Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice

Volume 14 | Issue 2 Article 4

2017

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Recommended Citation

Buchanan, T., & Palmer, E. (2017). Student Perceptions of the History Lecture: Does this Delivery Mode have a Future in the Humanities?. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 14*(2). https://doi.org/10.53761/1.14.2.4

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This article reports on a large survey of undergraduate history students, and reveals their attitude toward lecturing, particularly in the discipline of history. We argue that the evidence shows that students like lecturing and believe it aids their learning. In particular students value enthusiasm, organization, and an interesting analysis/argument in lecture presentations. We conclude that this suggests that historians should maintain the lecture when they are able to deliver lectures with these characteristics. Otherwise, they should adopt more interactive techniques.

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Introduction

Lecturing has been under attack for decades. Empirical evidence has long suggested that lecturing does not promote independent thinking, succeed in changing student attitudes, or work as a motivational tool (D. Bligh 1971; D. A. Bligh 1998). It has been argued that an hour lecture does not fit with the normal attention span of an adult learner (Gibbs, Habeshaw & Habeshaw 1987; Johnstone & Percival 1976; MacManaway 1970; Middendorf & Kalish 1996). Constructivist theories of knowledge reject the idea that knowledge is a vessel to be transferred, instead embracing the active role of the student in the learning process. This has led to criticisms of the lecture because it does not allow students a chance to incorporate new material into their existing understanding (King 1993). Carol A. Twigg (1999) analysed the lecture from a technological perspective and found that it is a "push" technology, which does not cater to individual learners, and which also does not work as well as online education, from either a pedagogical or financial viewpoint. This embrace of technology can be found in the work of more recent scholars who advocate moving lecture materials online (Oakley, Lock, Budgen & Hamlett 2011; Prensky 2001).

The argument, however, is not one-sided. Educationalists have advanced several defences of the lecture. Collins (1998, p.25) has argued that they allow for more intellectual arguments to be advanced, since one person speaking allows for greater depth than is possible in dialogue. Hodgson (2005) argues that meaningful results can occur when the enthusiasm of the lecturer kindles a "deep learning" in the student (Hodgson 2005; Jones 2007). The idea that lecturing is a kind of artistic "performance' has been defended as facilitating a useful "community of learners" (Brent 2005). Others have defended the inner dialogue between lecturer/speaker and student/listener as an important educational experience (Webster 2015).

Other philosophically based methodological support for lectures includes an attack on the concept of student "learning styles", which, one author argues, opens up possibilities for large-group teaching (Jennings, 2012). More empirically based defences have arisen with the expansion of lecture-capture technology in recent years. Student learning in live lecture experiences has been shown to be superior to that of students who only watch recorded lectures (Bos, Groeneveld, Bruggen & Brand-Gruwel 2016; Cramer, Collins, Snider & Fawcett 2006; Williams, Birch & Hancock, 2012); this is somewhat at odds with the broad literature on the impact of educational TV in the 1950s and 60s, which showed little significant differences between live and recorded delivery over hundreds of studies (Magnuson 2000; Schramm 1962; Wetzel, Radtke & Stern 1994). Thus, while earlier studies rejected the learning gains of face-to-face lectures, more recent scholars note that they can be better than online recorded lectures. Other challenges to the anti-lecture paradigm have come from researchers who contest the consensus that active-learning methods lead to better learning outcomes. For example, lecturing was found to be superior to problem-based learning in one recent study(Schwerdt & Wuppermann 2011) but other studies suggest the opposite, if supported by greater teaching time (Moreno-López, Somacarrera-Pérez, Díaz-Rodríguez, Campo-Trapero & Cano-Sánchez 2009). Whilst some scholars seek to defend the traditional lecture on comparative grounds, others seek to defend it as one tactic among many learning strategies (Ghosh, 2007). Revamped, interactive and multi-media lectures have also been proposed, moving beyond PowerPoint and allowing for revision via lecture

capture (Arvanitakis 2014; Clark 2008; Schrad 2010).

