Fáilte | Welcome

Celebrating and sharing eportfolio practice
1 October 2026

DCU Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath Dublin City University

Agenda

- **Welcome & opening remarks**

  Prof. Lisa Looney, DCU Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar
- **A student perspective**

  Malha Muhammed, former DCU student & Loop Reflect Award winner
- **Case study publication launch**

  Reflections from eportfolio based case study authors
- **Research study & report launch**

  Key findings and insights from our research
- **Mini panel discussion**

  Perspectives on 10 years of ePortfolio practice
- **Concluding remarks & celebration**

Prof. Lisa Looney

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

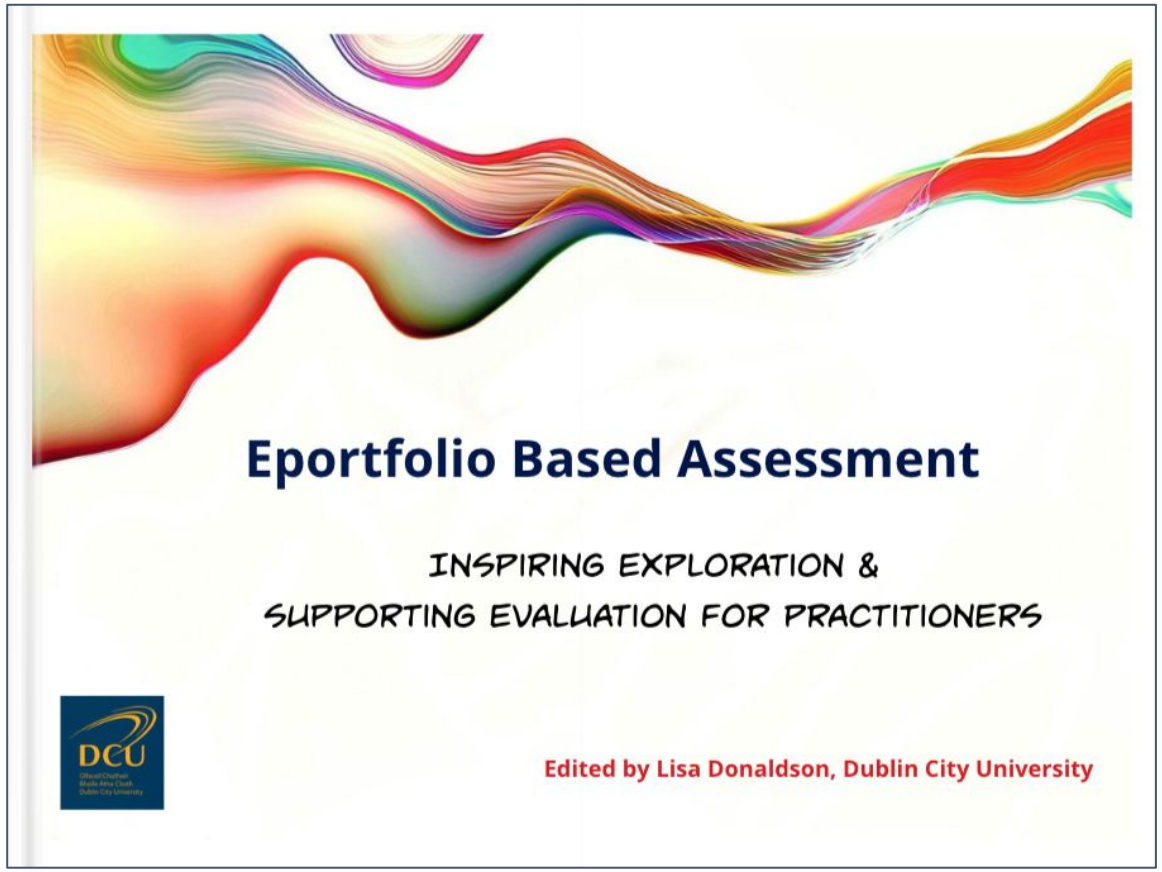
Malha Muhammed

Former DCU Student and Students' Union Officer

Case studies

DCU
Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Volume 1, 2018



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Volume 2, 2021

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Volume 3, 2026

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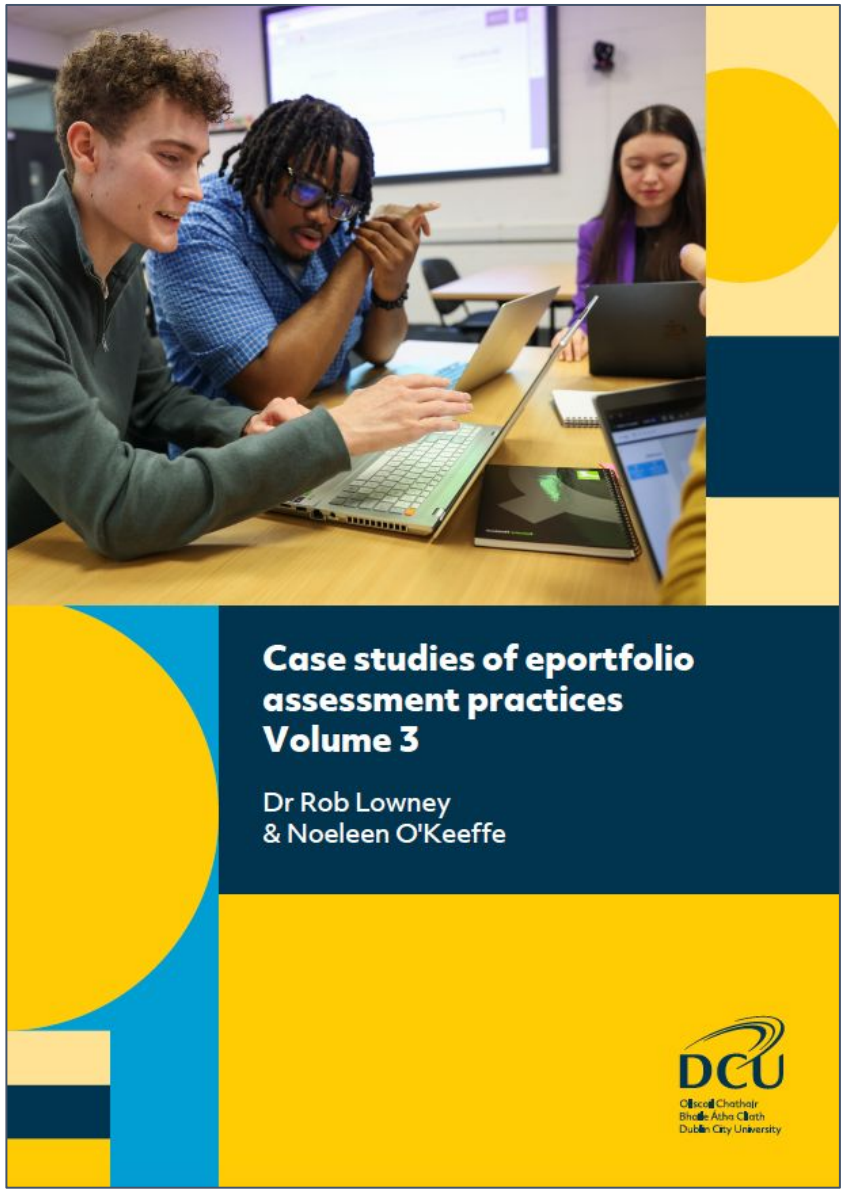
A living publication… further case studies in development

Get in touch if you'd like to contribute one!



Case study authors

Aishling Silke

Colette Real

Elizabeth Kent

ePortfolios at DCU: The experiences of students and staff

DCU
Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Background

10 years of ePortfolio practice with Loop Reflect at DCU

2021
5-year anniversary
→ Student survey
→ Low engagement

2026
10-year anniversary
→ Wider reach
→ Students + staff
→ Richer picture of the Loop Reflect experience

What has 10 years of ePortfolio practice meant for our students and staff?

