Open Research Online

Developing HE practitioner confidence and skills to ensure effective online teaching and student support
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Background

- Increasing number of HE institutions offering online tuition.
- Important to prepare practitioners new to online education to ensure effective teaching and support for students.

Aims

- Identify previous experience and confidence in core online tuition tasks of new OU tutors and make recommendations for their induction.
- Draw parallels for student induction.

Methods

- 67 novice tutors surveyed in first month of new role in the STEM faculty at the Open University (OU) between October 2018 and November 2019.
- Questions asked about:
  - Previous teaching experience
  - Confidence in core online tuition tasks, assessed via Likert scale (5 categories not at all confident – very confident).
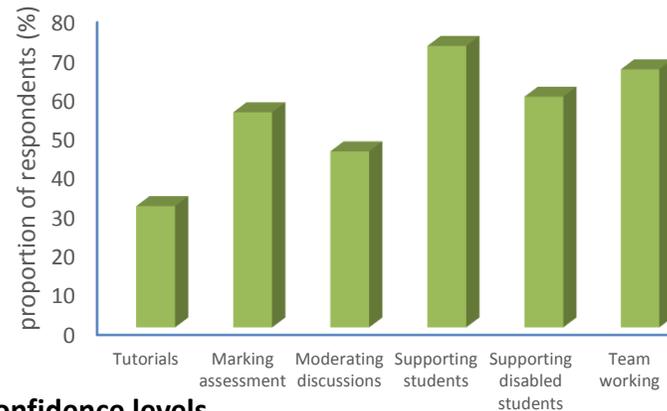- Data summarised and analysed using Excel.

Results

N=29

Previous experience:

- 81% had worked in HE, 44% in FE, 19% in schools. 50% had other experience e.g. private tuition.
- 45% no experience of the OU, 38% were past or current employees, 17% had studied with the OU.

*Fig. 1 Proportion of respondents with experience of core online tuition tasks.*

Confidence levels

Table 1 Proportion of respondents who said they felt confident or very confident with online tuition tasks.

Online task	Proportion of respondents (%)
Tutorials	48
Marking assessment	41
Moderating discussions	28
Supporting students	57
Supporting disabled students	45
Team working	76

Results

Fig. 2 Proportion of respondents who said they felt confident or very confident based on previous experience (a), and knowledge of OU (b).
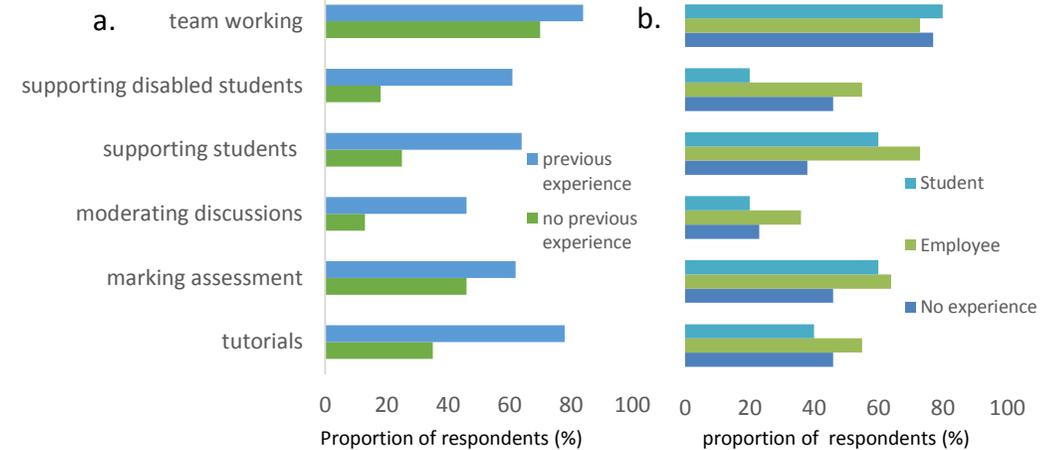
Conclusions and recommendations

- New tutors had varied previous experience of online tuition and of the OU which relates to their confidence levels.
- Tutors felt least confident about moderating discussions, marking assessment, supporting disabled students and delivering tutorials online.
- To support development of these skills we offered a bespoke induction programme comprising a web page, face to face and online workshops, and asynchronous support via discussion forums.
- As part of ongoing evaluation, tutors will be asked about their confidence levels and usefulness of the programme on its completion.
- Based on our research, we recommend training for HE practitioners new to online teaching that develops their skills and confidence in core tasks .
- Additional support for those with less experience should be considered.
- We suggest that student induction should also include similar, specific training for online study skills to ensure students have the tools and confidence to engage fully with online learning opportunities.