



# **Student Success Toolbox Project**

## **The Role of Student Feedback in the Development and Evaluation of Digital Readiness Tools**

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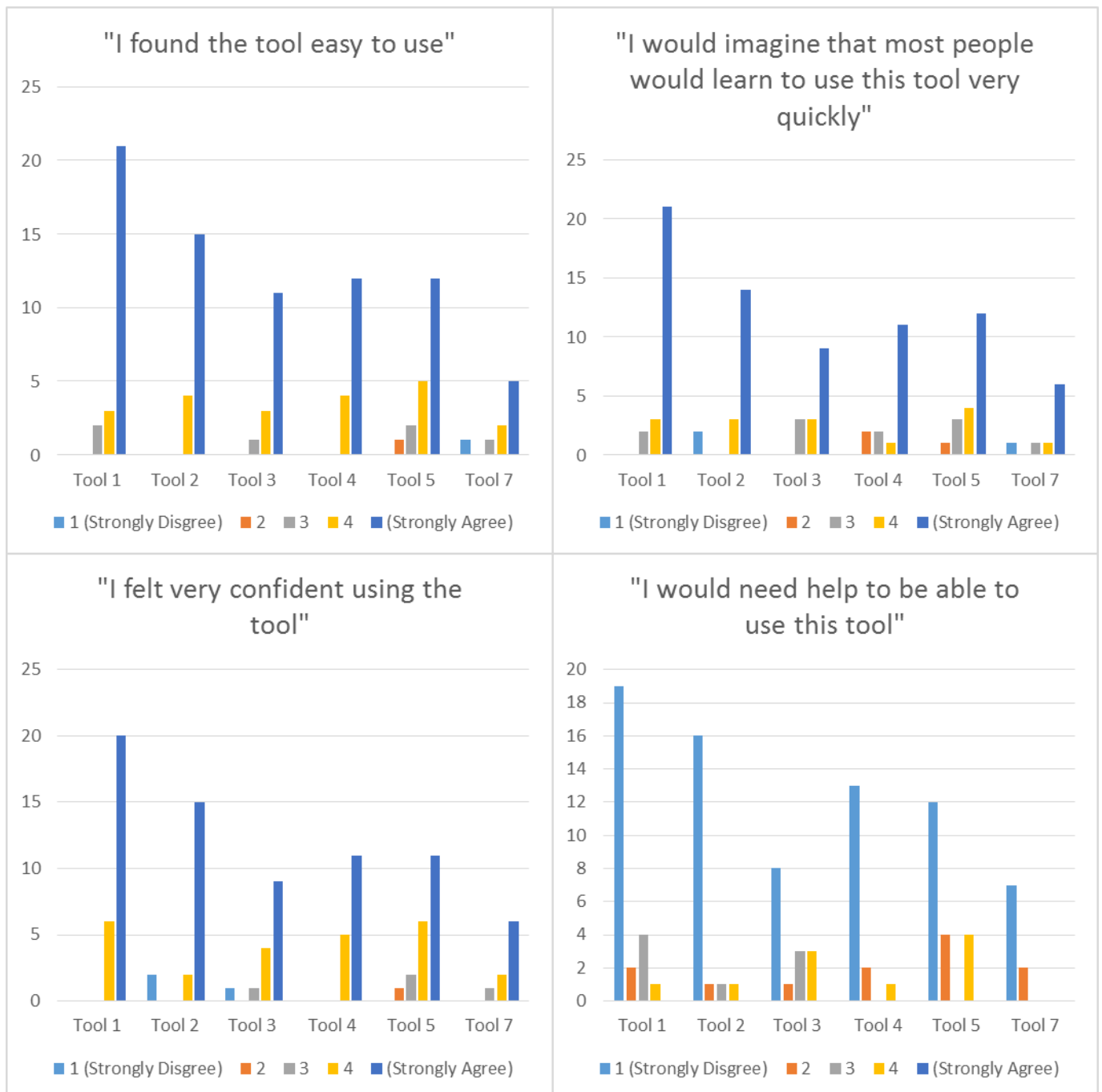
## Introduction

The project utilises an iterative development-review-(re)development cycle. When the tools were being developed feedback was obtained from higher education staff and existing flexible learners at two key points: tool design storyboard first draft; and first tool design prototype. This feedback was vital in moulding the development of tools that must be able to ‘speak’ to learners. Once further design prototypes were developed there was a small scale pilot evaluation, involving the flexible learner test users exploring the tools again, completing an online survey, and then a subset of those learners took part in one of four focus groups.

