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transforming assessment

International Online Conference
REAP07: Assessment design for learner responsibility

Evaluation Report

Re-Engineering Assessment Practices (REAP)
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Introduction

This report details the results of the formal feedback questionnaire distributed to participants of the 'REAP International Online Conference: Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility'. This report contains three main sections containing a summary of feedback obtained about the conference, followed by a list of recommendations for future improvements. Finally the formal feedback questionnaire results are presented.

Summary

- 90% of respondents were satisfied with the conference.
- The quality of keynotes, case studies and discussions were highly commended.
- The conference was successful in attracting 678 registrations from 46 countries which resulted in active participation by 415 people from 32 countries (See Appendix A for full breakdown).
- The conference was successful in attracting a number of participants who had never experienced online conferencing before.
- Participants greatly appreciated the flexibility, diversity and equality of being able to attend an international conference free of charge without leaving the office.

Recommendations

- Increase pre-conference reading week to 2 weeks.
- Expand session timetable to accommodate participants in different time zones. This might be achieved by enrolling the support of institutions in other territories (e.g. US and AUS) to provide facilitation, moderation and support.
- Guidance on the level of commitment required by participants needs to be highlighted more. Supplementary tools like online calendar services or iCalendar/vCalendar exports might be worth further exploration.
- Improved functionality of 'chat' tools (e.g. screen size, indicating when someone is typing, floating chat window, soft scroll on new messages received etc) or use of alternative technologies such as audio-casting.
- Improved moderation/facilitation and linking of synchronous and asynchronous activities.

Formal Feedback Questionnaire Results

On the 14th June 2007 at 15:00 BST the questionnaire in Appendix B was circulated via email to 678 registered[1] participants of the 'REAP International Online Conference: Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility'. Respondents were given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire by email return or to complete an online version hosted on the REAP conference website http://ewds.strath.ac.uk/reap07. 112 responses (17%) have been received (22 email, 90 online). The results of these responses are summarised below.

Q1. Within your organisation which of the following best describes your primary role:

Almost half (47%) of respondents to the questionnaire classify their primary role as lecturer/tutor/teacher.

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[1] 263 registered participants pre-registered for the conference but did not participate during the conference 29th – 31st May 2007.
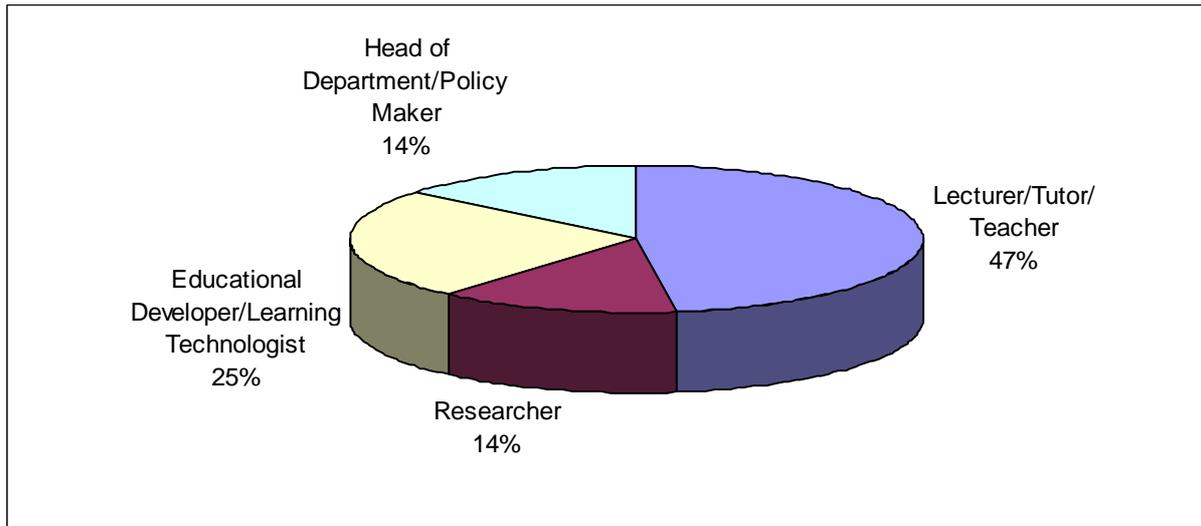
Q2. Did you log in during the pre-conference week?

90% of respondents logged in during the pre-conference week.

Q3. Did you login into the online conference when it was running?

89% of respondents logged into the conference site when it was running. In terms of participation the majority mention reading documents (n.78). The other main categories of responses are: participating in chat sessions (n.32), contributing to chat sessions (n.18), reading discussion boards (n.12) and posting to discussion boards (n.24). 4 participants highlighted a desire to participate in chat sessions but were not able to do so because of time zone differences (n. 4) or technical problems with the chat tool (n.1).

## Q4. If you did not participate, please state why?

In total 36 respondents indicated that they were not able to participate because of either technical, time or other constraints (this is not consistent with responses from questions 2 and 3). Of these responses 2 respondents had technical and time constraints, 27 stated time constraints (3 of these were explicitly identified these as time zone related) and 7 had other issues (3 of which were linked to time zone differences).

Q5. Did you have any technical problems during the conference?

86% of respondents stated that they had no technical problems during the conference. Issues faced by the 13% who identified technical problems were largely minor (e.g. 'remember me' button at login not working and inconsistencies with how papers were downloaded across the conference site). 2 participants state they resolved issues by getting help from their own IT services and 1 from the conference technical help staff. 2 respondents state that their technical issues were never resolved.

Q6. Rate these features of the conference (1 is poor, 5 is excellent):

Q6.1 Pre-conference information: (n.108)
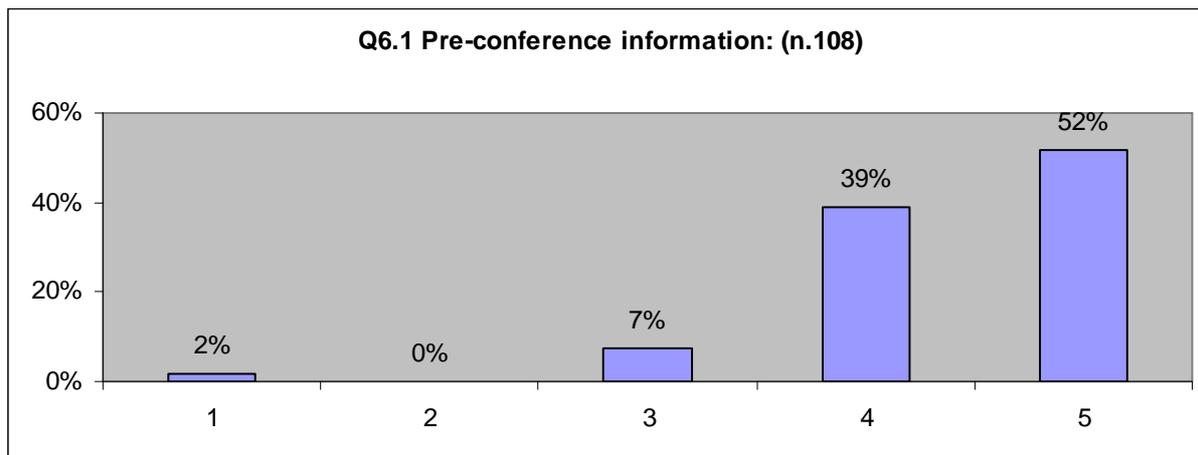
91% of respondents rated the pre-conference information as 4 or better.

