

Assessing the Impact of Choice of Assessment Weighting

The black/white awarding gap

Emily Walsh, Chris Wood & Alison Poole
University of Portsmouth



The black/white awarding gap
remains approximately 10%
nationally.

(Advance HE, 2023)

**We stumbled upon this
narrowing of the awarding gap
by accident.**

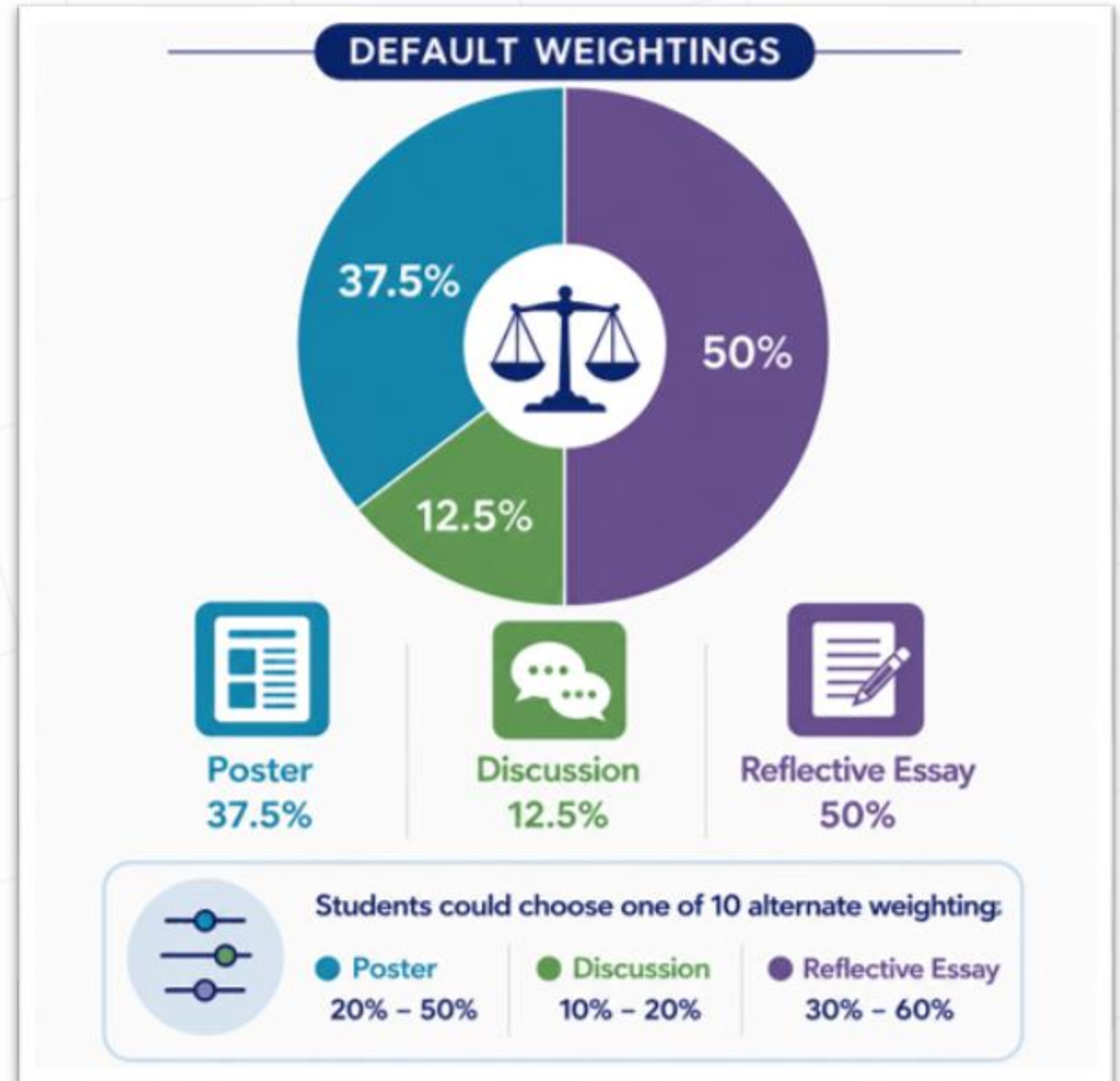
Research questions

1. To what extent does choice of assessment weighting influence outcomes?
2. Is the impact of choice different across ethnic groups?
3. Why do students choose particular weightings?

Assessment Design

The Pilot

- Year 2 Law Students
- Legal Writing & Research Module
- 210 students



No Jeopardy Design

Why?

