Data-Driven Insights into LMS Template Effectiveness: A Quality Matters and D2L Study

QM Online Research Conference
February 27, 2025

Presenter:

Dr. Cristi Ford

Chief Learning Officer, D2L

Why This Research?

D2L & QM Partnership (Late 2023)

- Collaboration to explore new opportunities for quality assurance in online and blended learning

Expanding Learning Opportunities

- Identified best ways to share our work with the field
- Developed new learning experiences to support educators and institutions

Masterclass: Quality Learning by Quality Matters

- Focused on best practices for ensuring quality in online and blended education

Community Engagement & LMS Template Exploration

- Sought insights from the community on LMS template usage
- Aimed to refine and enhance quality-driven course design

D2L
D2L.co
© 2022 D2L Corporation

Past Research Shows that Templates Improve the Student (and Faculty) Experience

LMS Templates can…

affect student engagement, self-efficacy, motivation, & learning outcomes.

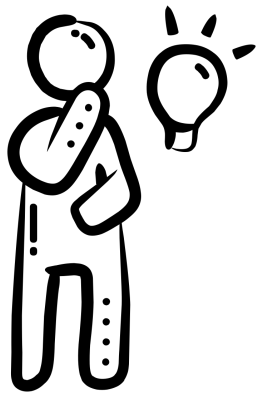
affect satisfaction in online courses by positively impacting social presence, perceived usefulness, and engagement with course content.

facilitate monitoring student participation and use of course materials – and learning analytics can enhance engagement and academic performance.

be useful for creating and managing online courses and can affect faculty satisfaction.

What is an “LMS template”?

- Provides a **skeletal organizational outline** so faculty can concentrate on their pedagogical design
- **Does not impact design** creativity or academic freedom
- Provides **good navigation plus quick links**/easy access to institutional/organization resources and tools
- Can include both course & **module-level organization**
  - Placeholder for module intro & objectives
  - Placeholder for “read, watch, do” items



Results from 2024 LMS Template Survey

306 respondents

90% Higher Ed
7% K12
3% Corporate/Non-Profit

Collected Jan - March 2024

Distributed via webinars, email, and social media

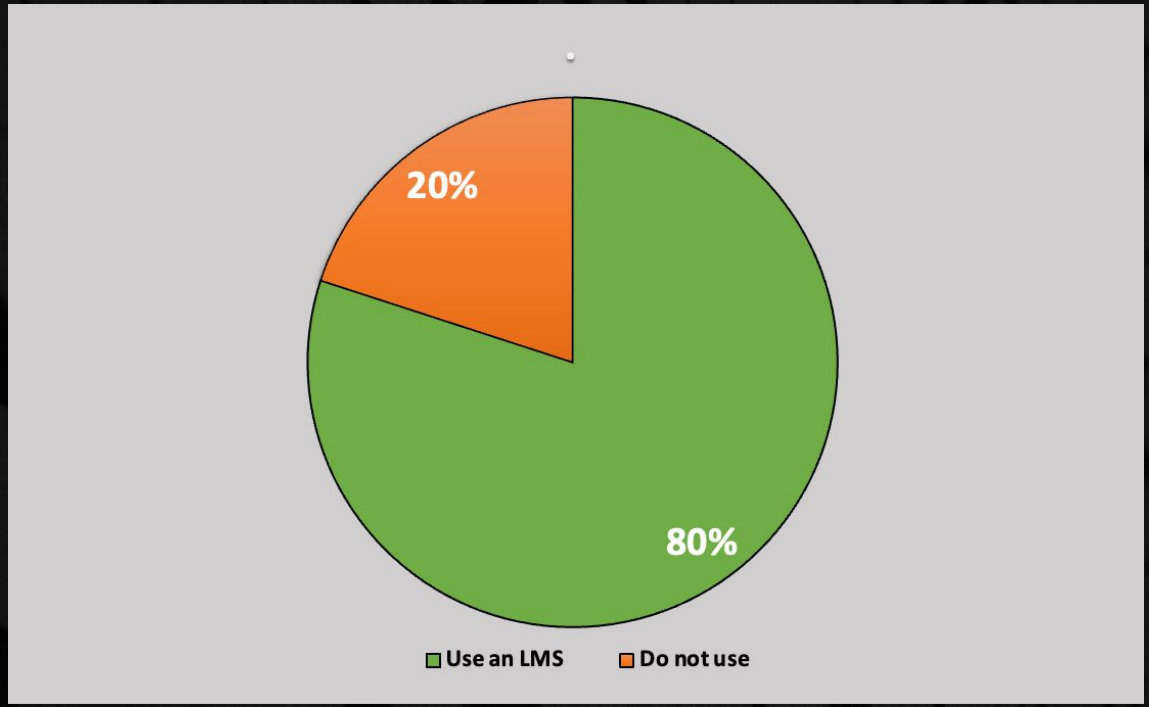
Data on use, efficacy, etc.