Q6.2 Pre-conference reading week: (n.105)
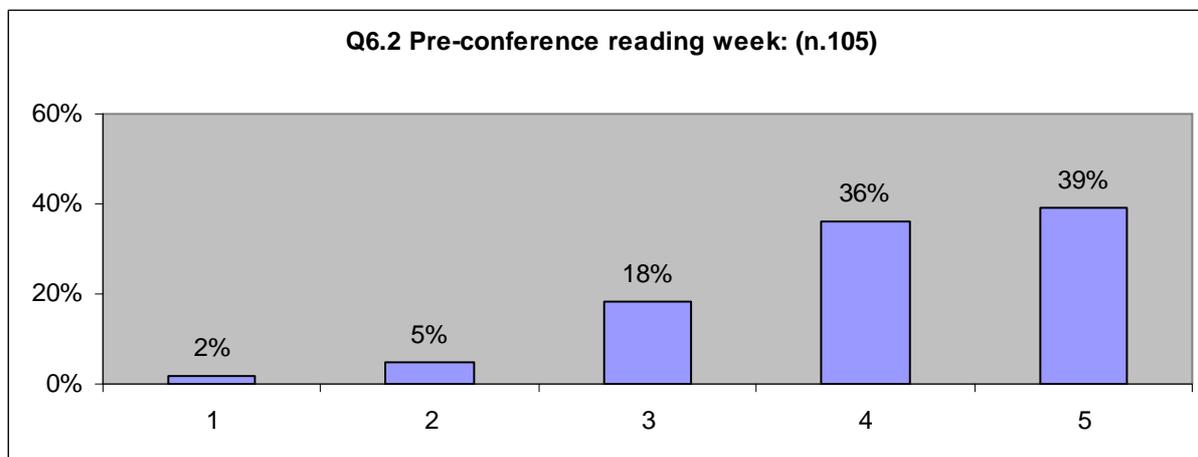
75% of respondents rated the pre-conference reading as 4 or better. 19 respondents provided additional comments 10 of which indicated that the reading week was too short. Typical comments were:

- *Timeframe not long enough, even when I knew it was coming.*
- *More time should have been reserved for reading the case-studies, especially bad timing with the UK bank holiday.*

Q6.3 Guidance and support for first time users: (n.104)
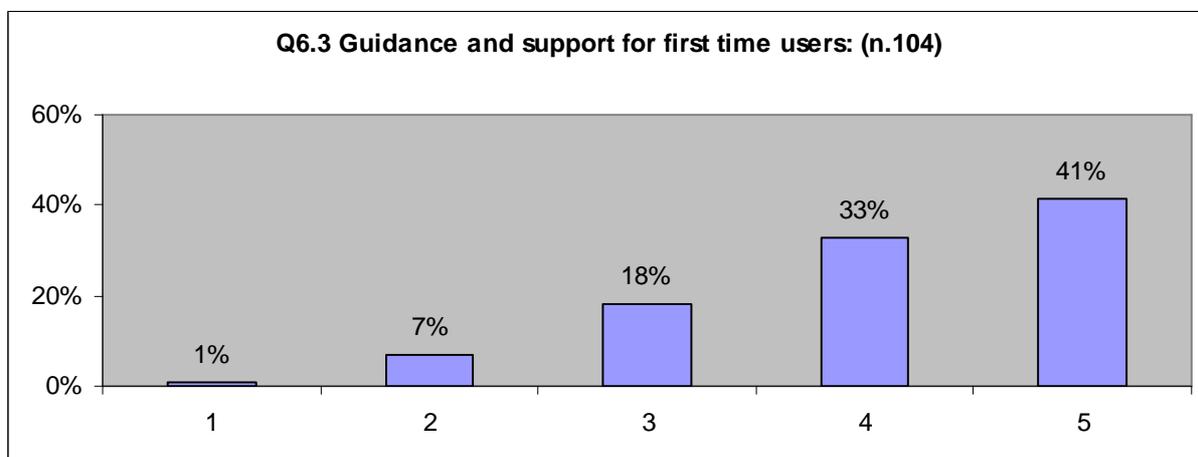
74% of respondents rated the guidance and support for first time users as 4 or better.

Q6.4 Quality of papers: (n.107)
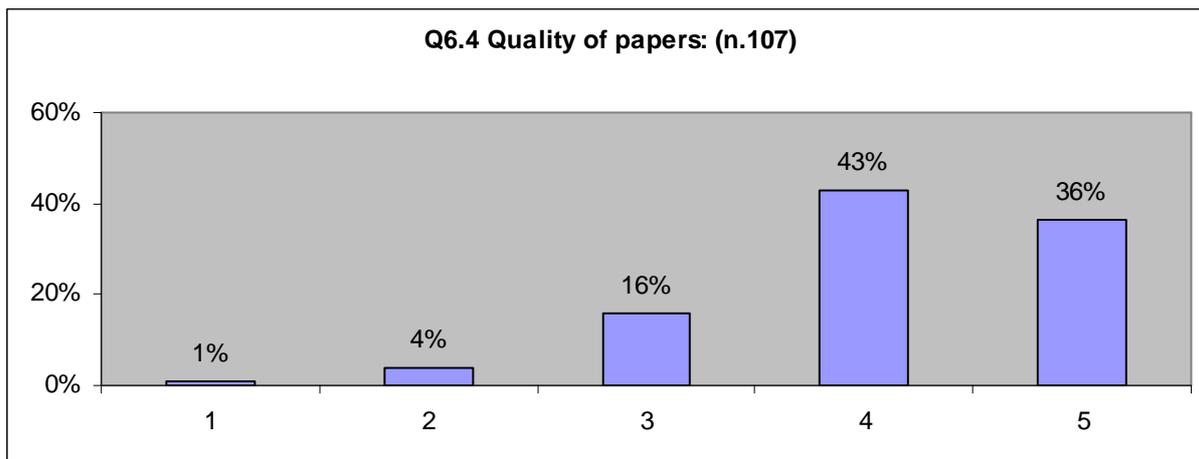
79% of respondents rated the quality of papers as 4 or better.

