

Reflections on going paperless in the Science Teaching Hub

Catriona J. Cunningham and Derryck Shewan
School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, University of Aberdeen, UK
catriona.cunningham@abdn.ac.uk @RegenMedCat



Background

The opening of the Science Teaching Hub led to many changes in the way we run practical classes. Here, we reflect on taking SM2001, Foundation Skills for Medical Sciences, paperless. This is a compulsory level 2 course for undergraduate medical science students consisting of 5 group workshops and 5 individual assessments, covering skills including data analysis and study design.

Summary of work

All workshops and assessments were migrated onto Lt, a cloud-based learning platform. This facilitated a range of question styles including multiple choice, short answers, tables, and labelling of images (Fig. 1). Marking was also completed in Lt. A change from previous years was that staff were asked to mark one question rather than a small number of complete scripts with the aim of increasing consistency and reducing staff time. Additionally, questions were adapted to allow for some automated marking.

Feedback from students and staff was collected via the SCEF and a short online survey respectively. Both Likert scales and free text comment questions were used.

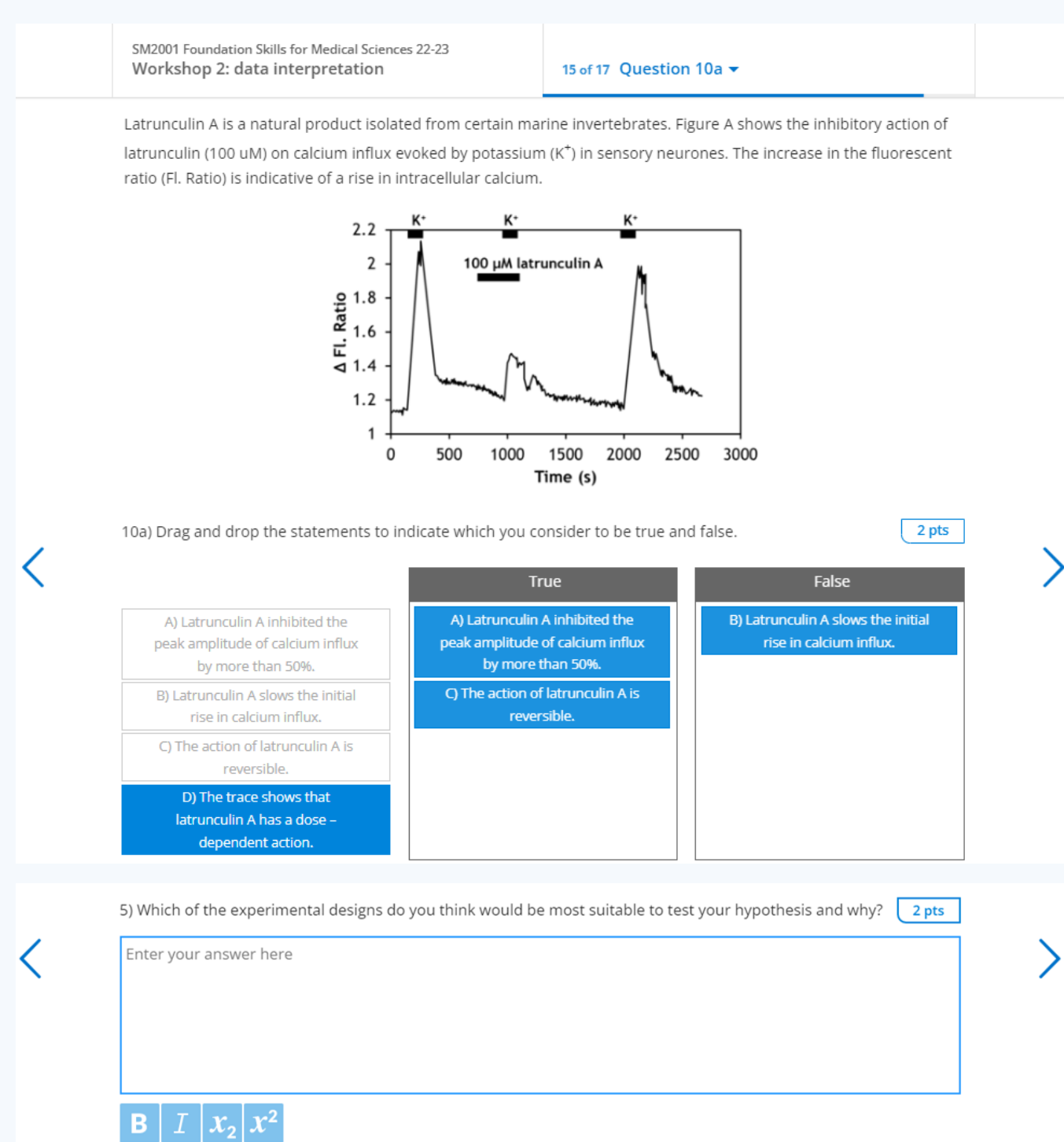


Figure 1: Screenshots from Lt workshops.