The issue of what students think of lecturing has been a key component of the ongoing debate, as evidence shows that student perceptions can affect motivation and learning (Cohen 1981; Struyven, Dochy & Janssens 2008; Van Dijk, Van Der Berg & Van Keulen 2001). Surveys of students have found that they like lectures and believe they learn from them (Covill 2011; Gysbers, Johnston, Hancock & Denyer 2011). Covill argues that while this flies in the face of much educational research, the possibility must be entertained that the students may be right, perhaps because they are motivated to learn by positive emotions. More recently, studies have shown that while students are aware of the pedagogical problems with lecturing, they come to lectures to socialise, which has been shown to be important in creating student identity and motivation (Petrović & Pale 2015). Other scholars have compared student perceptions of active-learning techniques and lecturing and found lecturing to be preferred (Leeds, Stull & Westbrook 1998; Struyven et al. 2008). Better students and older ones, however, have been shown to prefer active techniques (Hansen & Stephens 2000; Lake 2001), and other studies have shown students to be amenable to lecturers who blend active-learning techniques into their lectures (Marbach-Ad, Seal & Sokolove 2001). Another study has argued that when students were given the option of either online lecture capture or face-to-face delivery, they preferred lecture-capture delivery (Euzent, Martin, Moskal & Moskal 2011). It is possible that students like live lectures but do not wish to give up online recordings.

Covill notes that educators are increasingly encouraged to abandon the lecture method, regardless of the subject of the presentation (Covill, 2011) The issue in this article is whether students in the history discipline vary in any way from the students who have been studied. One of the striking aspects of the literature is the extent to which it focuses on the STEM disciplines, particularly the applied sciences (Covill 2011; Gupta & Saks 2013; Gysbers et al. 2011; Lake 2001; Struyven et al. 2008). This is potentially problematic, as the field of history is based in part on the individual interpretation or argument of the practitioner, which is often conveyed via a narrative or storytelling strategy. This issue of narrative construction is central to the research side of the discipline, and is mirrored in lecture presentations. Thus, in ways that may not exist for an introductory physics or medicine course, lecturing can be seen as an important way to introduce the way scholars research and write.
Do history students perceive this? How do they interpret the lecture? Do they differ from other students? This study thus seeks to understand student perceptions of the history lecture, and to understand how these perceptions fit with existing understanding.

Method

Participants

This study involved surveying students at a large metropolitan university in Australia that had approximately 5,000 students in its arts/humanities faculty. History is a major program offered in this faculty; it requires undergraduate students to complete eight classes that progress over three levels of learning. There are also Honours and PhD cohorts. Undergraduate students who had taken at least one history course in the period 2012-2014 were identified and were invited by email to complete an online survey. Additionally,

students were able to volunteer to participate in focus groups.

Instrument

The survey consisted of 21 questions consisting of a mix of Likert, ranking, demographic and open-ended questions (Appendix A), of which 17 related to the topic of lectures in history and are reported here. Where Likert-type data was compared, students' T tests were used; for ranking questions, Friedman testing was used with Kruskal-Wallis post-hoc analysis to search for significant differences between ranked items. P values of 0.05 or less were considered significant in all statistical tests. Data was analysed using SPSS (version 23).

Results

A sample of 1,907 students was identified as having completed at least one history course in the period of 2012-2014. Of these, 492 students responded, for an overall response rate of 26%. This provides 95% confidence in the results, with a margin of error of less than 5%. The respondents were predominantly female (65%), slightly higher than the actual population of 55%, and the majority were aged less than 25 (78%) (Table 1). The majority of students had completed four or more history courses (55%) (Figure 1) and were intending to either major or minor in history. Eleven students volunteered for the focus groups. Two groups were run, one with seven participants and the other with four.

