An Instructional Team Approach: Supporting Students in Large Online Courses

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Acknowledgment

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Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Define academic coaching to clarify the team approach for instructional support within the large online course.

- Describe effective ways of using academic coaches within large online courses to impact student learning.

- Discuss how presented findings might be used by faculty to best support student success within large online course(s).

About UTRGV

A University for the Rio Grande Valley

Rio Grande City
Edinburg
McAllen
Weslaco
Harlingen
South Padre Island
Port Isabel
Boca Chica
Brownsville

100 Miles Radius

2nd
Largest Hispanic-Serving Institution in the Nation

31,939 Students

90.8% Hispanic Students

54.5% First-Generation

Online Stats

	Fall 2021	Spring 2022
Online course sections offered	1,951	1,309
Students taking at least 1 online course	24,975	21,023

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Activity 1: Define

Group Activity 1

- Divide into groups of 2-3
- Discuss (5 minutes)
  - Define academic coaching?
  - Define a large online course?
- Share
  - Please assign 1 member of your group to share your definitions with the group.

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What is an Academic Coach?

- Subject Matter Experts

- Minimum Master's Degree

- Employed by Instructional Connections

- Assist Faculty at Course Level

- Provide Student Support

- For UTRGV
  - Large Online Courses
  - Accelerated Courses

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What is a Large Online Course @ UTRGV?

- For Undergraduate Courses
  - 60+ Actual Enrollment
  - Minimum capsize set to 75
- For Graduate Courses
  - 45+ Actual Enrollment
- For Accelerated Program
  - No Requirements
- Instructor Qualifications
  - Complete QM's APPQMR
  - Complete UTRGV's Teaching Large Online Workshop/Blueprinting

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Background

Purpose

- Limited research on how faculty deploy academic coaches as critical instructional support team members.

- Scholarly attention to best practices related to utilizing the team approach for instructional support.

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Research Aims

Examine the attributes, behaviors, preferences, feelings, attitudes, opinions, and knowledge of faculty who use academic coaches for instructional support within the online course.

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Intended Outcome

- Inform best practice guidelines for faculty new to the use of academic coaches.

- Provide the foundation for future development of a valid and reliable instrument for evaluation of the application and use of academic coaches in online courses.
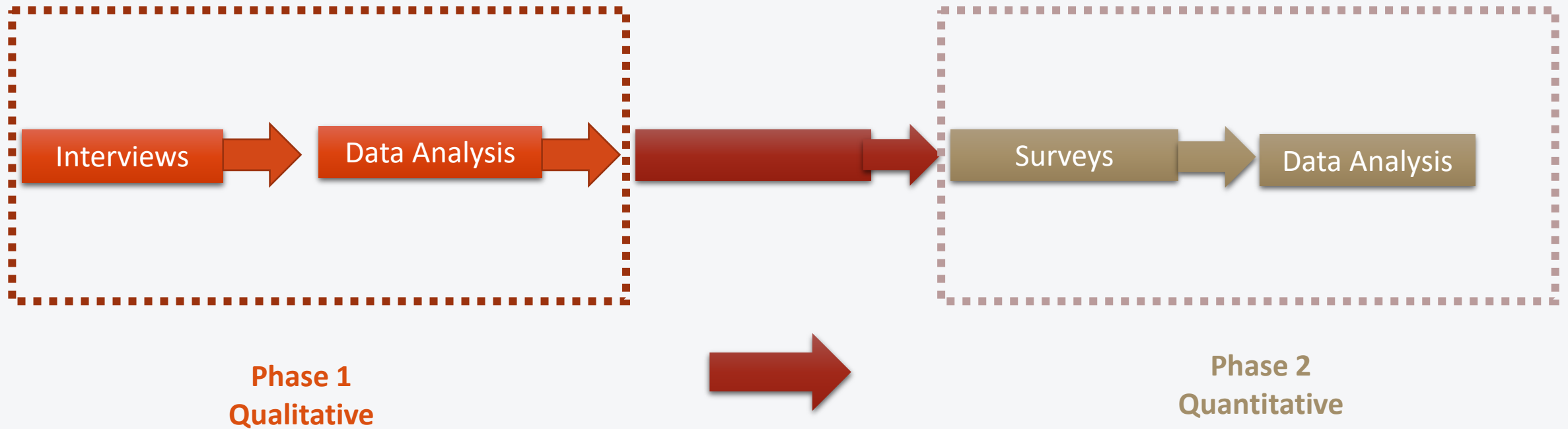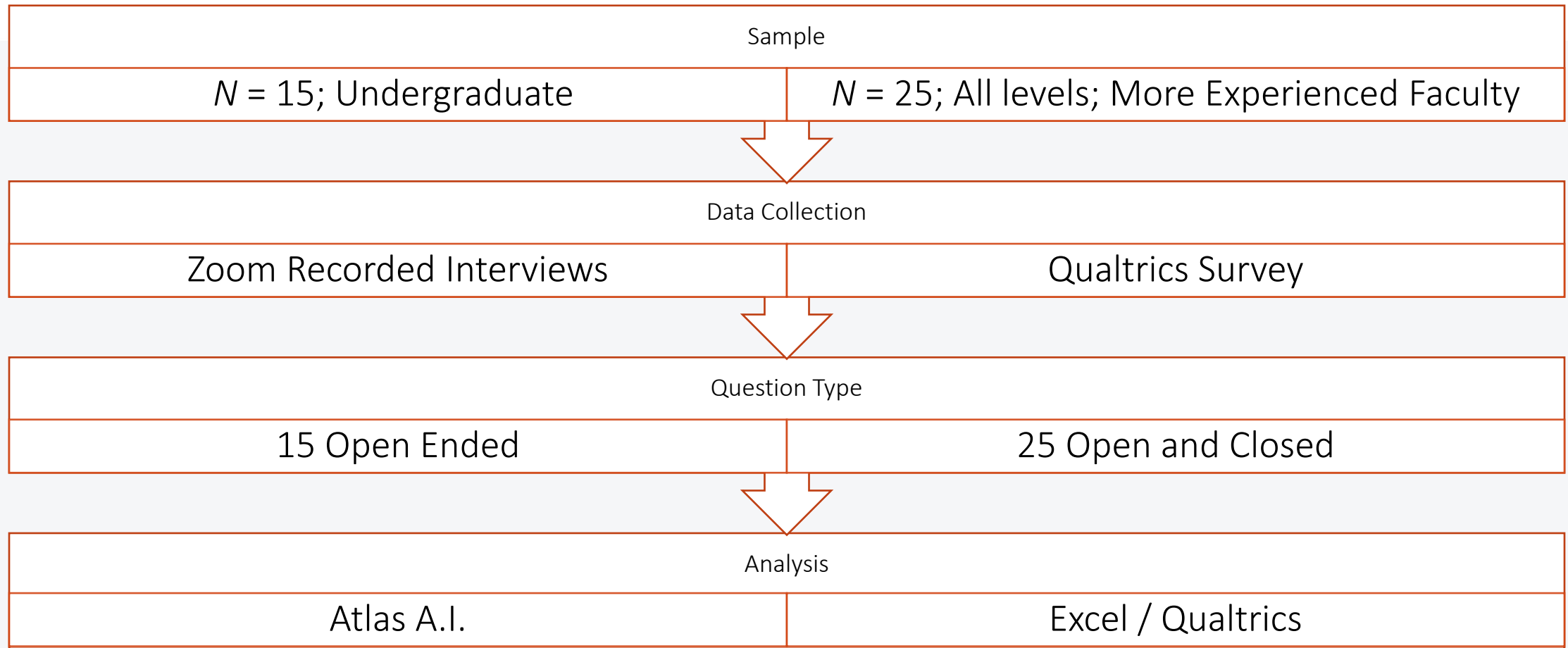
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Methodology

Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods

Interviews → Data Analysis →

Surveys → Data Analysis

Phase 1 Qualitative

Phase 2 Quantitative

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Breakdown

Sample	
N = 15; Undergraduate	*N* = 25; All levels; More Experienced Faculty

Data Collection	
Zoom Recorded Interviews	Qualtrics Survey

Question Type	
15 Open Ended	25 Open and Closed

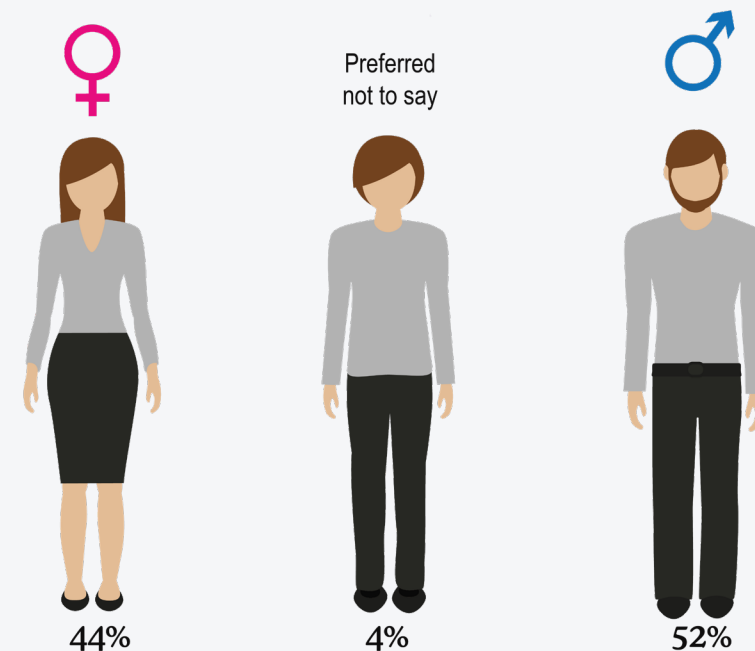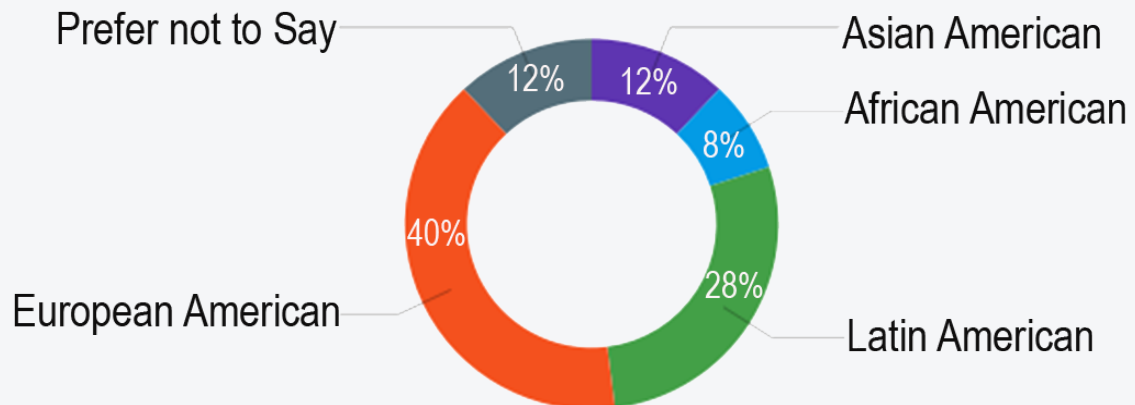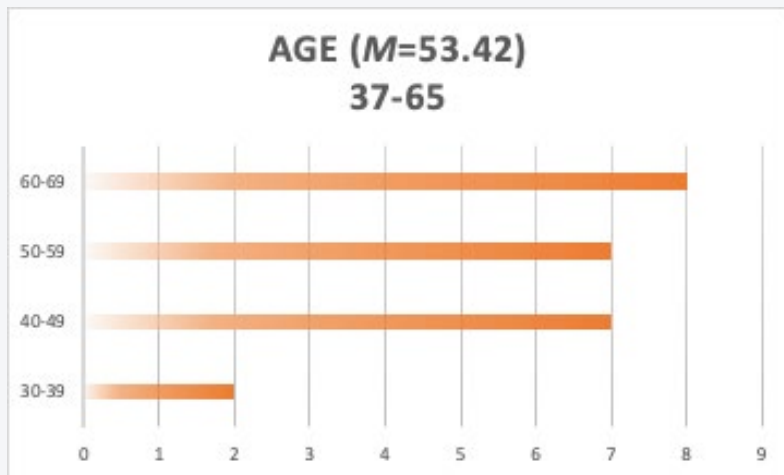| Analysis	
Atlas A.I.	Excel / Qualtrics

Purpose: Examine the attributes, behaviors, preferences, feelings, attitudes, opinions, and knowledge of faculty who use academic coaches for instructional support within the online course.