Research design

- Applied for Research Ethics approval in late 2025; granted in 2026
- Mixed-methods research, to ensure complementarity of methods and support triangulation of findings
- Two distinct populations: students and staff

Data collection

- Anonymous online surveys hosted via DCU Qualtrics: one for students, one for staff
- March 2026: student survey / population 8,100; eligible responses 412 (5%)
- May 2026: staff survey / population 1,100; eligible responses 42 (4%)
- Students incentivised with raffle for one of two €50 One4All vouchers

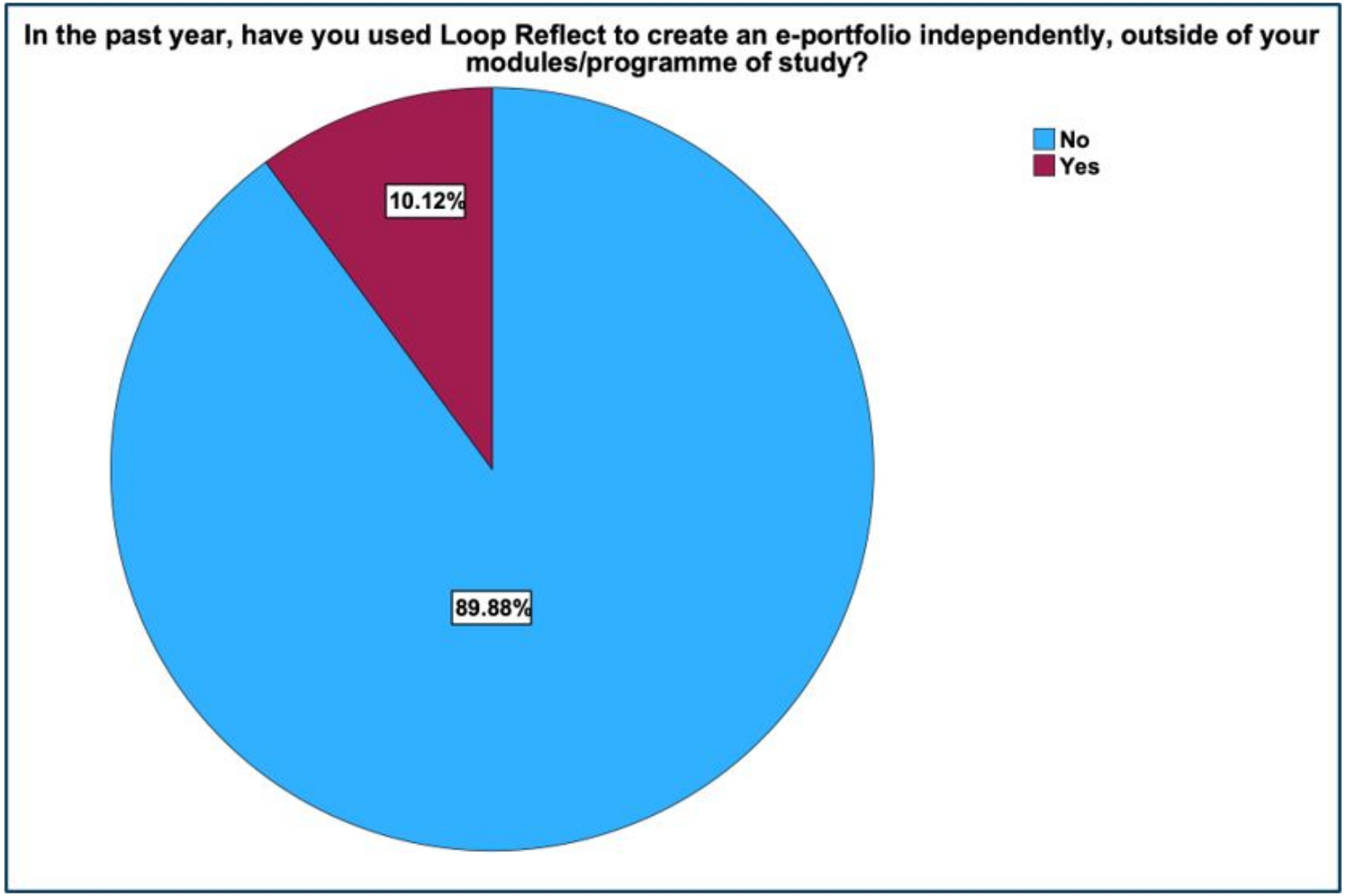
Data collection

- Online focus groups for students (April 2026) x 3 - 16 students total
- Students received a small voucher as token of gratitude
- Online focus groups for staff (June 2026) x 2 - 12 staff total
- Recorded, auto-transcribed, transcripts cleaned, pseudonymisation

Data analysis

- Quantitative data analysed in SPSS
- Qualitative data coded collaboratively in NVivo following Braun & Clarke’s reflexive thematic analysis framework (2022)
- Arrived at eight themes

Quantitative data



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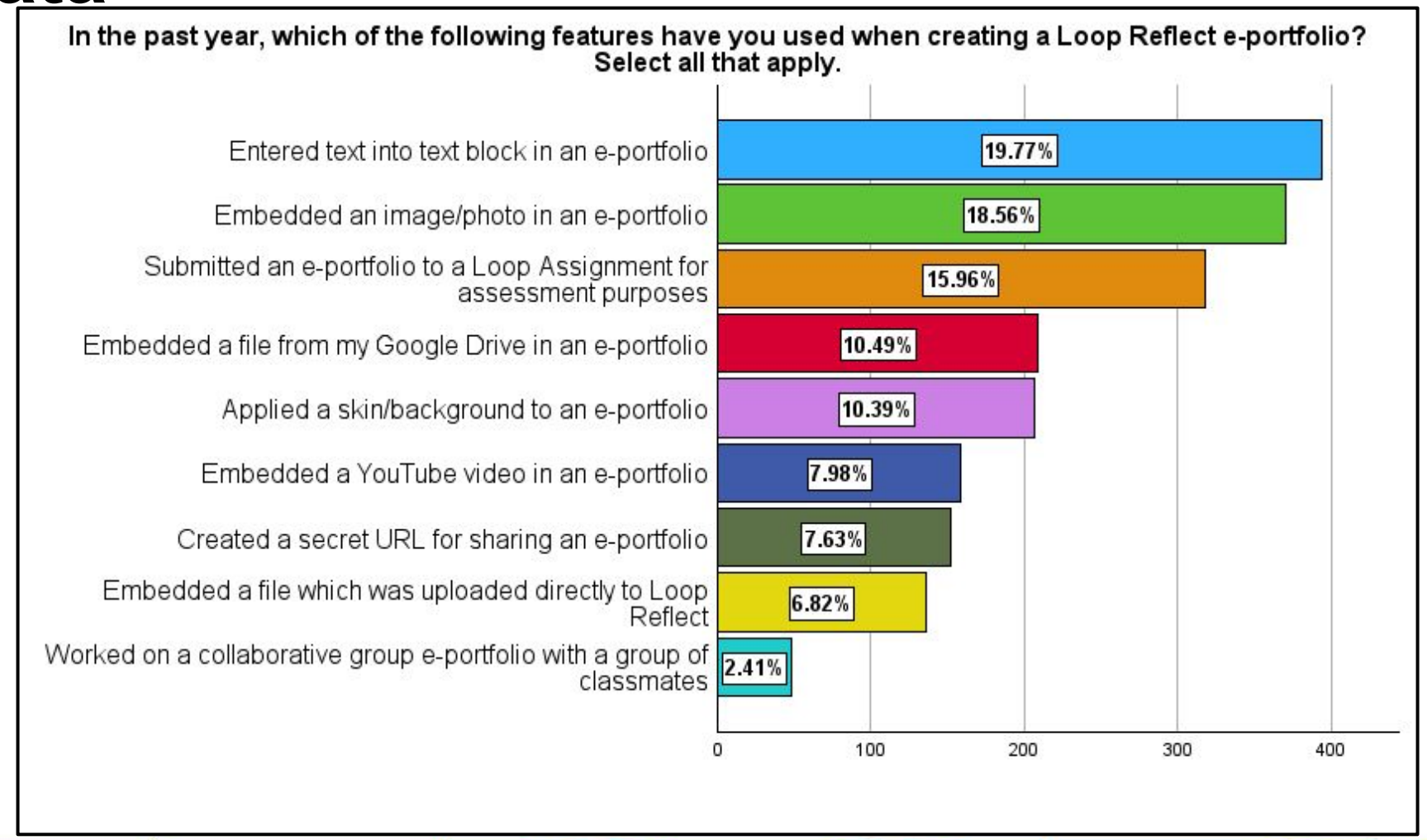