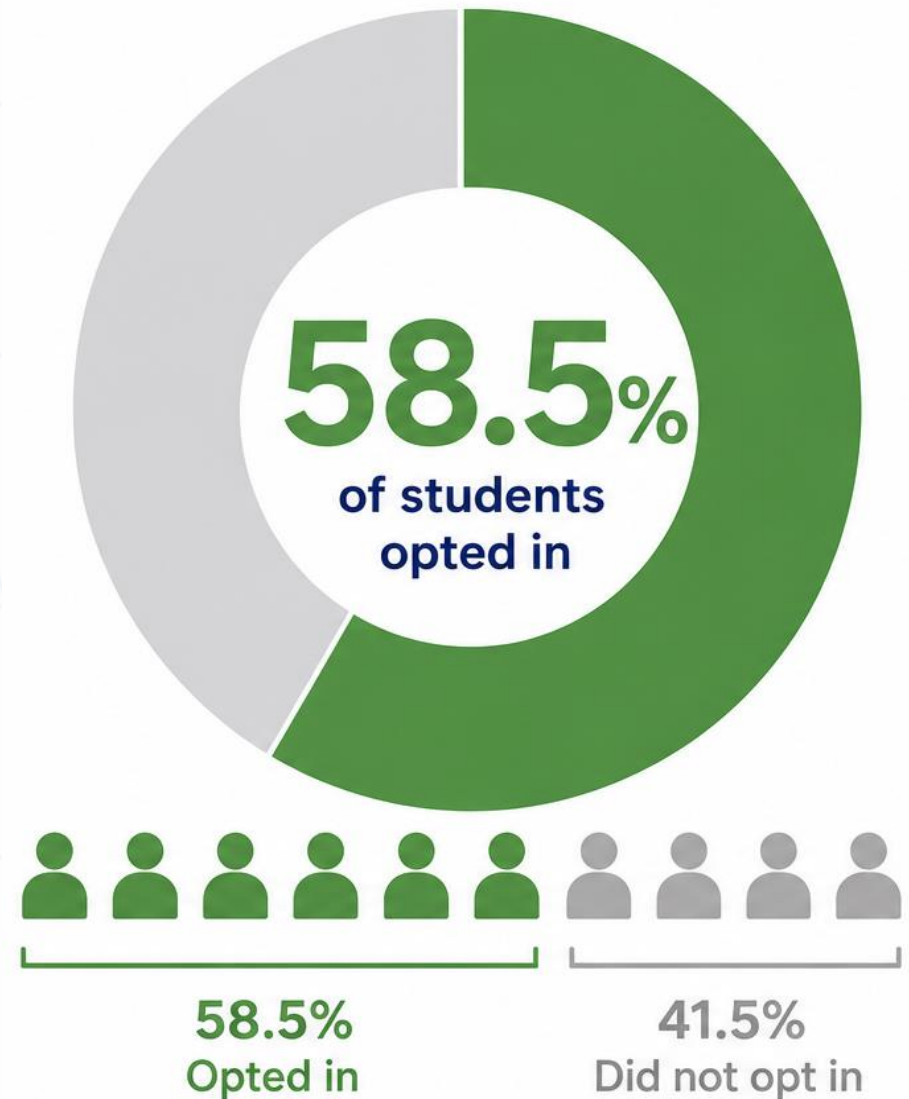
- Removes risk
- Encourages participation
- Allows investigation of choice itself

"We wanted to understand the impact of choice, not the impact of risk."



Participation

- Participation across full attainment range
- Participants broadly representative of the cohort
- Similar to participation rates reported by Rideout (2018)