*“There is a great selection in this presentation, and it gives poignant information. The opening slides are very encouraging and help deliver a spirit of excitement and positivity in a prospective student.”*

Participants in surveys and focus groups were either prospective or current online or part-time campus-based learners, who had reached varying levels of higher education. Surveys offered a series of positive and negative statements and asked participants to rate their level of agreement with the statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Focus groups were centred around these questions: A. What was your overall impression of the tool? B. (Depending on which tool was being discussed) Do you think this tool would help someone assess their readiness to study? (Tool 1); Do you think this tool would help someone assess how much time they have available for studying? (Tool 2); Do you think this tool would help someone figure out who in their lives can support them in their studies? (Tool 3); Do you think this tool would help someone to assess whether or not they have the right technology and computer skills to study? (Tool 4); Do you think this tool would help someone to understand the importance of using the right study skills to produce assessments? (Tool 5); Do you think this tool would help someone of the study skills that other students are using to succeed at their studies? (Tool 7). C. How easy did you find using the tool? D. What did you find worked best in the tool? E. What did you think did not work well in the tool?

*“It really focused the mind to what is ahead. The feedback worked well, getting personalised feedback responses at the end.”*



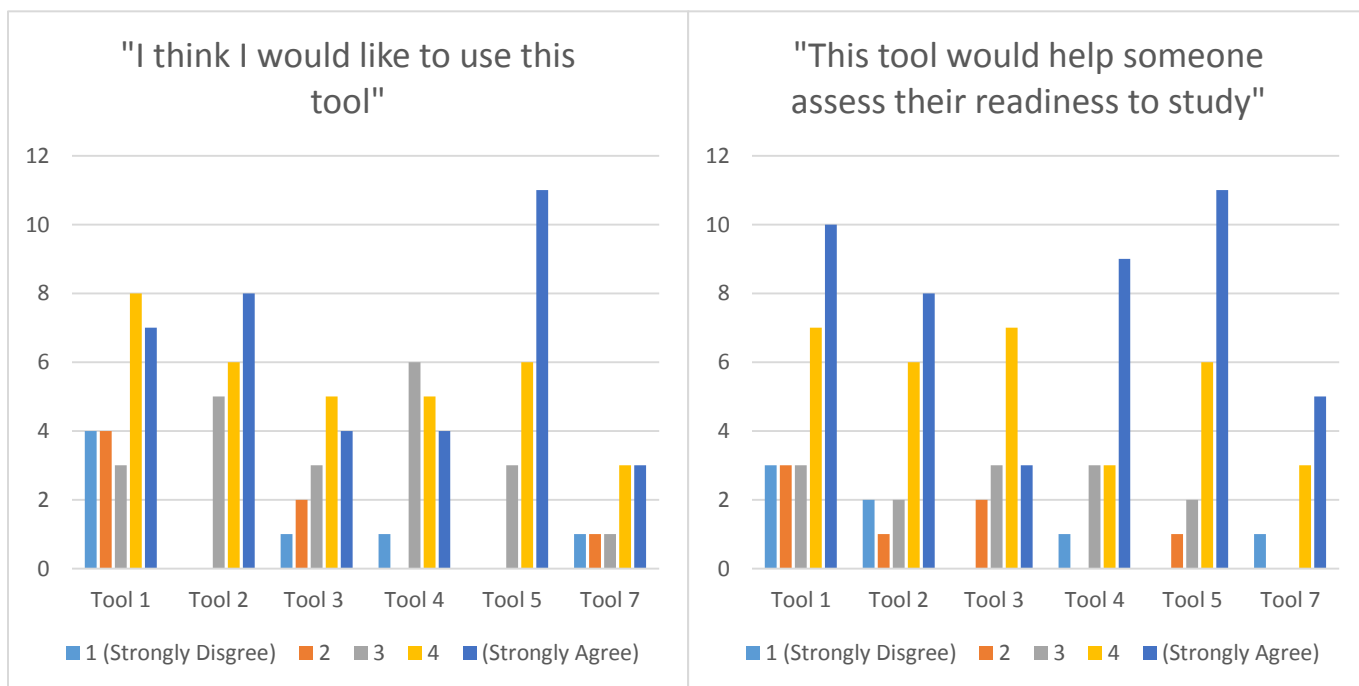
Overall, for all tools, participants tended to agree or strongly agree with the positive statements and disagree or strongly disagree with the negative statements. From the survey feedback, users found the tools easy to use and felt confident using them, and thought that most people would be able to use them quickly. Few felt that they would need help using the tools. Many of the recurring criticisms were issues that could be resolved by taking greater advantage of the customization opportunities built into the tools, such as generic feedback and student quotes, and the use of the same two photos accompanying student quotes throughout. Tools 2, 4, and 5 were the most popular tools. Each of these were regarded by several participants in focus groups as “the best,” and in surveys these had the strongest agreement to the statement “I think

