How are students using extensions, and what is the impact on their success?

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The problem

- Anecdotally, ALs are reporting increasing numbers of extension requests
- Whilst extensions may be vital to enable students to continue, their use could potentially lead to later problems, including rushed material and compressed study time near the end of the module.
- Larger numbers of students are now studying at high intensity; this is projected to grow further. So it is likely that clashing deadlines and managing workload will be a continuing and increasing student problem
- This is likely to be particularly prevalent in disciplines involving 30 credit modules

Research questions

1. Is the number of extension requests related to the number of modules a student is studying?
2. Does the number of extension requests relate to success on the module in terms of pass/fail/defer or grade attained?
3. Are students actively using extension requests to balance their workload?

Methodology

- The focus will be on level 2 biology / health science students studying at least one of SK299, S294, S295, SXHL288, SDK228
- Statistical analysis will be used to address research questions 1 and 2, using data from 17J, 18J, 19J
- Research question 3 will be addressed using AL interviews and student-facilitated focus groups of students for the 18J and 19J presentations

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How the project outcomes could be used

Module teams

- Identification of assessment “pinch-points” informing future modifications to the assessment model
- Development of resources and support for students studying at high intensities
- In the long term, a better experience and higher satisfaction due to revision of assessment strategies.

Associate Lecturers

- Informing discussions with students concerning advisability of extensions
- Supporting students with workload management

Student Support Teams

- Advice given to students on study intensity
- Advice on more or less suitable combinations of modules

Broader impacts

- Generalising to other subject areas with a similar pattern of modules
- Laying foundations for a more general study of approaches to support students studying at high intensity
- Informing the university’s work on different, more innovative or flexible modes of assessment

Link with institutional and eSTEeM priorities

- The project supports the OU’s institutional priorities of **increased retention and success** and **supporting full time and flexible study**
- The project lies within the eSTEeM theme of **supporting students** and potentially feeds into **innovative assessment**