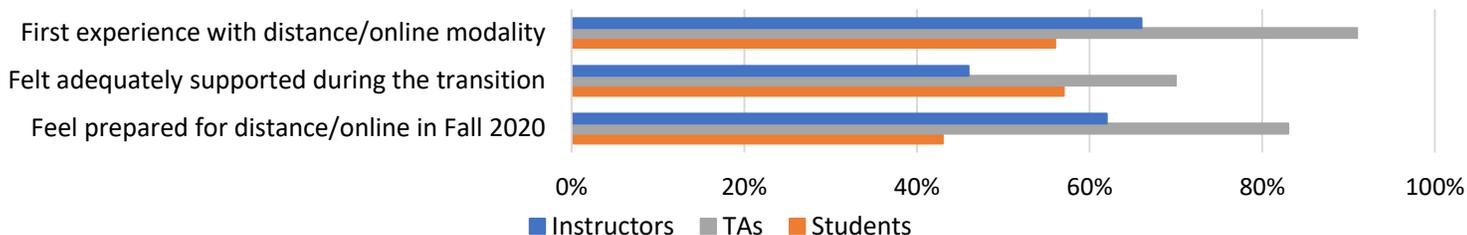


Synthesis of Distance/Online Transition Surveys

This brief synthesis document serves to highlight notable areas of congruity and contradiction between instructors, teaching assistants (TAs) and students in regards to their experiences and perceptions of the recent distance and online learning transition. Highlights are categorized below for those areas where similar survey¹ data was collected from each respondent group.

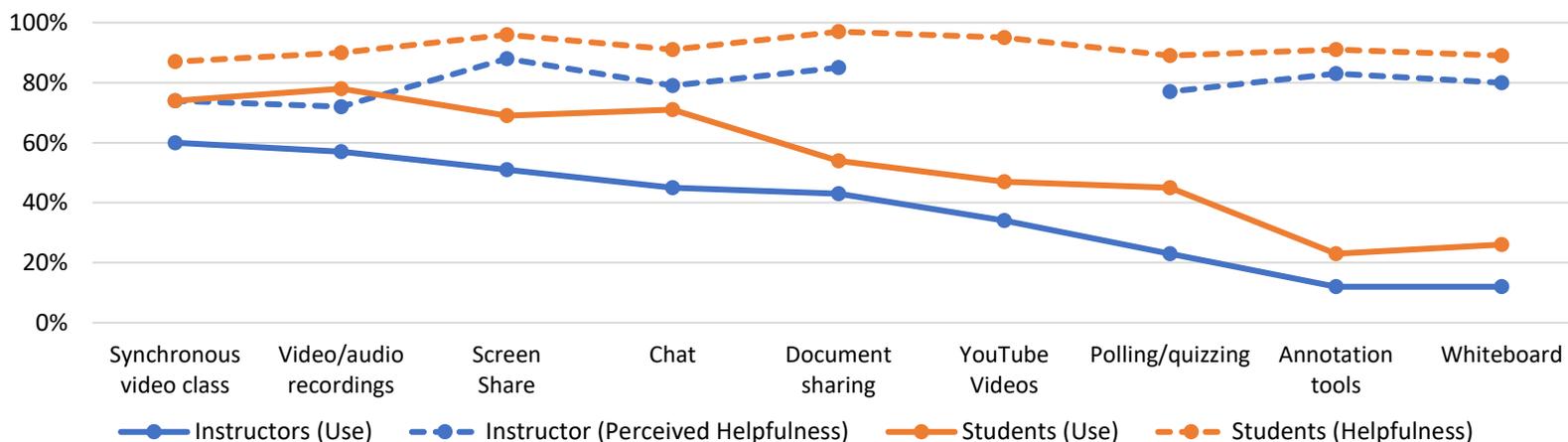
Transition Experience



Online instruction and learning was experienced for the first time by over 50% of all survey respondents. TAs felt most adequately supported, specifically from their course instructors and other fellow TAs. A large difference in perceived sense of preparation for the Fall 2020 semester was observed across respondents groups (as seen above). While professors and TAs cited a number of supports, students indicated that their confidence largely rested with how their winter/spring semester instructors navigated the transition to the online modality and that they were unsure of what to expect for the fall semester.

