with a lot more confidence.

Content of the workshops is tailored to your needs as these change over the semester.

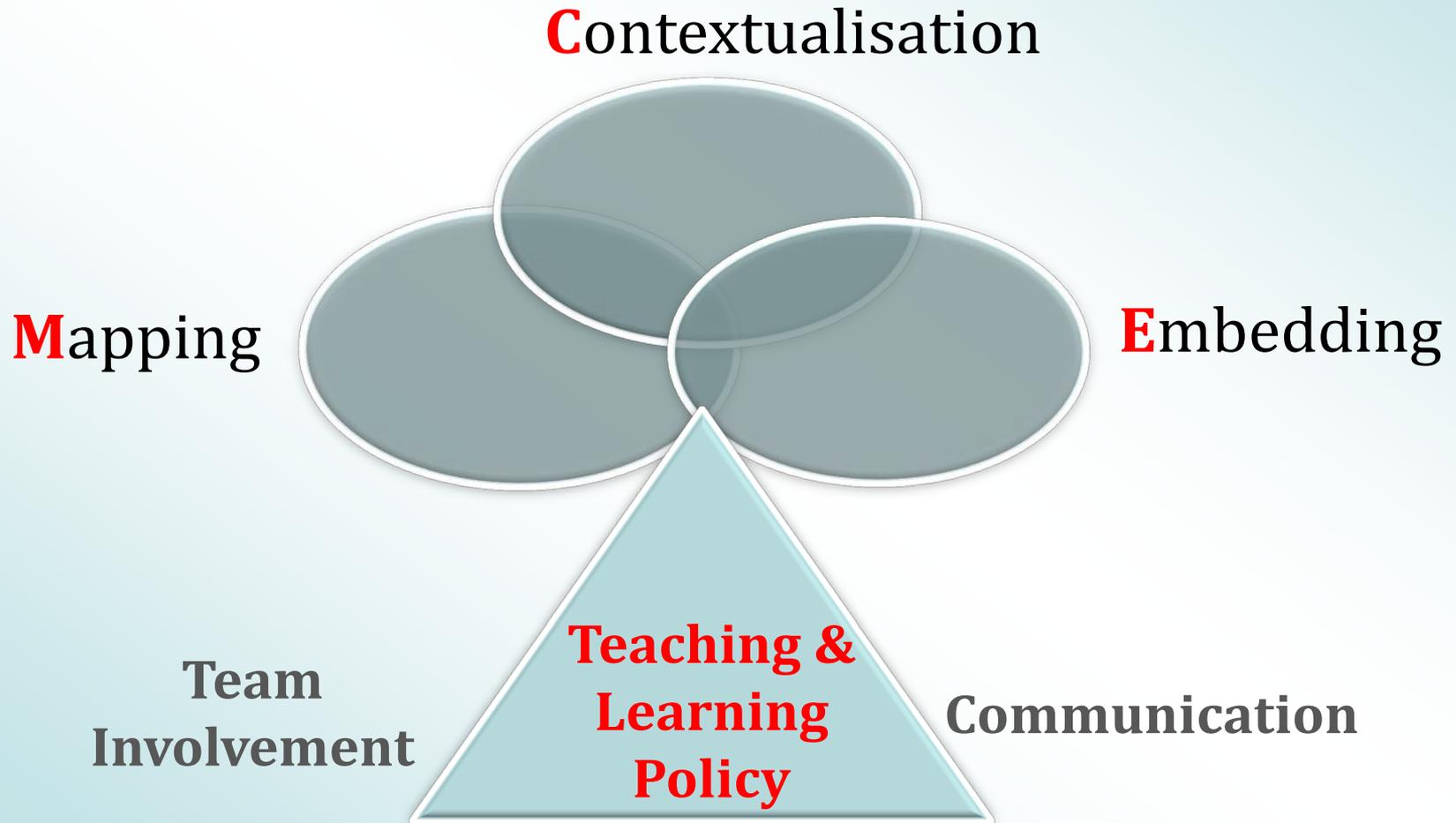
STUDENT QUESTIONS	ACADEMIC SKILLS ACTIVITIES
1. What will my lecturer expect?	Essays: strong and weak examples with marking criteria
2. How do I make my writing easy to read?	Writing clearly and logically using an appropriate style
3. How do I show my understanding?	Selecting, combining & acknowledging ideas to write definitions
4. How do I write for my academic community?	Peer feedback on essay structure and style
5. How do I use sources effectively?	Using Turnitin to identify inappropriate use of sources
6. What did my lecturer expect?	Feedback from tutors on your writing
7. How do I add my own ideas?	Critical evaluation to show my stance towards ideas
8. How do I write reports?	Research report structure and use of non-verbal material
9. How can I do my best in exams?	Strategies for remaining calm and answering the questions that the lecturers set
10. Where do I go from here?	Review and additional support

You can register for these workshops at the start of your degree. Go to the Vision course VCLSS Academic Skills, which you should find in your list of Vision courses, and sign up for the appropriate group for your degree.

For further information please email:
Ms Ohwyn Alexander
O.Alexander@hw.ac.uk

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Strategic Framework: CEM Model (1)



Needs analysis which informs Research

- **Prior Research:** Interviews & discussions with academic staff: what constitutes successful/unsuccessful performance Sloan, Porter & Alexander (2013)
- **HW Academic Skills course evaluations with students:**
 - Why did you leave/What would make you stay? (2011)
 - Ranking statements describing reasons for attending/not attending (2012 based on 2011)
 - Module feedback from subject modules (2009-2012)

Research Design & Results

Best-Worst Survey (before exams S1)

- 21 statements listing important aspects of Academic Skills
- Derived from literature, needs analysis, syllabus, pre/post-course questionnaires



Semi-Structured Interviews (during S3)

- Questions relating to the results of BW
- Identify students' understanding of terms, opinion of AS, dissertation