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Survey Results

Survey Sample (*N* =25)

AGE (*M*=53.42)
37-65

Prefer not to Say — 12%
Asian American — 12%
African American — 8%
Latin American — 28%
European American — 40%

♀ 44%

Preferred not to say — 4%

♂ 52%

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More Demographic Information

	Characteristic	Percentage/Number of Reponses (*N* = 25)
Area of Teaching	STEM Non-STEM	20% (5) 80% (20)
Semesters Taught Online	< 5 5-10 > 10	4% (1) 44% (11) 52% (13)
Experience Working with Academic Coaches (in Semesters)	1 3-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 24	4% (1) 24% (6) 48% (12) 16% (4) 4% (1) 4% (1)
Level of Teaching	Undergraduate Graduate Accelerated Program	20% (7) 37% (13) 43% (15)

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Coach Selection

	Percentage	Count
Chose coach(es) with whom I have previously worked	31.75%	20
Examined resumes, chose coach(es) by subject matter expertise	19.05%	12
Chosen for me, with my input	17.46%	11
Chose coach(es) based on colleague recommendations	14.29%	9
Examined resumes, chose coach(es) by relevant work experience	14.29%	9
Chosen for me, with no input from me	3.17%	2

"Based on their qualifications their understanding of anthropology and any recommendations."

" ... have a medical background. ...and then, of course, being able to learn in using educational technology, ... they have that background"

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Determination of the Number of Coaches
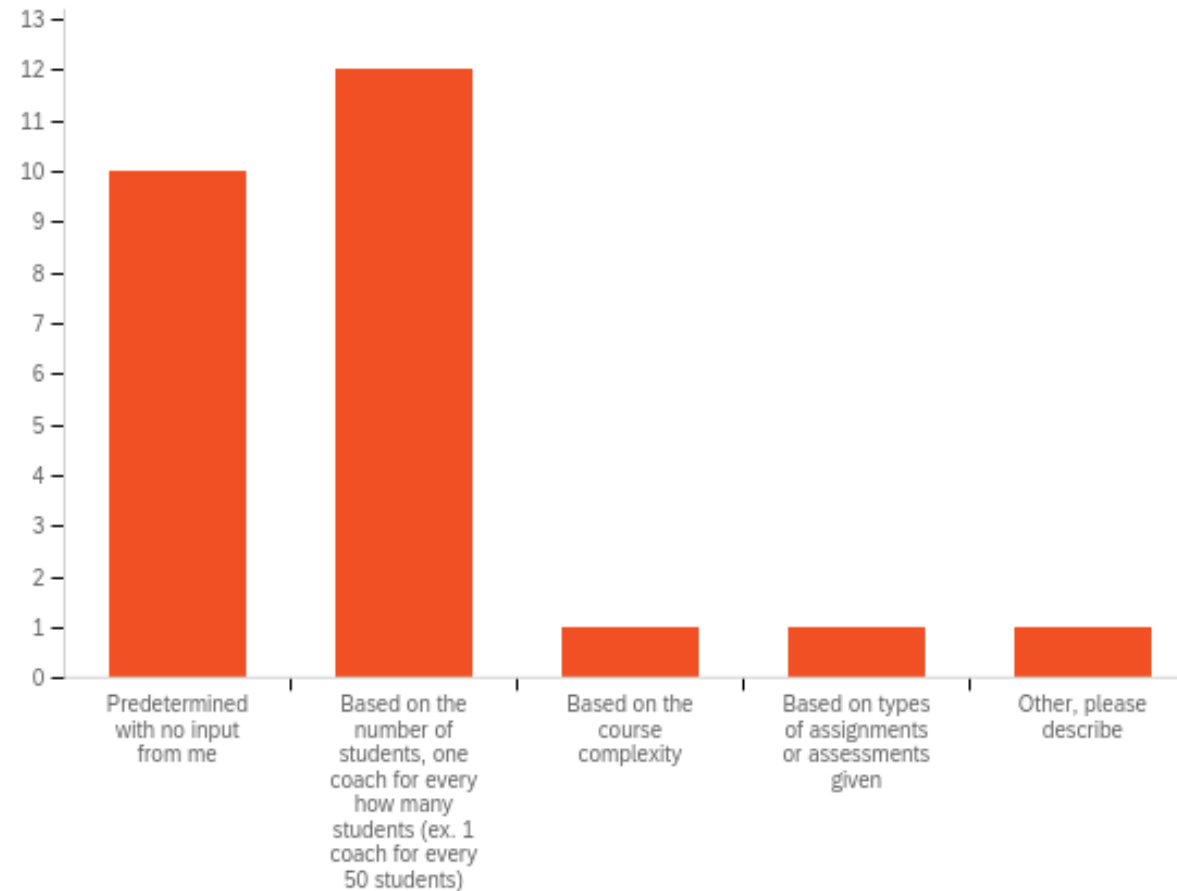
Communication Tools & Frequency Between Instructor & Coach

Communication Tool	Percentage
✉	32.88%
🖥	26.03%
☎	24.66%
💬	16.44%

Communication Frequency

Communication - Experienced Faculty (*n* = 23)