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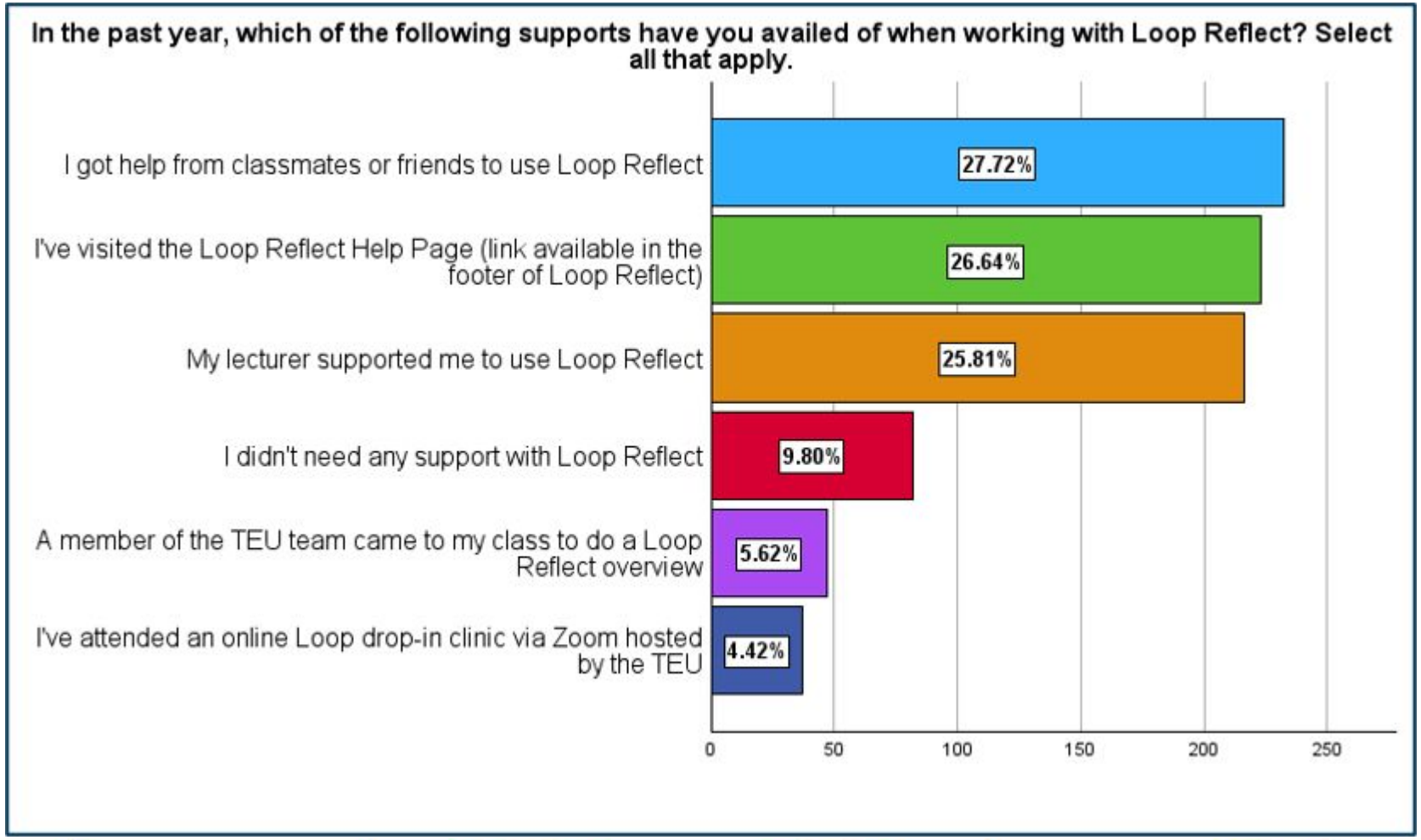

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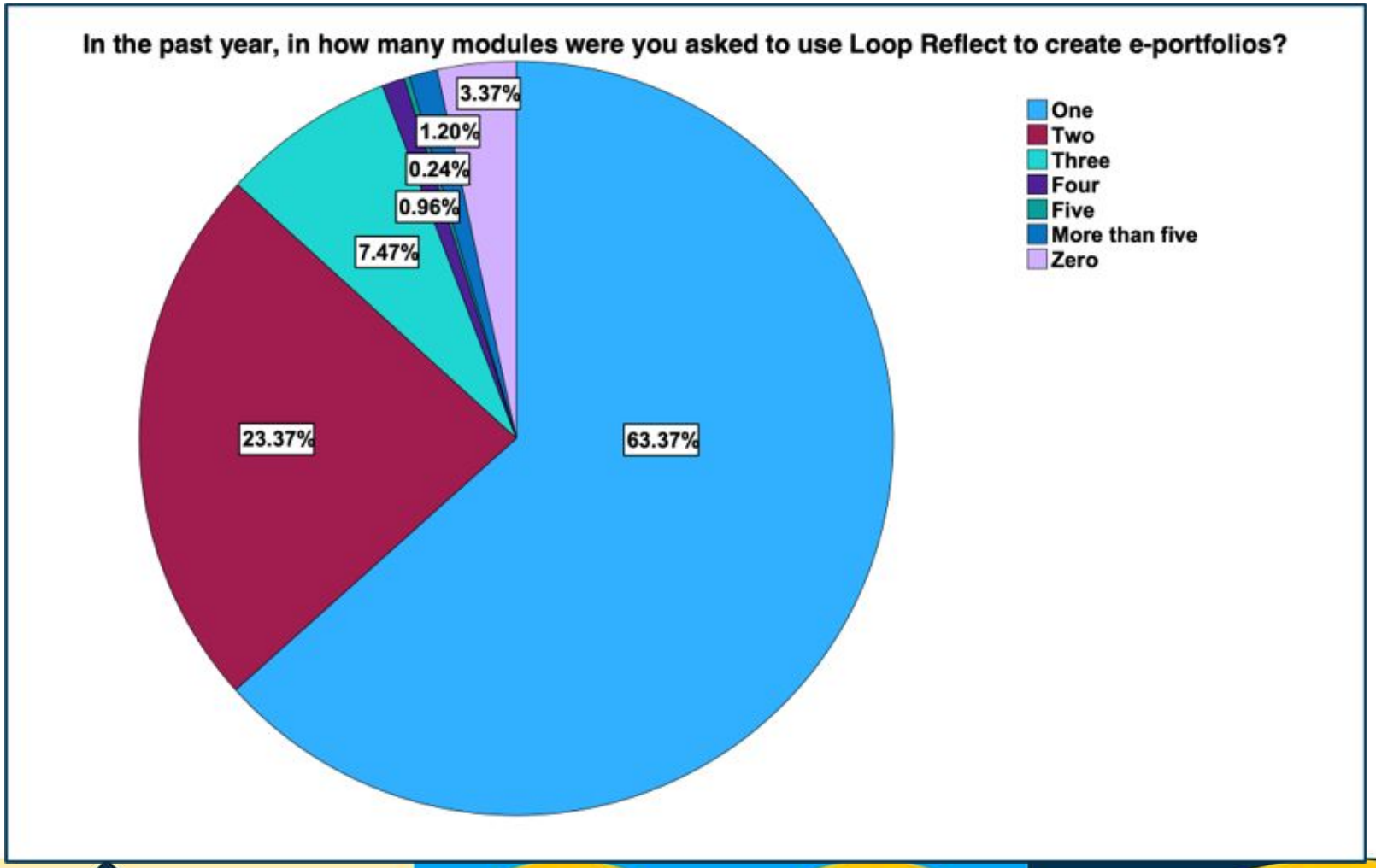

