

NEW SEC EU PROJECT

Evaluation Report

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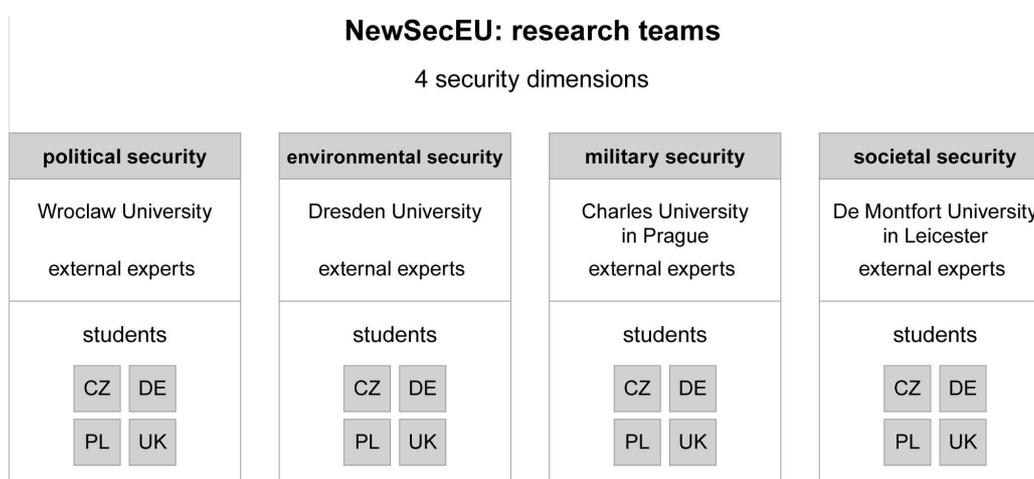
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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The New Dimensions of Security in Europe seminar (NewSecEU) was undertaken by teachers and students from four European universities (Charles University Prague, De Montfort University Leicester, Technical University Dresden and the University of Wrocław). The seminar was intended to allow students to achieve a number of learning outcomes:

1. To strengthen understanding of the link between theoretical analysis and practice in security studies;
2. To develop a broader comprehension of contemporary issues of European security;
3. To develop the communication, information technology and project management skills necessary for successful collaborative working with international partners;

In order to enable students to obtain these outcomes, the teaching team designed a blended learning structure, which combined face-to-face workshops with intensive online learning and collaboration. Participating students were placed into four working groups, each of which dealt with one specific dimension of security as identified in the structure for the analysis of security issues outlined by Buzan, Waeber and de Wilde (1997). Each group was supervised by a lecturer from one of the participating universities. In order to ensure the desired level of cultural exchange among the students, two students from each participating university joined a working group on every one of the four security dimensions in focus. As a result each dimension was made up of eight students representing all the participating universities.



NewSecEU was divided into two semesters, each organized according to specific teaching priorities. At the beginning of the first semester, students met the whole group of tutors and students at a kickoff workshop held in Dresden in October 2009. During the workshop they received an initial briefing about the objectives and expectations for the seminar. They were introduced to the OPAL learning platform and attended lectures from tutors and practitioners introducing the field of security studies, including the basic theoretical and methodological background. The working groups were also formed at this meeting: students undertook some initial

discussions of the peculiarities of their particular security dimension as well as participating in a number of icebreaking and team building exercises.

After the Dresden workshop the first semester was designed to guide participants through a study of the theoretical and historical aspects of security studies, focusing specifically on developments in the area of specialization of the group. During this period, students were expected to read selected literature and relevant documents, post comments in an online forum, and discuss their findings collectively (within working groups). They also had to prepare collective wiki pages covering their respective security dimension. Finally, they had to submit an individual assignment on how the security dimension they were studying affected their home country. Online teaching took place in the OPAL learning platform through which the students communicated with each other and with the tutor, got access to their study materials, prepared their individual and collective outputs, and received the tutor's feedback on their work. In addition to OPAL, other collaboration tools such as Facebook and Skype were employed.

In January students gathered face-to-face for the second time at an interim workshop in Brussels. In preparation for the workshop students had to identify the key contemporary issues in their security dimension. In Brussels they had an opportunity to present the main findings from their work during the first semester via a poster presentation – first to their colleagues from the other working groups, and subsequently to experts from Brussels-based institutions and think-tanks. They also had the opportunity to visit with staff at the European Commission and Parliament. The other purpose of the workshop was to divide the working groups into smaller working teams of four. These teams discussed and selected a specific research topic within their respective security dimension on which they would work for the rest of the seminar.

While the main goal of the first semester of the NewSecEU seminar was to develop student understanding of the theoretical, historical and contemporary issues involved with a specific dimension of European security, the second semester was designed to let them utilise the acquired knowledge. Based on the discussion at the mid-course workshop, the smaller working teams started working on collective policy papers covering eight specific topics relevant to the contemporary security debate in Europe. The form of a policy paper with specific policy recommendations was deliberately chosen to create a link between theory and practice. To enhance this intention, students were provided with contacts to national experts from the respective policy fields with whom they were encouraged to consult during their preparatory work.

The preparation of the policy paper proceeded online through the OPAL platform, using the tools and materials presented to the students during the first semester of the course, including discussion boards and wikis. Thanks to additional project funding, the working teams got an opportunity to meet with their respective tutors in a mid-semester weekend session. Here they were able to present the progress in preparing their papers, raise questions, explain the difficulties and challenges they were facing and receive advice from the tutors.

In order to simulate professional practice, the policy papers were presented by the students at the final conference in Prague. Before the conference, the policy papers were sent to Czech and German experts in the field of security studies for review. These expert reviews were subsequently presented alongside the papers within each panel of the conference. Besides them, the conference was attended by Czech academics, members of think-tanks and students from Prague-based universities. This way, NewSecEU students received feedback on their work from three different

sources: from the tutors of their working groups, from the invited experts through their reviews, and from the audience during the Q&A sessions within each of the panels.

Presentation of the policy papers at the conference was not the final step in the seminars. Following the expert feedback and conference discussions, students were asked to update and abridge their policy papers accordingly to prepare them for a publication. The experts who participated in the Prague conference were asked again to provide a brief reflection to accompany the student texts in the edited volume. The resulting publication, which will be coming out this November, will serve to demonstrate the potential of a combined, multinational student research effort and be a suitable recognition of the hard work and commitment shown by the students throughout.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

During 2009-10, an evaluation was designed across the project to investigate the effects of deploying web-based technologies on the affective and cognitive learning reported by students, and to relate this to the pedagogic approaches of staff. The evaluation was intended to scope the interplay between technologies, learning and curriculum design, and to suggest avenues for further research.

The evaluation sought to uncover a comparison and analysis of similarities and differences between the implementation of collaborative approaches to curriculum delivery and design within the four institutions, relating to the political, military, societal and environmental impact of EU security. The evaluators focused upon the impact of curriculum innovation on students, staff, external stakeholders and policy-making institutions, both as individuals and collaborators.

The evaluation pivoted around the impact of deploying the same technologies within four EU universities and was designed to analyse conversations about emergent curriculum approaches, in order to examine how the tools provided are being embedded, and to align that view with stakeholder perceptions about their experiences. The evaluation approach engaged with the systematic implementation of e-learning innovations and their impact on learning and teaching. Thematic content analysis was used in order to capture the emergent themes. The evaluation provides a pragmatic description of their expectations for the use of those tools and approaches.

The evaluation related to the following research questions:

- What was the impact of the collaborative model for teaching and research on staff and students?
- What was the impact of collaborative international research on the student experience?
- What collaborations emerged between young researchers, policy-making institutions and other non-academic members of the security community during the project?

In engaging with these questions, the evaluation focused on:

- preferred models of learning development and engagement by staff, students and experts with collaborative approaches;
- preferred technologies that support learning development and the actual technologies deployed, including a Learning Management System and Web 2.0 tools; and
- the services that support learning development and collaboration.

The intention was that the evaluation process would be forward-looking, in that it would underpin outcomes and methods for the curriculum design of future modules/programmes. A common theme in the evaluation was an analysis of conversations about emergent curriculum approaches, in order to examine how collaborative, web-based tools affect both student strategies for their use and those students' perceptions of their learning. At this point judgements can be made about the factors that impact these learners' engagement in specific situations.

Thematic content analysis was used in order to capture the emergent themes from a series of interviews and surveys, which were open-ended within limited parameters

outlined below. The interviewees were asked how they used technology to support their learning. Following on from this were three, bounded areas for questioning: personalisation and ownership of the learning environment; motivation and participation within collaborative networks; and the impact of feedback from groups/networks, peers or tutors on performance. The thematic analysis was conducted and the coding scheme was framed and tested by the same evaluator in order to maintain an internal consistency of approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe and Yardley, 2004). The evaluation examines what students said about the impact of these technologies on specific learning experiences, in order to provide a pragmatic description (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Reason, 2003) of the qualities of curriculum delivery through technology that those learners highlighted as valuable or problematic. These emergent qualities were then examined to scope the factors that impact these learners' affectively and cognitively in specific situations.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section has been divided into three parts:

- Student feedback
- Teacher feedback
- Correlations between student and teacher feedback

The numbering in the section enables relevant similarities within the data to be highlighted and conclusions to be cross-referenced back to their original source.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

BEGINNING OF PROJECT

1. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS, HOPES AND FEARS

(Source – video data. Complete data tables in Appendix A)

1.1. Expectations and hopes

Students' expectations and hopes for the project centred around three main themes:

- Knowledge to be gained
- 'Practical' work and results
- Group working dynamics

1.1a Knowledge to be gained:

Overall, most comments related to expecting and hoping to learn more about EU security issues:

'We will widen and open our minds'

Some also expected to learn more about online working, due to the online nature of the project, and to improve their research skills through the work undertaken. Additionally, two international students expected that the project would help to improve their English skills.

Furthermore, along with learning about the issue, a number of students also commented on their hope to deepen their understanding by gaining new ideas and perspectives from the other people in the project:

'The project will help me hear different perspectives from different nationalities about EU security'

'It will be fun and interesting to find out different perspectives on security'

1.1b 'Practical' work and results

Overwhelmingly, within this theme, students' expectations and hopes focused on producing work that would have a practical benefit to politicians and the direction of EU policy:

'We can bring some new ideas to real politicians and the future of the EU'

'What we achieve at the end will give ideas to politicians, some idea will reach to the highest level, and we'll put something from us to the problem of security.'

'To do something that affects policy and helps people, have a positive end to project.'