Q6.5 Quality of presentations: (n.97)
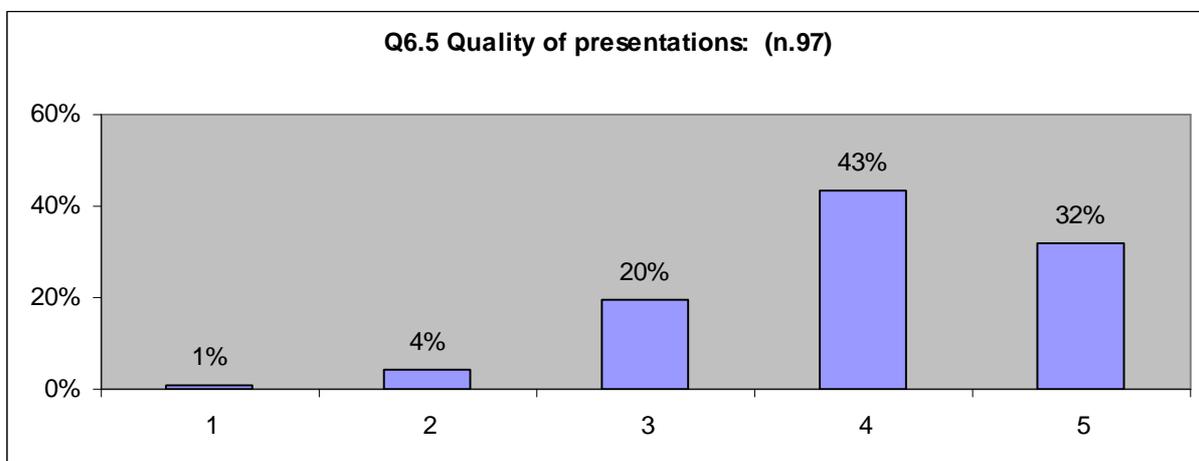
75% of respondents rated the quality of presentations as 4 or better. Some respondents were confused as to what 'presentations' were being referred to in this question. (e.g. "*Not sure if you refer to the slide presentations here. Technically there were no presentations. Merely discussions based on written documents*")

In terms of technological improvements dome respondents would like to see *"live presentations"* or use of other netmeeting tools.

Q6.6 Quality of chat sessions: (n.90)
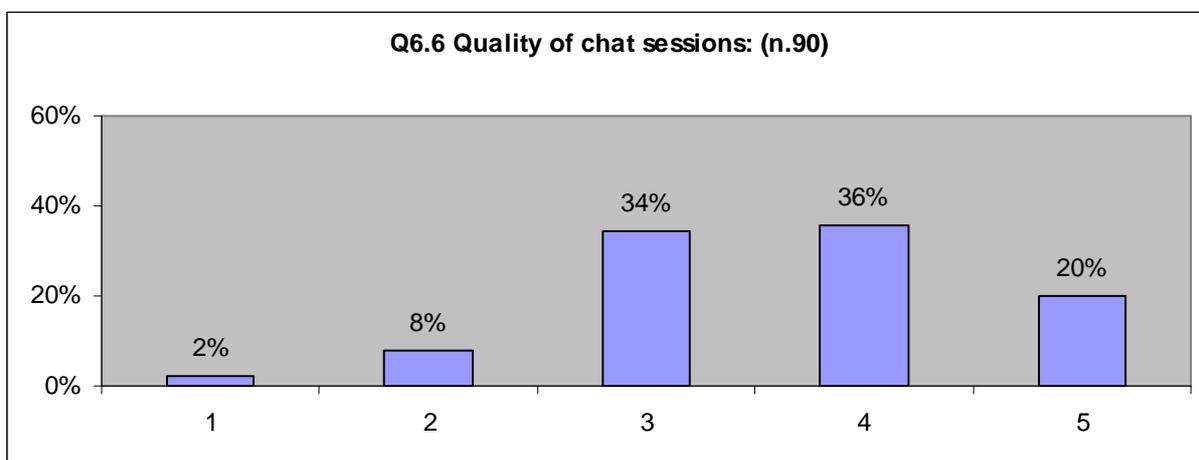
56% of respondents rating the chat session as 4 or better. 20% (n.22) of respondents did not respond to this question. This high 'No Response Given' rate is attributed to the fact that not all respondents participated in live chat sessions.

24 respondents made additional comments regarding the chat sessions, 8 of these were comments indicating they did not participate in chat sessions. Of the remaining comments the majority related to the speed (n.5) and quality (n.8) of the chat sessions.

In terms of speed all 5 comments indicate that the chat was too fast to follow. Issues with speed were related to; no prior experience of using chat rooms; geographic location (delay in message reaching US/Australia; and technical (e.g. text jumps up a line as each new message is received).

In terms of quality there improved moderation/management was highlighted by 2 respondents.

Q6.7 Quality of discussion forums: (n.94)

Rating	Percentage
1	1%
2	6%
3	20%
4	50%
5	22%
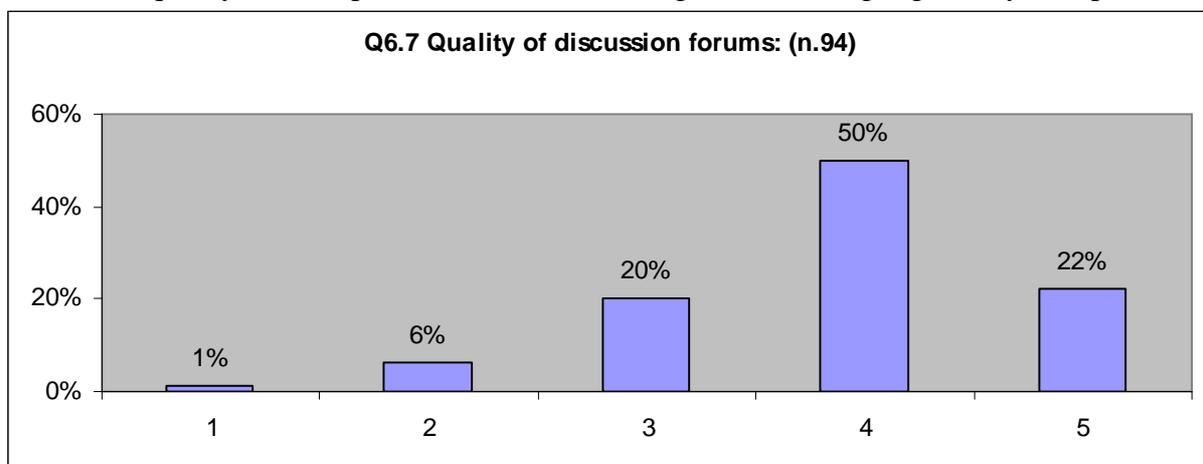
72% of respondents rated the quality of the discussion forums as 4 or better.

Q6.8 Opportunities for networking: (n.94)