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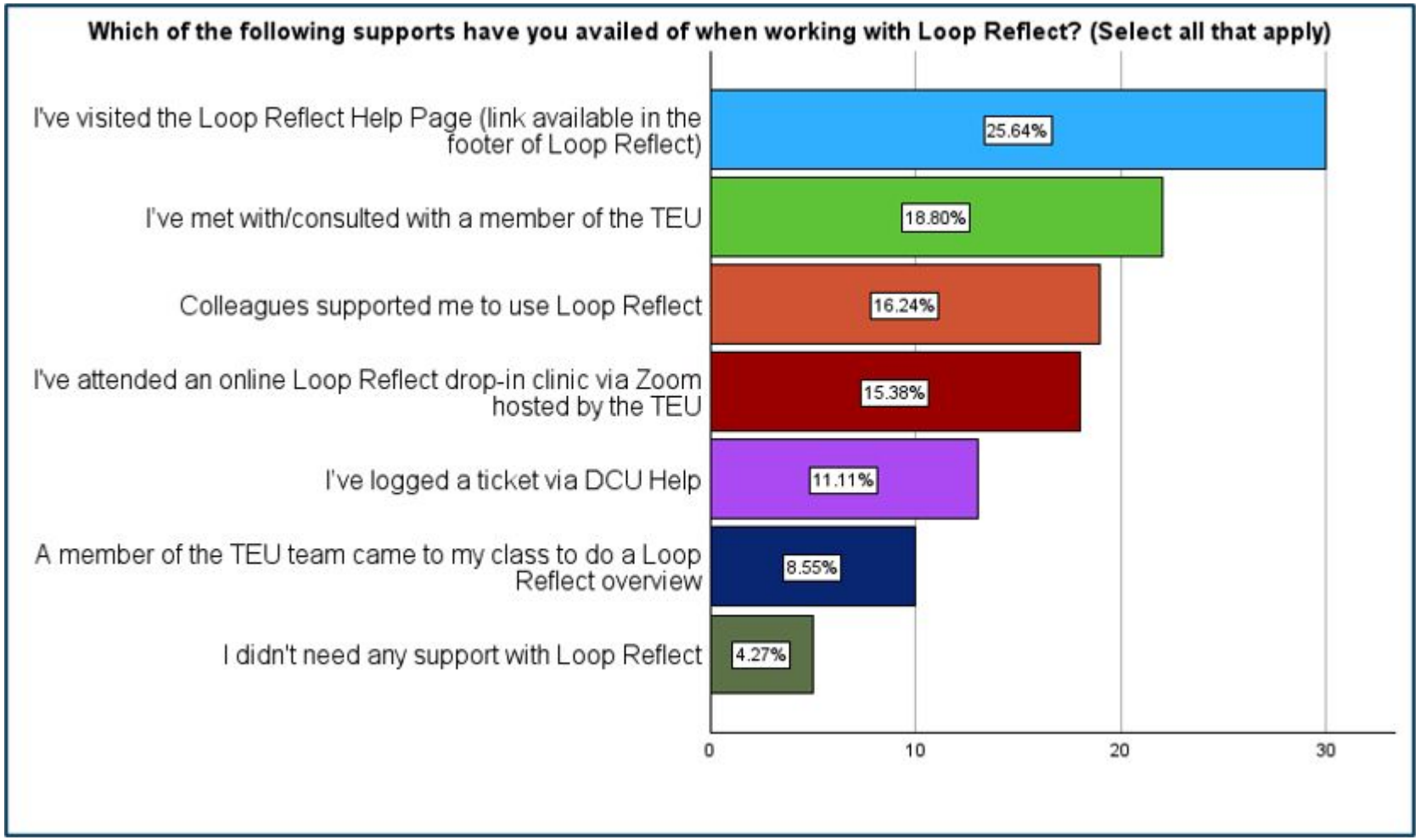

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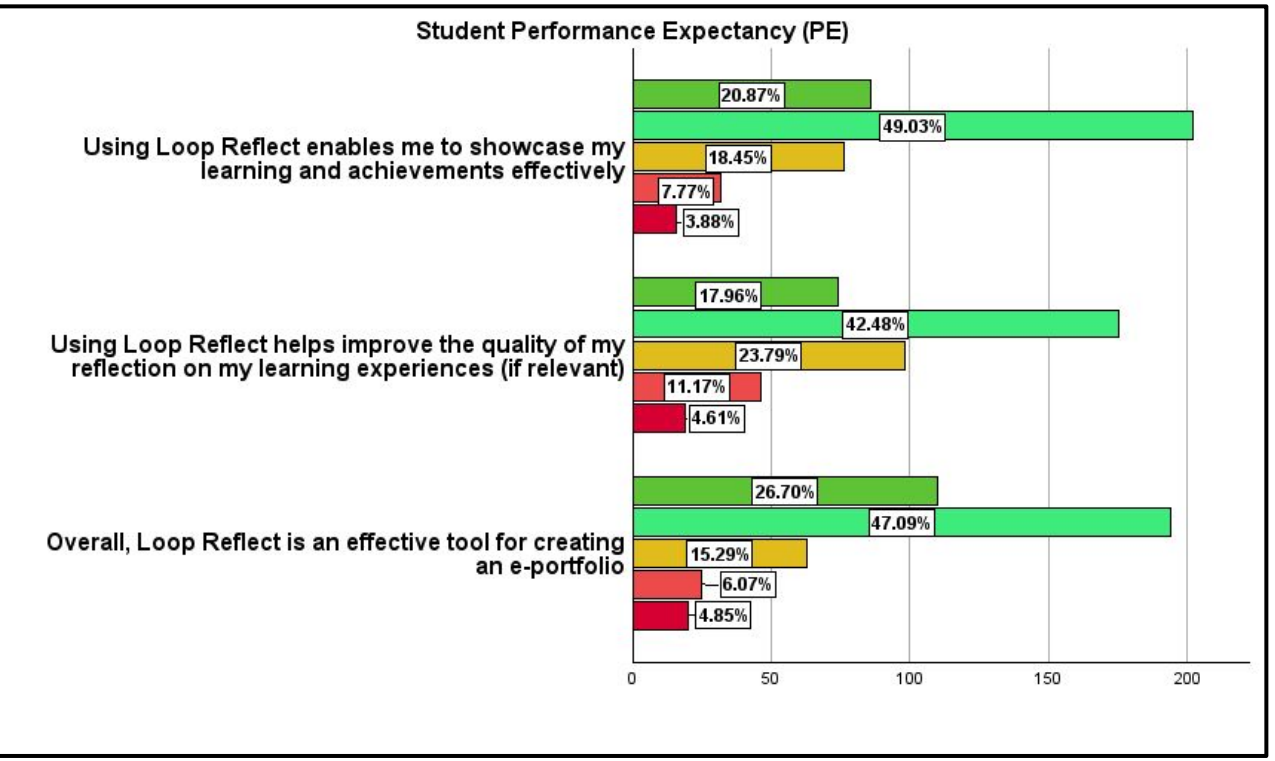