Example of Best-Worst Survey



How to Answer

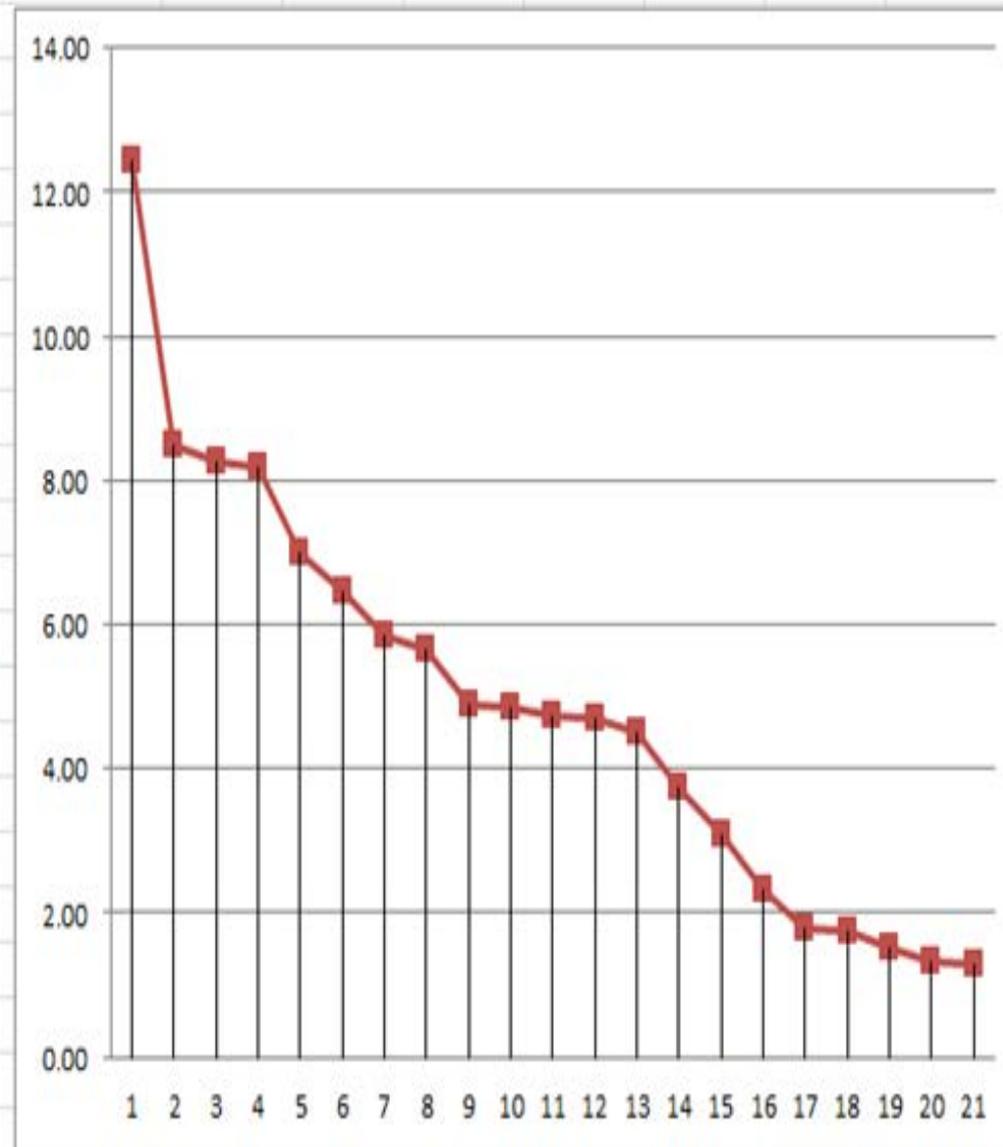
Below is an example showing how to answer the questions. In this example, *Learning how to write in an academic style* is the **MOST** important factor and *Combining several sources to write a definition* is the **LEAST** important factor in this group of five.

Question Number	What is MOST important to you? (Select ONLY ONE answer for each question)	Choose between:	What is LEAST important to you? (Select ONLY ONE answer for each question)
Example	?	Seeing examples of essays written by other students	?
	?	Finding out what my lecturers expect in coursework	?
	X ←	Learning how to write in an academic style	?
	?	Combining several sources to write a definition	→ X
	?	Understanding how to use Harvard referencing	?

Once you have studied the example above, please start the survey.