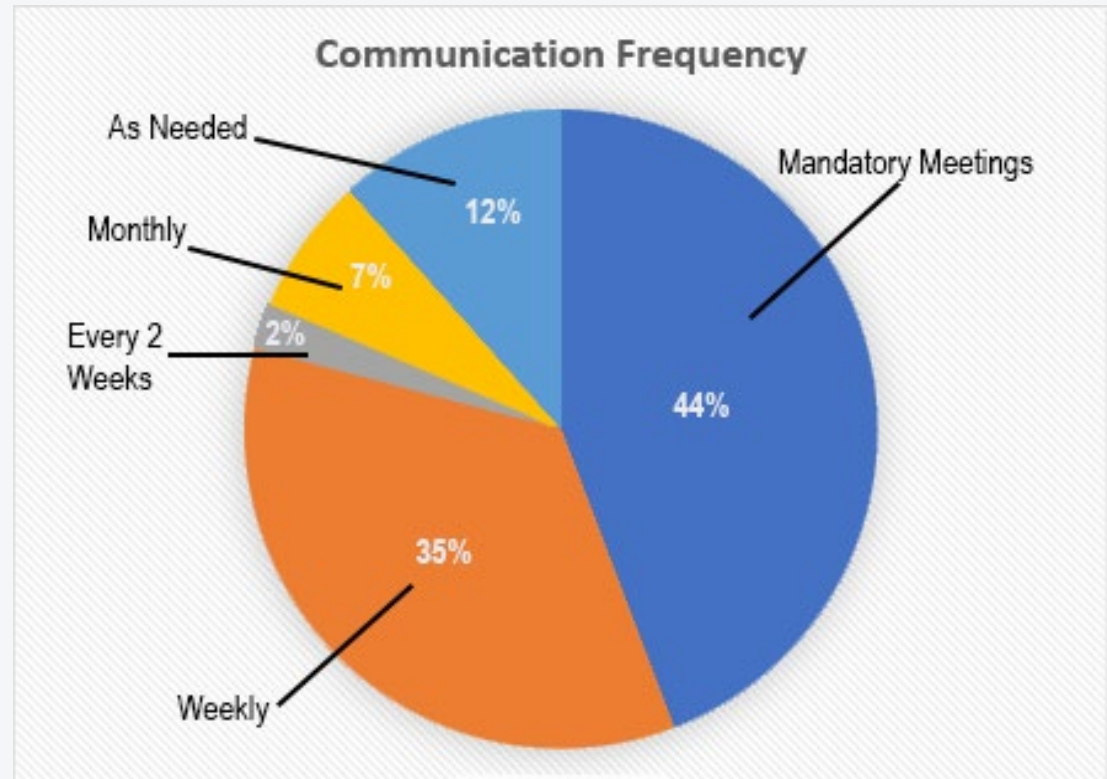Faculty who had previously worked with coaches, reported:

No difference - 34.8% (8)

Depends on coach - 21.7% (5)

Less interaction - 17.4% (4)

More interaction – 8.7% (2)

Easier 8.7% (2)

Other - 8.7% (2)
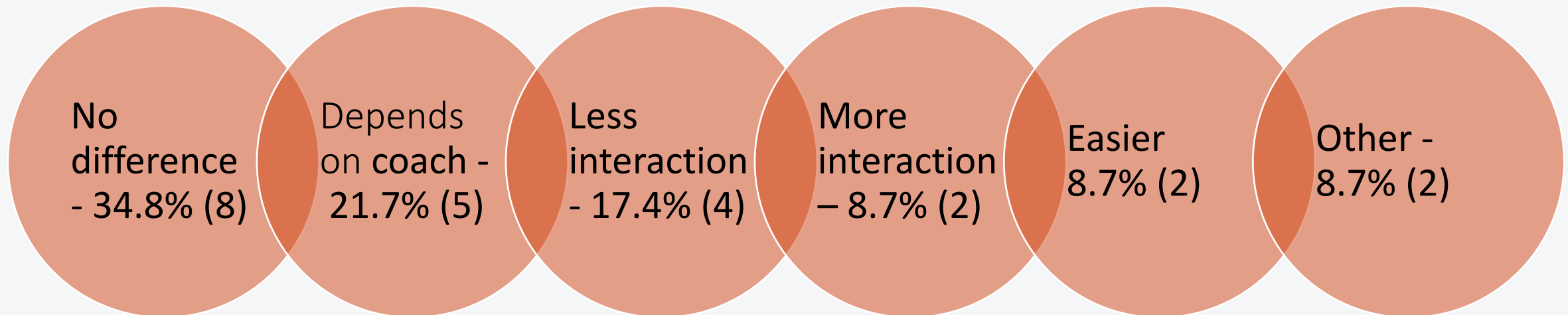
"When using the same coach for several semesters, less communication may be needed since we already know how the other works and because course content is already familiar. When working with a new coach, that requires more intense communication, especially at the beginning of the course."

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Types of Assessments Graded by Coaches

- Other — 6.5%
- Discussions — 38.7%
- Papers — 17.7%
- Group Projects — 17.7%
- Exercise Problems — 8.1%
- Exams — 11.3%
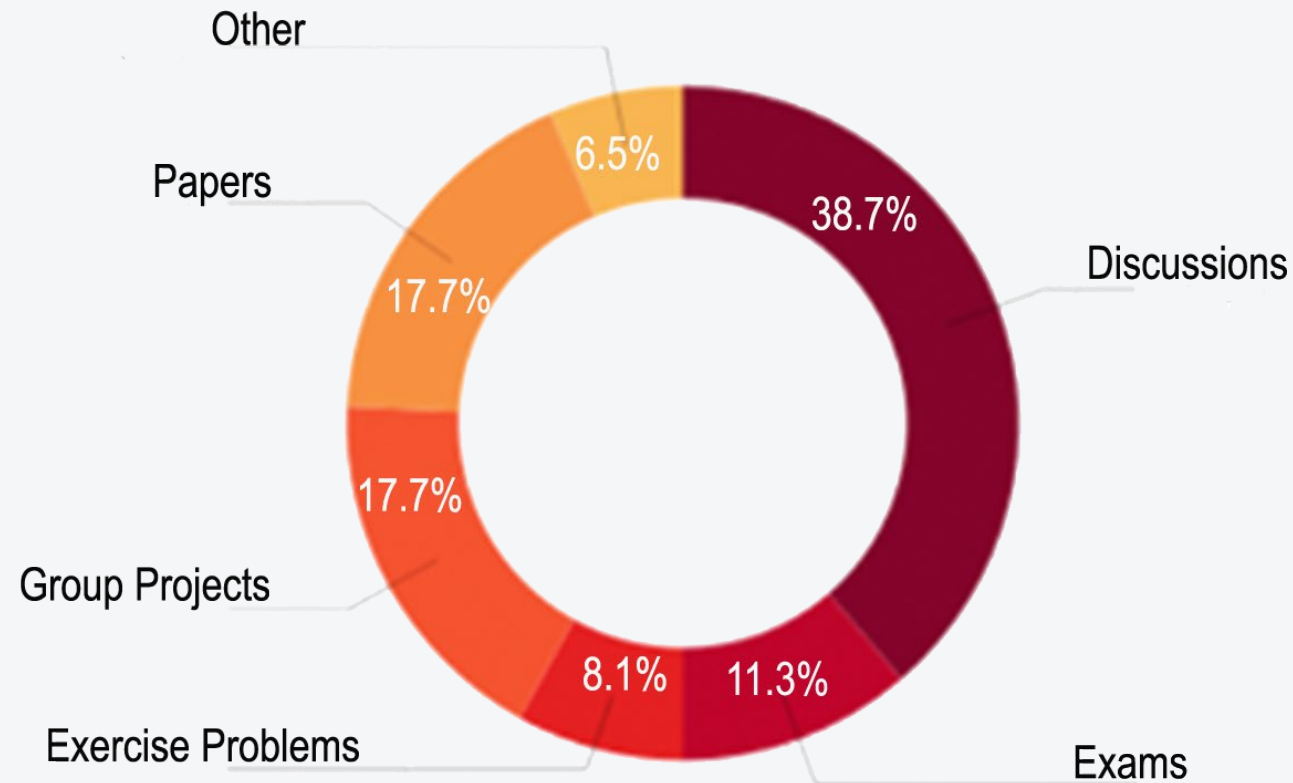
Assignment Rigor Graded by Coaches