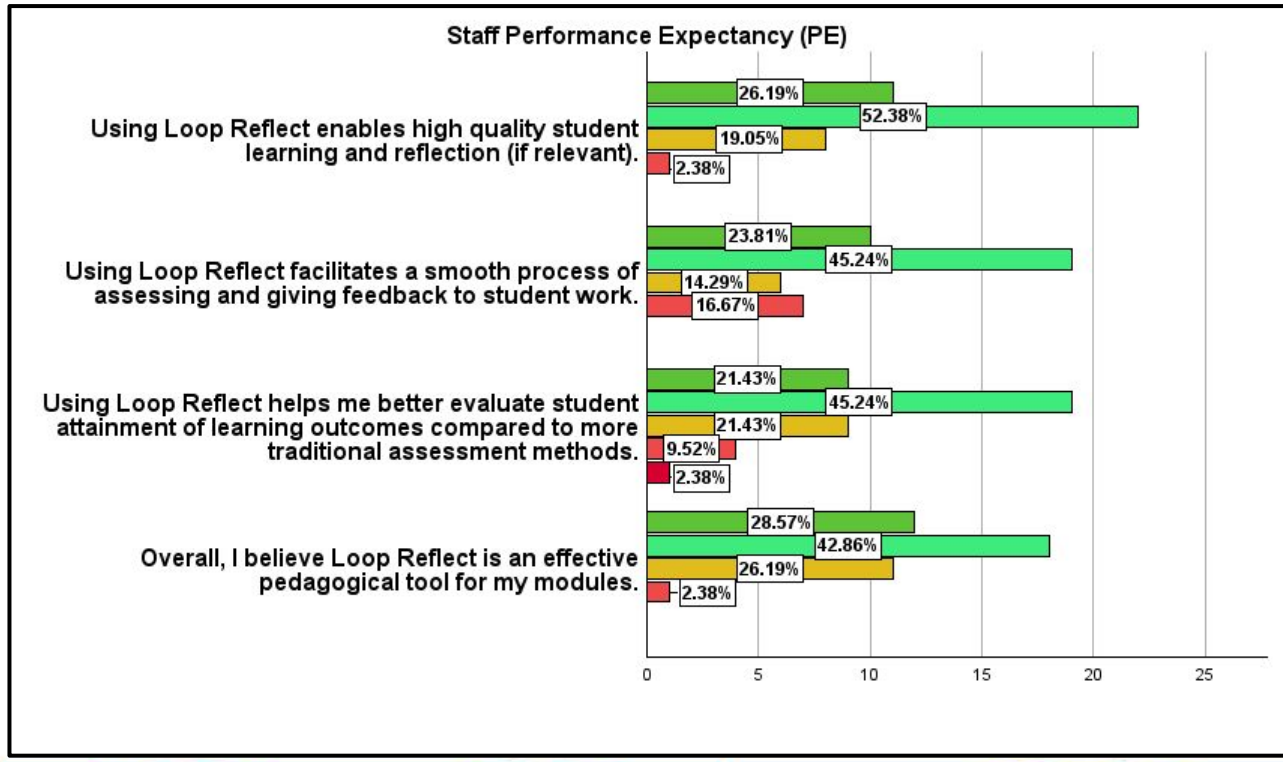

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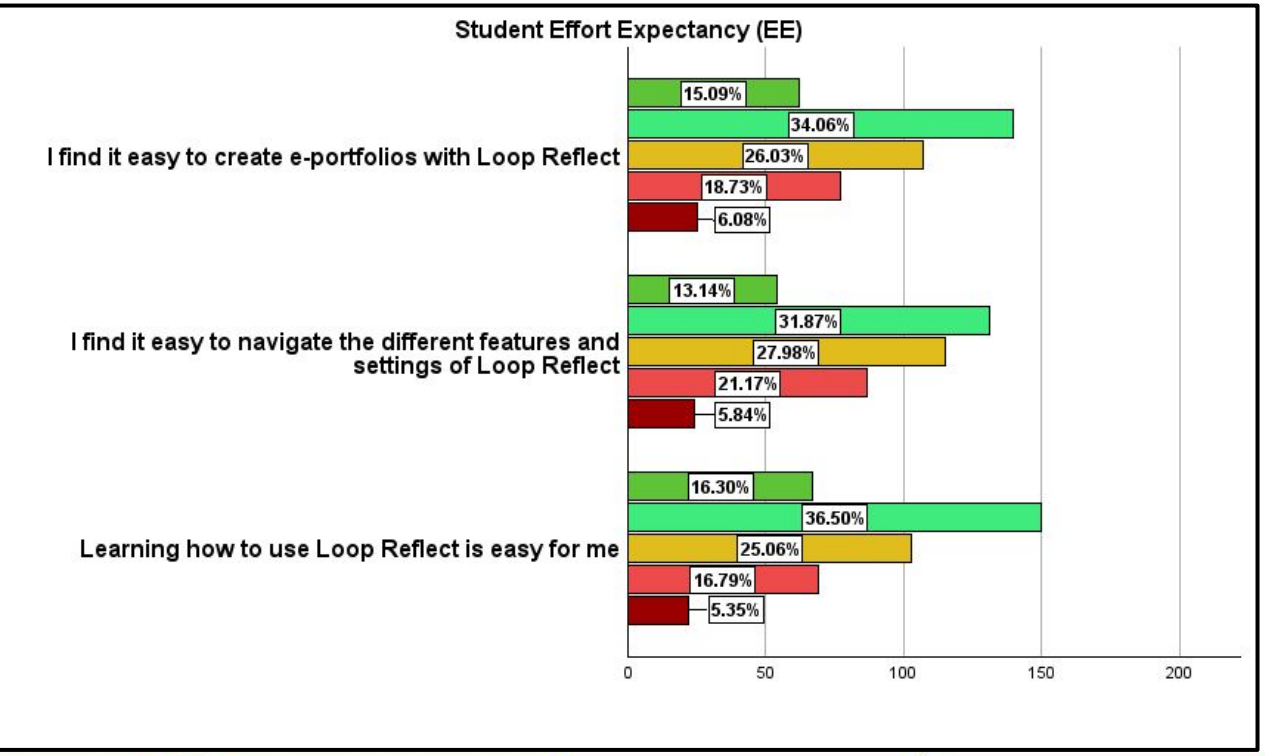