Table 1. Demographic information

Gender	Male (35%)	Female (65%)		
Age	Under 21 (32%)	21-25 (46%)	26-35 (12%)	26+ (10%)
Main Program of Study	Major in history (48%)	Minor in history (19%)	Neither (27%)	Don't know (6%)

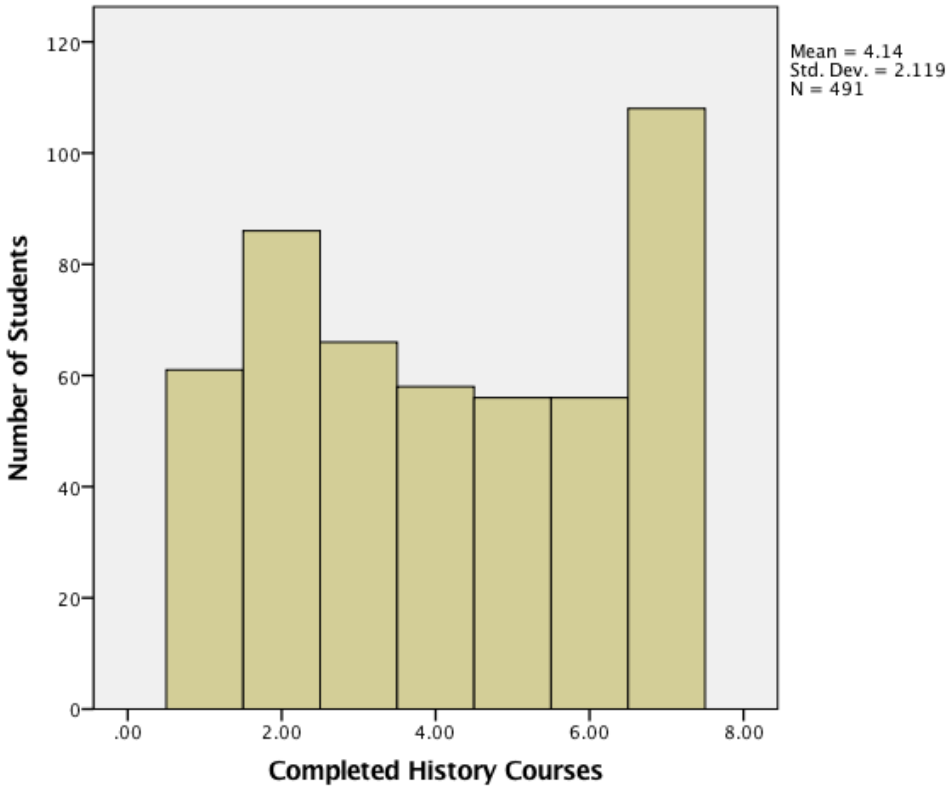

Figure 1. Completed history courses by respondents

Students were overall more satisfied with the quality of their education in history courses (mean 1.6) than in the university as a whole (mean 1.9), ($t=8.5$, $df=490$, $p<0.001$), but overall there were strong levels of satisfaction with the quality of education that they received.

Students believed that face-to-face lectures were important for their learning outcomes (76% broadly agreeing) but were unsure (46%) about the role of the flipped classroom in their learning (Table 2). When queried about the nature of activity in their lectures, history lectures and other lectures were reported to contain similar amounts of interactive elements, with the majority of students (59% for history lectures and 60% for other lectures) indicating that more than half of their lectures incorporated such aspects (Table 3).

Table 2. Satisfaction with education, face-to-face lectures and the flipped classroom

Question	**Strongly agree 1**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree 5**
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of education at [my university].	22	68	5	5	0
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of education in my history courses.	46	47	5	2	0
Face-to-face lectures are important for me to obtain good learning outcomes in my history courses.	47	29	16	6	2
The flipped classroom, where you have to engage with learning material online before	7	30	46	11	6
The lecture (e.g. quizzes, videos etc.) and then discuss it in a lecture theatre, is an excellent way to improve learning and engagement.					

