

Introducing learning workshops into the biosciences: A student-staff partnership

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Background

The biosciences can be difficult for nursing and midwifery students and embedding study skills into the curriculum may help overcome this challenge¹.

- **Aim:** To evaluate students' perceptions of 'learning workshops' in a 1st yr anatomy & physiology course.

Intervention

- Two x 1hr learning workshops were co-designed and co-facilitated by past students and teaching staff.
- Workshop 1: Students shared learning strategies (before mid-semester exam; Figure 1).
- Workshop 2: Students learnt exam tips and peer-marked exam responses (before final exam).
- Assessment: Pass-fail worksheet for each workshop.

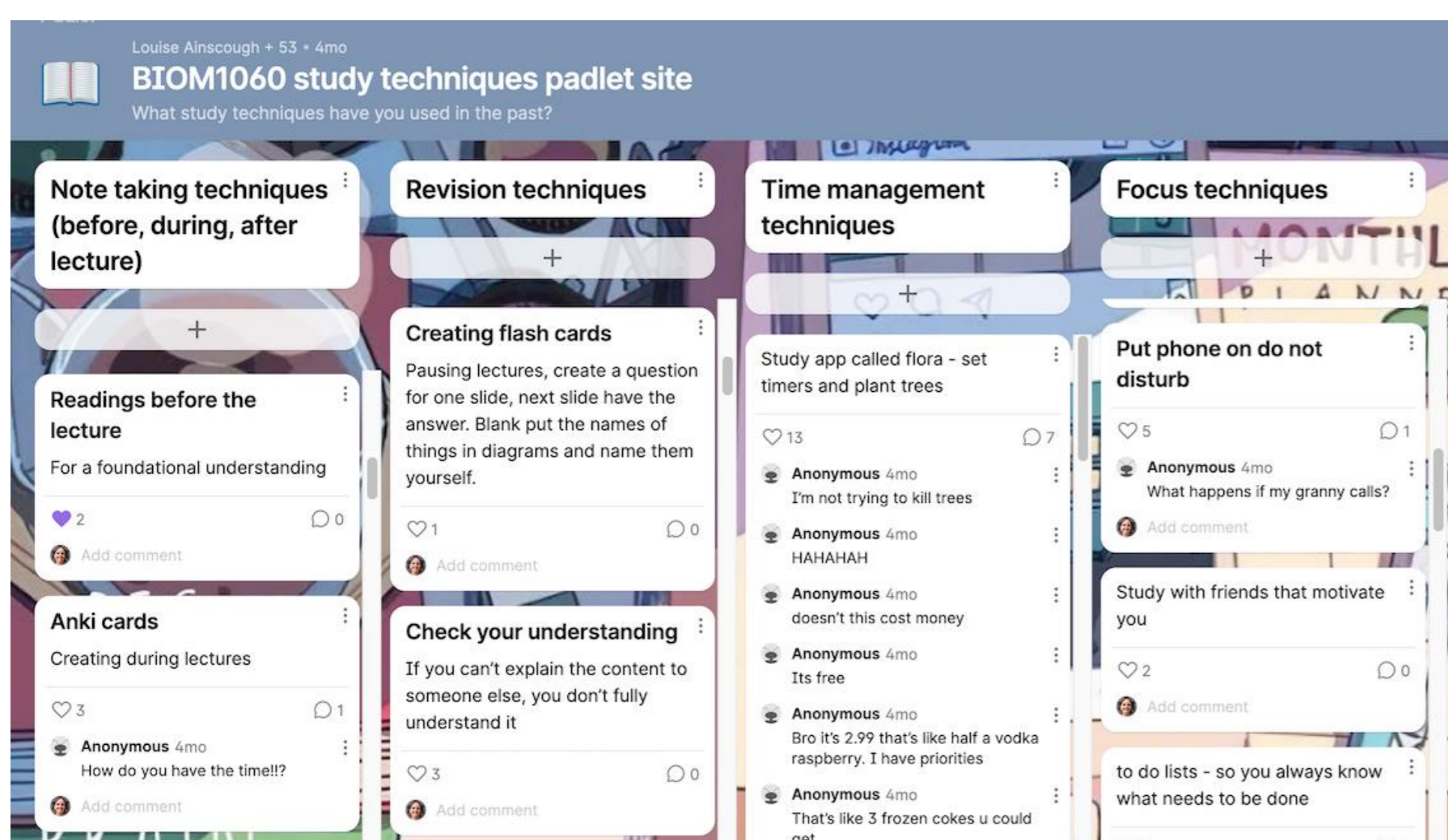


Figure 1: Padlet site for learning workshop 1.