'Someone will read the paper we create and something will happen on the grounds of it.'

In line with this, others commented on their hopes of ensuring they solved their particular task and had results/solutions to present at the final conference. Two students also hoped for meaningful outcomes to be achieved that they would then be proud of:

'We achieve something like the best paper ever, and we are proud of what we achieve.'

Another clear expectation was that of gaining practical and political input from experts:

'I'm looking forward to working with experts to get some practical input on the theories we'll be working on.'

This is suggested by some as a significant change to the usual focus in their studies on theory:

'Get valuable information from experts in Brussels because we are students and deal with books all the time and never get the opportunity to communicate with real policy makers.'

Additionally, a smaller number of students expected to be challenged, to undertake 'serious' research, and to have the opportunity to apply the knowledge they were gaining to practice.

1.1c Group working dynamics

The dynamics of group working also featured a lot within students' expectations and hopes. Most commented on this in relation to working well with their group and for their group working experience to be successful:

'The team will co-operate well, I hope communication will go well and we work together well.'

'That we solve this problem and we all work together in a good way.'

Other students focused on the expectation of having an interesting experience due to the international make up of the groups, and two commented on their expectation of having a reliable group.

1.1d Other themes emerging

The course: Two students expected the course to be of future benefit to them:

'I expect to get some new ideas for my future life and work.'

'The course will benefit me in future life from using the e-learning method.'

People: This centred on students expecting or hoping to meet new people and make some new friends.

1.2 Fears

The fears students expressed fall into three themes:

- E-learning
- International aspects
- Project work

1.2a E-learning

The main fear expressed by students was the online nature of the course. This was in relation to two aspects: communicating and co-operating online, and online working and learning in general. The quotes below are representative of the main comments made:

'Online learning as it will be a new challenge to me.'

'I'm a little bit scared of the technical part.'

'Co-operation and communication through the internet, as we won't be seeing each other for a couple of months.'

'It may be difficult at times to co-ordinate work online and to see that everyone does the same amount of work.'

'Online learning is a new experience so I'm afraid of misunderstandings that could occur because we won't see each other until Brussels.'

'We may get in too deep into our topic and don't know how to solve it because we only communicate on the internet.'

This fear may have been the most common one as the majority of students who were asked all stated that they had no previous e-learning experience.

1.2b International aspects

Working within an international group also appeared to worry some students at the very beginning of the project. Reasons given relate to working with people from different cultures, which may make negotiating and solving issues difficult:

'Different cultures and people within group. It could be difficult to find the common ground, and find the compromise on a practical issue.'

Additionally, two students suggested that different university schedules (length of semesters, exam times, etc) may also cause problems for the groups to work together effectively.

1.3b Project work

Some general fears about undertaking the work within the project were also expressed. Two feared getting 'stuck' within a problem that would be difficult to solve:

'We might get stuck in a problem and can't come to a solution about the societal dimension of EU security.'

Furthermore, two students worried about having an unorganised group, one indicated some concern about the challenging nature of the task, and one simply feared that they would fail the project.

DURING PROJECT

(Source – video data. Complete data table in Appendix B)

2. What have you learnt?

Eight students were asked the above question at Brussels. Their responses fall into four themes:

- Challenges of online collaboration
- Face to face meetings
- International group working
- Content

2.1 Challenges of online collaboration

A number of these students expressed various difficulties they had found with online collaboration. The most common being that they found it difficult to engage in effective discussions over the internet:

‘Online communication was not very productive, sometimes it was hard to discuss something.’

Additionally, they suggested that coming to conclusions and expressing opinions could also be problematic:

‘Working on an online seminar is not that easy, it’s quite difficult to come to conclusions together. We all put results on OPAL but there was no real discussion.’

‘It’s very difficult dealing with some issue online because some people have difficulties expressing their opinions through online conferencing.’

Furthermore, unequal participation from group members can lead to attention being focused on communication issues rather than the project work itself:

‘It’s quite difficult to work through the internet, it’s very important that everyone participates regularly, which doesn’t always happen. Having no other way to communicate with people other than through OPAL means a lot of time is dedicated to co-operation issues rather than content issues.’

2.2 Face to face meetings

In response to the challenges found with online working, many commented on the value of the face to face meetings for being more productive in progressing discussions and decision making:

‘These four or five days were much more productive than perhaps a whole month through the online platform.’

‘I really appreciate the face to face meeting for us to come to a conclusion together and talk and discuss together.’

'Face to face meetings are very productive. They're useful for us to come and discuss and share our opinions.'

2.3 International group working

The responses from students indicate that they have learnt both positive and negative aspects of working within an internationally mixed group. On the positive side, they have found the experience interesting and it has enabled them to gain different ideas and opinions. However, it may also make discussions and negotiations difficult:

'I discovered that it can be difficult to work with people from different nationalities but it can also be an advantage to have many opinions all together in the room.'

'I enjoyed the collaboration in the team although sometimes it was hard to negotiate some issues.'

2.4 Content

Two students also indicated that the project has had an impact on their studying, thinking and knowledge of security issues:

'My way of studying has changed and we've not done real research yet so it will change even more. My thinking about the subject of International Relations has changed.'

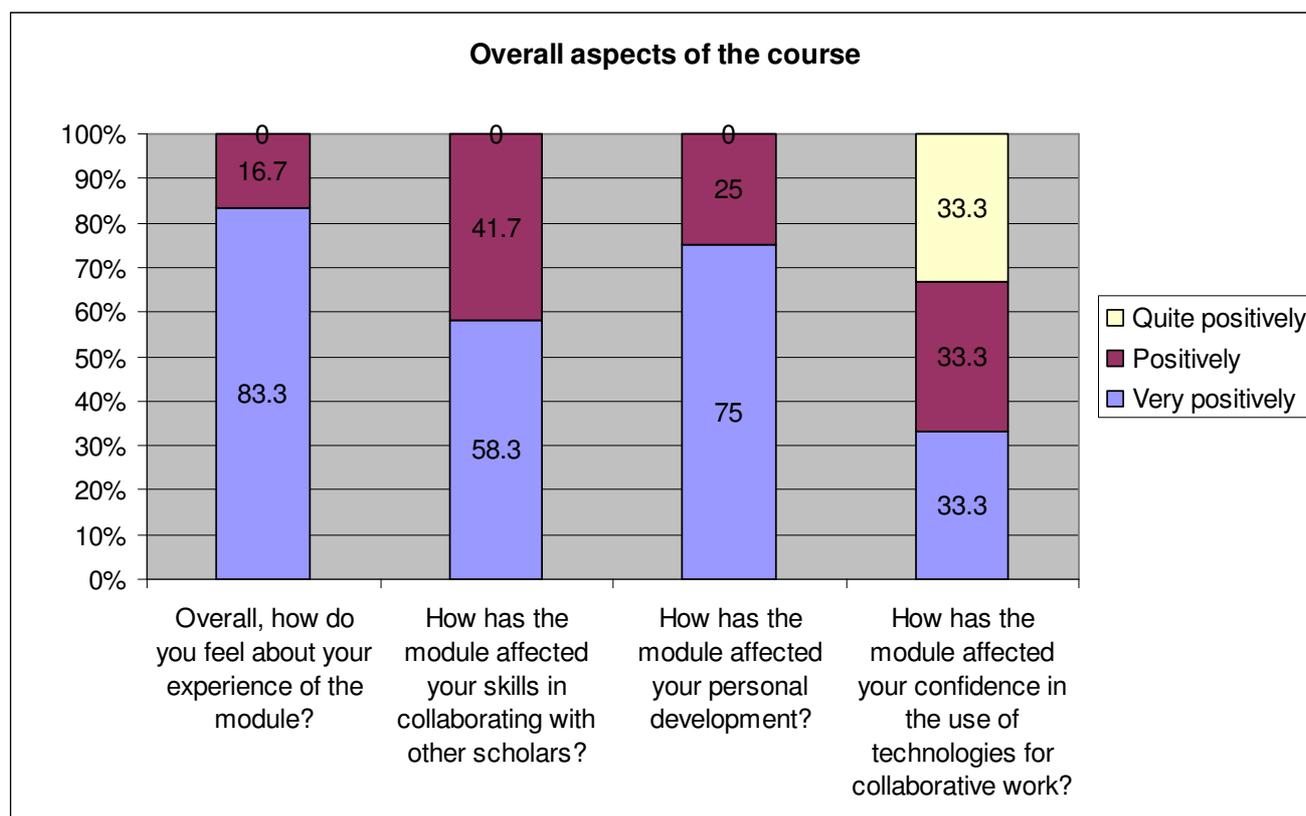
'I've learnt a lot about the whole topic of security.'

END OF PROJECT

3. Survey

(Source – Survey monkey: 12 respondents. Data tables in Appendix C)

3.Q1.



Please add any further detail about your development:

Three themes emerged in relation to this:

- Improved skills

Students indicate that the project has helped to improve their academic skills, their communication skills and their English skills:

'I believe this course pushed me to my limits and greatly improved my knowledge, writing, reading and communications skills overall.'

- Gained new skills

Additional skills were also gained of working in an online group, and working within the particular design of the project:

'An online research seminar was new for me. I developed quite a lot of new skills of how to deal with this kind of seminar and how to work in a group which is just online and not face to face.'

- Enjoyment of studying

Students also stated that the project was an interesting and inspiring experience for them:

'An extremely interesting and inspiring thing!'

3.Q2. In terms of module delivery, what worked well and what could be improved?

Q2a – What worked well?

- Group work

Face to face meetings and small group working were felt to have worked well throughout the course:

'In the course of the whole project, our group agreed that meeting face to face is far more effective than our debates online.'

'The face to face seminars were useful and produced the most efficient allocation of time.'

'I think that work in smaller groups was more effective, also the "brain storms", real meetings brought us lots of good ideas, that's why I believe that face to face meetings made our project much richer.'

- Organisation

One to one meetings and the planning/delivery of the module were felt by three students to have been effective during the project.

- Internet

The internet was perceived by one student as a valuable tool for staying in contact with people and finding recent and relevant research;

'The internet is a great thing to stay in permanent contact so it was not a problem to get the up-to-date information necessary to pursue our project.'

Q2b – What could be improved?

The following points come out of the comments made:

- Organisation
 - Reduce misunderstandings (about money, food, dates, etc)
 - Have more face to face meetings
 - Have more structure to meetings
 - Have stricter deadlines
 - Allow more rest time during events

- Tasks
 - Specify purpose more
 - Reduce 'pointless' work/tasks (especially at the beginning of project)
- Feedback
 - Increase the amount given

3.Q3. Teaching: Did the styles of teaching you experienced during NewSecEU differ from the ones that you have experienced in your home country? If yes, what do you think of these differences and how did you adapt to changes?