All Cohorts 165 students

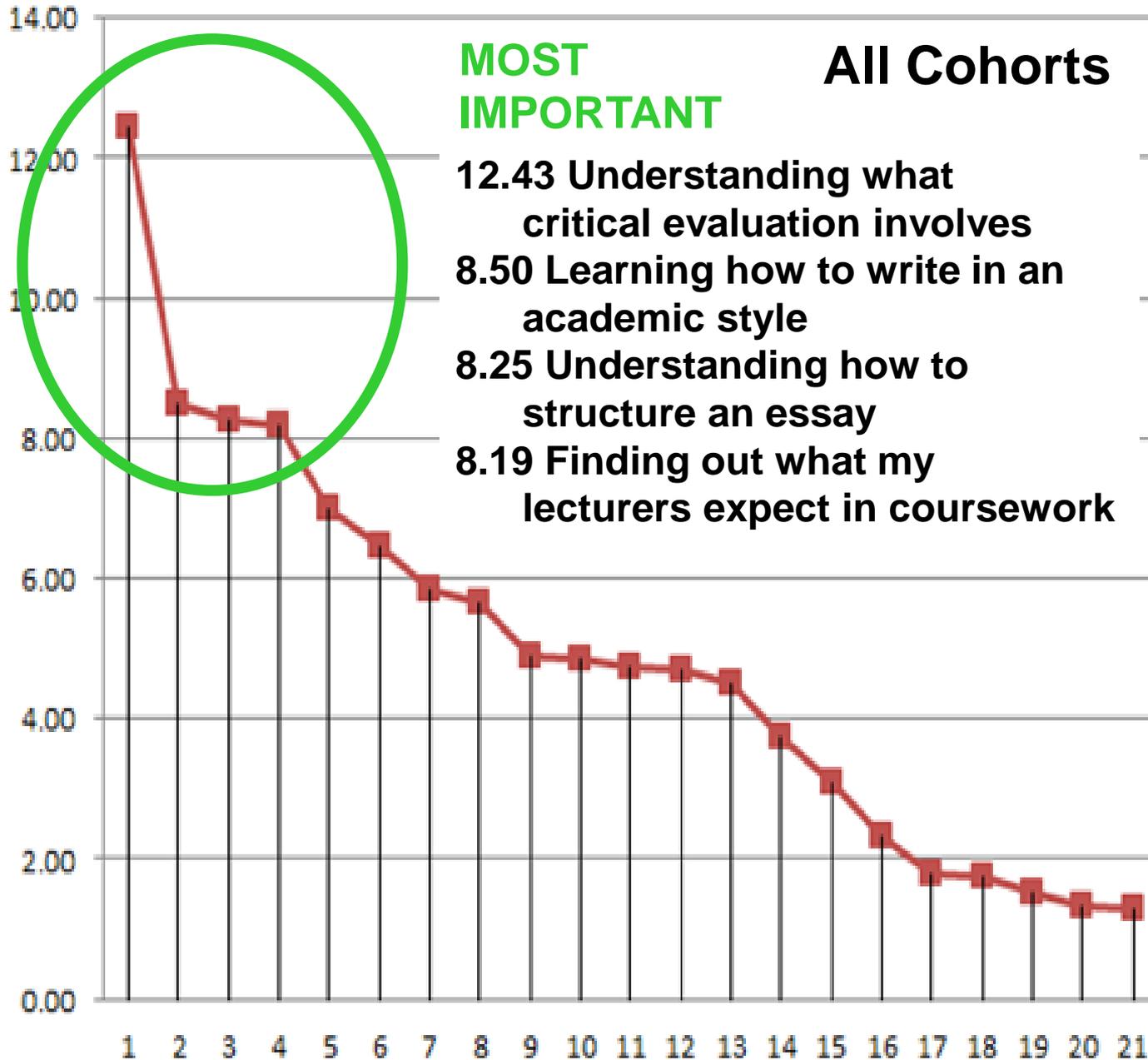
1	Understanding what critical evaluation involves	12.43
2	Learning how to write in an academic style	8.50
3	Understanding how to structure an essay	8.25
4	Finding out what my lecturers expect in coursework	8.19
5	Understanding how to interpret exam questions	7.01
6	Getting the best possible grades	6.46
7	Seeing examples of essays written by other students	5.84
8	Working with texts and tasks related to our degree subject	5.67
9	Getting feedback on my academic skills	4.90
10	Getting help with academic skills at the time I needed it	4.86
11	Understanding how to search for and select sources	4.74
12	Understanding how to read in an efficient way	4.70