Only low stakes assignment - 32% (8)

All the assignments - 36% (9)

Other - 32% (8)

Only high stakes assignments - 0% (0)
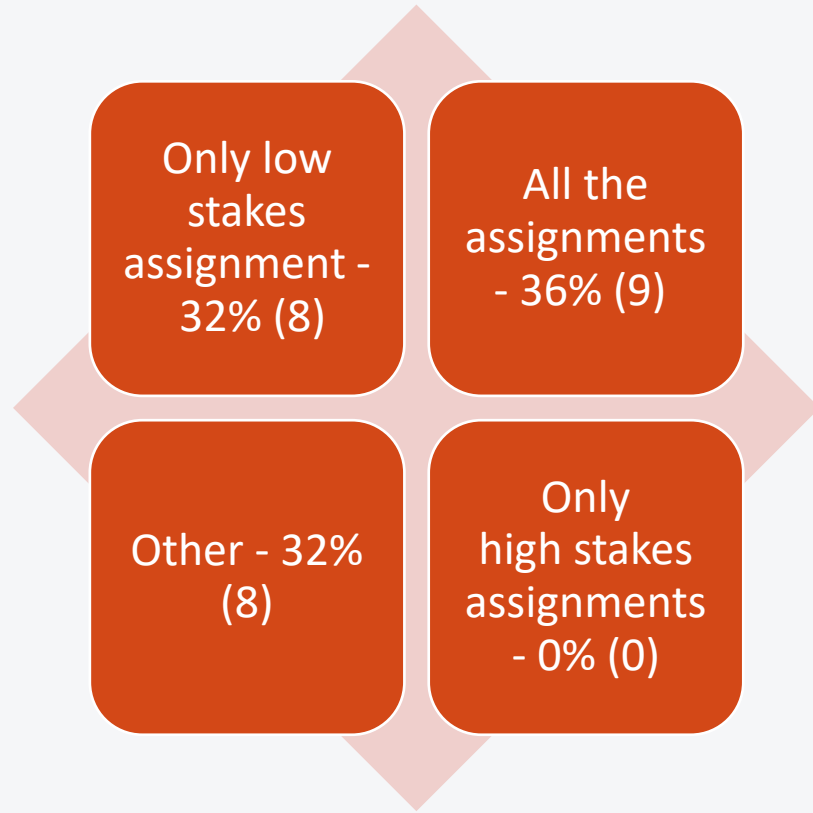
Other:
- *"My coach grades relatively straightforward quiz answers; I grade more complicated term papers that need more in-depth knowledge on the subject."*
- *"A mix."*
- *"No grading, just reviewing for writing quality, except they grade discussions ."*
- *"Majority of low stakes assignments and one high stake assignment."*

Percentage of Assignments Coaches Grade

Percentage of Assessments Coaches Grade

- less than 25%: 17%
- 25-49%: 9%
- 50-74%: 35%
- 75-89%: 13%
- 90-99%: 26%
- 0%
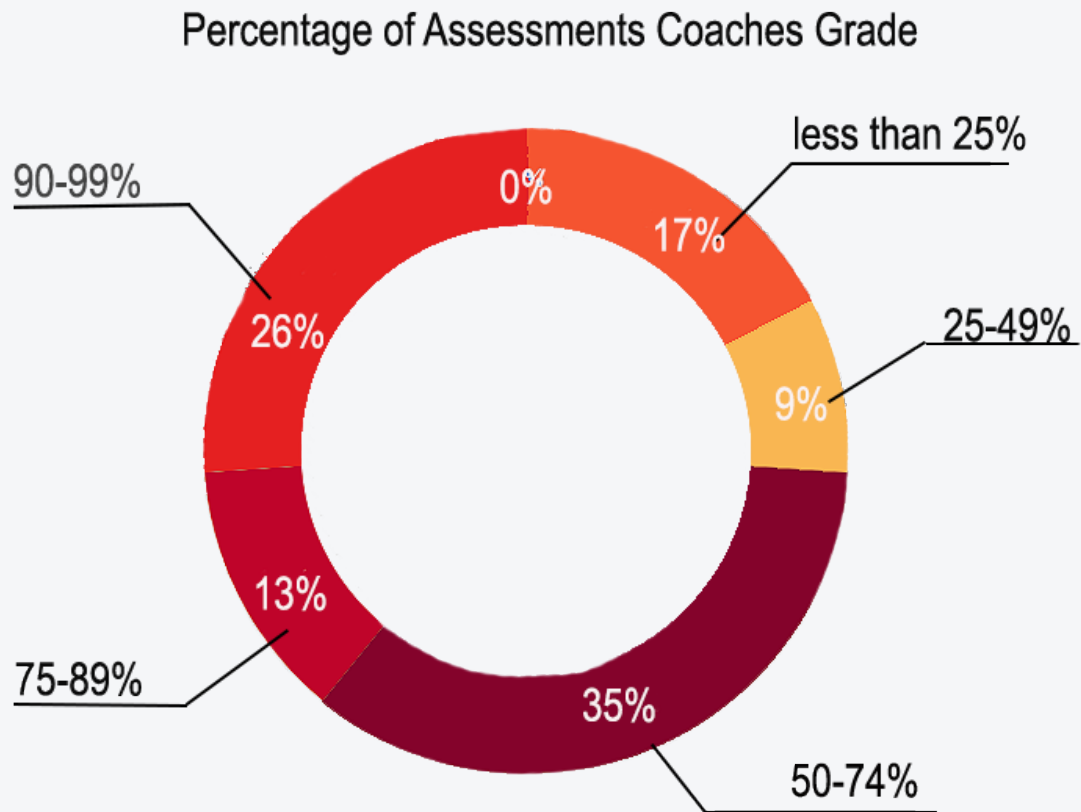
None of the above, please describe:

- *"My coach grade weekly quizzes; I grade term papers."*
- *"Coaches review for APA and writing errors, I grade every paper. They grade discussions."*

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Instructor Grading Contribution

I grade along with my coach(es) for each assignment (5)

"I grade the first or last 10 quizzes, and I will grade some discussion boards at random."

I grade along with my coach(es) for some of the assignments (8)

"I grade all other assignments and overlook assignments marked by coaches."

They grade only discussion boards (3)

"I grade all assignments except for discussions."

I review and edit 100% of the assignments (3)

"I verify that the rubrics are being applied consistently."

I grade all high-stake assessments (3)

"I grade higher stakes assignments such as projects and exams (if applicable)."

Instructor Facilitation of Coaches' Grading

Detailed Rubrics - 68% (17)

Sample Feedback - 4% (1)

Sample Work - 4% (1)
- (A, B, C, & D grades)

All the Above - 16% (4)

32%

32%

32%

4%
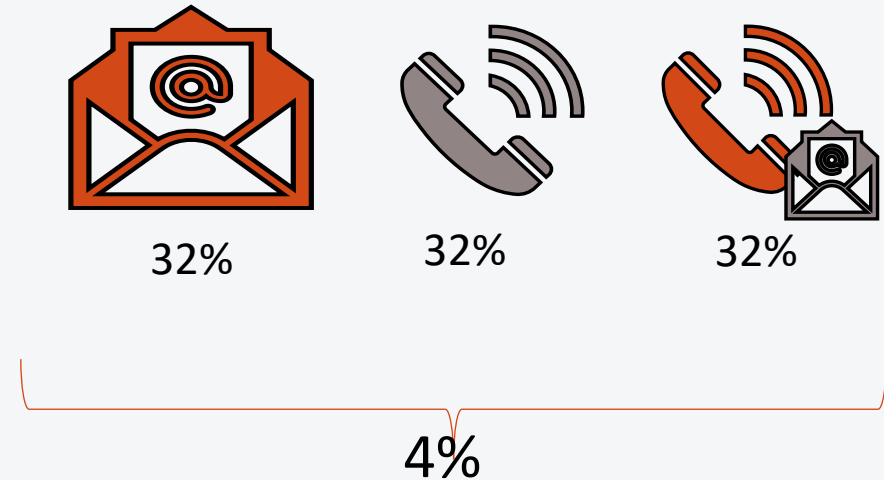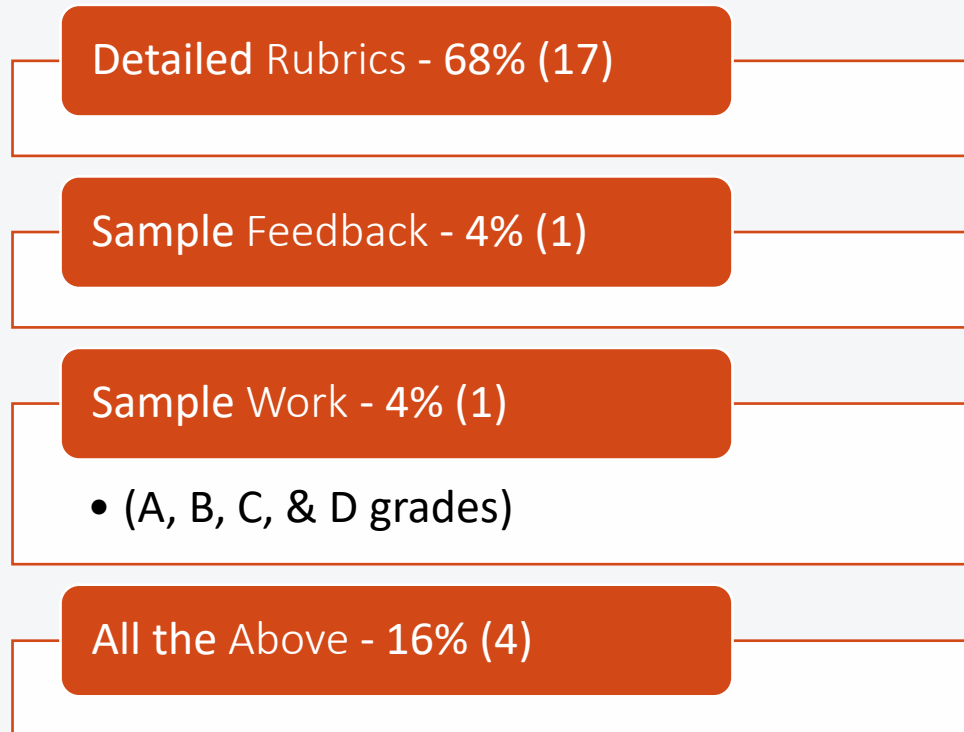
Coaches Role in Discussions

Feedback/Grading (9)

- Point out Strengths and Weaknesses of Posts
- Share with Students How to Improve Posts
- Specific, Detailed, Consistent, and Clear

Coaches Asked to Comment/Post in Discussion (6)

- Provide Counterpoints
- Apply Content or Professional Expertise
- Commentary on Learning
- To Improve Discussion