Q3a – How did teaching styles differ to those you have experienced?

Teaching styles were felt to have differed in three main ways:

- Course design

Students indicated that the design of the project placed more emphasis on self-directed learning, and discussion and dialogue, which they have not experienced much of previously:

'The teaching was built on dialogues and discussions, which had a very positive effect on what I have learned. For the first time in my life, I have the feeling that I have produced knowledge instead of just repeating and consuming it. I imagine that the work in the seminary was closer to what I will do later in my job.'

'The style of teaching differs a lot. We had the possibility to work by ourselves and the teacher just directed us sometimes when we had problems. But we had the possibility to do everything in a very free frame and to make mistakes. I needed to get used to it in the first place. But this was a kind of a free work in a group I enjoyed a lot, even if it was very difficult at some points.'

'The differences certainly placed even more emphasis on ourselves as scholars.'

Additionally, the online nature of the project and the distance learning element was also a new experience for some:

'There were no weekly meetings in a classroom. That's the most interesting and hardest part of the program. Being concentrated about the next task but knowing that nobody can really force you to do anything (except your homeland teacher, but still). So you have to remind yourself that people are expecting you to do your work.'

One student also expressed delight in having been able to apply theory to practice:

'The teaching method was brilliant!!! For the first time since the beginning of my university studies, I was able to apply a theory to practical considerations and it finally does seem to make sense to me.'

- Tutors

The role the tutors took in the project was a different style to those experienced by some before:

'We had more personal contact with tutors. I think it really helped us during the project.'

'Teachers were available all the time, open to answer every question. I appreciated that they sent their feedback to the group's work very quickly.'

- Group working

The team working and small group working style of the project was commented on by some as a different style to which they have been used to:

'The main teaching was in smaller groups than usually, therefore more intensive.'

'It differed a lot, mainly because it was based on a team work and created a situation when everybody needs to contribute so the whole group can work.'

Q3b – What do you think of these differences?

Students answered this in relation to the impact the different teaching styles had on them. Their responses suggest (evident in the quotes given above) that the emphasis on self-direction, distance learning and team working empowered them as learners and led to more meaningful learning.

3.Q4. Teaching: How could the team teaching on NewSecEU have been improved?

Most responses given to this question relate to teaching generally within the project, rather than specifically team teaching. Comments relate to three themes:

- Improve the provision of information

Students wanted more information provided that related to:

- marking criteria
- deadlines
- task requirements
- policy paper format
- what is expected from students on the course

- Online aspects

Some students wanted more frequent online sessions and the use of better technologies for online contact.

- Team teaching specifically

For those who did comment specifically on team teaching, they suggest that the project needs to ensure that all teachers get engaged and involved. Additionally, more support and guidance from teachers would be valued.

3.Q5. What do you think about the role of experts during NewSecEU?

- Positive comments

Overall, most of the comments received for this question suggest that students found the experts helpful and knowledgeable, and appreciated their feedback and input into discussions:

'Their feedback was very useful in terms of future work on a policy paper. We also got very important critical assessment of our work.'

'I think that they were quite helpful. The more opinion we got about our work the better.'

'Excellent, the knowledge is amazing and if anything an indication to where students should aim to be.'

- Negative comments

Two students, however, stated that the experts seemed unclear about their role within the project:

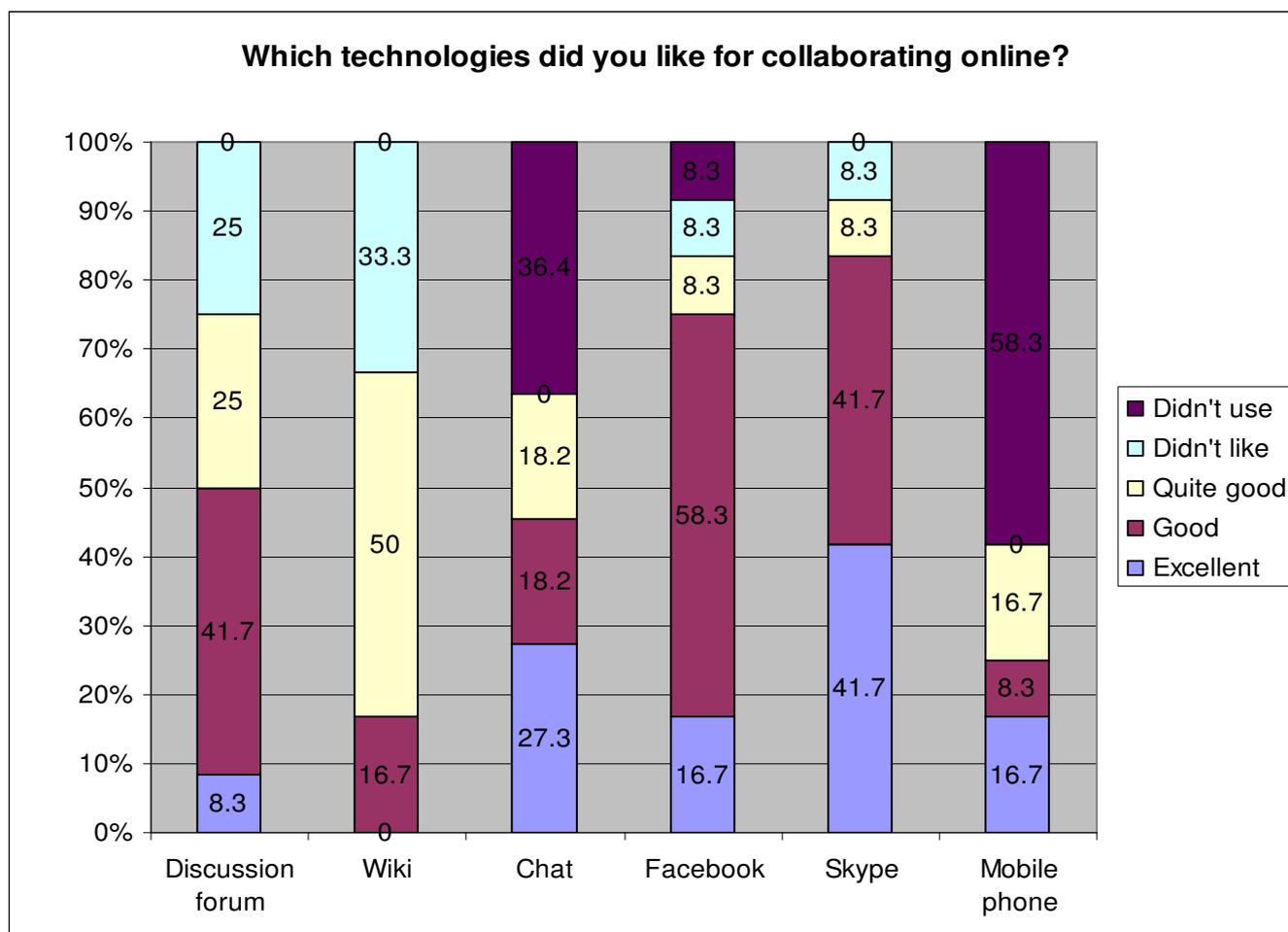
'I had the feeling that they were not always interested or even prepared. So their role in the project should be more clear in the first place.'

The following quote offers one view of how improvements could be made:

'the role of experts was a mixed bag, some being extremely useful and others feeling as if they were not entirely sure what we were looking for. The best opportunities came when a more informal approach was taken and experts were available for questioning. If possible in the future, splitting the groups up with relevant experts for each would be a benefit over having one expert for the whole group (32 in this instance) which left too little time for each group to ask the questions they wished on their specific areas. One opportunity which may have been missed was attempting when not in our face to face seminars to use experts from our national arena. In this instance each set of two would be able to identify some experts from say British uni's/institutes, as would each other set of nationalities then come together online to share thoughts. This may alleviate some of the time pressures to arrange something in a two day window with the opportunity to expand the use of experts and have a wider time scale to interview/meet/question etc.'

Five out of 11 respondents also expressed disappointment at having little or no contact with experts.

3.Q6. Which technologies did you like for collaborating online?



Why do you think some of these are better than others for collaboration?

Overall, the students suggest in their responses to this part of the question that different technology works better at different times of the project, i.e. it depends on the nature of the work they are trying to carry out at a particular time. Consequently, there was no specific technology thought of as better than the others. However, aspects mentioned in relation to the particular technologies were:

- Skype
 - Useful for team discussions
 - Benefits from immediacy
 - Allows real time collaboration
 - Less public than other forums
 - But – voice functions are problematic
- Discussion forum
 - More space for comments and diagrams
 - Ability to check over work during project
 - Public space for sharing information

- But – difficult for group to come to conclusion in it

- Facebook

- Benefits from immediacy
- Useful to connect and make contact with people
- Less formal, so encourages discussion

- Mobile phone

- Benefits from immediacy
- But – too expensive to use

- Wikis

- Useful to sum up discussions

In addition to discussing the specific technologies, certain themes arose about the benefits of similar types of technologies:

- Immediacy

A number of students commented on the benefits of technologies like Skype, Facebook and mobile phones to enable immediate responses and answers to questions to be gained. This is in contrast to having to continually check other technologies, such as wikis and forums. However, immediacy was not always wanted. For example, forums were commented on as enabling students to check and re-check work as the project progressed.

- Informality

Facebook was mentioned as an informal format that therefore encouraged greater discussion and expression. However, this informality was also felt by some to make it a less effective 'work' tool. Its particular benefits for these students focused mainly on the ease of contacting people through it.

- 'Catching' online

Skype and Facebook were also seen to make it easier to 'catch' people online. This is in contrast to formats such as wikis and emails, which people do not generally stay logged in to and therefore have to keep checking for responses.

3.Q7. Did technology help or hinder your collaboration with your study group? Please explain.

Overall, eight students stated clearly that technology *helped* their group collaboration. However, the general view was that using technology was a necessity and the only way for the project to run effectively due to group members being located in different countries.

Three students said it helped collaboration, but they still believed that face to face meetings were the most productive for getting work done.

Three also said that it helped collaboration, but was a hindrance at first because of having to get used to new technologies and learn how to use them. OPAL was mentioned twice as a hindrance through difficulties experienced using it, and through it not being familiar and so not regularly checked.