Evaluation

- Students were asked whether the workshops were or were not useful, and why.
- Consenting students' (n=165) responses were coded using inductive thematic analysis².
- Students' exam scores were compared between 2021 (no intervention) and 2022 (intervention).

Results

- All students participated in at least one workshop, with 88% participating in both.
- Most students (80%) found the workshops useful (Figure 2).
- Of the students who did not find the workshops useful, many stated already knowing effective learning strategies (39%).

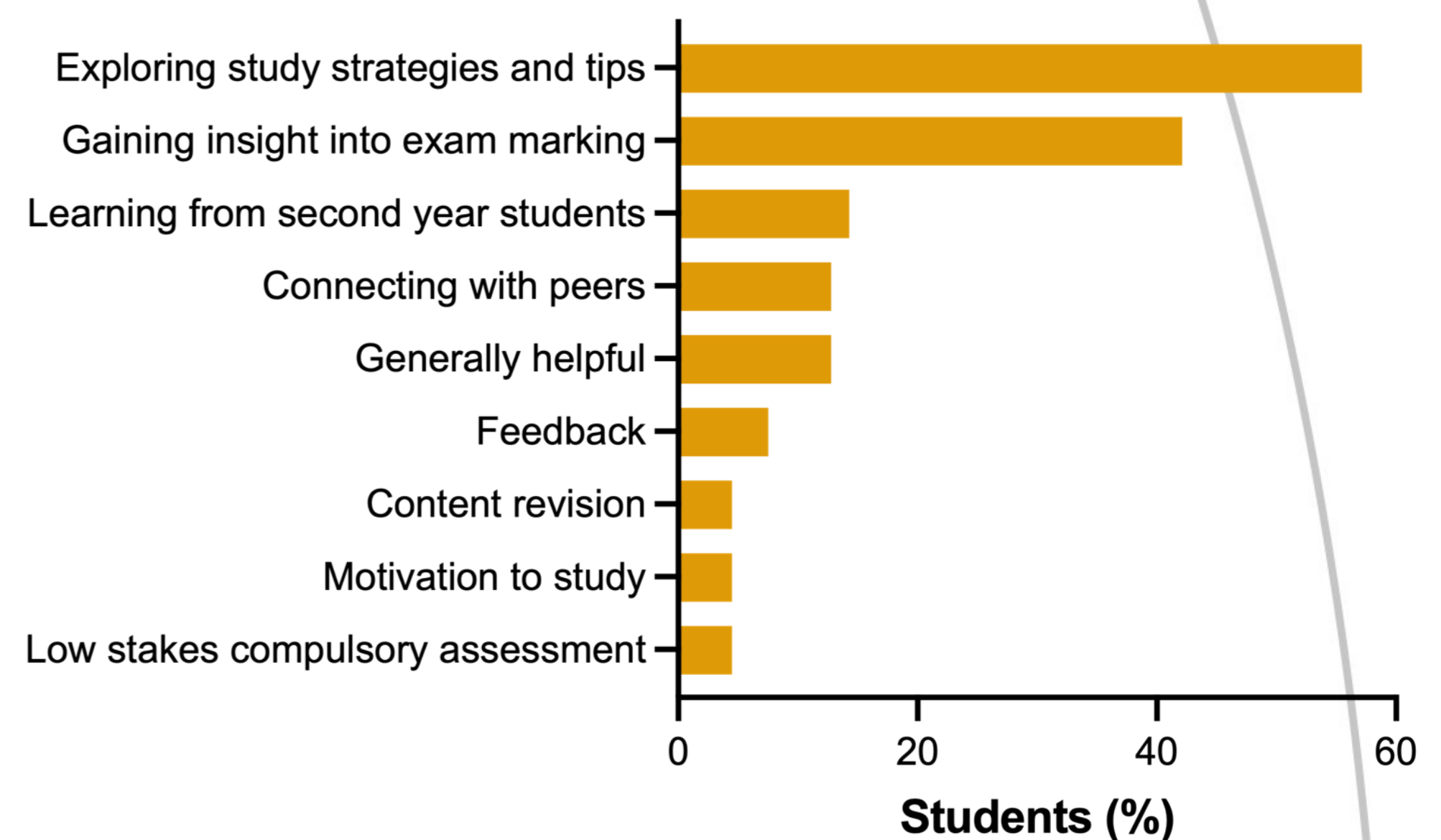


Figure 2: Reasons why students found the learning workshops helpful. Students could report more than one reason.