Engage Students (3)
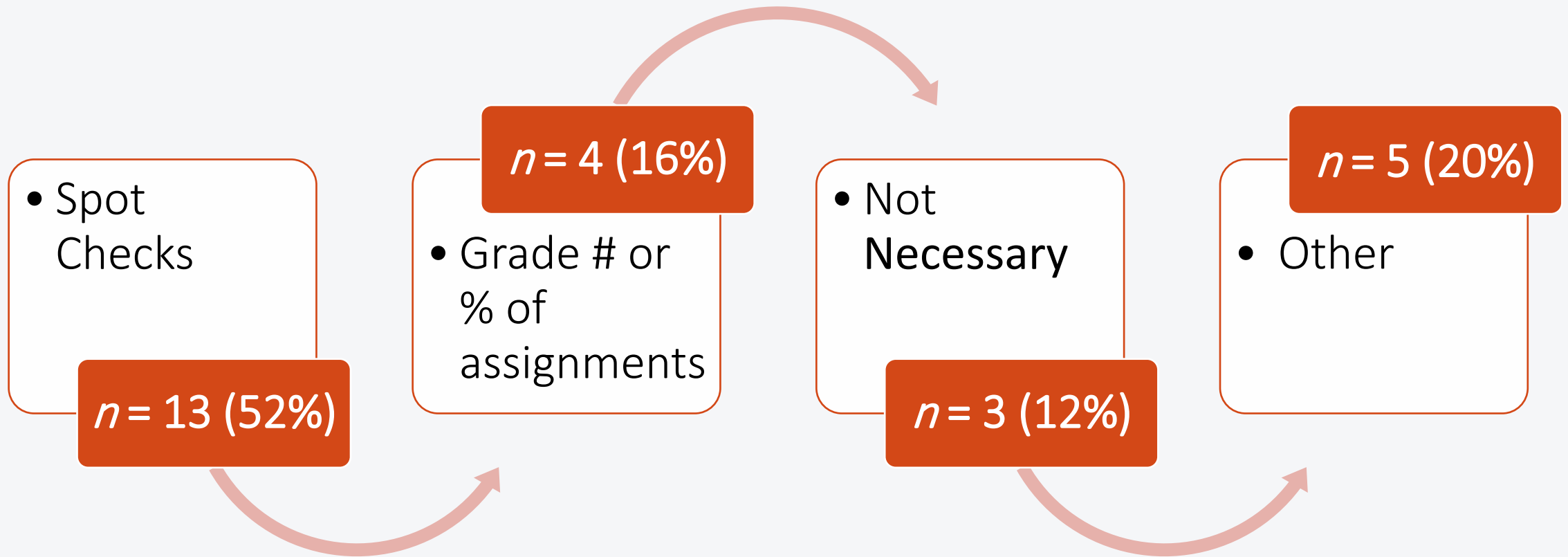
- Motivation
- Acknowledgement

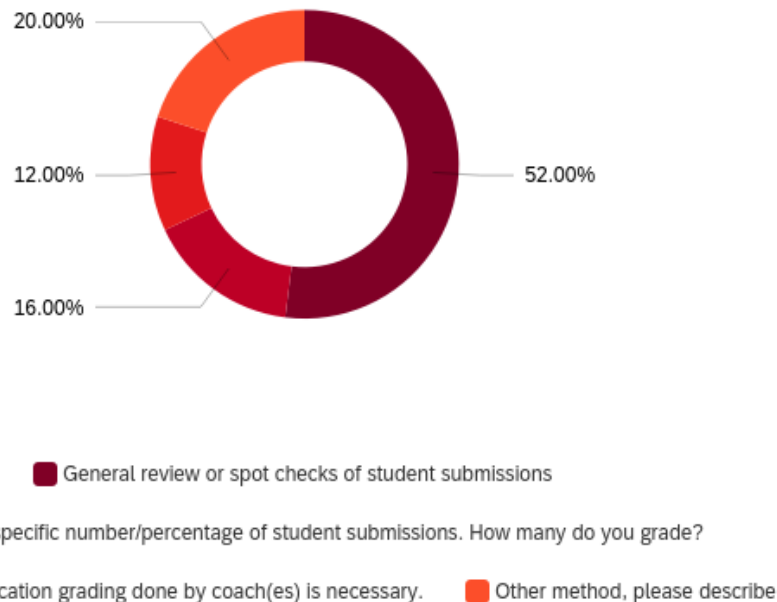## Grading Only (6)

- Using Grading Rubric
- Instructor Example

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Verification of Grading Accuracy

- Spot Checks

n = 13 (52%)

- Grade # or % of assignments

n = 4 (16%)

- Not **Necessary**

n = 3 (12%)

- Other

n = 5 (20%)

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Methods Used to Verify Grading Accuracy

- 20.00%
- 12.00%
- 16.00%
- 52.00%

- General review or spot checks of student submissions
- Grade a specific number/percentage of student submissions. How many do you grade?
- I do not feel verification grading done by coach(es) is necessary.
- Other method, please describe

Other method, please describe:

- *"I provide detailed guidelines on what is expected of students for each question."*

- *"Typically not something I do, but I see the value in it."*

- *"I have only worked with one Academic Coach and I spot check."*

- *"I only have one coach."*

- *"Not applicable."*

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Qualitative Responses

Grade a specific number/percentage of student submissions. How many do you grade?

- 10-100%

- *"I grade all papers and review graded discussions."*

- *"Always checks a sample of graded assignments."*

- *"I review student work if contacted by a student."*

- *"Review graded discussion boards."*

- *"I verify consistency across coaches which indicates fidelity of the rubric."*

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Instructor Management of Grading Issues

$n = 12\ (44\%)$
- Updates the grade and notifies coach and student
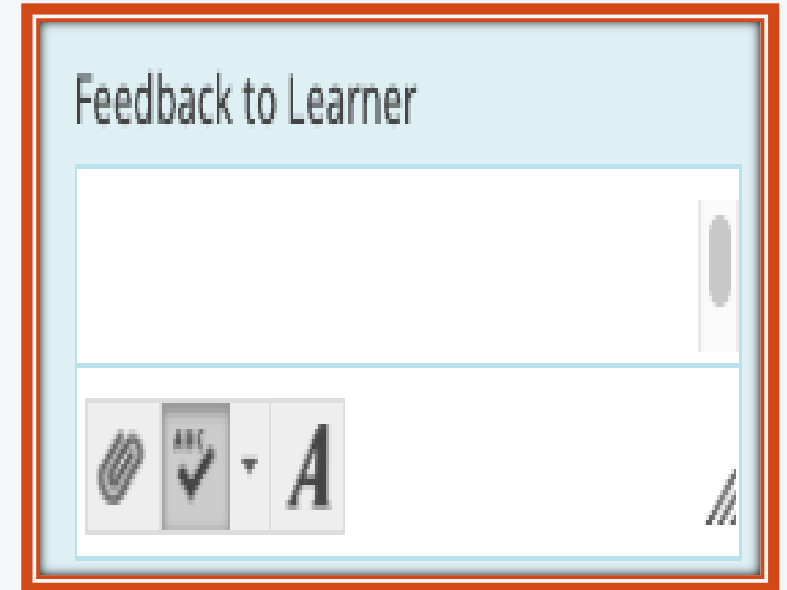
$n = 9\ \ (36\%)$
- Requests coach to update the grade and notify student

$n = 2\ (8\%)$
- Updates grade and only notifies student

$n = 2\ (8\%)$
- No grading issues reported

Feedback to Learner

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Benefits in using Coaches

Do you feel there are any benefits to using coach(es) for instructional support in your online classroom?

80%
Definitely yes

Definitely not   Probably not   Might or might not   Probably yes   Definitely yes

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Coach Benefits Word Cloud
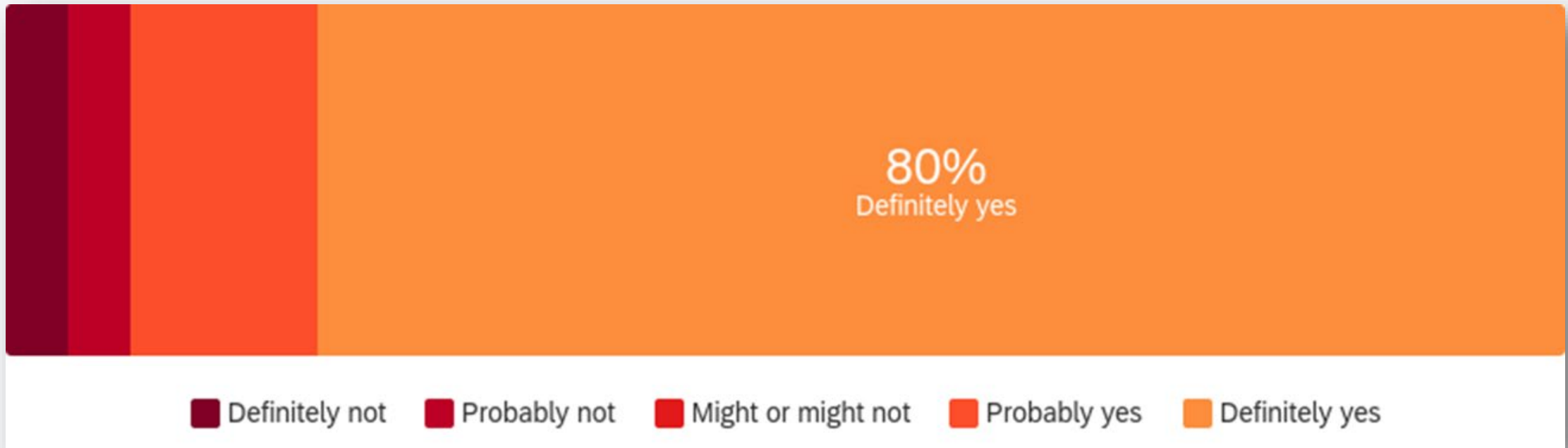
Risks in Using Coaches

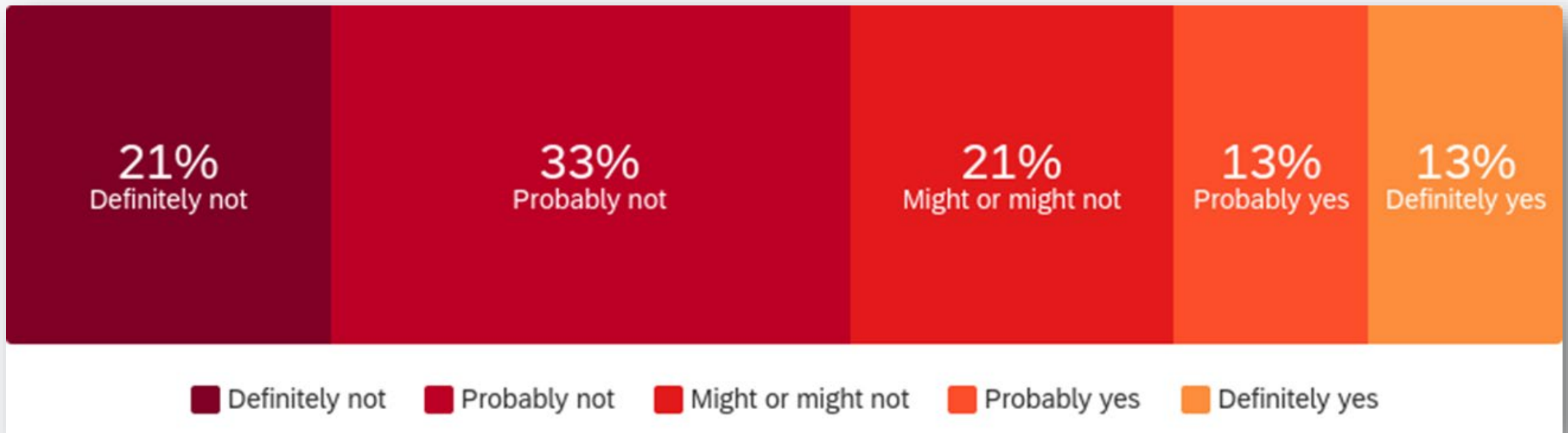**Do you feel there are any risks to using coach(es) for instructional support in your online classroom?**

21% Definitely not	33% Probably not	21% Might or might not	13% Probably yes	13% Definitely yes

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Might or might not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes

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Coach Risks Word Cloud

Activity 2: Discuss

Group Activity 2

- Divide into groups of 2-3
- Discuss (5 minutes)
  - What results surprised you the most?
  - How would you approach working with coaches differently?
  - Name one take-away you can use in working with your GA/TA/Coach now or in the future?
- Share
  - Assign 1 member of your group to share with us ...

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Next Steps

- Create Faculty Resource
- Publish Results
- Additional Research

What's Next?

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Thank you!

Questions?