3.Q8. Were there any differences in the ways students from the different countries worked? If yes, how did these differences affect collaboration?

Most differences mentioned were those based around personality rather than culture. Many commented on the difficulties of working with people with different motivation levels and characteristics to themselves, which is inherent in most group working situations.

Comments that can be related to culture were:

- Different university systems/schedules (e.g. exam times, semester times) were mentioned by two students as creating problems in the amount of time each person within the group could give to the project.
- Two commented on the importance of having native English speakers in the group to ensure the final paper is well written.
- British students were perceived by two international students as being very good at looking in-depth at a specific issue. One further commented though that their wider background knowledge is not as good:

'I found that the UK students in particular are far more to the point in looking at an issue, researching it and trying to solve it.'

'The study method in Britain is more about focusing on one specific problem in details - so the students' knowledge background is not so wide but they really can make a great evaluation of one distinct issue into deep details.'

- Two students stated that differences were felt within the group, but that these were useful and helped people learn from one another:

'We could observe the impact of different types of teaching and learning. I saw, as a Polish student, how big problems we have with writing about methodology. But those differences were helpful and we could learn from each other.'

- One student commented that differences could create friction within the group, but that this was alleviated when a rules-based system was introduced.

3.Q9. Were there any other difficulties in collaboration? If yes, how did you overcome these issues?

Only a small number of comments were received for this question. Two students commented on difficulties with their group and the commitment levels from other members:

'We overcame them by forming groups in which the students knew each other and understood the different problems. If something important happened we discussed it at the forum or informed our teacher.'

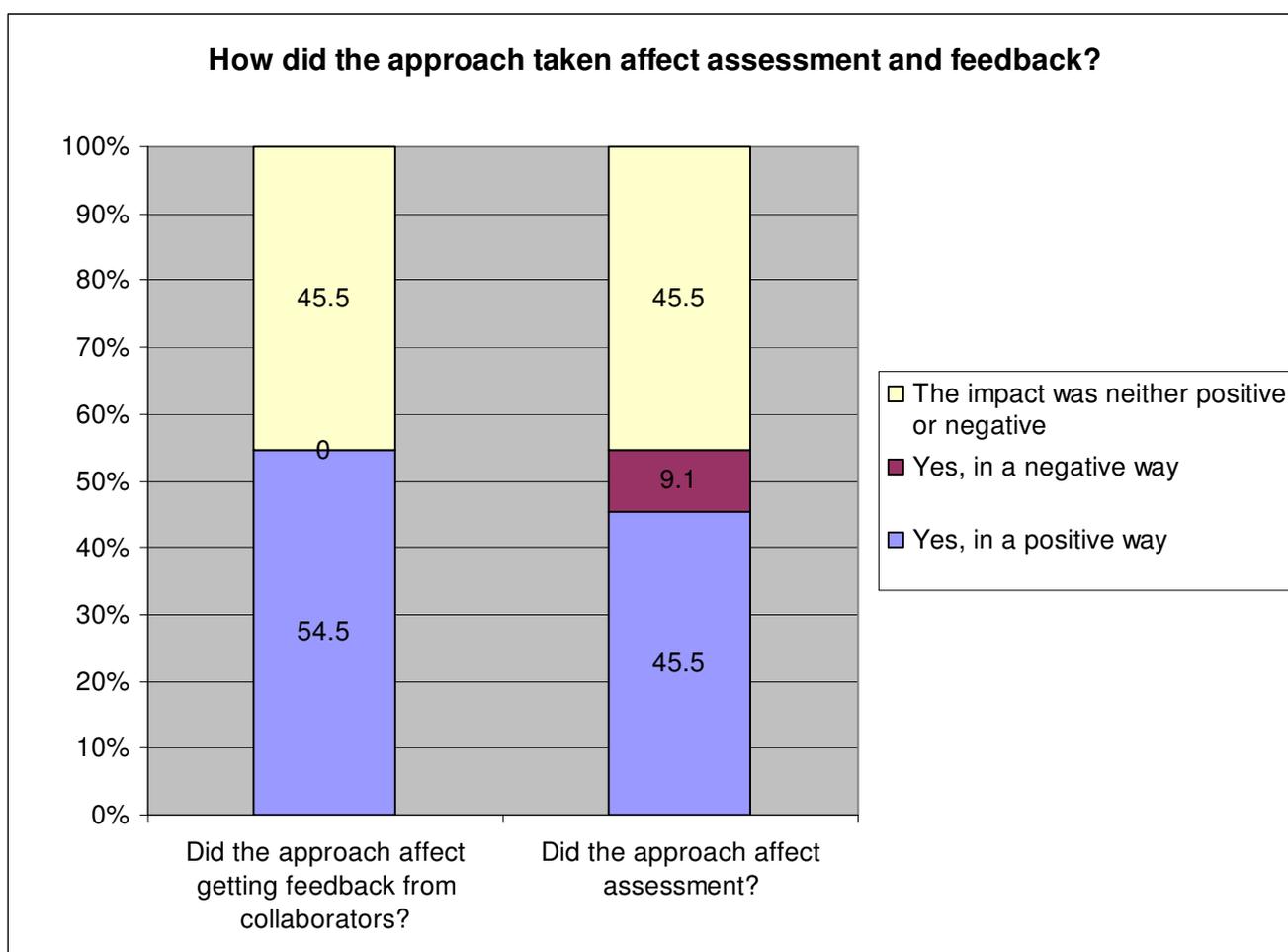
‘That we set up another face to face meeting helped a lot to go on with our work. In this way we overcame slight difficulties.’

Language was also mentioned by one student as another difficulty which was not really overcome but:

‘...patience and discussion to ensure a group position was taken on issues helped.’

Additionally, the difficulties of different university schedules were commented on by one student as an issue that they could not overcome themselves.

3.Q10. Assessment and Feedback on NewSecEU. How did the approach taken affect assessment and feedback?



Please explain any impact on feedback and assessment and tell us what changes you would recommend for assessment and feedback.

There were no comments made about the impact, but the following recommendations were given:

- Explain what work will and will not be moderated

- Focus assessment on larger tasks and those more related to the final product. This will help to give the group a better indication of how they are doing.

4. Positive and negative comments

(Sources – video clips, handed in papers. Complete data tables in Appendices D and E)

4.1 Positives

These comments are separated into positives about the final conference specifically and the project as a whole.

4.1.a *The final conference:*

(Source – handed in papers)

Five themes emerged in relation to the positive comments received about the conference:

4.1.a1 Organisation

The majority of comments stated that the conference was well organised and useful. The discussions had were viewed as very valuable and overall it was seen as a good opportunity to present the work undertaken during the project.

4.1.a2 Experts

Many positive comments were made about the experts. Overall they were seen to be well chosen, helpful, knowledgeable, honest and professional. One student also valued working on an equal level with them:

'I found the conference extremely useful and enjoyed being treated on an equal footing to other researchers and not simply as an undergrad.'

4.1.a3 Feedback

The feedback gained during the conference was viewed largely as very constructive and useful. Even negative feedback was seen to be valuable in helping the students to improve:

'Even though they were very honest in all cases of giving feedback and criticising, the feedbacks were (all of them) quite useful for all of us to improve the papers to actual policy papers.'

'The critics were constructive, thus it showed us all positive and negative parts of our job. It's really helpful, especially if someday we would have to write similar policy papers.'

'The most positive part was the critical evaluation of the papers, which really told us what the policy paper should be (the form) and where we did mistakes.'

A number of students commented on the value of the feedback for informing them about the appropriate format for writing policy papers.

4.1.a4 Learning

Students also stated that they had learnt a lot during the conference, and one also had the opportunity to improve their English speaking skills:

'The conference helped me to face the stress caused by talking in English to a group of people, but I think I succeeded.'

4.1.a5 Location

A number indicated that the venue of the conference was good, and one stated that they liked the hostel where they stayed.

4.1.b The project overall:

(Source – video clips and handed in papers)

Three themes arose regarding the positive aspects of the project as a whole:

4.1.b1 Group working

The group working experience, in particular the international co-operation and communication aspects, was most commonly mentioned by students. Many found the process interesting and enjoyable because of this, and it also gave some valuable learning opportunities:

'International co-operation – it was really fun working with them and sharing different opinions.'

'Meeting variety of people from different countries was good and learning how to co-operate with each other and how to make some good work.'

'International co-operation could be quite difficult and I can now see the difficulties for European bureaucrats to co-operate, and find solutions and agreements. It's useful for me to understand.'

Students also liked the opportunity the project gave to meet new people and gain different opinions and perspectives about the EU topic.

4.1.b2 New experiences

The project gave a lot of new experiences to some students, which centred mostly on e-learning and communicating online. The learning design of the project also featured within this:

'It was a new way of sharing ideas, knowledge and skills.'

4.1.b3 Topic

The topic was also received positively by some students who viewed it as both interesting and practical:

'The end of the project was very educational and practical.'

4.1.b4 General comments

A number of other general comments were made about the positive aspects of the project. Three students enjoyed the opportunity to travel to different places and see new sights, the project helped to improve one student's English skills, and another commented on the skills gained in writing a policy paper.

4.2 Negatives

(Source – video clips and handed in papers)

These comments relate to the project overall and fall into five main themes:

4.2a Organisation/co-ordination of project

The organisation of the project received the most critical comments from students. Many stated that there were problems, but did not specify their exact nature. For those that were stated, the late notice of information being given was top of the list. This was felt to have a detrimental effect on the students' abilities to plan and prioritise their work:

'Late notice of information made things complicated.'

'Sometimes things were told last minute and had deadlines for it. It was hard to fit into other workload.'

Some students also commented that the aims and objectives of the project were not clear, which to them indicated a lack of prior planning and forethought:

'Throughout the project it was not always clear where we were and why we were doing things.'

'The course doesn't seem to have been thought through in greater detail – there were some elements/problems which could have been avoided in prior planning was made and evaluated.'

The issue of money was commented on by some students, with the two most common problems being that 10 Euros was not enough and the refunding process took too long. A number of comments were also made about the need for more writing/preparation time and less time spent focusing on the theory. Other aspects raised include:

- an unproductive meeting in Brussels
- travel times that were too long
- a lack of expert talks and expert perspectives
- face to face meetings that were too short
- a lack of clear tasks throughout the project
- a general sense of a chaotic project

'Despite the enormous effort of course organisers, there were many times chaos in activities, programme and required duties.'

4.2b Tutor involvement

The majority of negative comments made about this aspect relate to one specific tutor who was perceived to be unhelpful and uncommunicative. Students

commented on being unable to get advice and assistance from him, and feeling that he was uninvolved and unengaged with the project.