I would like to use this tool” (responses to this statement were more mixed for Tools 1, 3, and 7). Overall, users said that they would recommend the tools and that they were easy for a beginner.

### Tool 1: Am I Ready for Study?

Twenty-six participants gave survey feedback for Tool 1, 17 prospective online learners and 9 part-time campus-based learners. This tool garnered mixed responses from users, in both surveys and focus groups. While several said that it made them aware of various factors in preparing for online or part-time learning, some others found the feedback too generic. (It may be worth noting that the of five survey participants who found the feedback unhelpful, three had achieved a postgraduate degree, one had achieved an undergraduate degree, and the other had achieved a 3<sup>rd</sup> level diploma; the information provided in Tool 1 may be more useful to those who have not yet embarked on higher education.) Others’ opinions were balanced between these two views (e.g., “The feedback is general but it does give some nice pointers.”) Similarly, some liked the spider graph provided on the last page of the tool, while others found it difficult to read, and would have liked an explanation of the graph. Despite the mixed commentary, survey feedback still showed an overall agreement with the positive statements and disagreement with the negative statements.

*“It opened my eyes as to the challenges you can be faced with. It’s important to see them there in front of you spelled out. I suppose the best thing about it was it opened my eyes.”*



### ***Tool 2: Do I Have Enough Time?***

Nineteen users gave survey feedback for Tool 2, all online learners except for one. In both survey and focus group feedback, users reported that this tool was very easy to use, and liked that it was on one page. Users said that it gave a good overview of the time available to them, and drew attention to areas of life that they might not otherwise have thought of and included. One user said that they used it to experiment with different scenarios, to see what schedules were possible and whether they could create time for study. Some feedback regarding ease of use was also given – one user suggested including an option to type in the number of hours for an activity, in addition to the sliders; another mentioned that a calculator to convert hours spent on something daily to total hours per week would have been useful.

*“This was the best tool I tried out.”*

### ***Tool 3: Who can I ask?***

Sixteen users gave survey feedback for Tool 3, all prospective online learners. There were some navigation issues with this tool, with several users reporting that it was easy to get lost, having so many options to click on. Users agreed that the information provided in this tool was good and useful, but some suggested that it may be better presented on one page. Others, however, commented that they found the tool “easy to complete.” One user said that they “found the tool very easy to use and it made me more aware of the people I can turn to if I need support in my studies.”

*“I found the tool very easy to use and it made me more aware of the people I can turn to if I need support in my studies.”*

### ***Tool 4: My Computer Skills: Am I Computer Ready to Learn?***

Features of this tool that users liked were the expandable sections, the Student Stories section, and the Do I Need Further Help page (especially when customized with links to University resources). Two focus group participants mentioned that it gave them confidence, and showed them that they knew more than they thought, as well as alerting them to areas that needed attention. One survey comment also noted that the tool was “informative and reassuring.” There was one presentation issue in the How Can This Tool Help Me? section, where three different example students had the same photo attached to them. Overall, this was a popular tool, with some users saying this was the most useful to them.