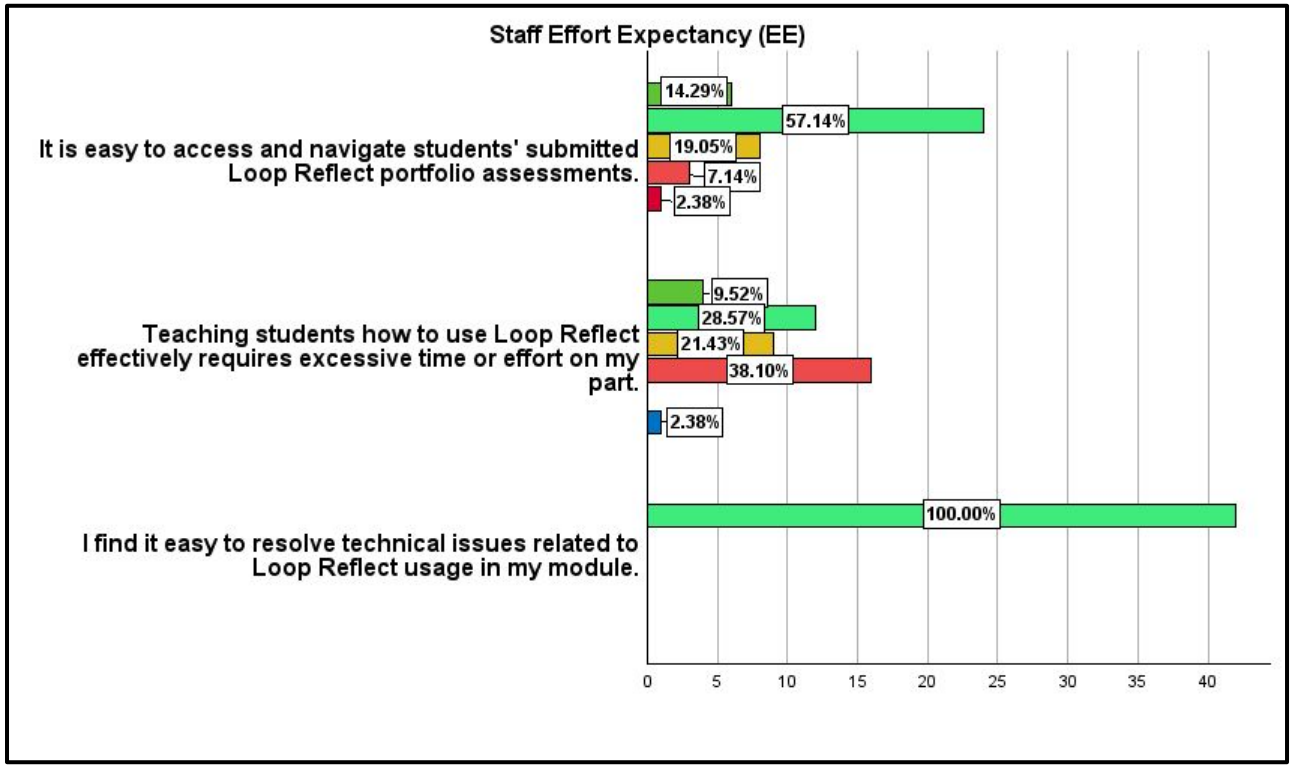

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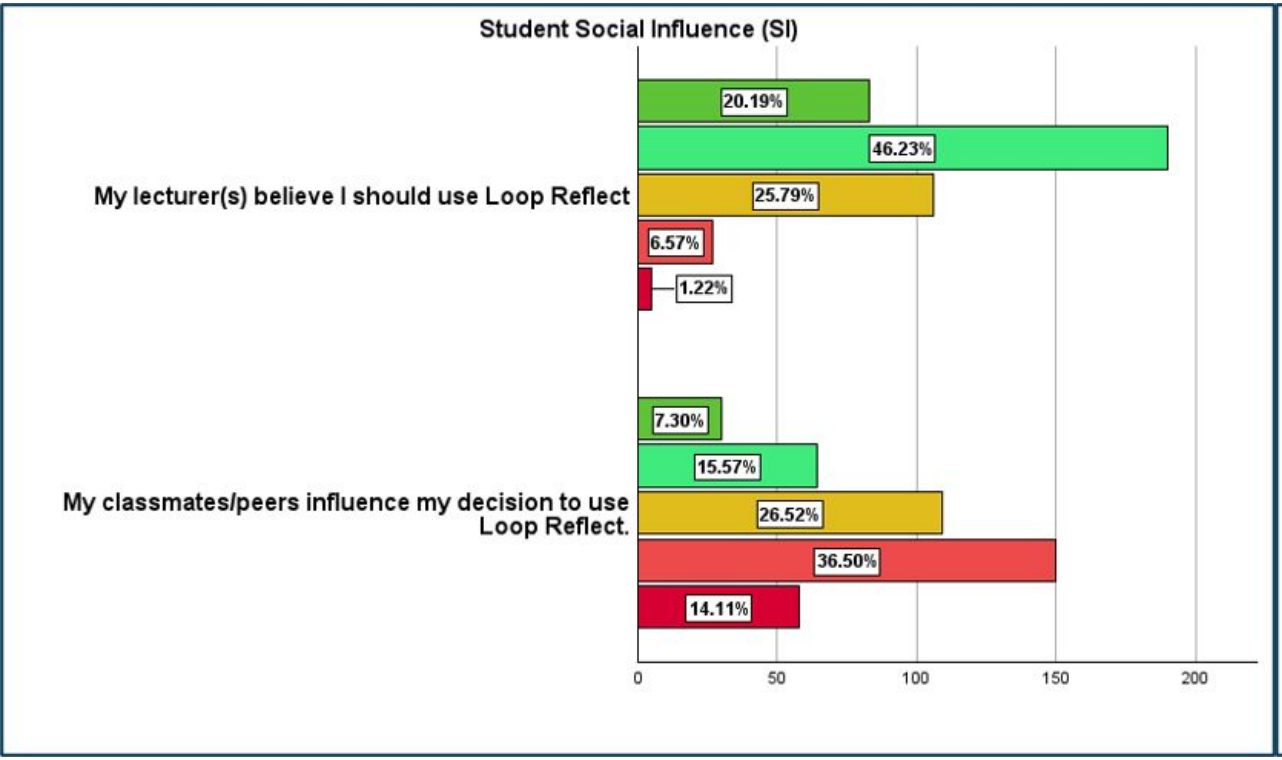

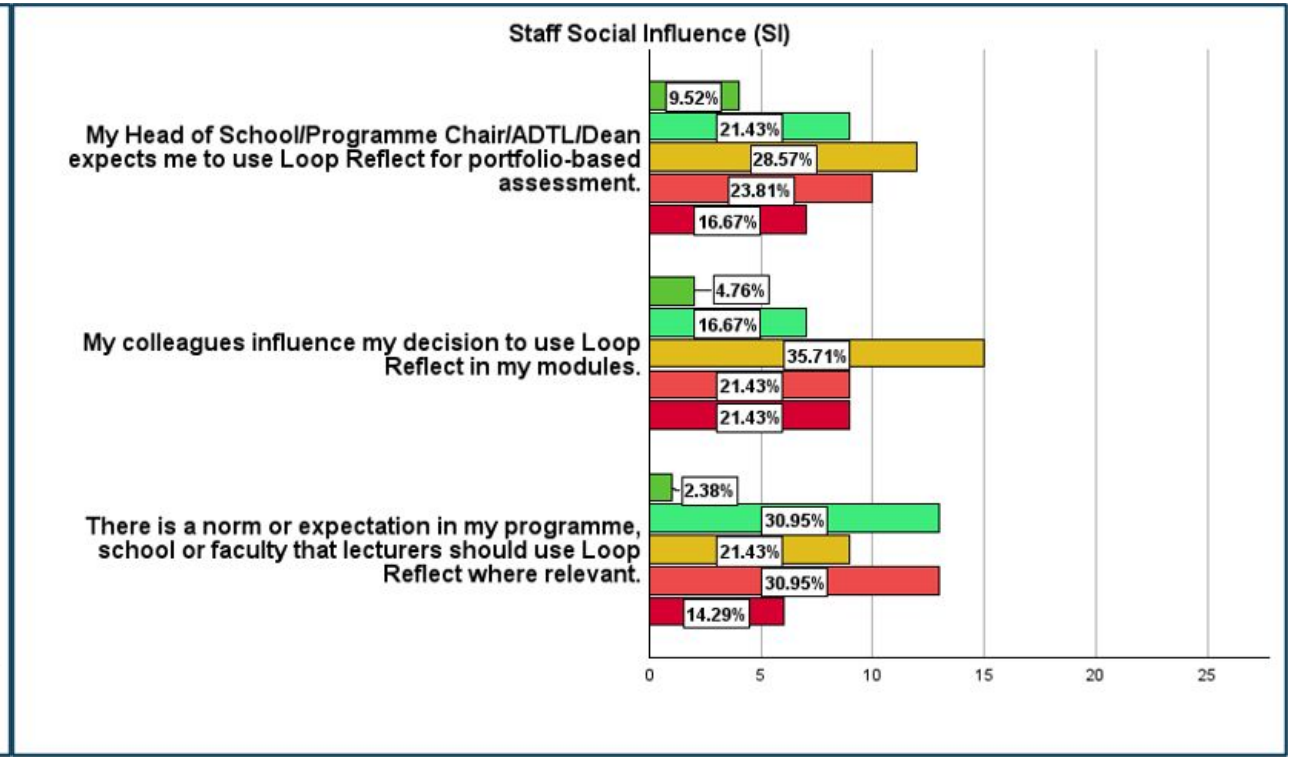

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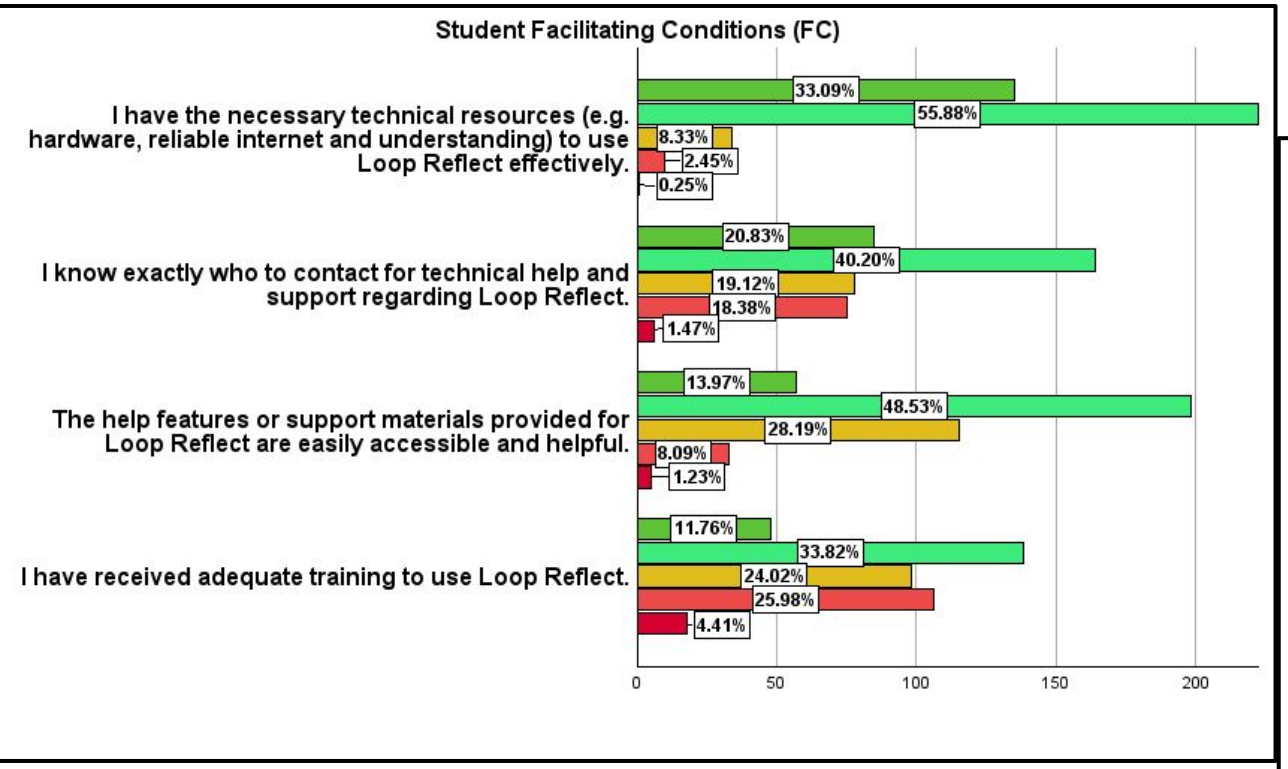