13	Combining several sources to write a definition	4.50
14	Discussing strategies for sitting exams	3.75
15	Understanding how to use Harvard referencing	3.08
16	Gaining confidence to use English	2.32
17	Being in a supportive environment	1.77
18	Being able to discuss academic skills with other students	1.75
19	Understanding the concept of scholarship	1.53
20	Understanding how Turnitin is used to detect plagiarism	1.33
21	Gaining confidence to ask questions in class	1.31



**MOST
IMPORTANT**

All Cohorts

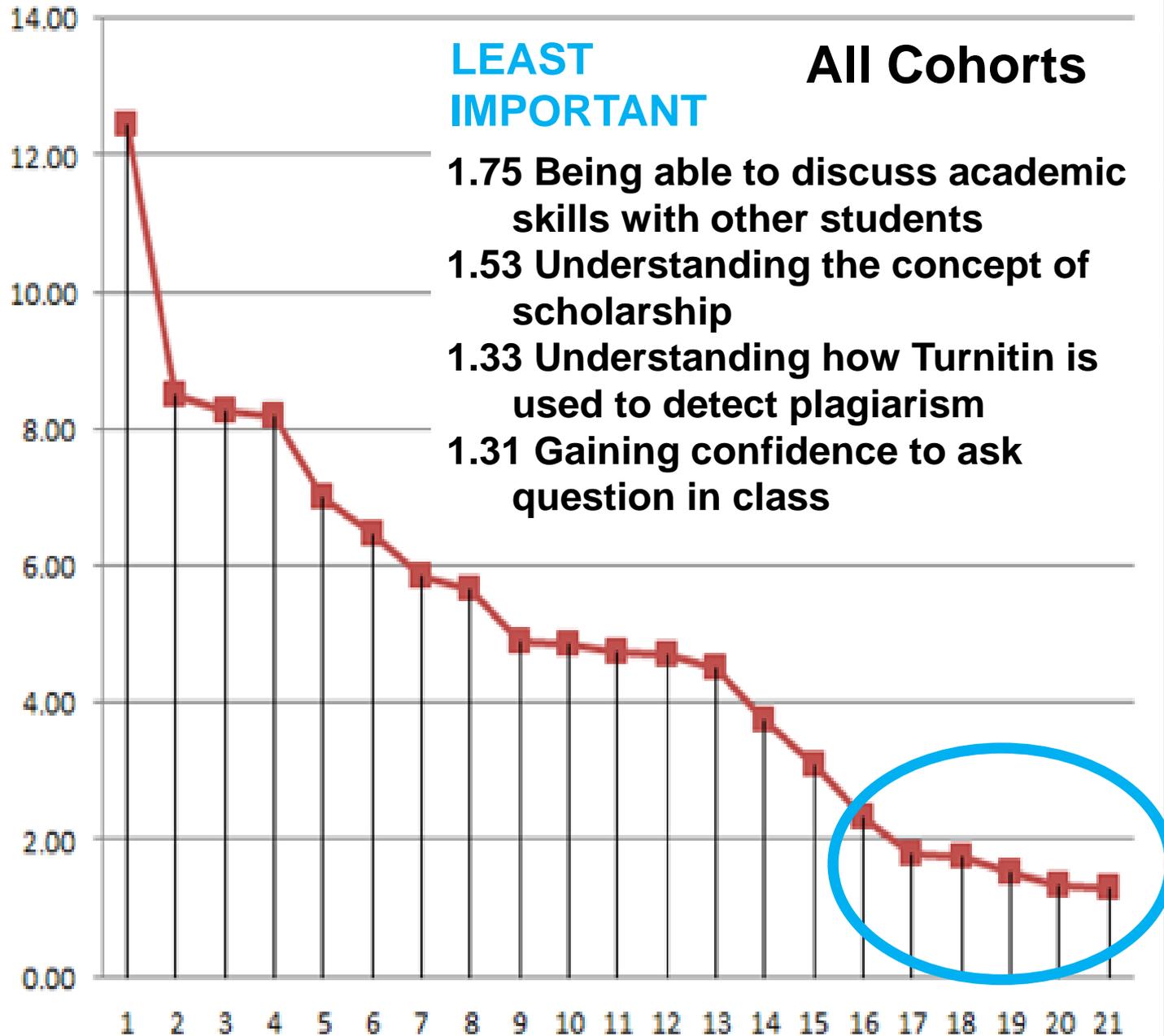
- 12.43 Understanding what critical evaluation involves**
- 8.50 Learning how to write in an academic style**
- 8.25 Understanding how to structure an essay**
- 8.19 Finding out what my lecturers expect in coursework**