A lack of co-ordination and communication from tutors in general was mentioned by some students as negatively affecting their progress in the project. In response to this, some commented on the need for more involvement and support to be given, which may in turn help to make sure some group members do their allocated work:

'I think the tutor should push the students and evaluate the project by some points or mark. Otherwise everyone thinks it's only an informal requirement to submit stuff on OPAL and hence not do so.'

4.2c Lack of information

There were three areas in which students felt information was lacking from tutors. The main one though was about how to write a policy paper. A significant number of students stated that enough guidance had not been given on this:

'Teachers need to make clear what a policy paper is and what an academic paper is.'

'We needed more input on how to write the paper.'

Additionally, a lack of marks received throughout the year and having no information about the marking criteria was felt to negatively affect the quality of work produced:

'No information given on what we will be marked on – was hard all throughout because I was not sure if I was doing well or bad or whether I needed to improve (this is very important for a student).'

'I don't know what my mark is – would've been nice to know as the course was going along rather than right at the end.'

4.2d Online group working

Difficulties around ensuring co-operation online were mentioned frequently by students, and many expressed disappointment in a lack of input from some members of their group:

'E-learning was difficult to take to, it was difficult to make people work or reply, and there was almost no discussion.'

'There was different motivation of students, some were very lazy. Because it was over the internet you had to co-operate and be on time with your submission and do your part, if not it makes it hard for the others. This needs to be improved for the next time.'

Some students suggested that the lack of meeting face to face added to this:

'A lack of personal (face to face) contact made some members feel less responsible for the group work.'

'More face to face contact would make some people more responsible for being on time with work.'

Tutors and more precise co-ordination may also have a role to play in overcoming this:

'Sometimes co-operation wasn't always good, I sometimes ended up having to do work for others who weren't responding. May be this could be overcome by setting some official rules by the tutors.'

'Live meetings showed us that e-learning is possible, but only when connected with live meetings and if you want to succeed – you must co-ordinate.'

4.2e The final conference

Although there were many positive comments relating to the feedback given at the conference, as discussed above, a number of students felt that some of the experts had been rude and focused only on giving negative feedback. A smaller number were disappointed with the late notice of information related to the posters, and others felt that presentation time had not been respected with some groups over-running.

4.2f General comments

Some other general comments given show that two students felt they had failed either in writing a correct policy paper, or affecting policy:

'We won't have changed EU policy with our work, so we have failed.'

Additionally, two other students perceived language challenges to have been a negative aspect of the project.

4.3 Improvements

Following on from the negative comments expressed, a small number of students did make some recommendations for future improvements:

4.3a The policy paper

- give specific information/lecture on how to write it
- it would be more useful to meet experts once the policy paper topics are set

4.3b The final conference

- it would be useful to have feedback/comments on the paper before presenting it
- presentation time should be respected – not over run
- organisation of travel to conference should be improved
- should arrive a couple of days before the conference to allow for rest and preparation with the group
- external audience may be confused by the design of the critique

5. What have you learnt?

(Source – video clips. Complete data in Appendix E)

A total of 14 students commented on what they had learnt at the end of the project.

5.1 Knowledge

Many felt they had increased their knowledge about EU security issues, writing a policy paper, and academic practices in general.

5.2 Group working skills

Some students felt they had gained valuable skills in working within a distance and internationally-based group:

'I learnt to work in an international group.'

'I learnt how to defend my ideas in an international team.'

5.3 Online learning skills

Generally, students indicated they had learnt more about carrying out online work/research and communicating online:

'I learnt how to communicate with other people through the internet.'

5.4 Self-organisation in learning

A small number of students commented on learning more about organising themselves and their learning:

'I learnt how to organise myself in the absence of much guidance.'

'I learnt to organise myself within a group without any teacher at all.'

6. SUMMARY OF STUDENT FEEDBACK

Below are the main points emerging from the student evaluation data:

6.1 What students have gained:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| • New skills/knowledge | - EU security issue | (Report section)
2.4; 5.1 |
| | - e-learning/distance learning | 3.Q1; 4.1.b2 |
| | - international and distance
group working | 2.3; 4.1.b1; 5.2 |
| | | |

'An online research seminar was new for me. I developed quite a lot of new skills of how to deal with this kind of seminar and how to work in a group which is just online and not face to face.'

'International co-operation could be quite difficult and I can now see the difficulties for European bureaucrats to co-operate, and find solutions and agreements. It's useful for me to understand.'

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| • Benefits of international experience | - working with/meeting new people | 4.1.b1 |
| | - gaining many different views/perspectives | 2.3; 4.1.b1 |
| | - understanding of different cultures | 4.1.b1 |

'I discovered that it can be difficult to work with people from different nationalities but it can also be an advantage to have many opinions all together in the room.'

'International co-operation – it was really fun working with them and sharing different opinions.'

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| • Benefits from project design | - working with/gaining feedback from experts | 3.Q5; 4.1.a2; 4.1.a3 |
| | - applying knowledge to practice | 3.Q3 |
| | - self-directed learning | 3.Q3; 5.4 |

'The critics were constructive, thus it showed us all positive and negative parts of our job. It's really helpful, especially if someday we would have to write similar policy papers.'

'The teaching method was brilliant!!! For the first time since the beginning of my university studies, I was able to apply a theory to practical considerations and it finally does seem to make sense to me.'

We had the possibility to work by ourselves and the teacher just directed us sometimes when we had problems. But we had the possibility to do everything in a very free frame and to make mistakes.

6.2 What students found challenging:

- **Online group working** - ensuring equal co-operation and input from all group members (Report section) 2.1; 3.Q9; 4.2d
- discussing/coming to conclusions online 2.1

'E-learning was difficult to take to, it was difficult to make people work or reply, and there was almost no discussion.'

'Working on an online seminar is not that easy, it's quite difficult to come to conclusions together. We all put results on OPAL but there was no real discussion.'

- **Lack of information provision** - late notice of information/deadlines 3.Q4; 4.2a
- format of policy paper 3.Q4; 4.2c; 4.3a
- marking criteria 3.Q4; 4.2c

'Sometimes things were told last minute and had deadlines for it. It was hard to fit into other workload.'

'Teachers need to make clear what a policy paper is and what an academic paper is.'

'No information given on what we will be marked on – was hard all throughout because I was not sure if I was doing well or bad or whether I needed to improve (this is very important for a student).'

- **Less tutor involvement and engagement than students are used to** 3.Q4; 4.2b

'I think the tutor should push the students and evaluate the project by some points or mark. Otherwise everyone thinks it's only an informal requirement to submit stuff on OPAL and hence not do so.'

6.3 Areas for improvement:

- **Organisation of project** - prior planning/co-ordination (Report section) 3.Q4; 4.2a

'Throughout the project it was not always clear where we were and why we were doing things.'

TEACHER FEEDBACK

END OF PROJECT

7. Survey

(Source – Survey monkey: 3 respondents)

Due to the smaller number of respondents, a narrative rather than thematic discussion is presented below. Connections with the student feedback are also made where appropriate.

7.Q1. How do you feel about the delivery of the module?

All three teachers stated they were happy with the delivery of the module. Particular comments made indicate satisfaction with partnership working and the delivery of the course to the students:

‘Partners mostly cooperated well when it came to study trips and joint teaching sessions.’

‘I think the delivery went smoothly enough, given the complicated structure of the whole project and the need to accommodate the different interests and views of the four partners.’

‘Students got on well with the content of the seminar as well as with each other. Thus it seems the content was delivered in a way that was comprehensible for the students.’

‘We stuck fairly closely to the course we designed and it seemed to work relatively well.’

Two points however were made in relation to contact with students that may suggest areas for future improvement:

‘Student-expert involvement is probably a weak point when it comes to contact during the course of the seminar.’

‘I underestimated how much work that the course would involve, especially the online sections of the module. At times I feel that I did not give my students as much feedback and support as I would have liked too.’

7.Q2. How has involvement in NewSecEU changed your teaching?

Two themes can be seen to emerge within the teachers’ responses to this question:

- Communication

Two teachers commented on the project making them reflect on how they communicate and give feedback to students within an online course. One stated that they believe they can do this more effectively in the future, and the other suggested ways of improving the provision of information to students:

'Too much information got lost, students did not remember or did not know where to find the relevant information. So next time I think we could maybe put up something like a "notice board", where the most important structural information is posted and latest news relevant for all students will be put up.'

○ Negotiated work

For two teachers, the 'open ended' nature of the project, in which students have more negotiation and decision-making responsibilities, has been a considerable advantage and something likely to be followed up in their future teaching practice:

'I loved the open-ended nature of the module - the idea of teaching a course where a proportion of the content is negotiated with the students was exciting and something I want to bring into my own work.'

'It taught me a great deal about balancing the need for structuring students' work with the necessity to allow them enough space for their initiative.'

Other points were also made about the impact of the project on the teachers' practices. One teacher in particular identified a number of aspects:

'It really made me reflect on issues around course construction - how to scaffold learning effectively; I became more aware of the differences between online and face-to-face teaching and the need to reconceptualise my approach to the former - an ongoing project; it reinforced my belief in the power of international collaborative learning.'

Another teacher commented on the need to dedicate more input to the policy paper format:

'The experience with how little students (and us, to some extent) know about the specific form of writing that is policy paper inspired me to prepare a specific course dedicated to this matter.'

It is important to note here that all of the comments made in relation to this question relate directly to the feedback received from the students. Many students commented on the greater responsibilities they had within this project and the empowerment this led to in their learning (sections 3.Q3; 5.4). Additionally, a significant benefit of the project, as expressed by the students, was the international group working aspect and value of gaining so many different views and perspectives (sections 2.3; 4.1.b1; 5.2).

Areas identified for improvement also correlate to the responses from students. Communication was a key issue seen as needing further work to make it more effective (sections 3.Q4; 4.2b), and many commented on the need for more information/input on the format of a policy paper and how to write it (sections 3.Q4; 4.2c; 4.3).

7.Q3. How do you feel about the role of the experts during NewSecEU? What value did it add to the project?

All three teachers saw the role of the experts as very valuable and an important part of the project. They were felt to bring the professional and practice-related perspective essential to widening the knowledge of the students:

'Their main contribution was bringing a point of view the tutors as academics simply do not have, including specific and detailed information of their area of expertise.'

'It brought a professional context to the project that is different to the academic framework that students usually operate in. This was very important, because it raised the standards for the students to meet.'