Rating	Percentage
1	3%
2	14%
3	34%
4	30%
5	19%
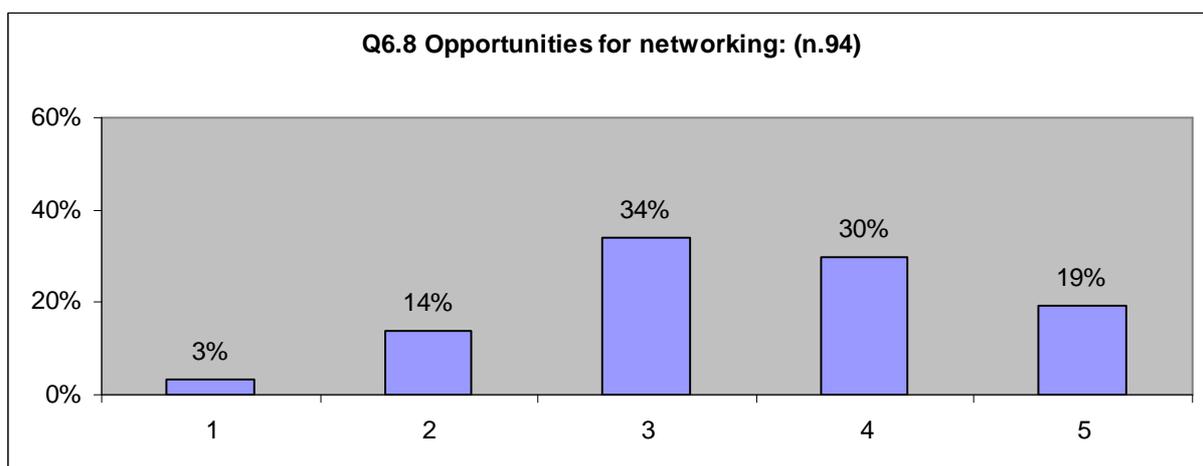
49% of respondents rated the opportunities for networking as 4 or better. A number of respondents were unsure about importance of networking and in some cases highlighted that this was *"not a priority"* or felt that the *"online nature of the conference inhibited a lot of networking"*.

Q6.9 Value of case studies: (n.102)
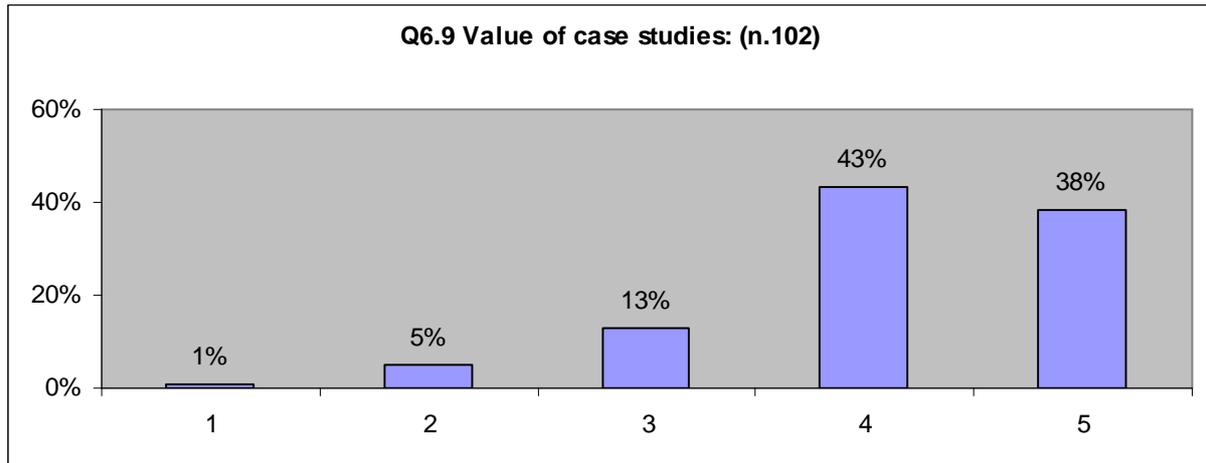
81% of respondents rated the value of the case studies as 4 or better. One respondent commented: *"these have been very valuable--I have already shared some of them"*.

Q6.10 Opportunities to discuss assessment with others: (n.95)
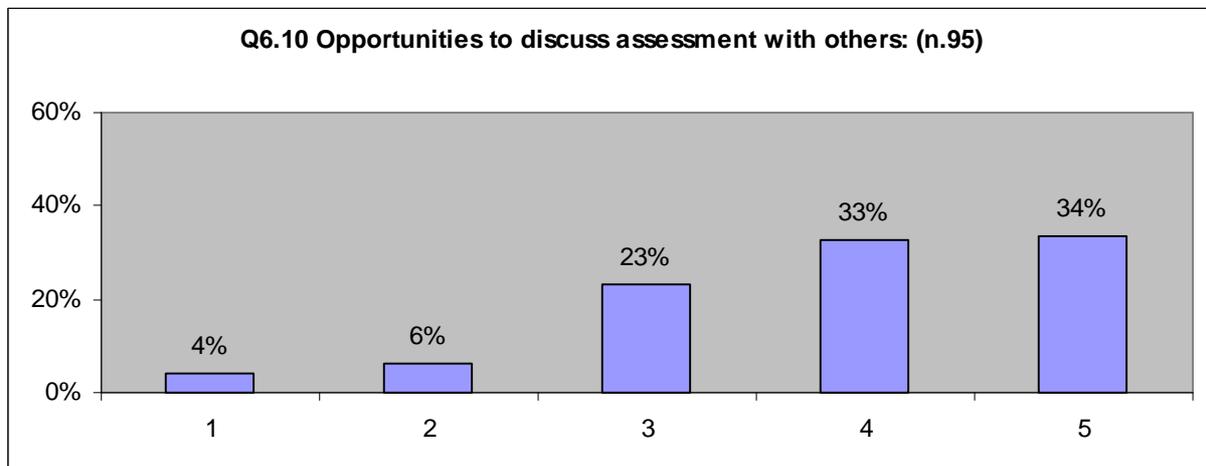
67% of respondents rated the opportunities to discuss assessment with others as 4 or better. Comments made by respondents included:

- *Great, although some communication difficulty with people having different practices and different conceptions, and it taking a while to work this out*
- *I had the distinct feeling that those who knew each other outside the conference, were only conversing with each other. "Outsiders" like myself were ignored.*
- *This came up in a chat. Most of us don't really have other people at our institutions who can discuss these topics in any depth, so we really appreciated this opportunity.*

Q7. How interested were you in the following topics (1 not interested, 5 is very interested):

Q7.1 Principles of assessment: (n.109)

Rating	Percentage
1	1%
2	2%
3	8%
4	28%
5	61%
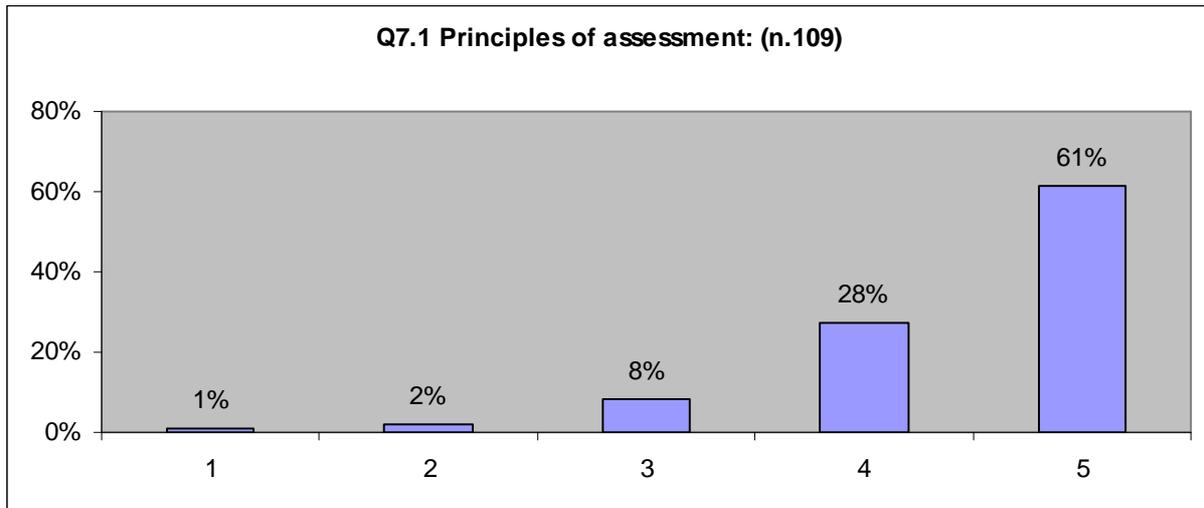
89% of respondents were interested in principles of assessment.