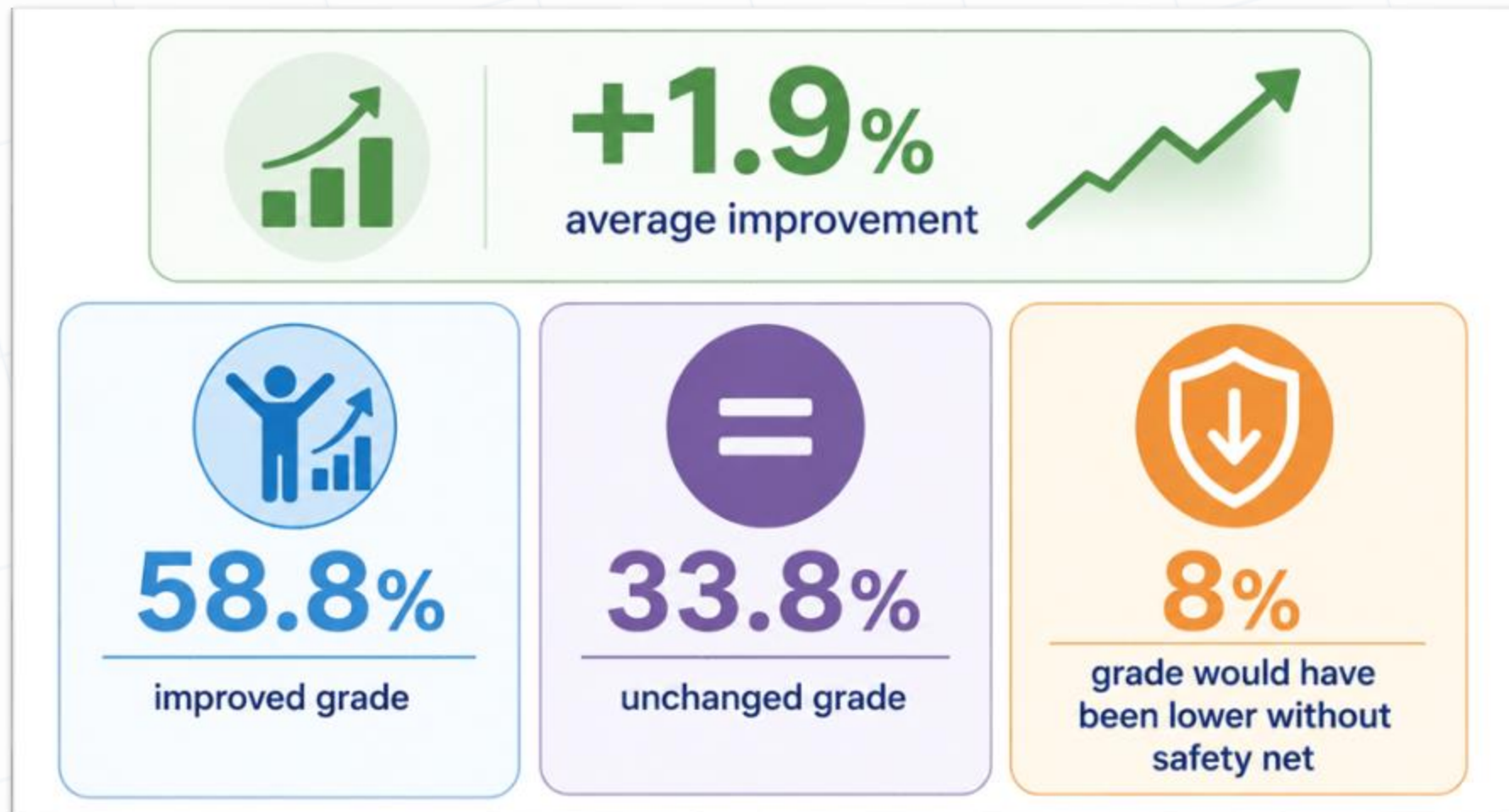


Why did students choose?

Five Themes Emerged

- 1 Confidence in a component (77%)
- 2 Reduce weighting of weaker component
- 3 Task uncertainty
- 4 Concerns about marking
- 5 Desire for balanced weighting

Main Findings



However, one student moved from a fail to a pass and four students crossed grade boundaries.

Impact on black and white students...

83%

Black students saw an
increase in grades

Whereas 50% of white students saw an increase in grades

What might be happening

Possible explanations:

- Opportunity for students to play to strengths
- Better alignment with preferred assessment modes
- Reduced impact of less-favoured assessment formats
- Controlled risk-taking



Limitations

- Single institution, single module
- Small ethnic subgroup sizes
- Self-selection bias
- No-jeopardy model may inflate gains
- Focused only on ethnicity



Key takeaways...

- ✓ Students engaged with assessment choice
- ✓ Most students benefited
- ✓ Gains were generally modest
- ✓ Black students benefited more frequently than White students
- ✓ Flexible weighting may have value as part of wider inclusive assessment strategies

Final thought...

If students can identify where they demonstrate learning best, should we give them more opportunities to do so?

References

Advance HE. (2023, November 15). *Equality in higher education: Statistical reports 2023*. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/equality-higher-education-statistical-reports-2023>

Rideout, C. (2018). Students' choices and achievement in large undergraduate classes using a novel flexible assessment approach. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(1), 68-78.

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