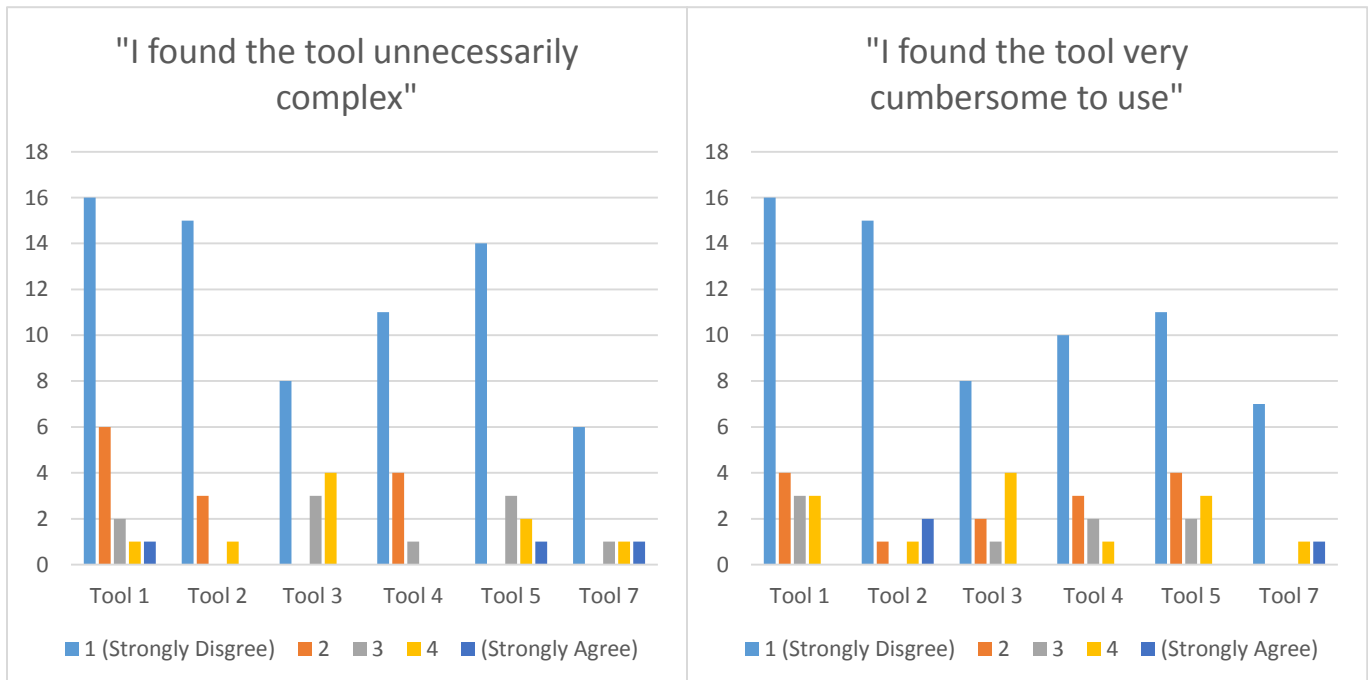
### Tool 5: My First Assignment

Twenty users gave survey feedback, only one of whom was an online learner. Users overwhelmingly agreed that this tool contained a lot of useful information and advice. One survey participant praised the tool for “using different tools to present the information, which is good for different types of learners.” There were a few technical/design issues, such as that rollover buttons were missed by some users, and some navigation links were also missed as they were part of an image, and it wasn’t obvious that they were links. One focus group participant commented that the tool would be improved with customization by the university to include links to university resources (for instance, the library and summary pages for these users contained only quotes, which users criticized). This tool was also deemed to be “the best” by some users. Focus group participants for this tool agreed that they found it useful, felt more prepared than they had before, and would follow the advice given in it.

*“I didn’t realise some of the images were clickable. It’s only a small thing, but I was using an iPad and I clicked on one of the images by accident and it opened up more information, but I didn’t realise that these were clickable tools.”*

### Tool 7: Study Tips for Me

Users agreed that this tool provided good information, though one user commented that it might



be something you would browse rather than use to find information on something specific. Another user suggested that adding categories might be helpful, and an introduction to the tool was also suggested as a potentially helpful feature, as several users found the tool initially overwhelming, with a lot of information visible on the page at once – some remarked that they

were unsure at first as to what to click on or where to go. Others, however, found it easy to use, and the overall feedback was favourable.

## Summary

The student feedback detailed above was vital in moulding the development of the Student Success Toolbox tools such that they could effectively 'speak' to flexible learners. The feedback received through the pilot evaluation informed the final development of the tools before being released as open educational resources with a CC-BY creative commons licence through the [project's website](#) and [Github](#) page.