Q7.2 Summative assessment: (n.107)

Rating	Percentage
1	0%
2	4%
3	16%
4	33%
5	48%
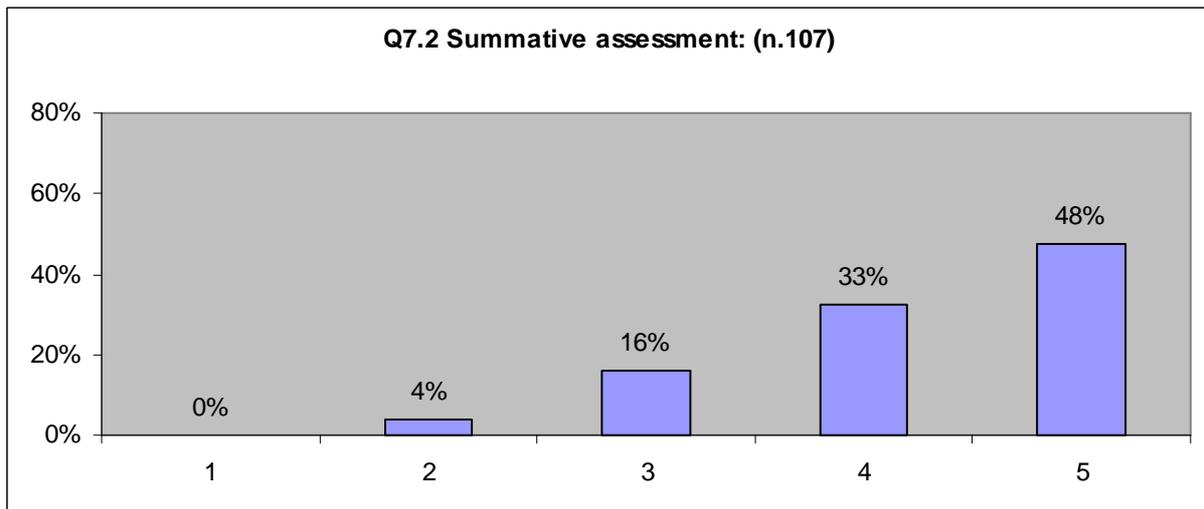
81% of respondents were interested in summative assessment.

Q7.3 Teacher assessment and/or teacher feedback (n.107)

Rating	Percentage
1	2%
2	3%
3	13%
4	35%
5	48%
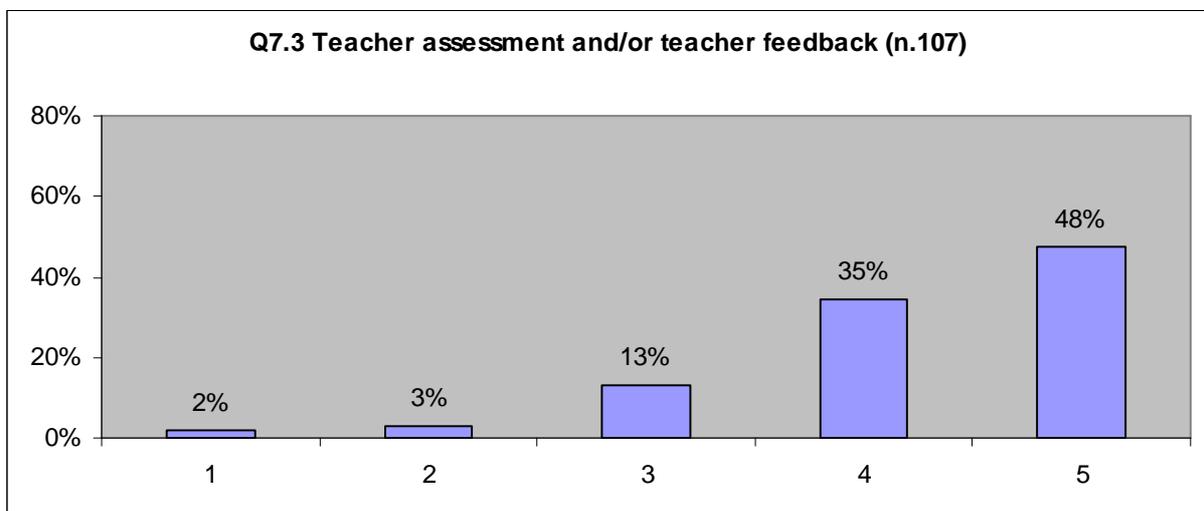
83% of respondents were interested in teacher assessment and/or teacher feedback.

Q7.4 Peer assessment and/or peer feedback: (n.107)
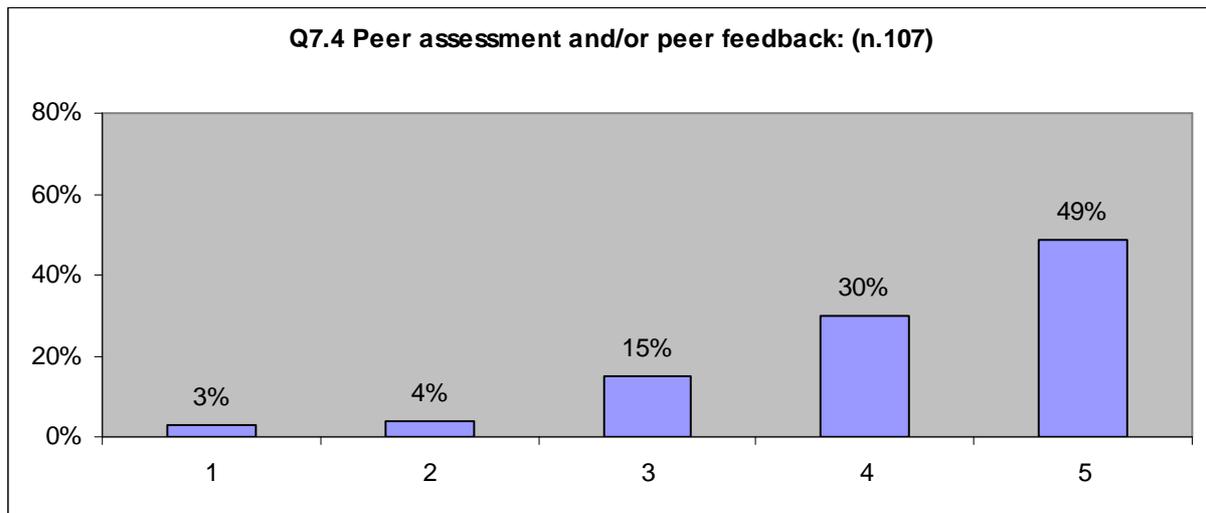
79% of respondents were interested in peer assessment and/or peer feedback.