- Two-way mixed ANOVA showed a significant interaction between the year students completed BIOM1060 and their exam performance (Figure 3).
- The 2022 students had significantly lower mid-semester exam results, but showed a significant improvement in their end of semester exam.

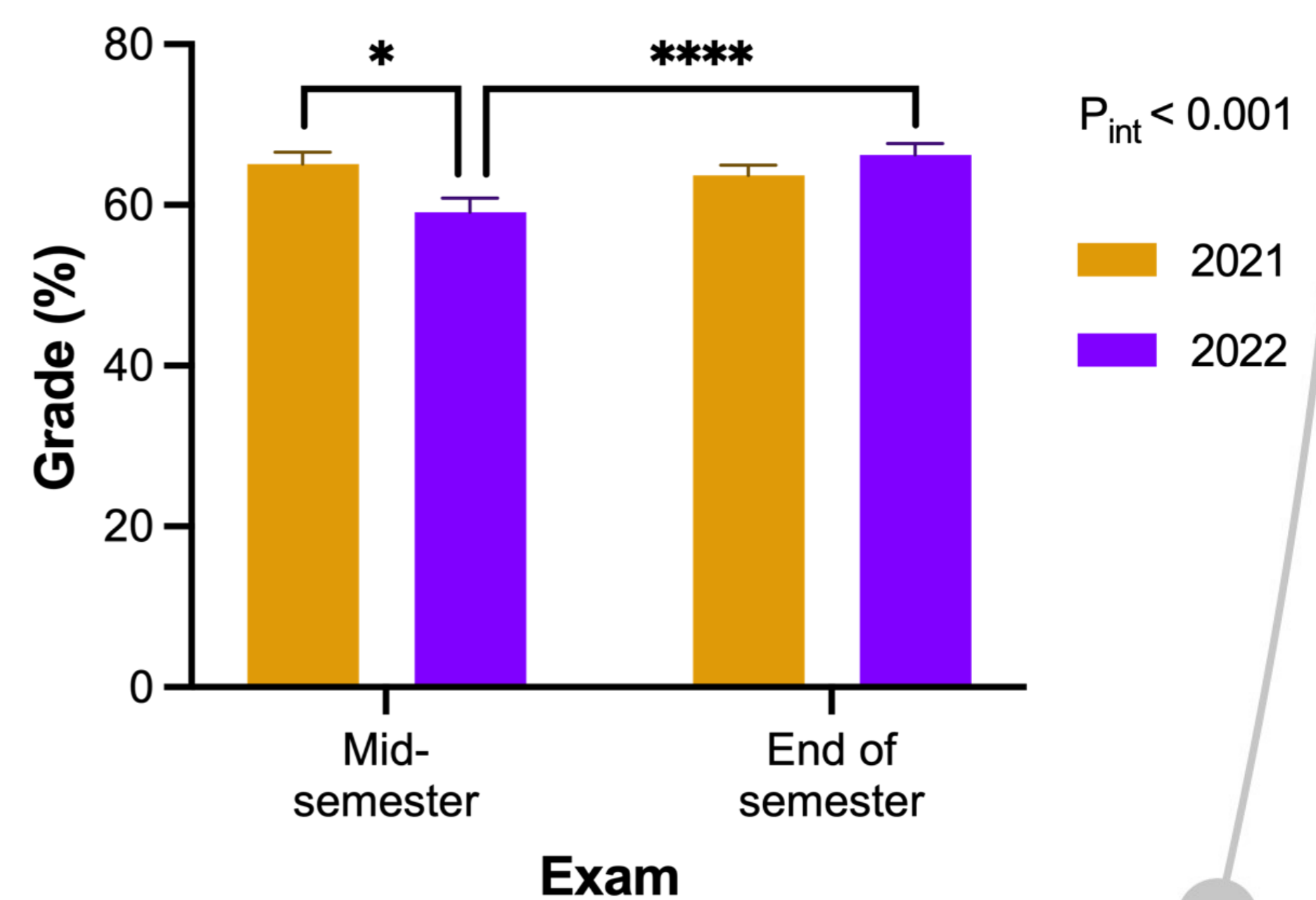


Figure 3: Exam performance in 2022 (intervention year) compared to 2021 (non-intervention year). * p < 0.05; **** p < 0.0001.

Conclusions

- Learning workshops are low-stakes activities that can be easily embedded within the curriculum.
- By focusing on how to learn, these workshops may reduce inequality between students with different levels of academic preparedness.

References

1. McVicar, Andrew & Kemble (2015). Nurse Education Today, 35, 500-509.
2. Braun & Clarke (2006). Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.