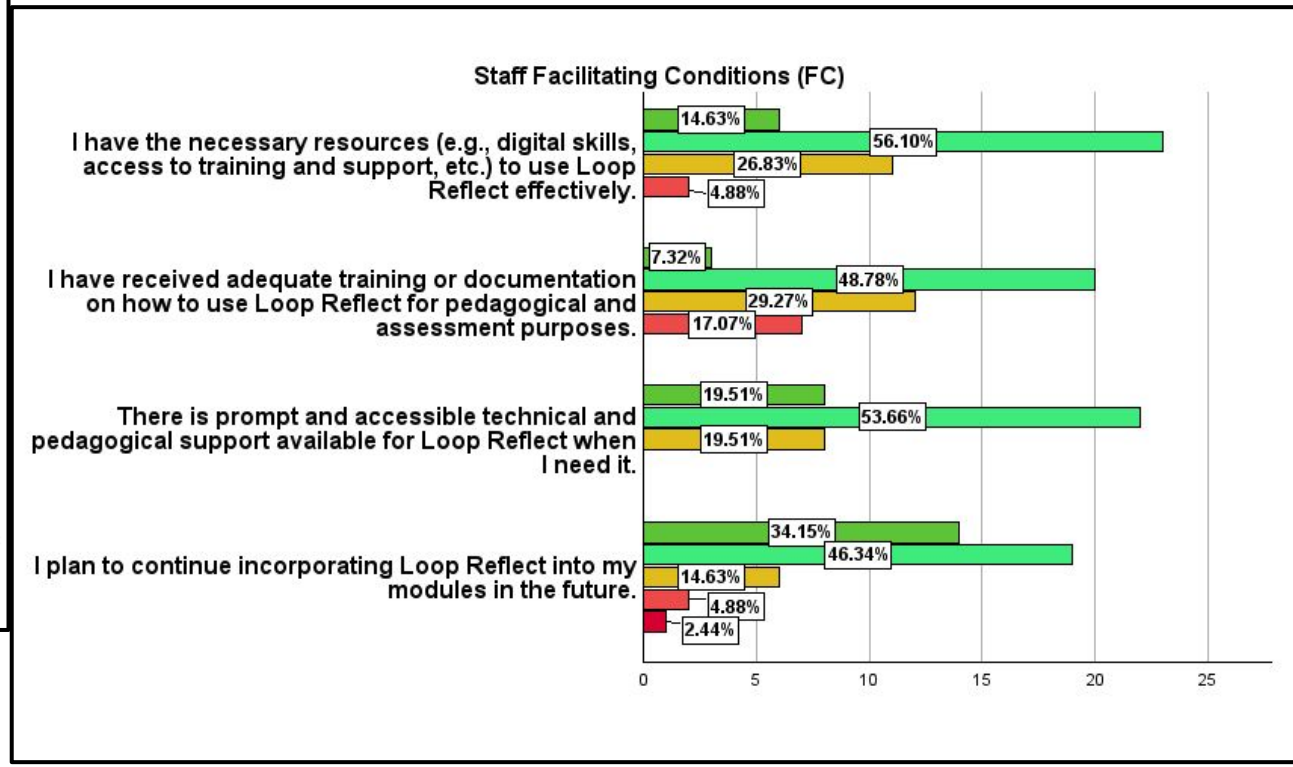

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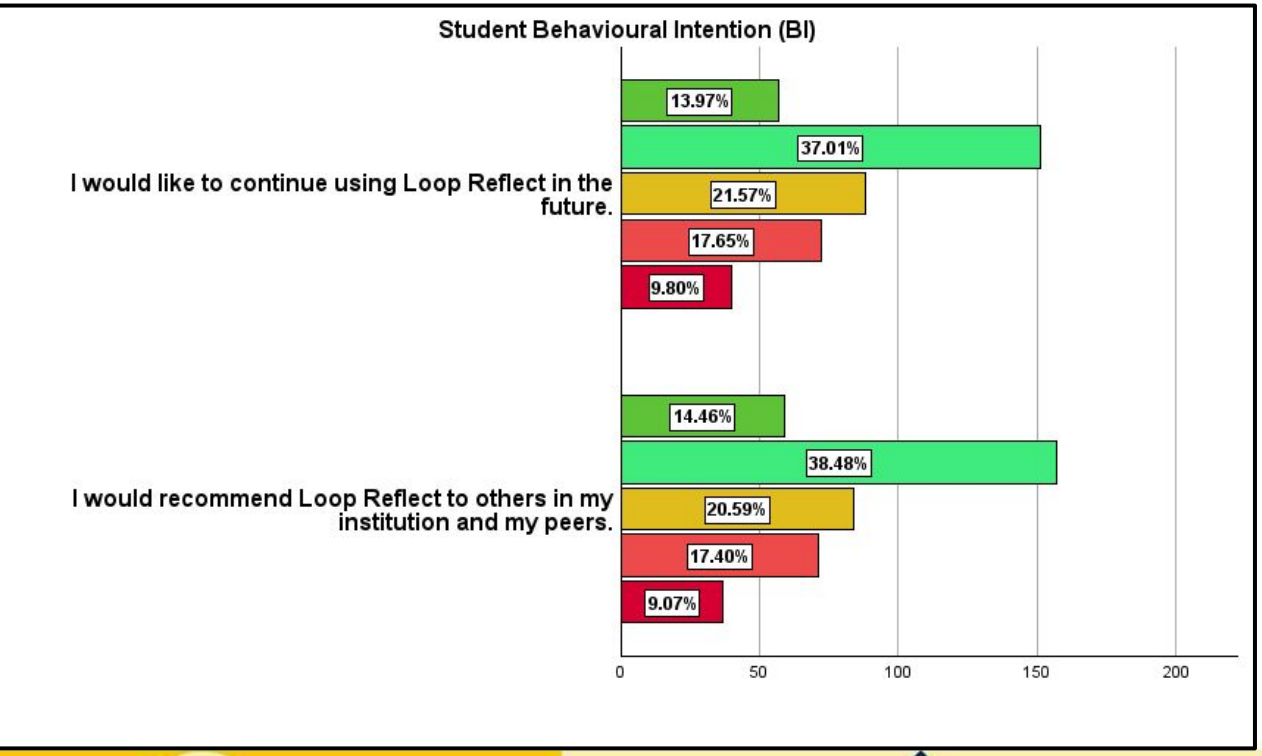
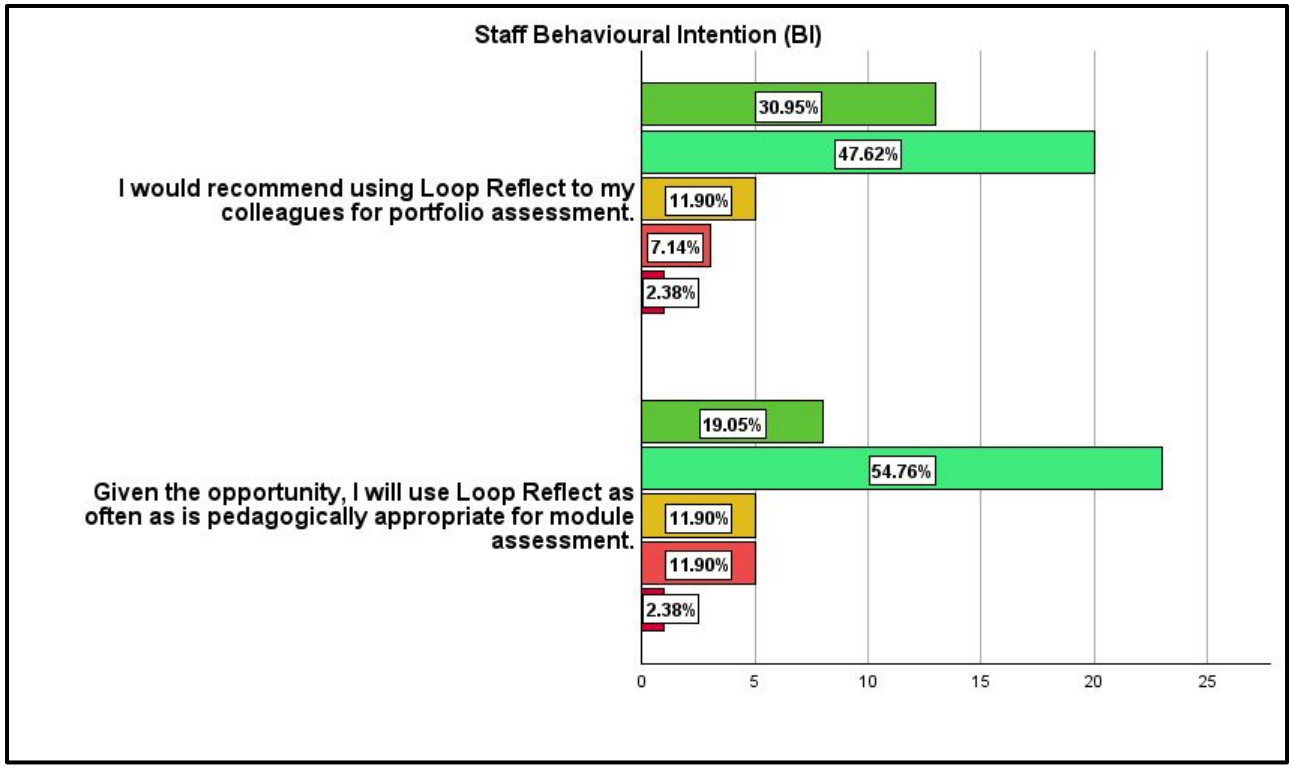