Q7.5 Self-assessment and/or self-generated feedback: (n.107)
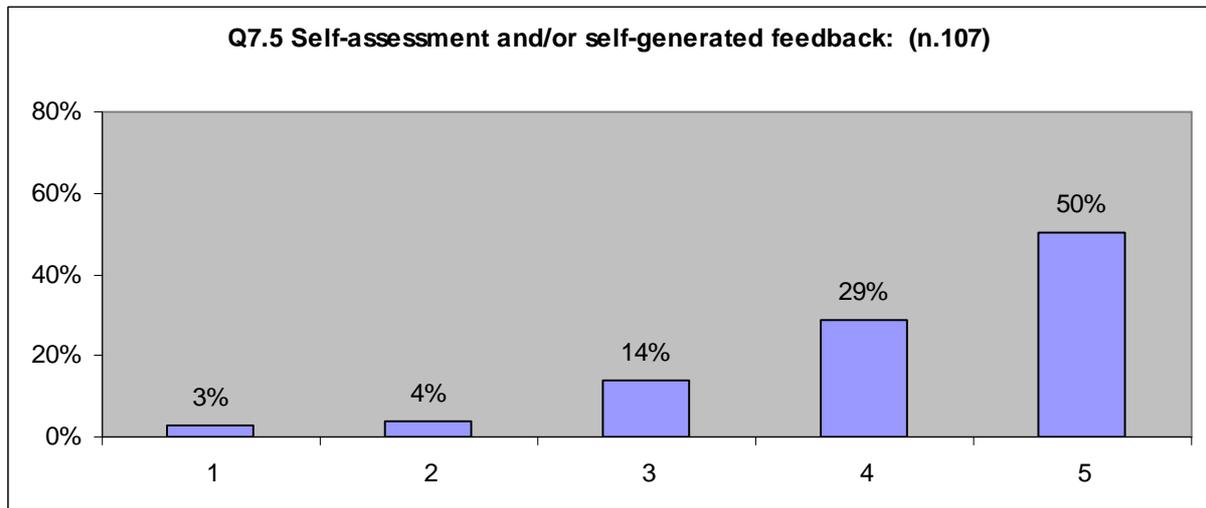
79% of respondents were interested in self-assessment and/or self-regulated feedback.

Q8. Please tell us what was the best aspect of the conference?

Responses from participants were based around 3 themes, the flexibility of attending an international event; the quality of material and resulting discussions; and the conference organisation and structure:

The flexibility of attending an international event without leaving the office

- *Chance to participate in a conference without taking the time for travel or incurring the costs for travel. This makes it much more accessible to a much wider audience.*
- *being able to have the stimulation of an international conference at a time of year when it would have been impossible to travel*
- *For me the best thing was the availability of the on-line material including the discussion which enables one to see a developing thread rather than reading a conference proceeding. Perhaps this approach enables those who do not have access to funding or*

time allowances to attend conferences to exposed to an essential developmental activity (however passive).

- *The fact of bringing so many interested people around the globe to participate in issues of high importance to HE. The 'density' of engagement was very high compared with f2f. The organising team deserve a lot of credit for setting this up.*
- *Just loved the international flavour; understanding that we are all trying to deliver the best possible education to our students. I also enjoyed the collegiality and mutual respect.*
- *The open invitation and inclusiveness of the conference was incredible. I would not have been able to tap into any of the resources if I had needed to go to the physical location. I missed the in-person communication and networking, but having the opportunity to gain some access to the interaction was wonderful.*

The quality of keynotes, case studies discussions and other content
- *I loved the case studies and the chats during the presentations were also very helpful-- great to be able to go more in depth on the case studies. It was also great to be able to talk with others who "speak my language" (assessment) about how to deal with the challenges we face.*
- *Content was stimulating, I copied papers , some threads of discussion for discussion / training in my own team of instructional designers*
- *Excellent keynotes. Appreciated access to their papers. Scholarly case studies. Access to these was also excellent. It means that participants can download, read and discuss at a time convenient to them.*
- *The number of similar comments at end it seemed as if we must have been working in the same institution same struggles regardless of place in the world. I thought there were some really positive contributions from keynotes. I loved the international dimension and contributions from the participants*

Organisation and conference structure/delivery
- *The organisation of the conference itself. Regular updates received throughout the conference from the organisers were particularly valuable.*
- *The daily summaries were particularly useful and captured the key issues and themes nicely. The final panel summary was great - I was able to appreciate the key themes from the daily chats.*
- *That it was well announced, and enough information provided beforehand…and it was a free activity. This would be very much useful for our colleagues in developing countries…*
- *Access to the range of materials was helpful and keynote speakers with video links were very accessible. System of emailing questions, etc, was most helpful.*
- *Being able to login remotely. Also liked the timetabling of the sessions - with no clashes of live sessions.*

Q9. Please tell us what was the least satisfactory aspect of the conference?

Responses from participants were based around 3 themes: the timing of the conference in terms of different time zones and time of year; the pressures of participants own work schedules; and the navigation functionality of the conference site.

Timing issues resulting from international participation outside the UK and the time of year

- *The timing, right in the middle of assessment season and I just didn't have the time to fully contribute, invigilation, marking, lecturing, meetings had to take priority*
- *Perhaps this was a wrong time of the year for teaching oriented lecturers who would be busy with exams related work. It is a shame that frequently those who attend academic conferences are more research oriented and hence we see good developments in the literature but not much in practice.*
- *Participating from Australia was tough with time difference in both cat and discussion forum*
- *the time zone issue! I wish there had been more sessions during the North American daytime.*
- *Unfortunately, because of the time difference, I missed the keynote session chats I was most interested in participating in, however, I realize that is something that cannot be changed with so many countries involved.*

Conflict with participants own work schedule

- *Too much choice :-) It really was like a full-time job just trying to read everything. Unfortunately, demands of the day job meant that I could not participate in most synchronous discussions.*
- *That I did not take time out of my usual work schedule to 'attend'! There fore had to take part at night after long days too tired to benefit fully.*
- *Discussion and chat difficult to engage in for those less experienced at using these tools. Not enough emphasis on the importance of booking reading time in the diary the week before the conference. The online nature of the conference meant other work took over.*
- *Not realising I should have scheduled a week (as I would for face to face conference) to allow for reading and participation- my problem not yours!*
- *This was the first time I had joined an on-line conference and it was difficult to make time from busy schedule to take part fully. Probably a little disappointed there wasn't fuller participation on some of the discussion boards.*
- *Not formally taking time out of my own work to follow the conference as I would if physically at a conference so my issue not that of the conference.*

Conference site navigation and features

- *could have done with prompts as to when someone was writing a reply as it times it was difficult to know if someone was in the middle of replying or not. e.g. MSN "Paul is typing a message" would be useful*
- *I didn't find the navigation menu particularly user friendly - too many areas and sub-menus.*
- *Navigation was very poor - I wasted quite a lot of time trying to work out what was where and what I had to do to participate in the conference.*
- *The web page was not as easy to navigate as it could have been. i.e. forum discussions need a link in left panel.*
- *That when you entered a 'live' discussion you couldn't see what had already been going on before, i.e. what other people had typed.*
- *The small box for inputting question or comment during the synch chat.*
- *Discussion tool wasn't that great - not able to see threads clearly*

Q10. If we could start again, what might we do to improve this conference for you?

