


Assessments in the Brave New World

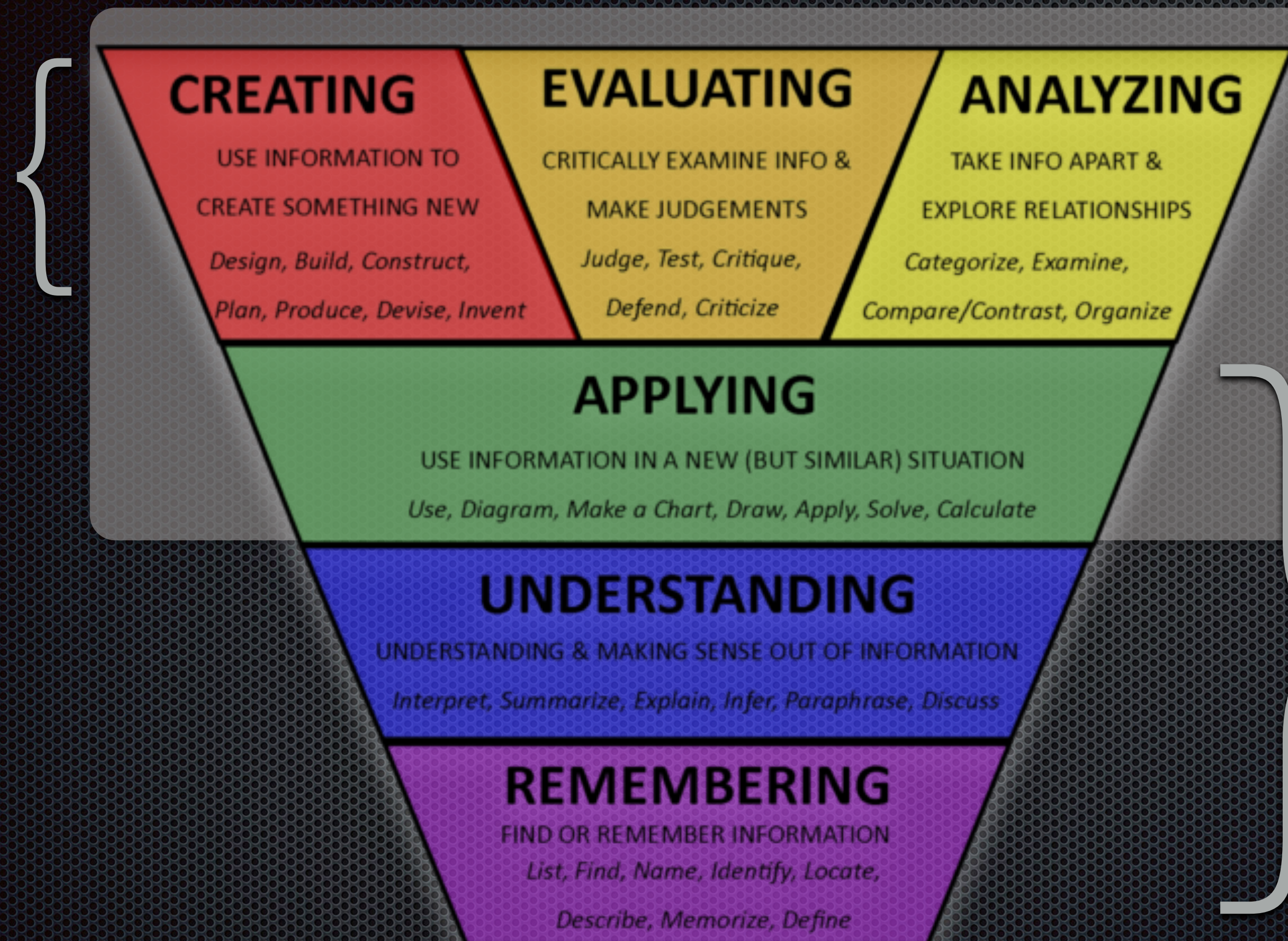
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#TeachECONference2020

What are we assessing?

In order to
create
evaluate
analyse



*High stake/final
assessments
should aim high!*

We need to be able to

- remember basic concepts
- understand the information
- apply information in similar situations

These are very important too!