'They [students] could get an impression on a) what do the experts perceive to be important and pressing issues and how do they appreciate the topics and thoughts our students had, and b) what is the day to day work of a specific expert in a chosen policy area. The second point has been very weak, since students and experts never engaged over a longer period of time. The first point seems to have been more successful.'

The feedback from students affirms that the practical knowledge and feedback given by the experts, and their professional perspectives of the issues being investigated, were highly valued by the students and seen as a particular strength of the project (sections 3.Q5; 4.1.a2; 4.1.a3).

There was consensus though from the teachers that further work could be done to make this involvement more effective. For example, one teacher suggested that next time:

'we should make sure to establish reliable contact to experts before the project and build up a stronger personal link to these experts, so they can actually understand more about the project and break the ice with the students.'

This teacher also commented on variations of input given by the experts. Some appeared interested and tried to engage with the students, whereas others acted mainly as a commentator at the final conference. This view is confirmed by the feedback from students, who perceived that some of the experts were not very clear about the nature of their role in the project (section 3.Q5).

7.Q4. How did the use of technology impact on the design of the course and the way you taught?

In line with the students' views, the teachers stated that technology was essential to the running of the project. However, the responses suggest that more forethought and planning may need to be given to *how* tasks are designed and *how* technologies are used to ensure the online setting is an effective one:

'Designing a course in an online setting requires a much more thorough planning of the modules. Tasks have to be phrased very carefully, information has to be published at a place that students can easily access/find.'

'I think I probably needed to spend more time thinking about how we used tools to help the students to know how to use them.'

Many of the students commented that the project had taught them a lot about e-learning and communicating with others online (sections 3.Q1; 4.1.b2; 5.3). This also appears to apply to some of the teachers, both in relation to interacting and teaching online:

'In online teaching students seemed to find it difficult to "listen" to each other. Either they were too shy (maybe did not understand the task, were not sure how to use certain tools, etc.) or they were content posting their own thoughts, quite often without any reference to other students' postings. This however improved dramatically as time went by, topic was narrowed down and students had to come to conclusions about their work.

A free-flow of thoughts was difficult in the beginning and I found myself trying to be ever more precise in the formulation of tasks.'

'As for teaching, learning how much to intervene was interesting. Our Skype chats were very helpful for both social and educational reasons - it helped us to trust each other.'

The first of the two quotes above does demonstrate some of the difficulties the students themselves expressed with collaborating online. A number of students commented on the lack of discussions taking place and the challenges of coming to conclusions and drawing work together (sections 2.1; 4.2d). It was for this reason that the students valued so highly the face to face meetings (sections 2.2; 3.Q2; 3.Q7). However, lack of e-learning experience for most of the students may be a significant cause of these difficulties and so this may reduce as experience and confidence is gained.

A further comment from a teacher regarding online learning can also be seen to relate to the feedback gained from students:

'Students however seemed to need a much clearer and stricter guidance content-wise as well as in terms of deadlines, behaviour online, etc.'

The responses from many of the students suggest that this would be welcomed, as concerns over when to do work and lack of participation from some group members were common negative points raised about the project. Some students also specifically identified the need for more rules and guidance from the tutors (sections 4.2d).

7.Q5. What was the impact of technology on student learning and collaboration?

Overall, the teachers agreed that, due to the nature of the project, student learning and collaboration would not have been possible without the use of technology. The teachers' comments indicate the use of formal and informal technologies in the same way that the students responses do, and both highlight similar advantages and disadvantages for each technology (section 3.Q6).

OPAL was viewed by one teacher as a technology that some students struggled with, which is confirmed in the student feedback. Skype was viewed positively as enabling discussion, though this was commented on as intensive for the teacher as:

'normal turn-taking procedures did not work as smoothly as in face-to-face discussion.'

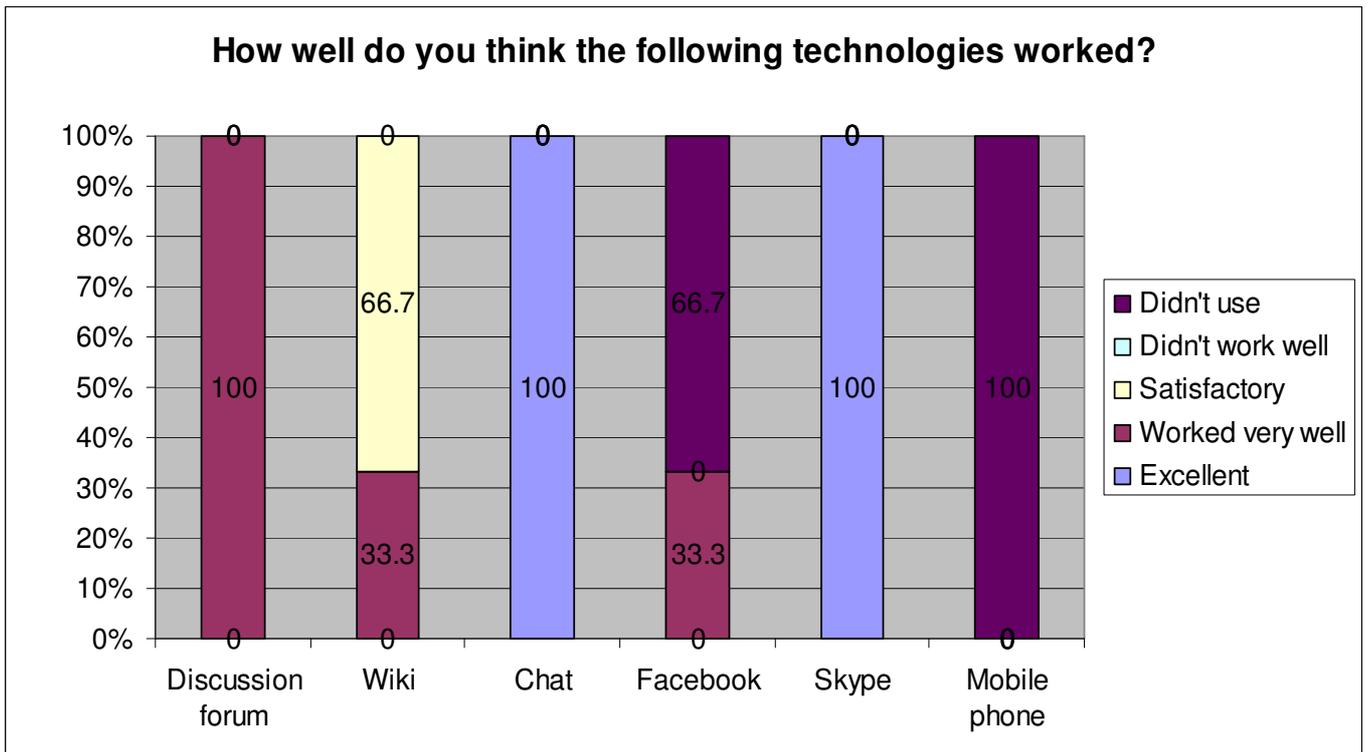
Face to face meetings though were still viewed as being more effective for discussions and coming to solutions:

'More discussion and willingness to debate their opinions would be good. Somehow this seems easier in face-to-face scenarios than online.'

'Some situations (typically: solving a strong conflict of views within a working group) seem to be more susceptible to solutions based on face-to-face contacts.'

These comments align very closely to the views of many students who felt the face to face meetings were more productive enabling discussions and conclusions to be made, which helped to progress their work further (sections 2.2; 3.Q2; 3.Q7).

7.Q6. How well do you think the following technologies worked?



Please give any further details. What needs to be improved for future cohorts?

All comments given indicate the need for more thorough and in-depth introductions to the tools to be available to students. Many of the issues with how the technologies were used by the students appear to relate to not understanding fully how the tools can be used. Comments made in relation to specific technologies were:

- Skype/Chat

Skype was viewed, in common with most students, as an effective tool and often used in place of Chat. One teacher confirmed the student view that Skype/Chat is immediate and good for clarifying questions, but felt it may not be as effective for actually teaching students.

- Discussion forum

This technology was felt to need more planning in the way it is used to make it as effective as possible. It was also seen to work better once students had got to know each other more:

'Tasks for discussion board need to be reviewed and refined to promote discussion rather than extensive summaries.'

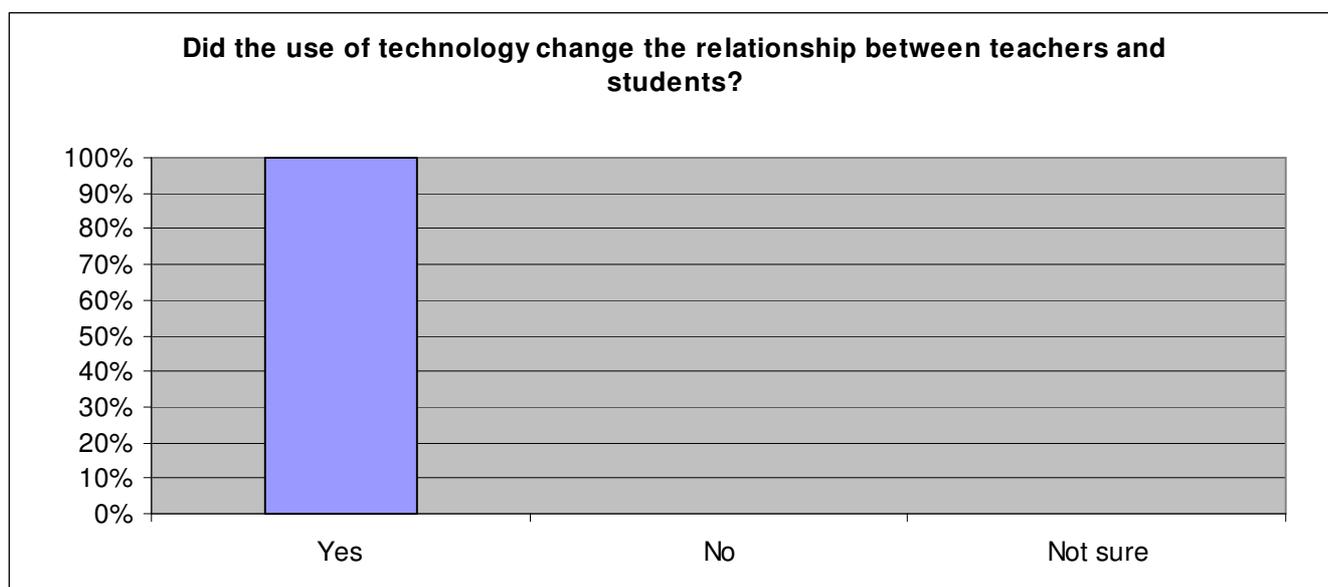
'Discussion forum needs time. I think in our project, the forum was in between anonymous postings and colloquial postings between fellow students. Since students did not know each other very well, the barrier to overcome before the first postings in the forum was quite high, because students knew they will meet each other in person soon. After they got to know each other and got used to the technology, the forum worked quite well.'

- Wiki

The Wiki technology was viewed as working 'flawlessly' by one teacher, though another commented that it needs to be developed more as a site for collaborative writing:

'If students got used to using it in the first part of the course, they would be more likely to use it in the actual research project, which would enable tutors to give more advice.'

7.Q7. Did the use of technology change the relationship between teachers and students?



Please give a reason for your answer:

All teachers indicated that the use of technology and the online nature of the course did change their relationship with the students. However, each teacher noted these changes in different ways:

- Intensity of relationship

One teacher felt that the absence of face to face communication made for a more distant and less intense relationship:

'As a teacher, I could not tell by the face of a student what state of mind s/he was in. This made it difficult to relate and respond to students appropriately and it made the whole teacher-student relationship more distant...I am sure contact to my dimensional students would have been even more intense had it taken place in a primarily face to face setting.'

The other two teachers however indicated a much more intense relationship due to the online/distance working aspect:

'The relationship was much more intense in that we spent a lot more time in social discussions aimed at consolidating the group than I would in normal classes. So, our relationship was much closer than normal.'

'The role of the tutor gets transformed as a result: he/she is no longer a direct provider of information (but of course the information is provided 'indirectly' through the collection of resources in the online platform) or a 'leader' in discussions, but rather a catalyst of the dynamics within the working group and a facilitator of the search for a consensus.'

These two quotes suggest the nature of this project changes the role of the teacher, and, in consequence, the basis of the teacher-student relationship. In particular, much more attention is given to the social side of this role in ensuring that the group works together effectively. The latter quote, however, emphasises a change from teacher to facilitator. The effect of this can be seen in the feedback gained from the students and the sense some have of actually producing and creating knowledge, rather than simply being taught it (section 3.Q3).

- Level of contact

One teacher did highlight some tension between the level of contact that each tutor should give:

'The differentiation between national tutor and dimensional tutor left each tutor insecure about what kind of contact the student had with the tutors of a project.'

This may account for the views of some students that communication from tutors was not at a high enough level (section 3.Q4; 4.2b).

7.Q8. Did any cultural differences become apparent amongst the students that you taught? If so, how did the impact on the work of the group and how did the students overcome them?

The feedback gained from the students in relation to this aspect suggests that personality differences rather than cultural ones are the most significant (section 3.Q8). This is supported by the teachers; however, two did provide accounts of the different working methods they had observed within their group:

'In my group I seemed to observe that British students seemed to withdraw in case of potential (online-) conflict, while some German and Polish students tended to directly address potential conflicts. While Polish and German students tended to respond to critique quite frankly and addressed the person uttering the criticism, it seemed that British students tried to focus more on shared aims and results and eventually might complain to a tutor rather than the respective fellow student. But to what extent this is a culturally linked behaviour is difficult to say.'

'It was quite clear that Polish and Czech students had incredibly demands on their time, which made them very focused in completing things on time. This was in stark contrast to the British students at times. There were also difference in approaches to knowledge and this made the writing process difficult in places.'

Both teachers go on to state though that the students overcame any differences through maintaining friendly relations and engaging in compromise and debate.

7.Q9. How did the approach taken impact feedback and assessment?

○ Assessment

Assessment was viewed by two teachers as an aspect that worked reasonably well, though some initial problems were encountered:

'It became more difficult when students failed to hand in tasks. Especially in the beginning the rate of tasks was quite high while at the same time familiarity with the learning platform was very limited.'

The third teacher felt however that this is an area for improvement:

'Assessment was underspecified: we should have spent more time working on this.'

This ties into the recommendations some students made about the assessment process; in particular, focusing assessment more larger tasks and ensuring students know which pieces of work will and will not be assessed (section 3.Q10; 4.2c).

○ Feedback

Two different views were given to the issue of feedback. One teacher felt that there were many opportunities both for individual and group feedback to occur. In contrast, another teacher found gaining feedback more challenging, particularly in the face to face meetings when students were anxious to get on with their work. Additionally, the online feedback form may not have worked as well as it could have:

'The online feedback form we put up half way through the project was not taken on very well in time, students filled in the form only shortly before or even after the second meeting, so there was little we could do to react to the feedback in time.'

- Other comments

Related to assessment and feedback, two other comments were made that may suggest aspects to be worked on:

'Giving feedback was relatively normal...although sometimes I feel the big picture of where we were going was missed out.'

This can be seen to emerge in the students views with some feeling that the aims and objectives, and the direction of the project was not always clear (sections 3.Q4; 4.2a).

'It was more challenging to evaluate the process of students' participation and deliberation, especially when this took place outside the dedicated OPAL platform (e.g. through Skype).'

Again, many students indicated frustration with unequal levels of input and participation from some group members, and a more structured or rules-based format was seen as a possible solution to this (sections 2.1; 4.2d).

7.Q10. In terms of feedback and assessment, what would you do differently for future cohorts?

The following comments were made in relation to this question:

- Feedback

'I would probably make a mid-term feedback part of the normal tasks, hoping to increase the number of comments.'

- Assessment

'Work much harder on assessment - be more specific about outcomes and be more transparent.'

'It would probably be advisable to have a printable list of required assessments for the entire duration of the seminar; publish a list of the percentages the tasks will count towards the final mark.'

Student feedback suggests that both of the above aspects would be welcomed, as well as more transparency regarding marking criteria (section 3.Q4; 4.2c).

'As challenging as it is, it would make sense to design the course even more in such a way that clearly demonstrates the process that led to the results of the working groups. This means especially 'forcing' the students to rely more on an online discussion forum than on Skype.'

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STUDENT AND TEACHER FEEDBACK

Feedback gathered shows that there are a number of areas in which the students and teachers share similar perspectives about the project. These fall into two categories:

Positive aspects

- 'Open ended' learning design

Teachers' noted the advantages of giving students greater responsibilities in the learning process. Some students commented that they felt more empowered as a result and developed their own self-directed learning skills:

'I loved the open-ended nature of the module - the idea of teaching a course where a proportion of the content is negotiated with the students was exciting and something I want to bring into my own work.' (Teacher:7.Q2)

'There were no weekly meetings in a classroom. That's the most interesting and hardest part of the program. Being concentrated about the next task but knowing that nobody can really force you to do anything (except your homeland teacher, but still). So you have to remind yourself that people are expecting you to do your work.' (Student:3.Q3)

'For the first time in my life, I have the feeling that I have produced knowledge instead of just repeating and consuming it.' (Student:3.Q3)

Report sections: 3.Q3; 5.4; 7.Q2

- International collaboration

The benefits of international collaboration, which centred on working with different people and gaining a variety of perspectives and opinions, were expressed many times by the students and were observed specifically by one particular teacher:

'...it reinforced my belief in the power of international collaborative learning.' (Teacher:7.Q2)

'I discovered that it can be difficult to work with people from different nationalities but it can also be an advantage to have many opinions all together in the room.' (Student:2.3)

Report sections: 2.3; 4.1.b1; 5.2; 7.Q2

- Experts

Both teachers and students highly valued the role of the experts throughout the project. Teachers saw them as complementing their own academic input by adding a professional and practice related perspective. Feedback from students confirms that this was viewed as a strength of the project and was greatly appreciated by them:

'It brought a professional context to the project that is different to the academic framework that students usually operate in. This was very

important, because it raised the standards for the students to meet.'
(Teacher:7.Q3)

'Excellent, their knowledge is amazing and if anything an indication to where students should aim to be.' (Student:3.Q5)

Report sections: 3.Q5; 4.1.a2; 4.1.a3; 7.Q3

- Face to face meetings

Though students indicated that the project has given them the opportunity to learn about collaborating and working in a group online, they still felt they had difficulties in engaging in discussions and coming to conclusions over the internet. For this reason they felt that the more productive work took place in face to face meetings and saw these as advantageous for the progression their project. Some teachers also expressed similar views:

'I really appreciate the face to face meeting for us to come to a conclusion together and talk and discuss together.' (Student:2.2)

'Some situations (typically: solving a strong conflict of views within a working group) seem to be more susceptible to solutions based on face-to-face contacts.' (Teacher:7.Q5)

Report sections: 2.2; 3.Q2; 3.Q7; 7.Q5

Areas for improvement

- Communication

A common theme running throughout the feedback from students is the need for more effective communication from tutors during the project. This relates not only to feedback and guidance, but also to information provision. Specifically, students felt that a lot of information was received at short notice, making it difficult to organise their workloads. Two teachers confirm that this could be done more effectively in the future:

'Late notice of information made things complicated.' (Student:4.2a)

'Too much information got lost, students did not remember or did not know where to find the relevant information. So next time I think we could maybe put up something like a "notice board", where the most important structural information is posted and latest news relevant for all students will be put up.'
(Teacher:7.Q2)

Report sections: 3.Q4; 4.2a; 4.2b; 7.Q2

- Format of policy paper

Many students commented on needing further information and guidance about the format of a policy paper and how to write it. This was confirmed by one teacher, who also suggested that this may benefit the teachers too:

'We needed more input on how to write the paper.' (Student:4.2c)

'The experience with how little students (and us, to some extent) know about the specific form of writing that is policy paper inspired me to prepare a specific course dedicated to this matter.' (Teacher:7.Q2)

Report sections: 3.Q4; 4.2c; 4.3a; 7.Q2

- Experts

Though the contribution of experts was valued by teachers and students, both groups felt that some were not very clear about what was expected of them in their role and the input they should be giving:

'I had the feeling that they were not always interested or even prepared. So their role in the project should be more clear in the first place.' (Student:3.Q5)

'we should make sure to establish reliable contact to experts before the project and build up a stronger personal link to these experts, so they can actually understand more about the project and break the ice with the students.' (Teacher:7.Q3)

Report sections: 3.Q5; 7.Q3

- E-learning

Both teachers and students noted the challenges of collaborating online, specifying particularly variations of input and engagement from some group members. More teacher involvement in terms of setting rules and giving more guidance was viewed as a way of helping to resolve this:

'Students however seemed to need a much clearer and stricter guidance content-wise as well as in terms of deadlines, behaviour online, etc.' (Teacher:7.Q4)

'Sometimes co-operation wasn't always good, I sometimes ended up having to do work for others who weren't responding. May be this could be overcome by setting some official rules by the tutors.' (Student:4.2d)

Report sections: 2.1; 3.Q9; 4.2d; 7.Q4

Additionally, the difficulties of engaging in discussions online were also expressed by both groups:

'It's very difficult dealing with some issue online because some people have difficulties expressing their opinions through online conferencing.' (Student:2.1)

'More discussion and willingness to debate their opinions would be good. Somehow this seems easier in face-to-face scenarios than online.' (Teacher:7.Q5)

Report sections: 2.1; 4.2d; 7.Q5

- Transparency of assessment

Teachers commented on the need to be more specific about the outcomes of assessment and transparent about marks and marking criteria. Both of these would be welcomed by students. In particular, some students suggested feeling disadvantaged by a lack of information about their marks:

'It would probably be advisable to have a printable list of required assessments for the entire duration of the seminar; publish a list of the percentages the tasks will count towards the final mark.' (Teacher:7.Q10)

'No information given on what we will be marked on – was hard all throughout because I was not sure if I was doing well or bad or whether I needed to improve (this is very important for a student).' (Student:4.2c)

Report sections: 3.Q4; 3.Q10; 4.2c; 7.Q9; 7.Q10

LESSONS LEARNED

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Expectations:

No. of students: 27

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Knowledge/skills	Learn more about EU issues	10
	Learn more about online working	3
	Improve English skills	2
	Improve research skills	
Work	Get practical/political input from experts	5
	Bring 'real' results/conclusions to politicians <i>Quotes:</i> <i>"We can bring some new ideas to real politicians and future of EU"</i> <i>"To produce something"</i>	3
	To be challenged	2
	Undertake 'serious' research	2
Group working	Work well with group/to be successful	5
	Have interesting international group working experience	4
	To have a reliable group	2
People	Gain variety of international perspectives/opinions	4
	Meet new people	2
	People to be friendly	
Course	To benefit future life/work	2
	To be well organised	

Hopes:

No. of students: 15

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
End product	Produce something that affects policy/EU <i>Quotes:</i> <i>“Do something that affects policy and helps people, have a positive end to project”</i> <i>“Someone will read paper we create and something will happen on the grounds of it.”</i>	4
	Have results/solutions to present	3
	Be proud of achievement	
Knowledge	Learn more about issue <i>Quote:</i> <i>“Widen and open our minds”</i>	4
	Gain new perspectives/ideas	2
	Apply knowledge to practice	
Group working	Work well with group	3
	Gain inter-cultural soft skills	
General	Find good friends	
	Find a bachelor thesis theme	

Fears:

No. of students: 23

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
E-learning	Online communication/co-operation	9
	Challenges of online working/learning	7
International aspects	Working in an international group (different cultures, etc) <i>Quote:</i> <i>“Different cultures and people within group. Could be difficult to find the common ground, find the compromise on a practical issue.”</i>	3
	Different university commitments/schedules	2
Work	Getting ‘stuck’ in a topic can’t come to solution about	2
	Unorganised group	2
	Challenging task	
	Project may fail	
General	Group leader may not emerge	

Appendix B

What have you learnt?

No. of students: 8

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Challenges of online collaboration	Difficult to engage in discussions	3
	Difficulties expressing opinions	
	Difficult to come to conclusions	
	Unequal participation from group members	
	Attention focused on co-operation issues rather than content	
Face to face meetings	More productive	3
	Interesting	
International group working	Positive - interesting - gain different opinions	
	Negative - Hard to negotiate some issues	2
Content	Changed way of thinking	
	Learnt more about topic	

Appendix C

(12 respondents)

Q1.

Please add any further detail about your development

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Improved skills	Academic (inc. knowledge, reading and writing)	4
	Communication	
	English language	
Gained new skills	Working in an online group	2
	Working within seminar design	
Enjoyment of studying	Interesting	
	Inspiring	

Q2. In terms of module delivery, what worked well and what could be improved?

- Q2a – What worked well?

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Group work	Face to face meetings (as opposed to online debates)	3
	Small group working	
Organisation	One to ones/meetings	
	Planning of module	
Internet	Finding up to date information	
	Staying in contact after course finished	
Content of course	/	

- Q2b – What could be improved?

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Organisation	Reduce misunderstandings	2
	More face to face meetings	2
	More structure to meetings	
	Have stricter deadlines	
	Allow more rest time during events	
Tasks	Specify purpose more	
	Reduce 'pointless' work/tasks (esp. at beginning of course)	
Feedback	Increase amount given	

Q3. Teaching: Did the styles of teaching you experienced during NewSecEU differ from the ones that you have experienced in your home country? If yes, what do you think of these differences and how did you adapt to changes?

- Q3a – How did teaching styles differ to those you have experienced?

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Course design	Self-directed learning *	2
	Emphasis on dialogue and discussion *	
	Online communication	
	Distance learning *	
	Application of theory to practice	
Tutors	More personal contact	
	Constant availability	
	Open to answering questions	
Group working	Team working *	
	Small groups *	

- Q3b – What do you think of these differences? (Students answered in relation to the impact the different teaching styles had on them)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Empowered	Increased self-responsibility for doing work *	2
	Producing knowledge, not just repeating/consuming it *	
	Sense of freedom make mistakes and learn from them *	
Meaningful learning	Relevant work, not abstract	
Work harder	Read more material	

* indicates direct relationship stated by student of difference and impact

Q4. Teaching: How could the team teaching on NewSecEU have been improved?

(Most responses related to overall teaching, rather than team teaching. This is reflected in the table below)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Improved information provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - marking criteria - deadline information - task requirements - policy paper format - what is expected from students on the course 	Overall teaching
Online aspects	More frequent online sessions	
	Use better/newer technologies for online contact	
Team teaching	Have a co-ordinating team leader in the group	
	Ensure all teachers engage and get involved	
	Provide more support and guidance	

Q5. What do you think about the role of experts during NewSecEU?

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Positive	Helpful	2
	Valuable feedback	2
	Useful discussions	
	Knowledgeable	
Negative	Experts seemed unclear of their role	2

Q9. Were there any other difficulties in collaboration? If yes, how did you overcome these issues?

<i>Comments</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Differences in commitment from other students in the group	2
Language	
Different university schedules	

Appendix D

Positive:

No. of handed in papers: 27 (1 or more comments per paper)

Blue – relating to conference

Green – relating to project as a whole

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Organisation	Well organised	12
	Useful conference	4
	Good discussions held	
	Good opportunity to present work	
Experts	Well chosen	3
	Helpful	3
	Knowledgeable discussions	2
	Honest	
	Professional	
Feedback	Constructive	7
	Negative feedback beneficial to improve	5
	Variety of critiquing approaches	
	Informative about form of policy papers	
Learning	Learnt a lot	3
	Learnt new skills	
	Developed English skills	
Location	Good venue	3
	Good hostel	1
Misc	Treated on equal level with other researchers	
General	Informative about policy papers	2
	Organised and structured	2
	Good face to face meetings	
	Useful round table session to exchange ideas	

Negative:

No. of handed in papers: 38 (1 or more comments per paper)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if more than 1)</i>
Organisation /co-ordination of project	Information received late	7
	Organisational problems (unstated)	6
	Money - 10 Euros not enough - Too long to refund	6 (4) (2)
	Unproductive Brussels meeting	5
	Aims and objectives of course not clear	4
	Better travel arrangements needed (- travel times too long)	4 (2)
	Less theory and more preparation/writing time	3
	Lack of expert talks/expert perspectives	2
	Chaotic project	2
	Face to face meetings too short	
	Lack of clear tasks throughout project	
Tutor involvement	Problems with specific tutor (Marcin Skocz) inc. unhelpful and unprofessional	6
	Lack of communication from some tutors	4
	Lack of co-ordination from tutors	3
	More involvement/support/pushing needed	3
Lack of information	Lack of guidance on how to write a policy paper	13
	No marks received throughout the year	3
	No information on marking criteria	
Online learning	Online co-operation difficult	4

	Precise co-ordination needed	
	More face to face meetings needed - to establish personal contact - to connect with online learning	(1) (1)
Group work challenges	Unreliable group members	5
	Better communication/co-ordination needed between students	3
Conference	Rude critics	3
	Information about posters received late	3
	Lack of time management of presenting groups	3
	Only negative feedback given	
	Not enough discussion time	
General	Failed in writing a policy paper	2
	Language challenges	2
	Economic security should have been an option	

Improvements:

No. of handed in papers: 9 (1 or more comments per paper)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if more than 1)</i>
Policy paper	Specific lecture needed on how to write it	
	More useful to meet experts once policy paper topics are set	
Conference	Would be useful to have feedback/comments on paper before presenting	2
	Presentation time should be respected – not over run	2
	Should arrive a couple of days before conference to allow for rest and preparation with group	
	Organisation of travel to conference should be improved	
	External audience may be confused by design of critique	

Appendix E

Positives:

No. of students: 21

Theme	Sub themes	Tally (if >1)
Group working	International co-operation/communication <i>Quote:</i> <i>“International co-operation could be quite difficult and I can now see the difficulties for European bureaucrats to co-operate, and find solutions and agreements. It’s useful for me to understand”</i>	10
	Meeting/working with new people	7
	Gaining different opinions/perspectives	4
New experiences	E-learning	
	Online communication	
	Sharing knowledge/ideas	
Topic	Interesting	2
	Practical	
Conference	Well organised	
	Good experts	
General	Travel to different places	3
	Improved English skills	
	Gained skills in writing policy paper	

Negatives:

No. of students: 22

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Organisation	Unspecified problems	5
	Late notice of information	3
	Unclear aims and objectives of course	
Tutor(s)	Lack of communication/engagement	4
	Lack of feedback/information	
	Generally applies to one specific tutor	
Online learning	Lack of input from some group members *	5
	OPAL difficult to use	
Content	More information/time needed on what a policy paper is	3
	More input needed from tutors	2

* Two students suggest more rules or a rewards/punishment system to improve this

What learnt:

No. of students: 14

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Tally (if >1)</i>
Knowledge	EU security	4
	How to write a policy paper	2
	Academic practices	
Group working skills	Distance group working	3
	With international colleagues	2
	General skills	
Online learning skills	Online research	
	Online communication	
	General skills	
Self organisation in learning	/	2