Responses from participants were to a greater extent very positive. Areas highlight for improvement were largely around the timing of the reading week and conference sessions. Some comments were also made about the conference website and the lack of presentation technologies such as live audio and video casts:

Timing of reading period and conference sessions

- *Allow more time for reading the information before discussions commence*
- *two weeks reading time 2, downloadable material better numbered re session subject etc, and possible compressed into pre organized folders 3. have a longer conference*
- *I would have liked 2 weeks for pre-reading! But otherwise, nothing. It was really good.*
- *Have a longer pre-conference reading preparation period. It would have been good to have made contact with other delegates a bit sooner.*
- *Since this was a world wide conference I respect the challenge of time zones. Would the opportunity to have more than 1 opportunity to have synch chats with your keynotes be beneficial so others would have the opportunity to have live discussions. It appeared that many did not understand the purpose of the discussion boards - would a better explanation in the Pre-conference materials help with participant understanding?*
- *Set a different session schedule for those countries with different time zone. Allow more time to assess the cases by uploading it earlier perhaps 3 wks ahead.*

Conference site and technology used for presentations and discussions

- *Use a discussion technology that better supports discussion (vs. a string of comments on a initial post). 2. Ensure presenters (as opposed to just facilitators) are present throughout the discussions. 3. For the synchronous sessions, consider an e-classroom technology that would support voice presentations (& maybe video, but audio is sufficient & requires less bandwidth) & both text & voice questions. Chat is too disjointed for this, especially if there is a large group.*
- *Try audio sessions, e.g. using Marratech <http://www.marratech.com/> or similar technology*
- *Would suggest that larger chat windows would be useful - the comments disappeared too fast and it was hard to remember who had said what.*

Q11. Were you satisfied with the online conference overall?

90% (n.106) of respondents were satisfied with the conference. Respondents who were dissatisfied were so mainly because of their personal time restraints:

- *I guess it wasn't the conference itself, it was my lack of being able to participate when I really wanted to.*
- *I didn't participate properly - partly my own fault, lack of time. However, despite the fact that I am a confident and experienced user of online forums (and know quite a lot about assessment - I was the author of a case study), I was totally put off by other people in the chat sessions, and didn't have the confidence to 'say' anything myself*
- *Because of other work pressures I didn't participate as I would have like - or as i would have done if it had been a conference in the outside world. But as I mentioned already it is great to have the materials available now.*

- *Unfortunately at the end of the day I was not able to block out the time to take part. I found it hard to ring-fence the time to spend reading the articles, and it was hard to concentrate on the presentations in a shared office with people walking in and out of the room all the time. However, this was my first experience and I would definitely like to participate in an online conference again in the future, and will hopefully learn how to participate a bit more constructively next time.*

Other respondents felt the conference was a good idea but fell short of their expectations:

- *Lack of asynchronous participation by presenters; (2. choice of communication tools not really appropriate for the task). Overall, it's a great idea, just not yet as effective as it could be.*
- *It seemed so insubstantial compared to a face-to-face conference. There was a lot of potential and good material but I didn't feel it had been sufficiently realised.*
- *I appreciate your efforts, and I have learnt from the experience - just not about the things I was hoping for!*

The majority of respondents were very satisfied:

- *I think you have done pretty much everything that one could wish for. This is by far the best online conference I attended in years. It was very clearly structured, and excellent archiving meant that I benefited from the conference materials and discussions even though I had very little time to participate while the conference was running.*
- *I thought it was a really new and fresh approach...especiallly given the subject matter and I think it really livened up debates on assessment in particular.*
- *Impressed. Well organised, highly regarded presenters, diverse case studies - a surprisingly enjoyable (and addictive) experience.*
- *Well organised and brought together a useful collection of papers and case studies.*
- *Enjoyed it - to extent of trying to be on two computers at once at a couple of points so that essential other work also happened. Need more of these. Well done.*
- *This was the first conference of this sort that I have attended and I thought it was outstanding because of the opportunities for learning from other people from around the world who are also devoted to promoting student learning. I deeply appreciate the vision behind this conference and all the hard work it took to make it a reality. Thank you.*
- *It was an amazing experience to have this opportunity to sit in my office and have the equivalent of a week long conference with global participants. I wish I had both the courage and the skill to participate actively in the chats + network. Hope you will do this again.*
- *As stimulating as a F2F conference and left me wanting more! This was the first time I have participated in such an event and I will definitely recommend my collegues to join any similar events in the future*
- *Liked the conference topic and theme. Found the access easy. From the quick and brief scans, the material is impressive. Good facility to download the presentations/summaries. Look forward to reading these over the next few weeks.*
- *Excellent case studies- I very much enjoyed reading everyone's comments- I particularly liked that we could access them after the end of the conference too.*
- *I was able to attend the conference without having to travel; beside, it's was free. Above all, it dealt with issues that are of relevance to my research interest. Thank you so much to the organisers for their efforts in making the conference a success. I look forward to more online conferences.*
- *Better discussion opps than most conferences. No overheads (travel etc.). No clashes between incompatible things you want to do. Can drop in and out. Excellently organised.*

- *Excellent approach for a conference. It meant that one did not require to leave work at a very busy time but could 'drop in' when time permitted*
- *In the times of globalization and hectic life this novel effort is indeed worth praising.*
- *It was a great conference, lots of fun, and a new experience for me being involved with the chat. It was very well organised, excellent navigation through the web pages, good presenters/writers with highly relevant information. Well done!*
- *It was first time that I was participating in Online Conference. I was eager to see how it works. Well, it worked with excellent satisfaction. I was very happy to be a part of this international online conference.*
- *This was my first online conference, and I was uncertain how helpful it would be. This conference was clearly carefully organized and carefully considered, and I appreciate the opportunity to take part. I have already passed on and discussed ideas from the case studies and the presentation papers with my colleagues in the university - a sure sign to me that the conference was effective. Thank you for the opportunity to take part!*