Table 3: Interactive elements in lectures

Question	**<10%**	**11-25%**	**26-50%**	**51-75%**	**>75%**
What percentage of your history lectures have contained an interactive element, e.g. class discussion in lecture theatre, group work, real-time quizzes?	8%	12%	21%	31%	28%
What percentage of your lectures overall (not just history) have contained an interactive element, e.g. class discussion in lecture theatre, group work, real-time quizzes?	8%	11%	21%	32%	28%

Tables 4 and 5 show student reports on attendance and their means of accessing lectures. Both bear on their perceptions of history lectures. Attendance at lectures was reported as being mixed between physical attendance and the viewing of online recordings. More than half of the students (54%) reported physically attending more than three-quarters of their lectures, with 21% reporting viewing recordings of more than half (Table 4). Twenty-four percent of students reported attending lectures *and* viewing recordings more than half of the time, but there was a strong negative correlation (Pearson correlation -0.63, $p<0.001$) between attending in person and viewing online. Reasons for not attending lectures in person were ranked from 1-7 from a provided list (Table 5). Work, personal issues and timetabling issues were the most highly ranked and were all ranked significantly higher than all other options ($p<0.003$). A belief that attending lectures does not help learning was ranked lowest overall (significantly lower than all other options, $p<0.001$, except as compared to family issues, which was not a significant difference).

Table 4. Attendance at lectures

Question **What proportion of history lectures do you attend?**	**<25%**	**26-50%**	**51-75%**	**>75%**
In person	12%	14%	20%	54%
Online	49%	20%	10%	21%
Both	62%	14%	11%	13%

Table 5. Ranking of the reason for not attending lectures
(1-7, highest ranking = 1)

Reason for not attending lectures	**Median**	**Interquartile range**
Work commitments	2	1-3
Medical or personal problems	2	1-4
Timetable problems, e.g. clashes or only one lecture in a day	2	1-3
Family or childcare reasons	4	3-5
Transport problems	4	3-5
Social activities	4	3-5
Attending lectures does not help my learning	5	3-7

When it came to history lectures themselves, students valued organisation, enthusiasm and an interesting argument significantly higher than all other options ($p<0.001$), including good use of audio-visual materials (such as PowerPoint), humour and interaction with the class (Table 6).

Table 6. Ranking of the characteristics of a good history lecture (1-8, highest ranking = 1)

Most useful activity	**Median**	**Interquartile range**
Clear, logical organisation	2[1]	1-4
Enthusiastic delivery	2[1]	1-3
Good use of PowerPoint	5	3-7
Good use of audio-visual material	6	4-7
Humour	6	4-7
Interesting argument or analysis	3[1]	2-5
Interesting human stories	5	3-6
Lecturer-student interaction	6	5-8

1 = significantly higher than non-superscripted options

Students again raised the theme of enthusiasm in an open-ended textual question: "What was the best lecture you ever had (in any subject and in any format)? What made it so memorable?". Three main themes emerged from the 352 responses to this question. One theme (174 responses) named a specific lecturer, citing his passion, enthusiasm and

theatrical performances. Other themes included enthusiasm and passion (139 responses) and how engaging the lecture was (133 responses). Many of the respondents mentioned history lectures specifically (132 responses).

Typical comments mentioning enthusiasm included one student who recalled a lecture "delivered with so much enthusiasm" that it was "impossible to not be engaged with the content". Another recalled a "memorable" lecture in which the content was "delivered with great enthusiasm". A number recalled how such enthusiasm facilitated learning, as when one student watched the recording several times after the lecture to further understand what had caught their interest. Another commented that because of the lecturer's enthusiasm, their "understanding came very quickly". While this quality would not be specific to the delivery of history lectures, there is no doubt that students value their lecturers enthusiasm and believe it helps their learning.

While textual responses did not often mention the highly ranked "clear, logical organisation", individual responses give some insight into students' reasons for the high ranking. One student simply reported in a text response, "The best lectures are the ones that are well organised". Another wrote, "The best lectures I have had have been clear and concise." While examples of clear organisation were apparently not so memorable that they generated lots of comments, these student comments may well reflect broader views.

Similarly, the third of the three most important characteristic of good lecturing, the category "interesting analysis/argument", also received some individual comments from students. One student, for instance, noted a lecture that "was thoroughly interesting" because it contained an analysis "I had not thought [about] before". Such comments are significant because the learning outcomes for history inevitably include understanding the interpretative elements of the discipline, and many students reported valuing this in their lectures, with some commenting further. The fact that many students enjoy lectures, along with their belief that lecturing contained this important learning outcome, together work to support this pedagogical technique.

Some other lower-ranked characteristics of good lecturing – such as "interesting human stories" – also offer additional potential defences of the history lecture. One student recalled, "I always enjoy the human stories so much – I do know that some lectures on Eastern European revolutions got me teary. The lecturers that really focus on the human spirit in events are usually wonderful." Another great lecture "conveyed the real human impact of the events that were described". But most students did not rank this as particularly important, placing it near other low-ranked qualities such as "good use of PowerPoint", a topic that received few comments from students.

In terms of preparatory activities for lectures, students ranked readings significantly higher ($p < 0.001$) than videos or podcasts and group work, the other options of online learning. Group work was the least well regarded of all activities ($p<0.001$) (Table 7).

Table 7. Ranking of most useful pre-lecture activity (1 to 4, highest ranking = 1)

Value of pre-lecture activities	**Median**	**Interquartile range**
Online learning activity, e.g. quizzes	2	2-3
Short podcast or video	2	2-3
Assigned reading	2[1]	1-3
Student group activity (either virtual or face-to-face)	4	3-4

1 = significantly higher than non-superscripted options

This corresponded to the responses from an open-ended question asking students to explain their ranking of pre-lecture activities. Analysis yielded four strong themes from the 329 students who responded to this question. A large number of students (122 responses, 37.1%) stated that they enjoyed readings before lectures, and believed that they were a beneficial and useful way to learn. They felt that reading was an easy and convenient way to learn new information, or create a basis to be expanded upon within lectures. This was the expected pedagogical sequence in the courses they took. A typical student comment was:

Ultimately, I find that accurate, directed reading is the most important source of knowledge and understanding for me. Academic direction in reading is key.

However, many others felt differently. The participants who stated they did not enjoy readings reported that they found them to be excessively time-consuming, unlike videos, and required a lot of effort, as they could be tedious or difficult to read through. Many participants (67 responses, 20.7%) indicated that participating in group activities to aid in learning content was not an effective means of education. Students commonly cited that the commitment to organise meeting times around other people's schedules was difficult when there was other university work to complete. Students also stated that people often did not engage with these activities, either through not wanting to be involved, because of shyness, or by not completing the necessary reading/background work for effective participation. A typical response was:

Being in a group activity can be difficult to arrange and maintain attendance. Becoming off task or not being able to contribute due to dominant personalities within the groups can also be common issues with group work.

Short videos were mentioned as a good alternative to readings, as they are quick to watch and the format can be more engaging than readings. The convenience of short videos or podcasts was one reason stated to justify their being more beneficial than readings. One student wrote:

Video = easy way to obtain information, can do on bus on way to uni if you are short on time and wont [sic] miss out on quality of lecture if you don't have time to do big tasks.

Quizzes were regarded in a similar way to videos and podcasts, as a quick way to check how well a student understood a topic. They were embraced because they were not considered to be a large commitment compared to readings or group exercises; however, they were not universally received well. One student wrote:

Quizzes very quickly fall out of the head.

Thus there was a range of views on pre-lecture activities. Overall, students felt that better lectures were the biggest influence on their learning outcomes (Table 8). Better lectures ranked significantly higher than most other options ($p < 0.001$) such as better technologies, a better community, a wider range of assessments or more-flexible timetables. Students' ranking of better lectures was not significantly different from that for better feedback and improved student-staff ratios (Table 8).

Table 8. Ranking of things to improve student outcomes (1-10, highest ranking = 1)

What would most improve learning outcomes?	**Median**	**Interquartile range**
Better lectures	4[1]	2-6
Better in-class use of technology	6	4-8
More effective use of [learning-management system]	6	4-8
Greater sense of community	6	3-8
More committed, student- friendly staff	5	3-8
Better feedback on assessments	4*	2-6
More flexible timetabling (e.g. early mornings, weekends, trimesters etc.)	7	5-9
Lower staff-student ratio	4*	2-8
Wider range of assessments, not just traditional essays	5	2-8
More small-group learning	6	3-9

1 = significantly different from all non-asterisked options

Discussion

A key thing to note at the outset is that students reported a somewhat traditional pedagogical experience in this university's history department and arts faculty. Students reported a range of experiences, but mostly traditional lecturing. Fifty-eight percent of students answered that 25% or fewer of lectures had an interactive element. When reporting on all courses they had taken in their arts degree, 60% of students claimed that 25% or fewer of their lectures had an interactive element. Thus most students felt that most lectures still used a traditional didactic approach both in their history courses and in their overall university experience. The implications of this finding are potentially significant, as evidence suggests that the culture of the institution can have an impact on student perceptions of their learning (Covill 2011). It may be that history departments that switched more dramatically to interactive techniques would have a different survey result.

That said, these students reported liking lectures and believed them to be important for their learning. Seventy-six percent of students either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "face-to-face lectures are important for my learning" (Table 2). This fits well with existing evidence from other disciplines (Covill 2011; Gysbers et al. 2011). While there has been much talk among university administrators about the need to move away from lecturing, perhaps because they feel the requirement to fully support online approaches to learning, the students in this study did not perceive this, but instead may view an attack on lecturing as an attack on a traditional form of education that they enjoy and feel they benefit from. It should be noted that the majority of students were under 25, and it may be that this age group has a preference for lectures, but given that many of them have significant part-time work commitments (James, Krause, & Jennings 2010), this group is probably just as time-poor as other groups included in this survey.

Whilst there is substantial evidence to support the role of the lecture, specifically in history courses, there is also evidence to argue for changes in this approach. We find the evidence in Table 6 especially relevant, along with the textual comments for the "most memorable lecture" question. Many respondents were highly enthusiastic about lectures, but when asked why, focused on enthusiasm and engagement as key themes. Enthusiasm and passionate engagement are not characteristics found in every lecturer and can be personality-dependent. Thus for instructors who are not talented and enthusiastic lecturers, different learning modes may be appropriate. Students in this study did not wholeheartedly endorse flipped classrooms, and a large percentage of them were undecided about the value of such teaching methods. The future could see those students sway either way, but if students were to take advantage of flipped-classroom approaches to prepare for learning sessions, this could result in a swing away from lectures. We would argue, however, that the sorts of lectures enjoyed by students and described in this paper may not be easily replaced by other teaching sessions, especially as lectures do have an efficiency to them that small-group teaching cannot replicate. The survey participants' support for lecturing, when coupled with the significant defences of the lecture that have emerged in the scholarly literature in recent years (Brent 2005; Hodgson 2005; Jones 2007; Webster 2015), suggests that moves to scrap lectures completely, especially history lectures, should be reflected upon very carefully, with consideration of the value that students may gain from being in a well-organised, social environment with enthusiastic lecturers before making decisions based on convenience and budgetary issues. Lecture recordings, too, have their place,

although they work best when students are given the chance to review the lecture with a recording and are not as effective when face-to-face lectures are replaced with online-only lecture recordings (Bos et al. 2016; Cramer et al. 2006; Williams et al. 2012).

The findings in this paper are intended to provoke reflection. If historians and lecturers in other fields have the key qualities of enthusiasm and organisation identified by students, they could be advised to continue lecturing, probably with incorporation of modern media, which students indicated that they liked as a pre-lecture activity (Table 7), and interactive windows in the manner championed by Arvanitakis (2014). Other lecturers might reflect that they lack some of these characteristics and move toward a more interactive, or even flipped, format. If the flipped classroom is too big a change, they could consider adding interactivity to their presentations. While this study found little student interest in interactivity as enhanced by PowerPoint and multimedia, other studies have found these to be important ways to heighten interactivity in the classroom (Clark 2008; Schrad 2010). Table 8, which indicated students' opinions on which aspects of teaching might improve their learning, can be interpreted in multiple ways. One possible interpretation suggests that the most effort should be directed into better lectures, improved feedback and smaller class sizes, a sentiment that few lecturers would object to. Another might be that students don't see the benefit of improved technology, greater sense of community, small groups and varied assessments because they don't experience them often enough or at high enough quality to make a balanced decision against the things they encounter regularly. Staff could focus on those areas and investigate outcomes. Improving group work could be such a focus. Although students rated it poorly in this survey, it is up to staff to design and implement group tasks that are fair and do not disadvantage students. It may be that formal training in this area would benefit staff and enhance the value of group work in students' eyes.

Overall, our finding is that the history lecture is defended by students in ways that connect to good lecturing, with only some additional emphasis given to qualities that may have particular relevance to history lectures. In a broader sense, this paper suggests that the movement against lecturing should not go too far, particularly in history, and probably in other disciplines, where student support remains strong and where learning outcomes like argument and interpretation can be advanced through oral presentation.

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Appendix A: Survey questions

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of education at the University of Adelaide. (five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD))
2. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of education in my history courses. (SA-SD)
3. What is your main degree program at university? (I am intending to major in history, I am intending to minor in history, I am intending neither to major nor to minor in history, Don't yet know/unsure)
4. Gender (m/f)
5. Age (under 21, 21-25, 26-35, 35+)
6. So far I have taken the following number of history courses. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7+)
7. Face-to-face lectures are important for me to obtain good learning outcomes in my history courses. (SA-SD)
8. What percentage of your history lectures have contained an interactive element, e.g. class discussion in lecture theatre, group work, real-time quizzes? (<10%, 11-25%, 26-50%, 15-75%, >75%)
9. What percentage of your lectures overall (not just history) have contained an interactive element, e.g. class discussion in lecture theatre, group work, real-time quizzes? (<10%, 11-25%, 26-50%, 15-75%, >75%).
10. Rank the following characteristics of a good history lecture. (clear, logical organisation, enthusiastic delivery, good use of PowerPoint, good use of audio-visual material, humour, interesting argument or analysis, lecturer-student interaction, interesting human stories)
11. What proportion of history lectures do you attend? (in person, online and both as options) Scale? (less than 25%, between 25 and 50%, between 51 and 75%, more than 75%)
12. When you don't attend a lecture, please rank the reason(s) you don't attend. 1 = most relevant and 7 = least relevant (work commitments, medical or personal problems, timetable problems, family or childcare reasons, transport problems, social activities, attending lectures does not help my learning).
13. The flipped classroom, where you have to engage with learning material online before the lecture (e.g. quizzes, videos etc.) and then discuss it in a lecture theatre, is an excellent way to improve learning and engagement. (SA-SD)
14. Rank the value of these pre-lecture activities to you. 1 = most valuable, 4 = least valuable (online learning activity, short podcast or video, assigned reading, student group activity (online or face-to-face)).
15. Please explain your answer.
16. What is the best lecture you ever had (in any subject and in any format)? What made it so memorable?
17. Rank the following according to how they might best improve your learning outcomes in history. 1= most important, 10 = least important (better lectures, better in-class use of technology, more effective use of [the learning-management system], greater sense of community, more committed, student-friendly staff, better feedback on assessments, more flexible timetabling (e.g. early mornings, weekends, trimesters etc.), lower staff-student ratio, wider range of assessments (not just traditional essays), more small-group learning).
18. Please provide your opinion of the usage of the following technologies at [university]. (PowerPoint slides, discussion forums, wikis, online audio, online video, online quizzes, online submission of assessments, social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.), articulate storyline). Scale (not used enough, used in the right amount, used too often, don't know what this is).
19. Are you aware of the university's commitment to "Small Group Discovery"? Have you seen any impact in your courses, and how do you feel about it?
20. I believe I get improved learning outcomes by working in groups with fellow students. (SA-SD)
21. We are interested in improving teaching and learning at [this university], not just in the History

Department but also in the Faculty of Arts. Do you have any additional comments that might help us?