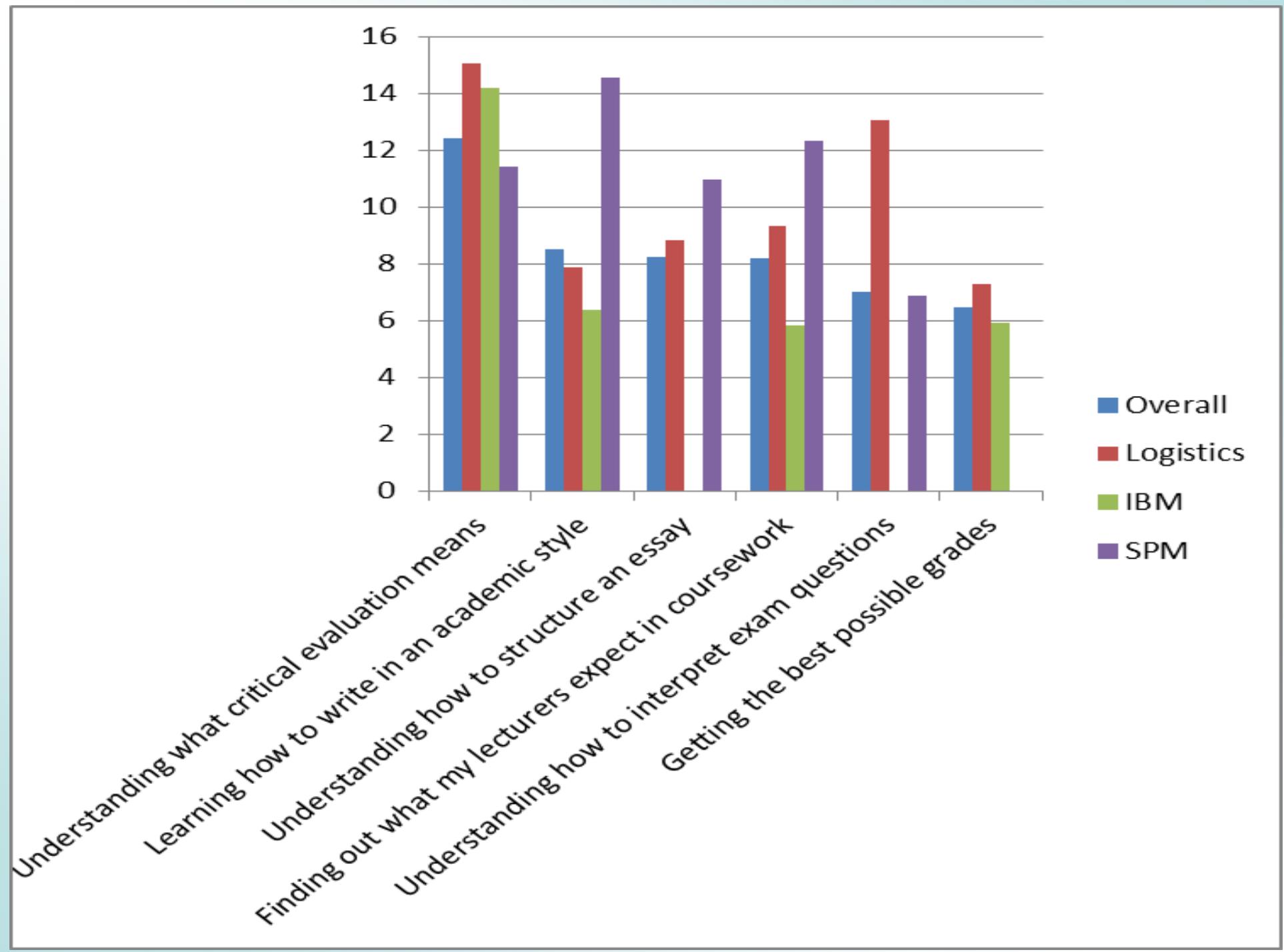


LEAST IMPORTANT

All Cohorts

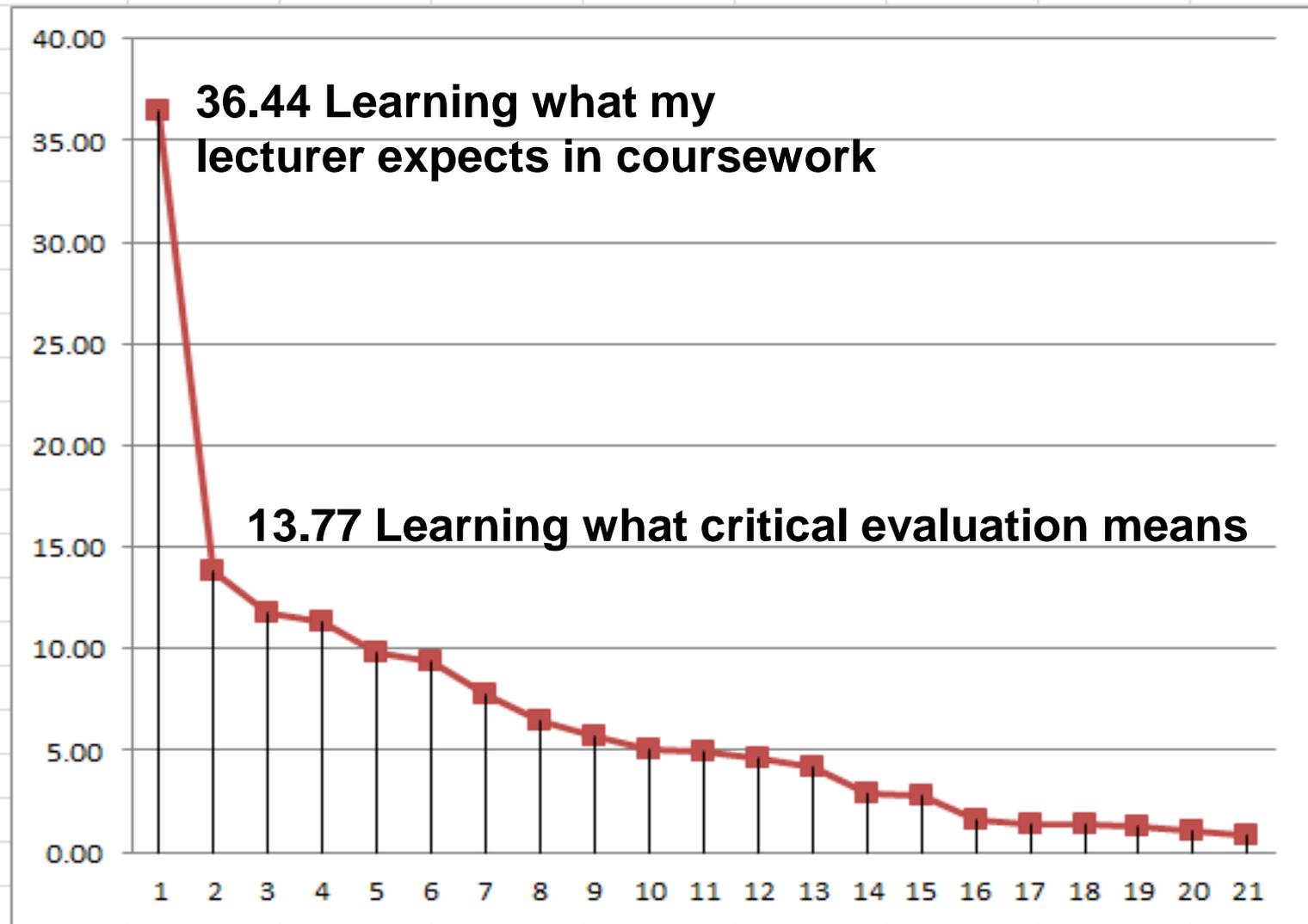
- 1.75 Being able to discuss academic skills with other students
- 1.53 Understanding the concept of scholarship
- 1.33 Understanding how Turnitin is used to detect plagiarism
- 1.31 Gaining confidence to ask question in class