Bloom's Taxonomy

source: <https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/taxonomies-learning>

Considerations when setting assessment

- ✦ **Learning outcomes**
- ✦ **Timezones**
Many students are in different countries with different timezones
- ✦ **Special arrangements**
If special arrangements are dealt with extra-time, this may not be a challenge; but if special equipment is required, it may be difficult to support students in their homes
- ✦ **Access to library resources**
Libraries are closed and many students rely on the library resources (e.g. books) to prepare for exams. If e-books are not available, these students may be affected
- ✦ **Late submissions**
IT failures may affect submission so contingency plans have to be put in place
- ✦ **Students well-being**
An issue in general around exams
Everybody is going to extra-levels of stress at the moment
- ✦ **Marking workload**
Depending on the assessment, this may increase or decrease
- ✦ **IT systems available**
Ultimately, the assessment you will be able to set remotely depends on what is available in your university

Based on Burnett & Paredes-Fuentes (2020)

My (mock) assessment 1

- Year 3 Applied Macroeconomics
optional module (~20 students) 48h assessment

You work as economic advisor for the UK government, and have been tasked to provide a policy brief (700 words max) on the effects on overall inequality of a policy change. **[50 marks]**

Choose one of the following:

1. “Reform of disability allowance”

Following the increase in claims for job seeking allowance amongst individuals with disabilities, the government is considering introducing a flat disability premium for those with declared disabilities.

2. “Improving the bargaining position of low-skilled workers”

Following the increase in wage-gaps in the labour market between high-skilled and low-skilled workers, the government is considering introducing an employment protection legislation in favour of workers who are in danger of being laid off if they do not accept lower wages.

My (mock) assessment 2

- Year 2 Economics of Money and Banking
optional module (~70 students) 24h assessment

Question 1.

Why might giving the central bank responsibility for banking supervision make it more difficult for the bank to pursue an independent monetary policy with price stability as the primary target? [15 marks, 100 words]

Question 2.

Why changes in the official interest rate do not necessarily result in an instant change in market rates? [15 marks, 100 words]

See more examples here

Students' views

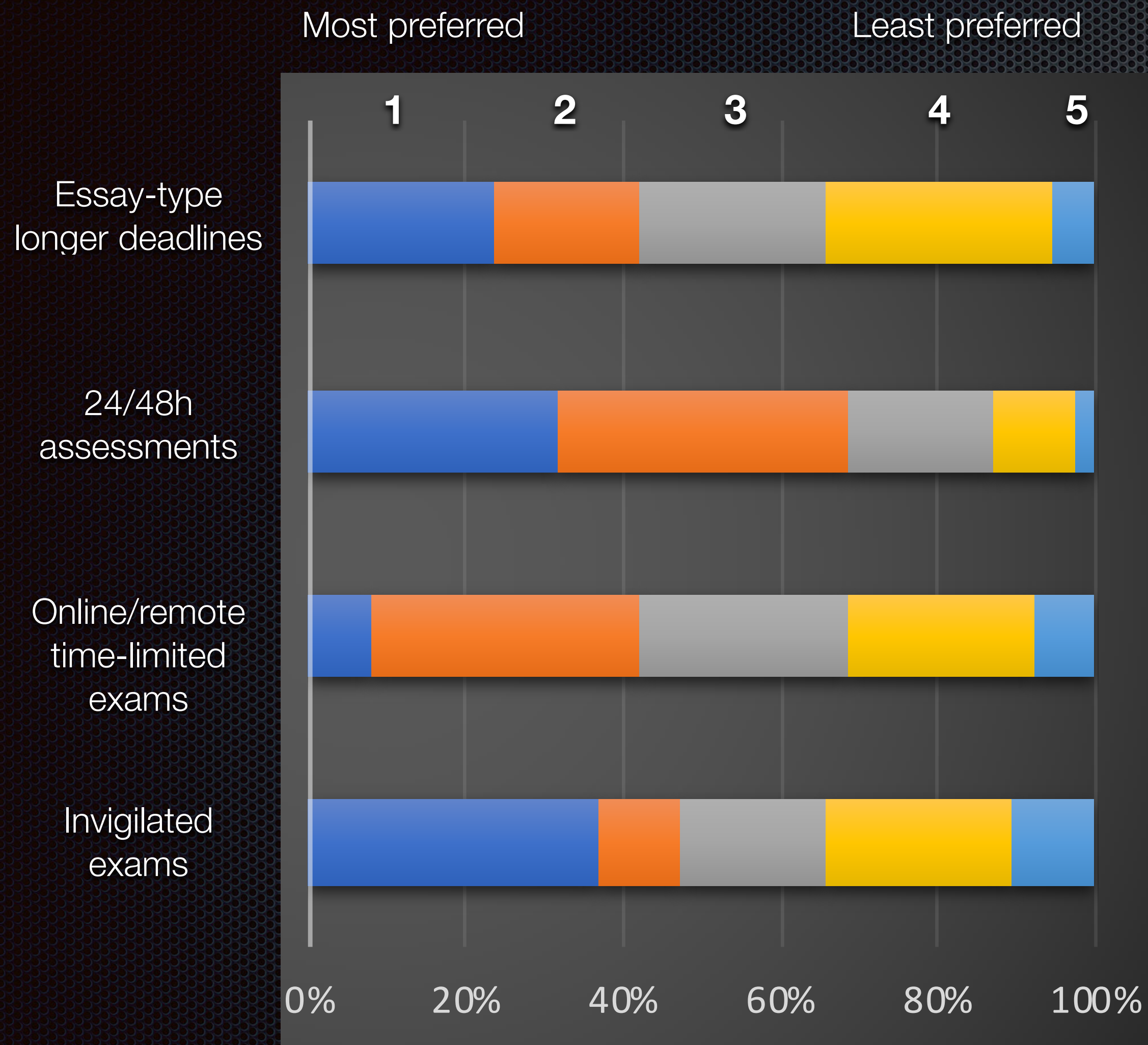
Compared to invigilated exams, did you find remote assessments:

	more stressful (29%)	same stress (32%)	less stress (34%)	depends (5%)
more difficult (26%)	11%	8%	5%	3%
same difficulty (39%)	11%	18%	11%	0%
easier (8%)	0%	0%	8%	0%
depends (26%)	8%	5%	11%	3%

I think they were similar in difficulty in terms of the questions asked, but more difficult and stressful in terms of the procedure of answering the questions, inserting the pics, keeping the time yourself, technology issues, etc.

38 students (out of 76)
from both modules

High stake assessments from preferred (1) to least preferred (5)



There was also "group project" & "other" which were the least popular choices

There was a far larger pressure to get everything perfect. I found myself wasting time because I felt it needed to be perfect since it was open book. Its a new scenario I guess so I say depends because I imagine it becomes easier as you get used to a timed open book essay.

More stressful in some aspects because a lot of time is spent trying to figure out the best way of adding equations to the word document. However having notes available lessened the stress.

38 students (out of 76)
from both modules

Students' comments on 24/48h assessment

"I found the 24 hour format of the exam very helpful compared to the 2-3 hour format, it alleviated a lot of the stress surrounding the online assessment and I believe it will have helped me to perform better as a result. I think the format really meant that my understanding of the content was able to be examined fully."

"I think a 24/48h exam would work better in eliminating the stress and pressure of submitting in time ... as well as testing the students' knowledge more broadly. If the questions are designed correctly, like in EC230 for example ... [s]uch questions involve the student already knowing the material quite well and the different aspects of a single question, which cannot be answered well if the student relies only on the 24h time frame to find the answers in the material already provided..."

I think for some exams the open book aspect is actually really useful especially where it is case study based. In those cases the exams with books were really fruitful as we were able to focus on critically answering questions rather than wasting time memorising lots of facts about it and recalling it.

Assessment design: Two take-aways

- ✦ Design questions that go beyond 'remembering' material from lectures/books (good practice in general)
- ✦ Does *cheating* happen? Perhaps.
But cheating does happen during invigilated exams too.
I have no evidence much cheating happen in my exams (very low Turniting reports, variety of answers, normal mark distributions similar to what it was last year).
Good assessment design can help to mitigate this.



Students' comments on '*cheating*'

Indifferent for my own performance, but I strongly suspect a lot of collaboration will have taken place and not been caught, pushing grade boundaries up a lot. I think this could be a big issue in maths heavy exams, where plagiarism and collaboration is almost undetectable.

If the questions on the exam can be directly copied from lecture notes or other module material, then online exams seem very useless.

I am a bit sceptical as to how university can prevent cheating in the online exam format. While I understand it is a very difficult matter, those who may use external help, will get a relatively better grade than those who not, thus distorting the distribution.

Students are worried about cheating too

Remote = Cheating?



- ✦ We under-estimate the probability and incidence of exam room misconduct
 - ✦ *cheating in exams is common practice*
 - ✦ *physical presence of academic staff give the illusion of control*
- ✦ We over-estimating the dangers of misconduct associated with take-home assessment
 - ✦ Plagiarism software (e.g. Turnitin)
 - ✦ Assessment design helps to mitigate for commissioning of work (i.e. *essay mills*)
 - ✦ Assessments which promote higher order learning are more difficult to farm-out