Feedback

A total of 58/179 (32.4%) students completed the SCEF with >90% rating teaching as effective (Fig. 2A). Additionally, in 5 individual Likert scores >83% of students agreed the workshops helped them develop their numerical, data interpretation, data handling and experimental design skills.

Discussion

- Overall, feedback from both staff and students was very positive
- While there were some more negative comments on feedback this could be explained by the integration issues with Blackboard Ultra leading to delays in grades being published
- All marking was completed on time and for the majority of workshops, feedback was returned within 5 days
- There was no consensus on if the use of Lt decreased marking workload but it did improve consistency
- In future years, we will make more use of group submission for workshops to decrease marking time

In the free text comments, there were 7 positive mentions of the use of Lt and 11 positive comments on the course structure (Fig. 2C).

A total of 9/16 (56.3%) staff responded to the survey. Overall, the feedback showed staff felt that the transition of the course to Lt was successful and marking was straightforward (Fig. 2B). However, there was no consensus on how Lt changed marking time with responses ranging from greatly decreased to greatly increased.

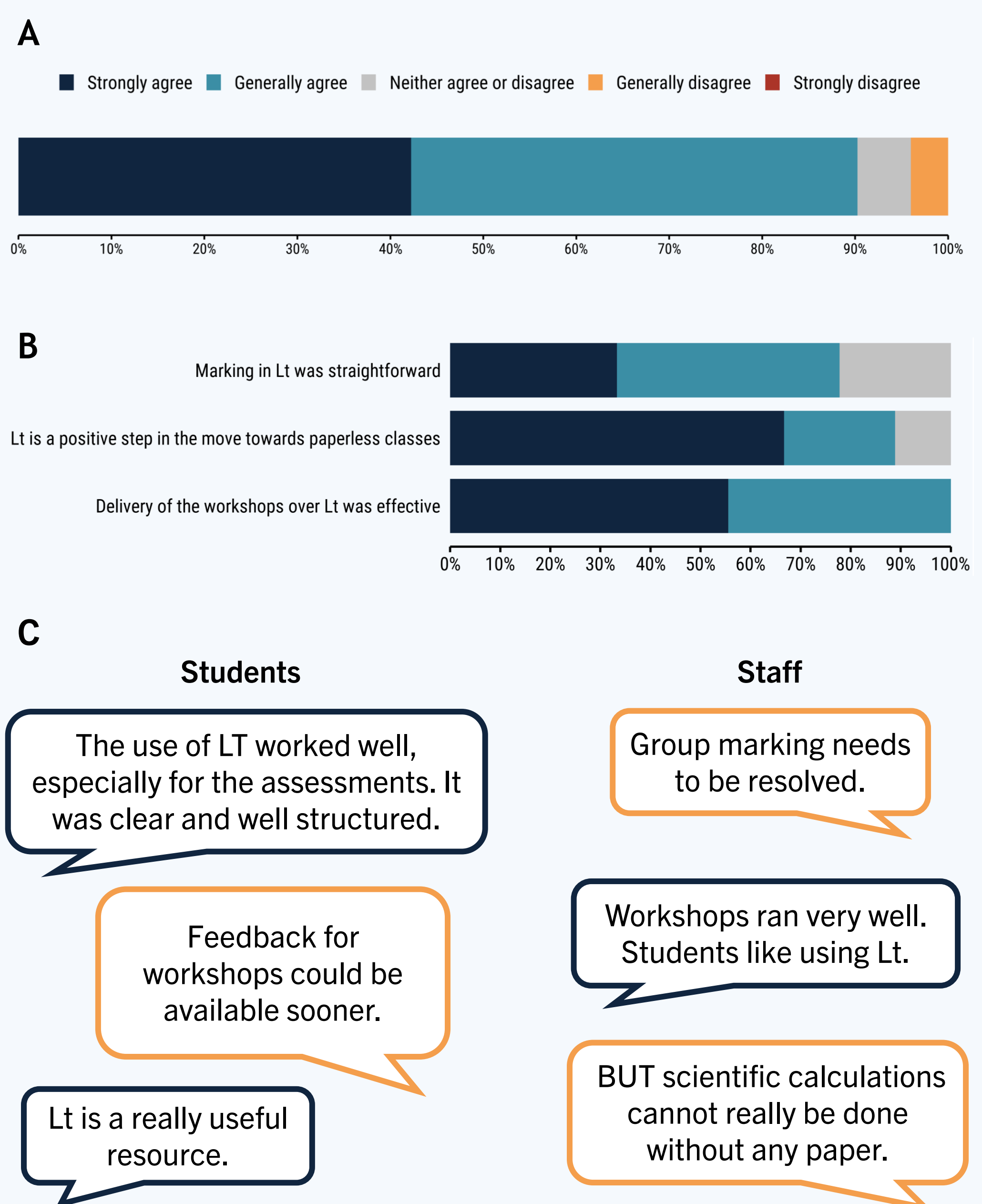


Figure 2: Likert scores from SCEF (A) and staff survey (B). Selected free text comments from students and staff.