Appendix A – Conference Registration & Participation by Region

Conference Registration by Region
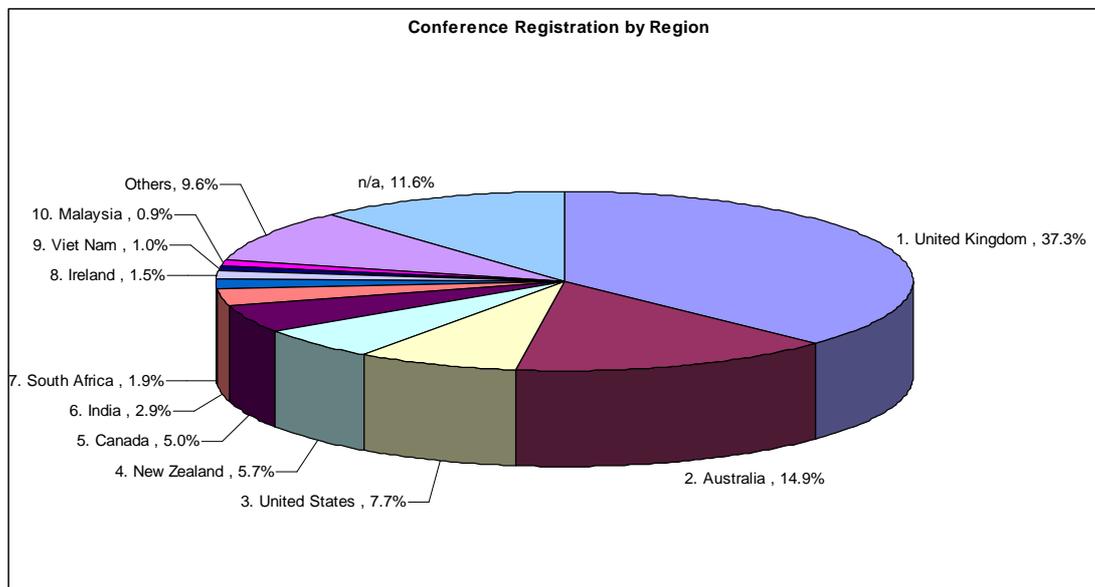
Country	Registrants
United Kingdom	253
Australia	101
United States	52
New Zealand	39
Canada	34
India	20
South Africa	13
Ireland	10
Viet Nam	7
Malaysia	6
Egypt	4
Nigeria	4
Pakistan	4
Ghana	3
Israel	3
China	2
Cyprus	2
Iran	2
Jamaica	2
Mexico	2
Moldova	2
Portugal	2
Romania	2
Taiwan	2
Thailand	2
Turkey	2
Hong Kong	2

Country	Registrants
Saudi Arabia	2
Sweden	2
Uganda	2
Indonesia	2
Botswana	1
Belgium	1
Japan	1
Jordan	1
Lesotho	1
Nepal	1
Philippines	1
Russian Federation	1
Singapore	1
South Korea	1
Spain	1
Switzerland	1
United Arab Emirates	1
Brazil	1
Bouvet Island	1
n/a	79
Total	**679**
Number of Countries	**46**

Conference Participation by Region

Conference Participation by Region
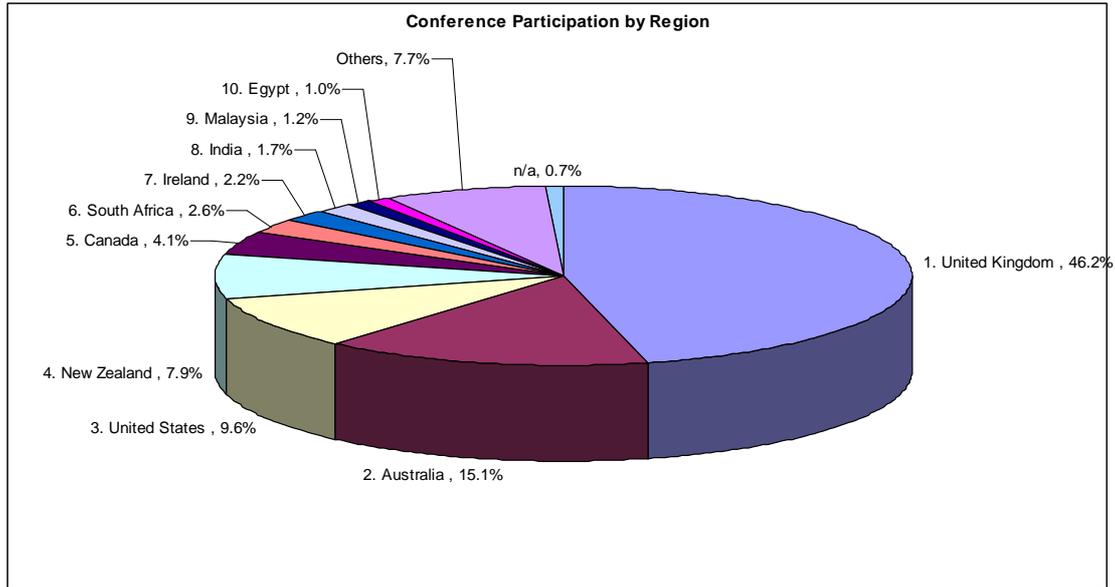
Country	Participants
United Kingdom	192
Australia	63
United States	40
New Zealand	33
Canada	17
South Africa	11
Ireland	9
India	7
Malaysia	5
Egypt	4
Viet Nam	2
Nigeria	2
Ghana	2
Mexico	2
Moldova	2
Portugal	2
Romania	2
Saudi Arabia	2
Sweden	2
Indonesia	2
Pakistan	1
Israel	1
China	1
Cyprus	1
Jamaica	1
Taiwan	1
Thailand	1
Uganda	1

Country	Participants
Belgium	1
Spain	1
Switzerland	1
United Arab Emirates	1
n/a	2
Total	**415**
Number of countries	**32**

Appendix B – Evaluation Questionnaire

REAP International Online Conference
Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility
May 29-31 2007

EVALUATION

We would like to collect some quick information about this conference so that we can make future improvements. This questionnaire is short but your answers are important to the REAP team. Your responses will be anonymised. Once complete please email to:
martin.hawksey@strath.ac.uk

Q1. Within your organisation which of the following best describes your primary role:
- ☐ Lecturer/Tutor/Teacher
- ☐ Researcher
- ☐ Educational Developer/Learning Technologist
- ☐ Head of Department/Policy Maker

Q2. Did you log in during the pre-conference week?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q3. Did you login into the online conference when it was running?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
Please state how you participated (read documents, participated in chat sessions etc)?

Q4. If you did not participate, please state why?
- ☐ Technical problems
- ☐ Time constraints
- ☐ Other, please state:

Q5. Did you have any technical problems during the conference?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
If yes how did you resolve them?

Q6. Rate these features of the conference (1 is poor, 5 is excellent):	1	2	3	4	5	Comment (optional):
1 Pre-conference information:						
2 Pre-conference reading week:						
3 Guidance and support for first time users:						
4 Quality of papers:						

Q6. Rate these features of the conference (1 is poor, 5 is excellent):	1	2	3	4	5	Comment (optional):
5 Quality of presentations:						
6 Quality of chat sessions:						
7 Quality of discussion forums:						
8 Opportunities for networking:						
9 Value of case studies:						
10 Opportunities to discuss assessment with others:						

Q7. How interested were you in the following topics (1 not interested, 5 is very interested):	1	2	3	4	5	Comment (optional):
1 Principles of assessment:						
2 Summative assessment:						
3 Teacher assessment and/or teacher feedback:						
4 Peer assessment and/or peer feedback:						
5 Self-assessment and/or self-generated feedback:						

Q8. Please tell us what was the best aspect of the conference?

Q9. Please tell us what was the least satisfactory aspect of the conference?

Q10. If we could start again, what might we do to improve this conference for you?

Q11. Were you satisfied with the online conference overall?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
Please give a reason for your answer: