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A SMART START: A case study exploring the use of a structured academic skills support programme

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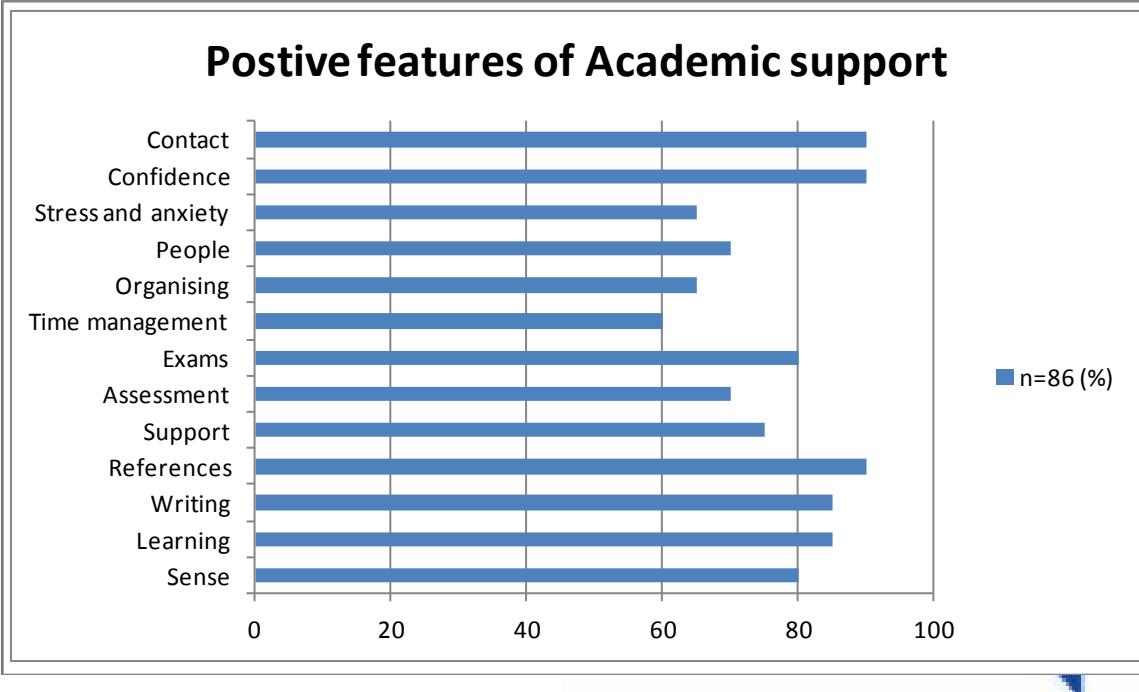
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## WHAT WE LEARNED

The provision of early supportive academic skills support had a positive effect upon learning and academic success  
 Confidence and engagement were enhanced by participation in a pre entry academic skills programme  
 Constructive targeted feedback has a positive influence upon learning and assessment  
 Key social and cultural factors influenced engagement with academic support  
 The nature and values of the institution has a significant influence upon academic skills support

## BACKGROUND

Higher education requires educators to be responsive to the needs of the student community. In an ever increasing performance driven and consumerist culture, proven, effective strategies to enhance the learning experience must be adopted.

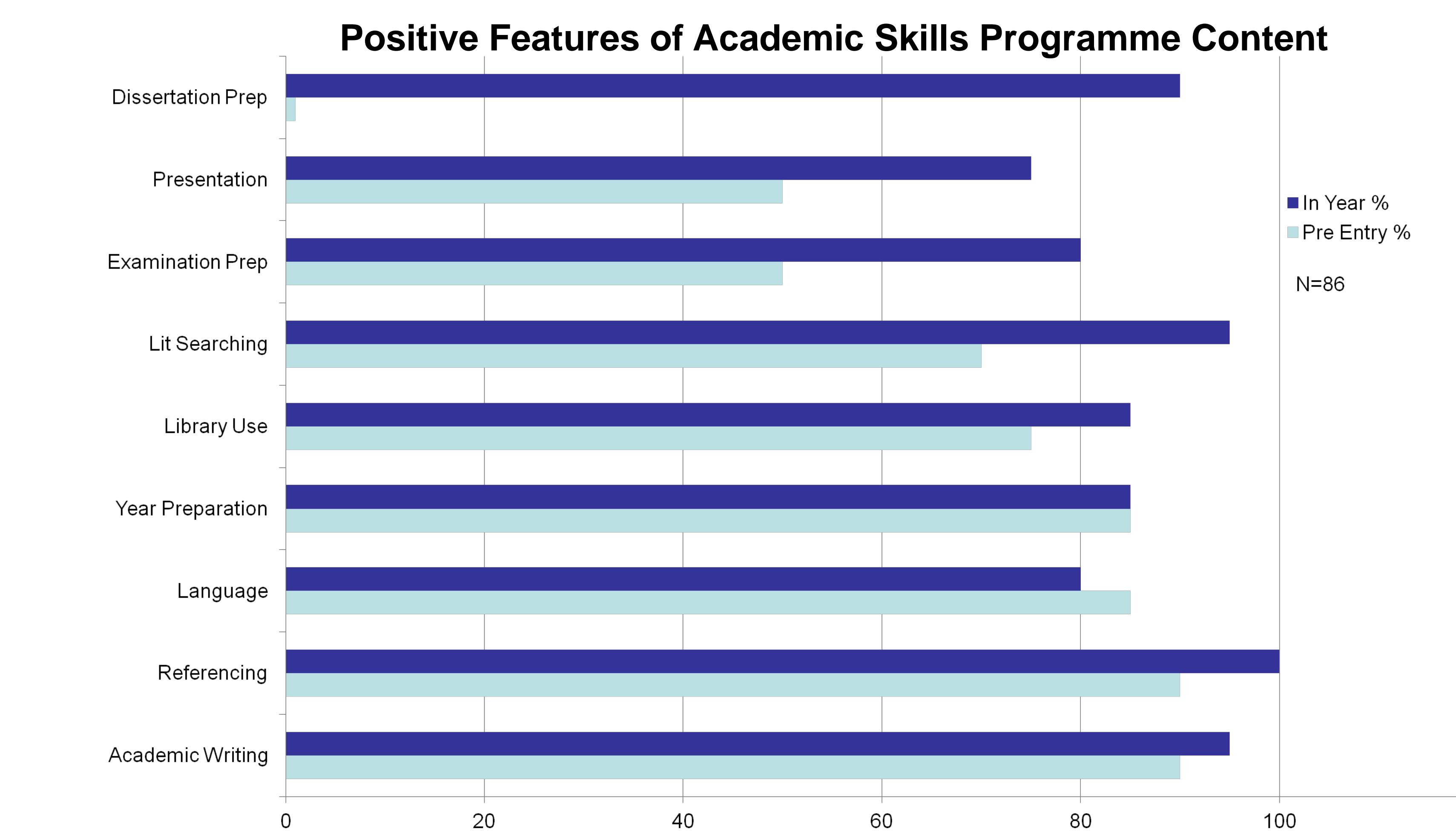
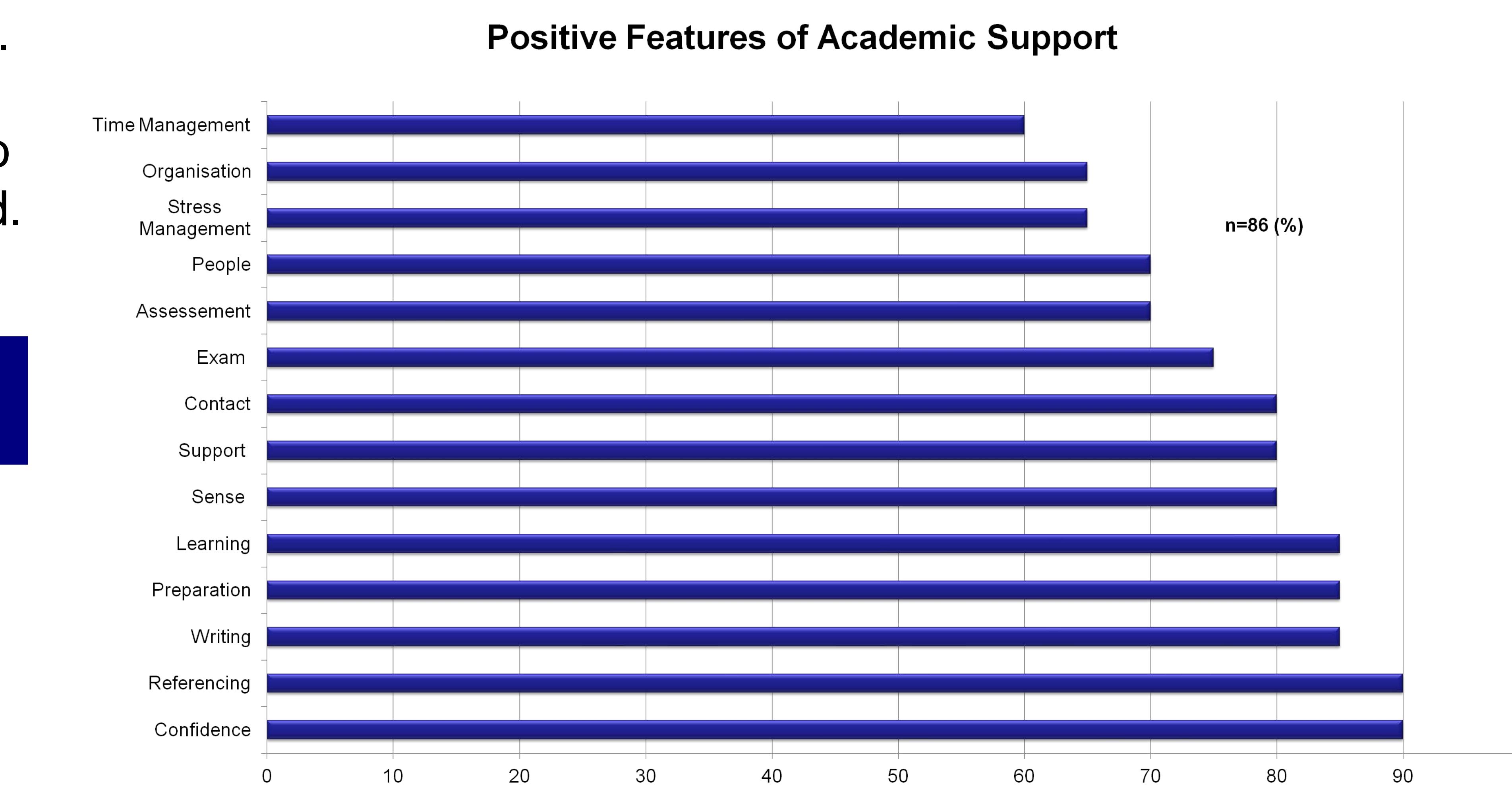
## OBJECTIVES

Explore how pre entry academic skills support influences the undergraduate learning experience.  
 Examine what factors influence the provision of continuing academic support during undergraduate study  
 Identify features of successful academic support

## METHODS

An ethnographic case study approach was adopted following a 86 students over a period of three academic year's – from pre-entry to graduation  
 Data collection tools included focus group and semi structured interviews, questionnaire and student assessment data.  
 Assessment performance, NSS and USS data was compared between participants and non-participants.

## RESULTS



## KEY THEMES

Enhanced student performance and satisfaction.  
 Encouraged engagement with the student community  
 Mean grade score was enhanced by 8%.  
 Students expressed 100% student satisfaction with quality of learning experience in NSS and USS.  
 Driven by demands of students.  
 Flexibility welcomed especially by students with family and work commitments, due to accessibility.  
 Promoted confidence and reflective engagement with learning especially feedback.  
 Students appreciated the "head start"  
 Students demonstrated enhanced subject and knowledge, academic skill and ability.  
 Bridged the gap and encouraged motivation

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional commitment to pre entry academic skills strategy required to enable success  
 Transitional support between each year prior to start of academic year.  
 Flexible delivery and operating mechanism .  
 Clear guidance provided e.g. expectations; engagement  
 Clear outline of roles - AST and Academic

A Smart Start the "sure" way to get ahead"