Themes

Portfolios as vehicles for reflecting and evidencing
Support: Peer, lecturer and institutional
Competencies and ways of working
Motivation
Benefits and challenges of Loop Reflect portfolios
Assessment and feedback
Creativity and individuality
Embedding of portfolios in the curriculum
Student and staff experiences

Theme 1: Portfolios as Vehicles for Reflecting and Evidencing

“For me, it was a real, really strong tool in their reflective practice, because I ask them to think about the module learning outcomes – one each month. And obviously, at the early stage, they’re not really demonstrating outcomes, they’re demonstrating how they’re going to get there, and so you can get in and you can kind of prompt them and say ‘what about this, or could you try this?’ And when they come then to submit the final week portfolio, they have those monthly reflections, and so they’re looking back at themselves in October, and they can really see the journey that they’ve travelled in the year in a way that I don’t think anything else would make possible.” (L2)

Theme 2: Support: Peer, Lecturer & Institutional

“One of the types of resources you haven’t mentioned, which you have, is the kind of sample, or, you know, of good practice that are up there that people can look at, and I think they’re very useful… I think that impacts on the student’s perception of what they can achieve, and giving them a sense of comfort that they can do this” (L7)

Theme 3: Competencies & Ways of Working

“I tend to just kind of jump in, to be honest. I… but I don’t think… I think that’s more a reflection of the way I work, as opposed to a reflection of the platform itself. Yeah, I, like, I normally don’t plan everything out, I just kind of, go with the flow.” (S4)

Theme 4: Motivation

“I use it only for assignments, but maybe next year I’ll use… I’ll use it to create some outside-of-modules, portfolio for, for example, the Reflect awards ceremony. Because for this year, I used my assignments, but I think it would be great to create a new one.” (S11)

Theme 5: Benefits & Challenges of Loop Reflect technology

“I found it… what sort of surprised me, I didn’t really think about the visual element of Loop Reflect, or the way it allows them to bring in lots of different links and resources, and that was kind of a pleasant… surprise for me to see all the stuff the students put in there, that they would just not have put in another… another assignment, so that bit was kind of a, yeah, a surprise to me, a good surprise.” (L4)

Theme 6: Assessment and Feedback

“And the idea is that they’re integrating everything they’ve learned into the programme, into those activities. So it’s meant to show at the end this way in which they’ve thought through all of the different aspects, and that’s what we’re trying to really demonstrate with that eportfolio, that it’s not just that module in itself, it’s actually how… and we have stages along… like, I would have one or two points along the way, which I asked them to start even doing out plans, you know, to actually show where each of their modules link together and where the thinking behind some of the topics that we raise, where they can draw those thinkings from different modules. So I’m also trying to get them to think outside of that individual module as well.” (L8)

Theme 7: Creativity and individuality

"Yeah, I think just, like, the nature of it, because it's, like different from, like, say, an essay or a PowerPoint, no matter… like, it doesn't have such a rigid structure, that no matter what, like, everyone's is gonna look a little bit different, so, like, I would say it does promote uniqueness in that sense." (S3)

Theme 8: Embedding of portfolios in the curriculum

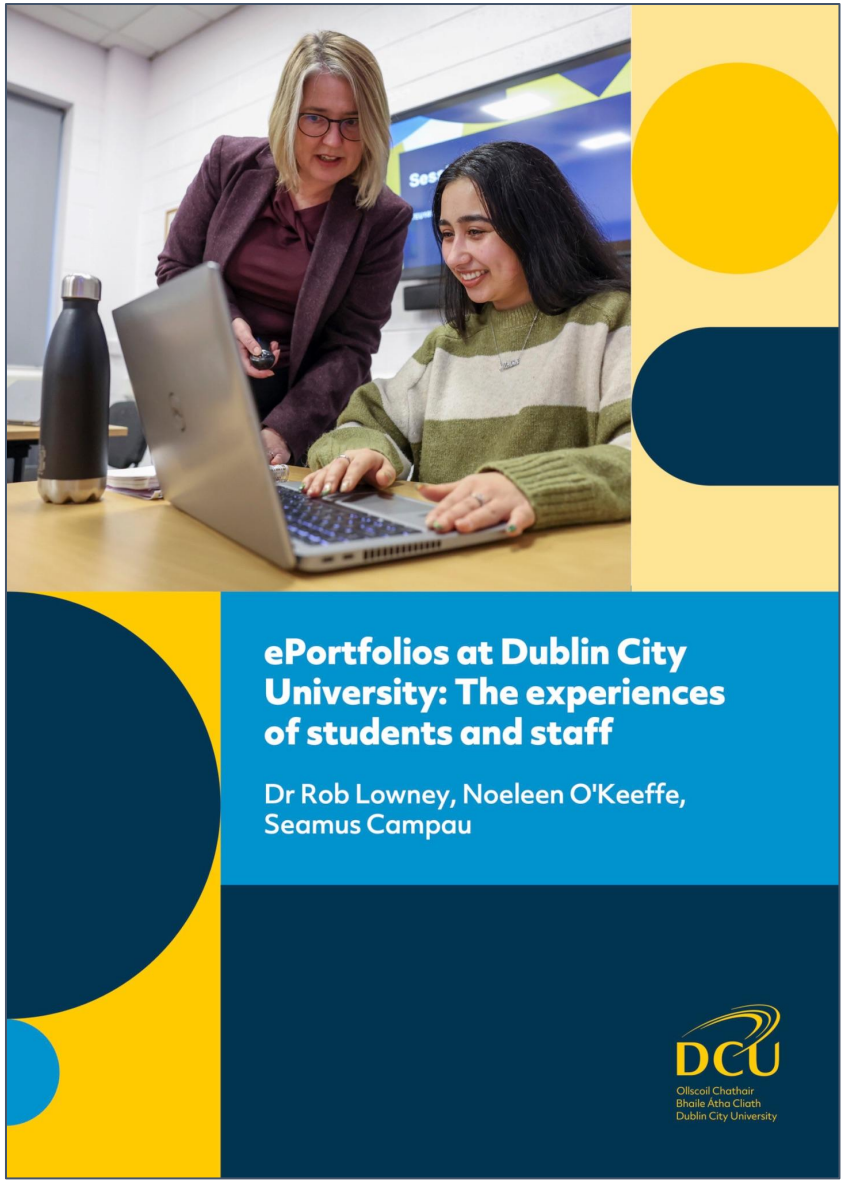
“I can speak to my course where we take a placement module every year. So every year there’s a different theme we’re given for Loop Reflect, so our first year it was teacher as a communicator, and then the second year would be teacher as involved with parents, or something like that. (S5)”

Actions taken

1. Upgraded Loop Reflect to the latest version of Mahara software, which included a re-architected interface that is more modern, consistent and responsive
2. Increased the limited file quota for users
3. Scheduled more frequent drop-in clinics, including into the university's exam period
4. Redesigned the Loop Reflect Help Page to improve navigation and sharing of direct links to help articles
5. Proactively reached out to staff who use Loop Reflect eportfolios for assessment to offer demonstrations and support for their students

Report of emerging findings

Available on [Zenodo]



Discussion

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Thank you for attending

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