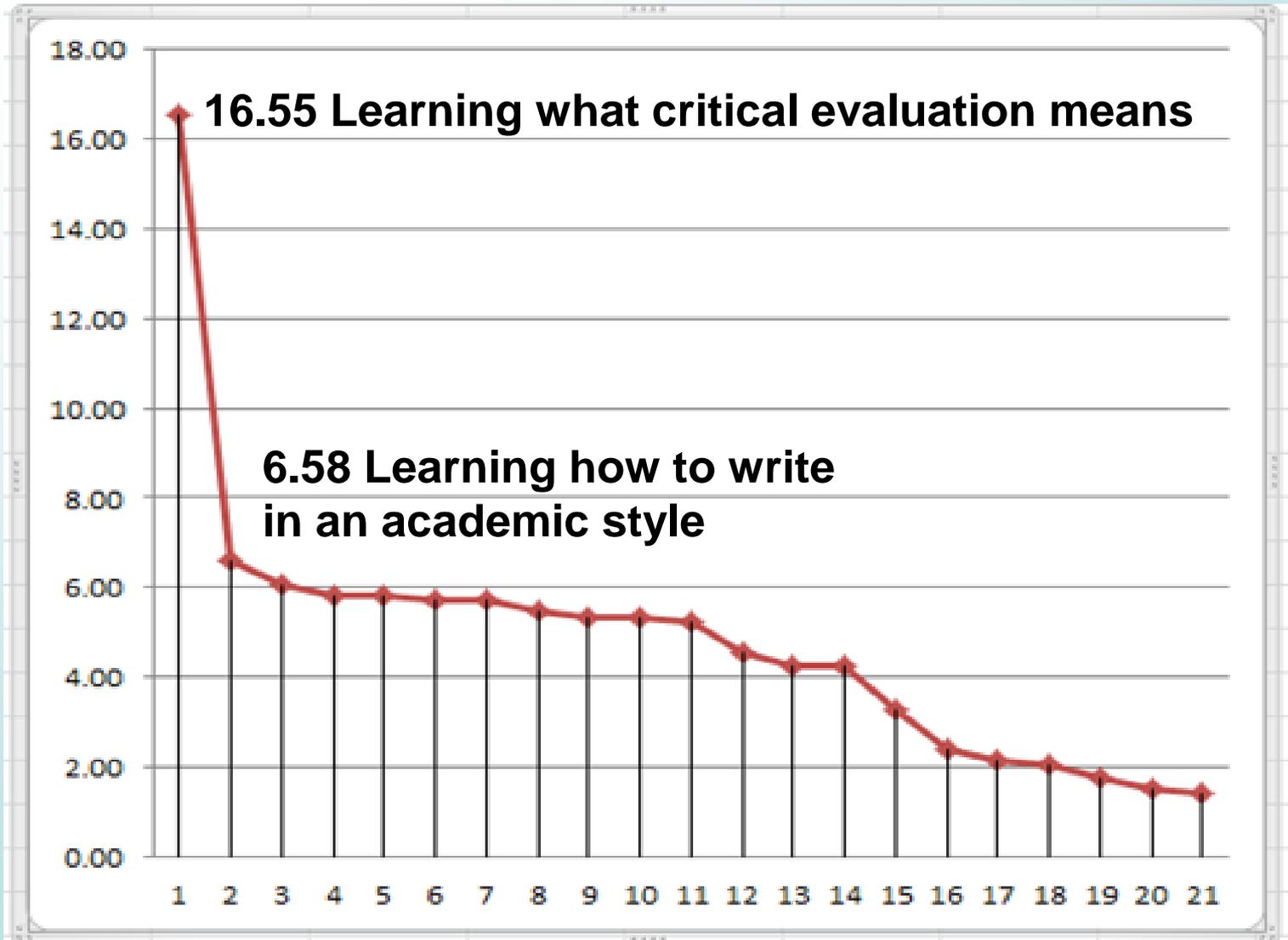
English/German/Scandinavian Students

47 students



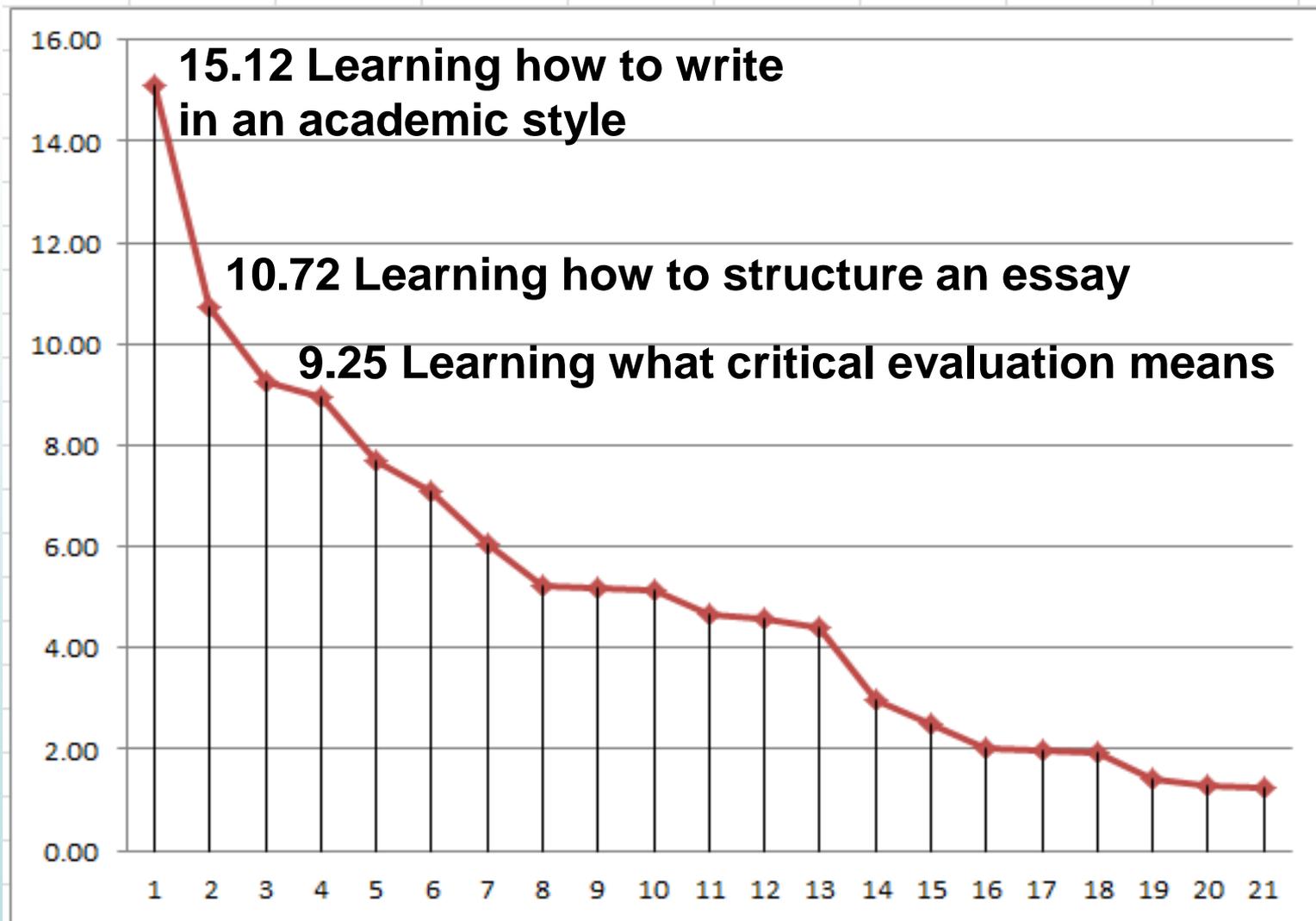
Chinese / Thai Students

65 students



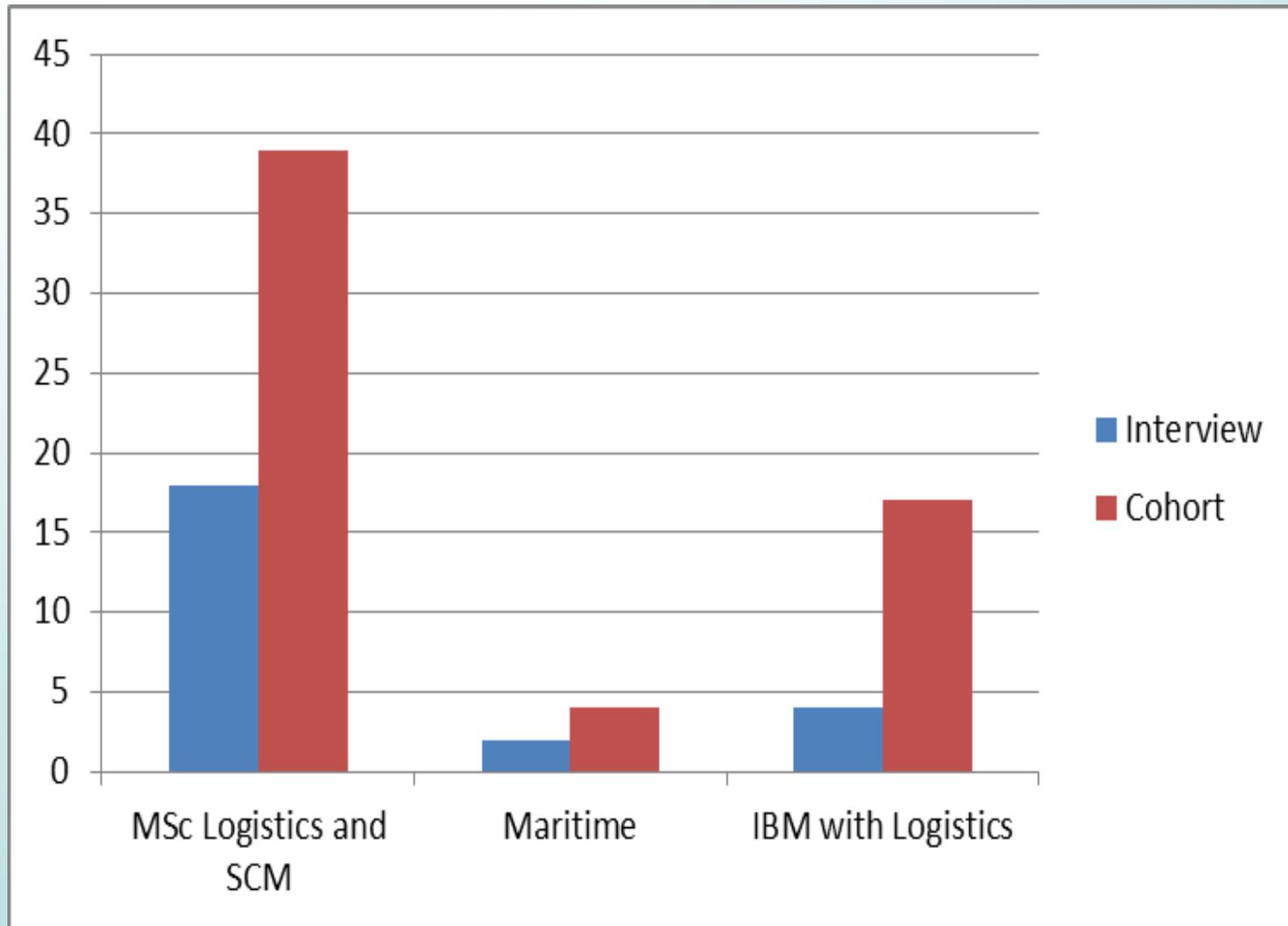
All Other ESL

47 students



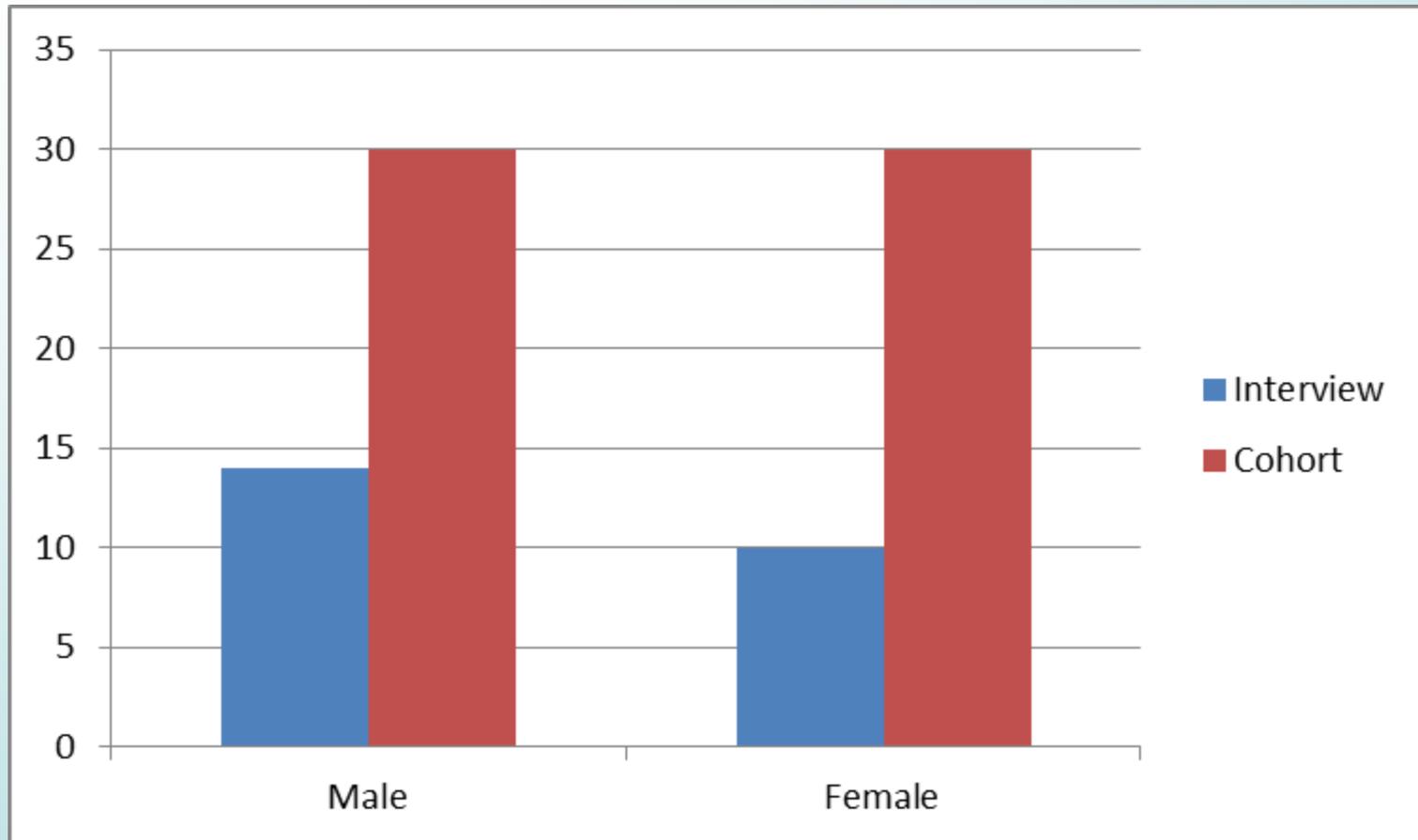
Interview Statistics

24 students from Logistics Cohort – 3 programmes



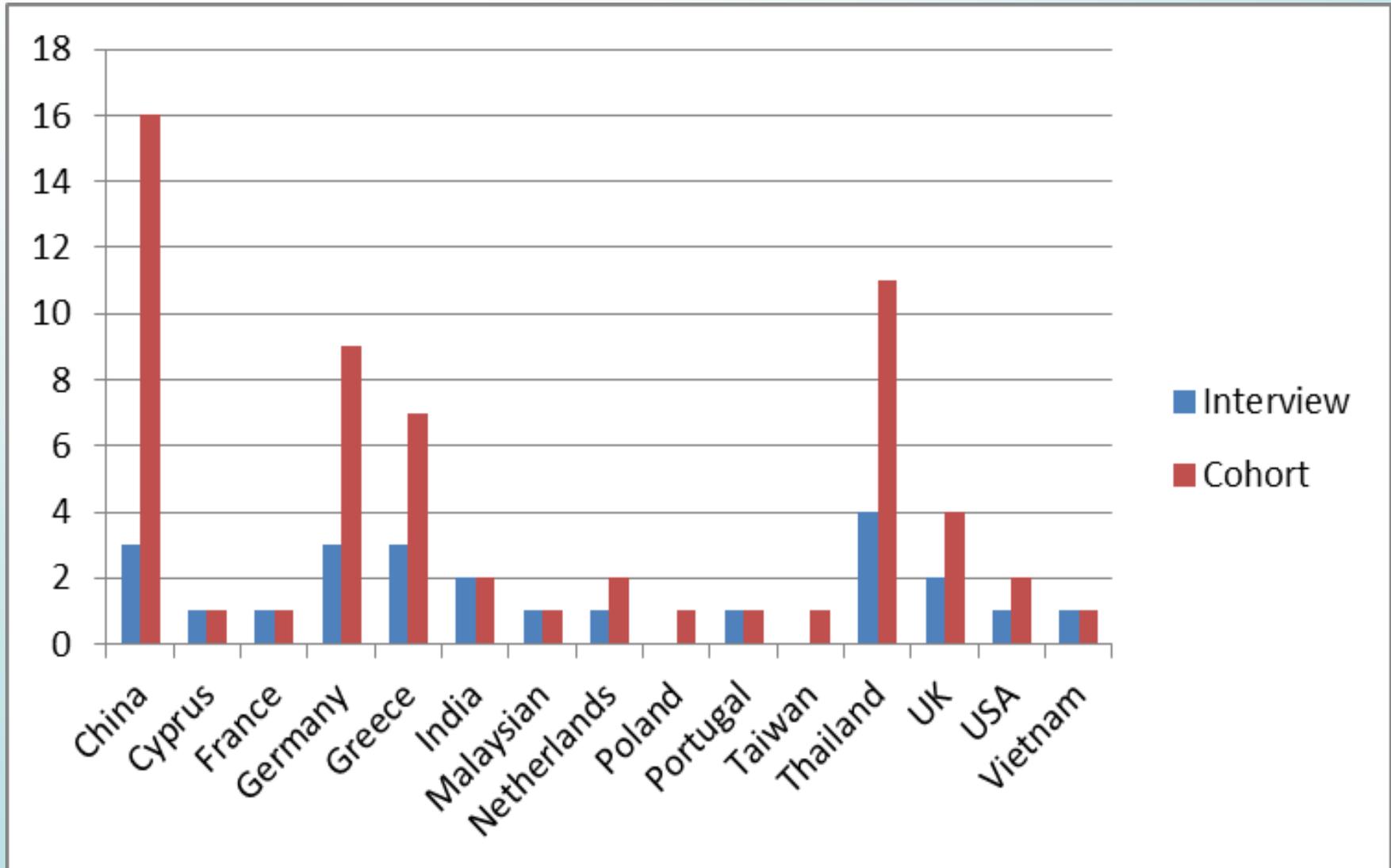
Interview Statistics

Male-Female



Interview Statistics

Nationalities in Cohort



Interview Comments

- We didn't know critical evaluation was important
- Only went as the lecturer told us to... we didn't know that we needed it
- I have studied English for years – but I needed AS to be able to do well in the course
- Learnt critical evaluation through AS, assignment feedback, and as I started doing the dissertation
- I thought the AS lecturer was joking
- Really important for all students – a way to gain a deeper understanding of the UK system

Conclusion

- Model (and the follow up survey) triangulate the idea the critical evaluation is a key skill for PG students to succeed in UK
- Contextualisation Embedding and Mapping is critical for academic skills to be seen by the students as relevant
- Students' primary focus is on critical evaluation & exams
- This has resulted in:
 - a review of the course materials to highlight critical evaluation as a concept that underpins all AS activities and tasks
 - Increased interaction between AS and content lecturers about required AS for cohorts

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