

“Essays are boring”: Using video production to support learning in climate change

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Introduction

A 2014 Ipsos/Mori poll of Public Attitudes to Science found that in 2013 climate change was one of the most talked about media topics. However data showed that people would rather talk about something else. Their data also show that **78% of people feel informed about climate change**, but only **60% are actually concerned about it**. Furthermore in an address to the Walker Institute in December 2014 the Government’s Chief Scientific Advisor Sir Mark Walport stated that **“communication about climate change and its...consequences is extremely important”**.

Rooney-Varga *et al.* (2014) & Gold *et al.* (2015) in found that getting groups of university and high-school students, respectively, to produce videos on climate change showed that students were highly motivated, developed a genuine interest in the topic, learned about the scientific process and developed digital skills. **Deeper learning through individual video production** is also supported Fuller & France (2014). Furthermore the CU Teaching & Learning Strategy (2011) encourages giving students opportunities to learn a range of technologies and applications and two colleagues have had successful experiences using video production to enhance teaching & learning.

I opted to ask students to prepare a short video, rather than write an essay, to communicate the importance of action on climate change.

The Assignment

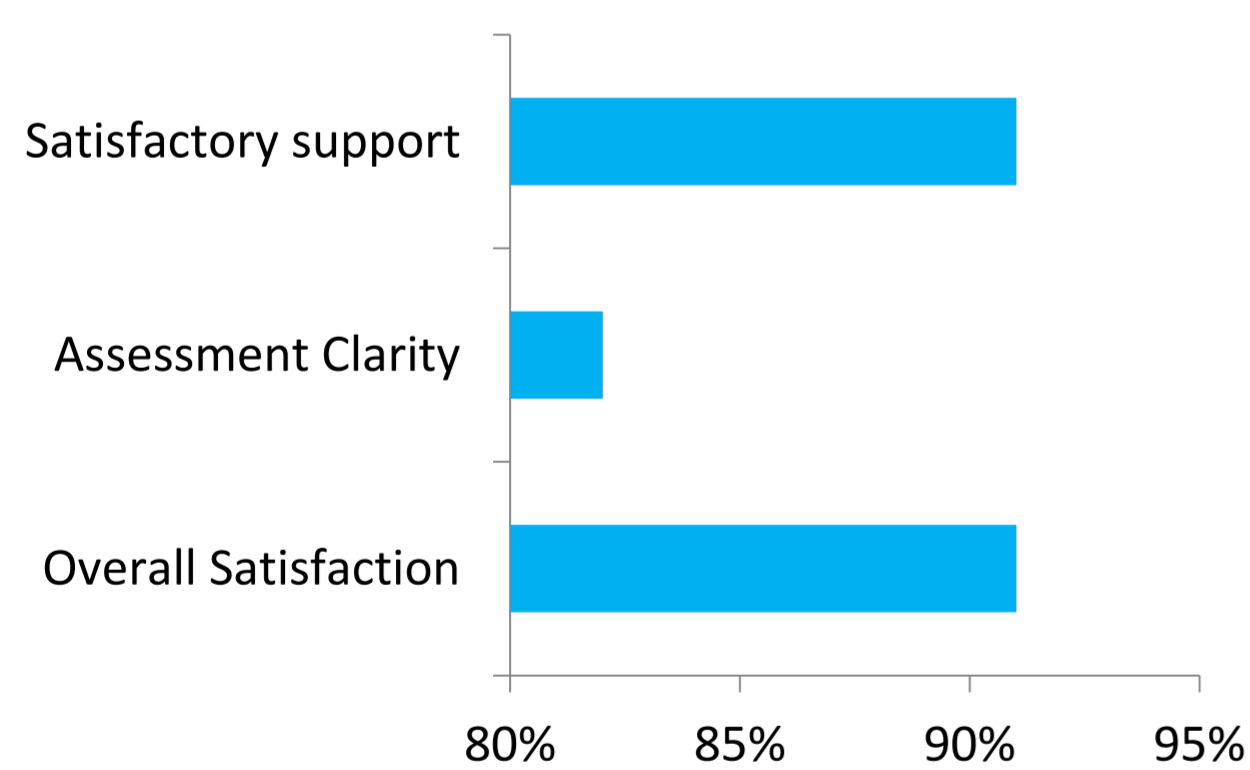
A201GED Your Response to Climate Change students were asked to produce a 3-5 min video campaign proposal to get CUSU to mitigate or adapt to climate change. The video was worth 40% of the module mark. This was an individual exercise. Students were supported in the following ways:

- In class discussions on campaigning & advertising
- Workshop on video production (by the LEU)
- Detailed info on Moodle on video production, Apps & software
- Drop-in sessions for both video production (from the LEU) & ideas
- On-line international learning to discuss their ideas with their partner

The video was supplemented with a written portfolio on other actions they could take to reduce their own carbon footprint.

MEQ Feedback

Figure 1. Key Module Evaluation Scores.



MEQ scores were reasonably positive (Fig. 1), but students did also make a number of useful comments on areas for improvement:

“video making needs **more help**”

“**Remove** making the campaign video”

“**More detailed information** [needed] about the coursework”

“**More insight** into what can be produced by students in the previous cohort”

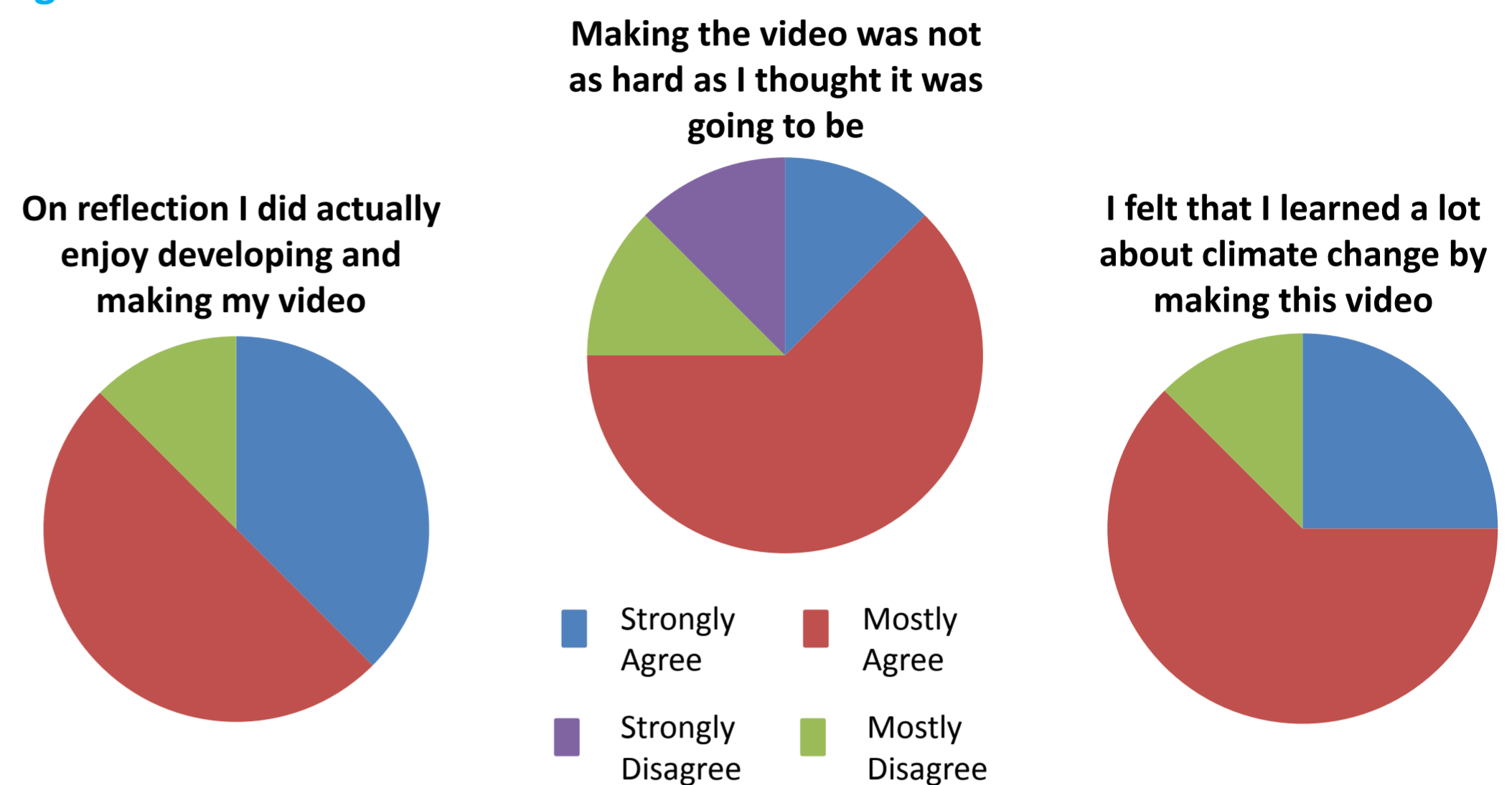
“I think asking students to make a video by themselves is unreasonable. I for one do not have the technology skills to make a video. **Group work would have been much better**”

The MEQ was of limited value as it took place before the completion of the task. But this early feedback allowed me to add in some additional surgery sessions and more discussion time on what makes a good campaign.

Student Feedback Post Assessment

I wanted to find out what students thought about the video production having actually produced their videos so I put together a short feedback survey in Bristol Online Survey:

Figure 2. Post Assessment Feedback



Verbatim comments included:

“...it's not something I had done before, and thought 3-5 minutes sounded like a long time, but once I started it I **realised how wrong I was.**”

“even though writing an essay would have been easier, the **video was fun and interesting** to make and was different to previous coursework.”

“Essays are boring”

“**Too much coursework** for only 10 credits.”

“I feel like I would have enjoyed making the video more when I could have had a partner. **Doing it in pairs** would have been nice.”

Evaluation

Students were apprehensive about video production, but their feedback shows that they did learn and they did enjoy the process (Fig. 2). I have also identified areas for improvement from conversations with the LEU and other academic colleagues that have used video production in their modules. In combination student and peer feedback have helped me shape the assignment for next year.

- **Video production in pairs:** Video production is inherently team based activity. Although the students had their peers here in the UK and a partner in the USA to bounce ideas off they still had to deal with production on their own it still seemed to be quite intimidating. After discussion with the LEU and peers I feel that working in pairs might alleviate some of the stress and isolation the students feel.
- **Reduce the length of the assignment:** Produce a 3 min video and a 1000 word action plan to show how they will reduce their own carbon footprint.
- **More guidance on ideas:** More discussion time in class on ideas for campaigns and capturing those ideas online for reference. The best videos of students who have granted permission will be shown for inspiration.
- **More guidance on assessment:** The assessment outline was too brief. Students will be given a more detailed breakdown of mark allocation and expectations of content and presentation.
- **Video production workshop later in the term:** After discussion with the LEU we feel it would be better to hold the workshop once the students have a few ideas to play with. This should lead to better video production, rather than an abstract exercise.

The Videos

Sophie D’s video (3:46)



<http://tinyurl.com/q5u94mu>

Sophie A’s video (3:09)



<http://tinyurl.com/naul2db>

Ryan’s video (3:29)



<http://tinyurl.com/pb263ql>

These students have all given their written permission for their videos to be used for educational purposes.