Use of Educational Technology

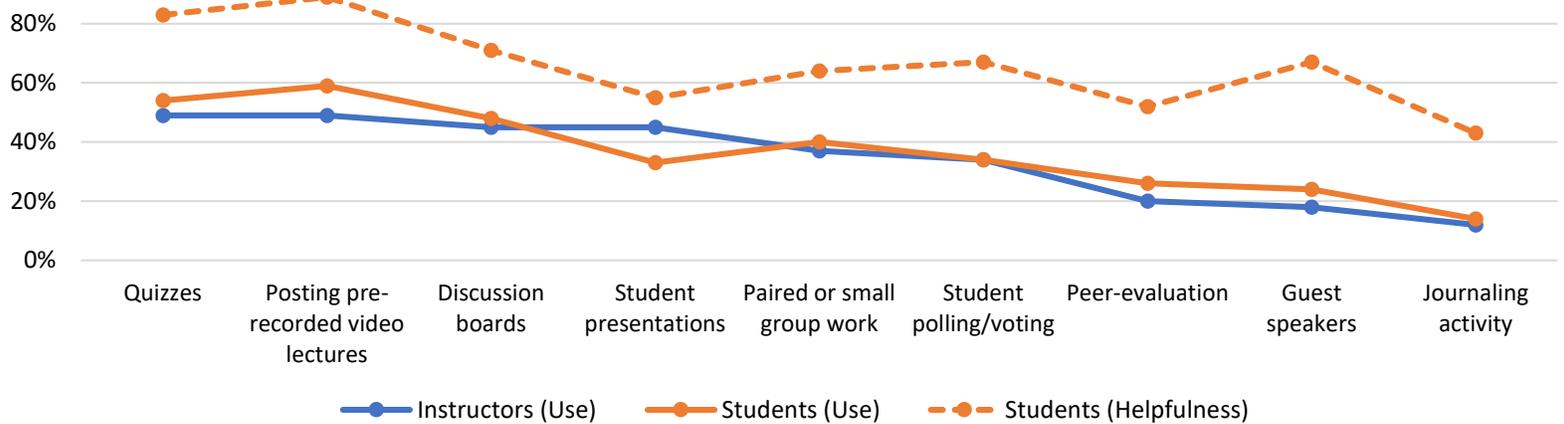
Both Instructors and students reported very similar usage of webconference platforms, Zoom being used most by a margin of nearly 20%. In terms of ease of use, Zoom ranked highest and Adobe Connect lowest. TAs reported using platforms less, as about half indicated that their responsibilities principally related to the evaluation of student work.



While instructors reported using platform features in their instruction to varying degrees, students report using these features between 12-26% more as part of their own course-related interactions (with fellow students, diverse course instructors and TAs). On average students rated features as *somewhat* or *very helpful* about 10% more than instructors perceived that they would be for student learning. Across open-ended comments, students clearly indicated that the thoughtful integration of a diversity of platform features was optimal for their learning. In addition to the features listed above, over 90% of respondents from all three groups reported using virtual campus (Brightspace) as part of their distance/online teaching and learning experience.

¹ Instructor survey data was collected mid-May 2020 with a 48% response rate (of 2,160 instructors); Student survey data was collected in late-June 2020 with a 26% response rate (of 42,433 students); TA survey data was collected in late-June with a 48% response rate (of 1,900 TAs).

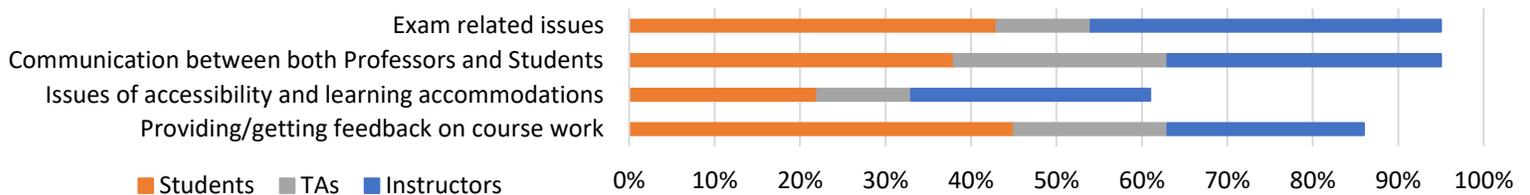
Use of Instructional Approaches



Both Instructor and student reports regarding the use of instructional approaches in their online courses were quite similar overall. Minor differences are likely the result of differing understandings of the use and integration of specific approaches. Students highlighted posting of recorded lectures and ongoing formative quizzes as most helpful to their learning.

Challenges Experienced

The top three moderate or significant challenges identified by over 40% of instructors were technology-related [e.g. selecting best tech for course (54%) and issues with tech not working (40%)]. The top four challenges indicated by over 55% of students were interaction-related [e.g. psychological strain of remote learning (57%) and not interacting with my classmates (56%)]. While not listed by a majority, 46% of students identified “instructors having problems using tech” as a moderate/significant challenge to them. Top challenges for TAs appeared as a combination of both tech and interaction-related. An additional difference in perspectives related to the provision and receipt of feedback. As seen below, it appears that over 20% more students found the receipt of feedback to be a challenge compared to the number of instructors who indicated the provision of feedback as a challenge. A relative similarity in perceived challenge related to exams related issues, communication, and issues of accessibility.



Of particular note with regards to challenges, across all three groups, survey respondents in French reported experiencing fewer moderate/significant challenges by about 10% overall, as compared to survey respondents in English.

Support Used

While supports and resources were necessarily different between instructors/TAs and students, it was observed that the most used supports were those that were easily accessible online. However, those that were deemed most helpful were those with some form of personal contact. For instructors these were coaching from other instructors and synchronous webinars; for students these were personal counselling and mentoring/faculty help centres.

Overarching Themes across Surveys

Themes were diverse and largely related to specific challenges lived by respondent groups, however, one stand-out area of congruity revolved around the competent use of educational technology. Instructors shared much concern about the selection and use of technology along with a need for more individualized technical and pedagogical support and coaching. Students shared equal concern regarding instructors struggling with tech issues that took up class time and spoke to the need for instructors to invest more time in learning and following training on, and testing/practicing with, educational technology.