Total of 23 questions

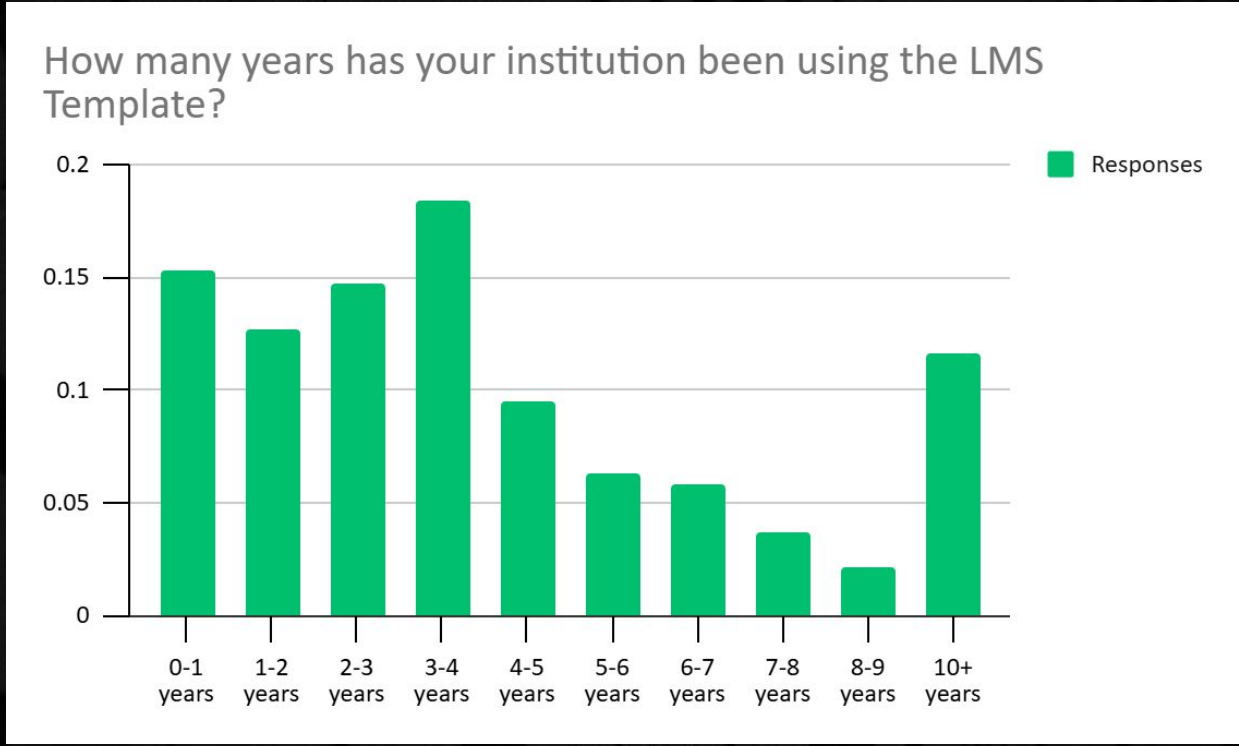
Introduced future project

Those without an LMS template who want to create one

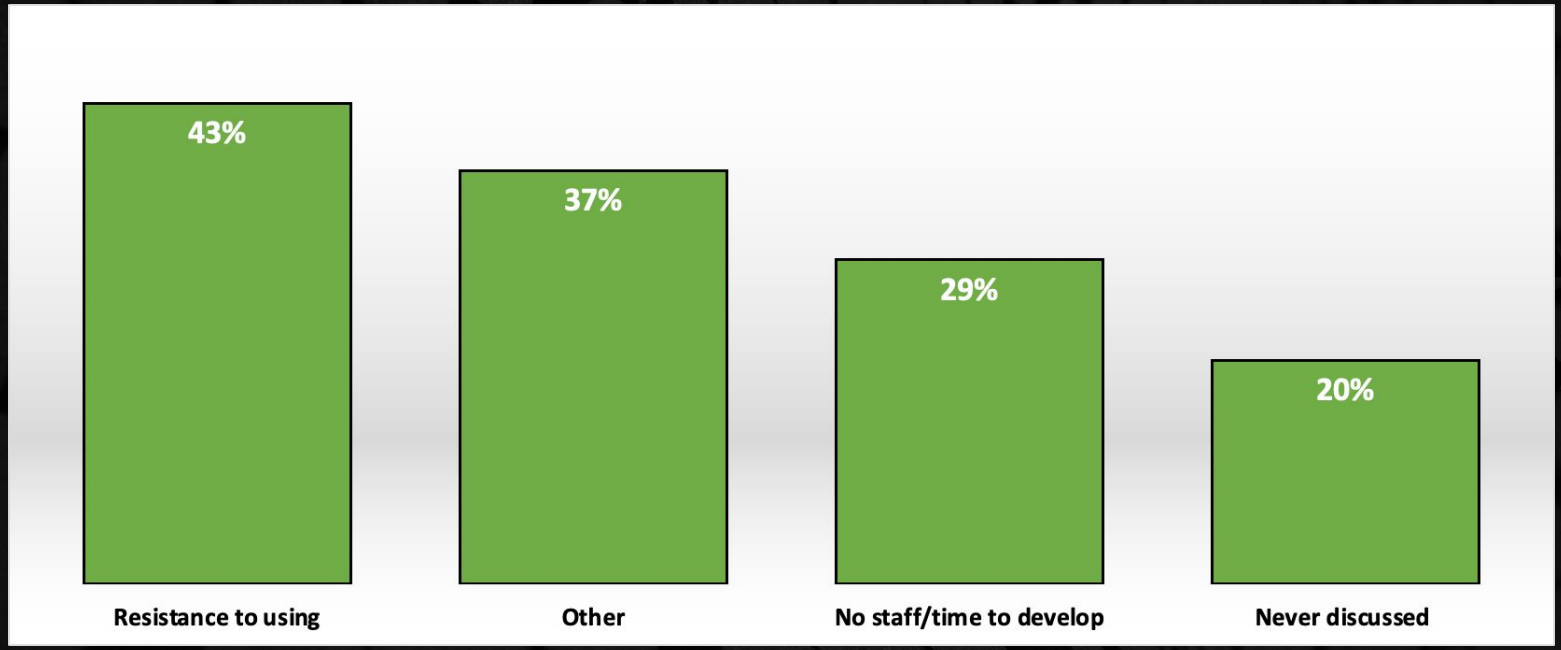
Most Institutions Use an LMS Template



D2L

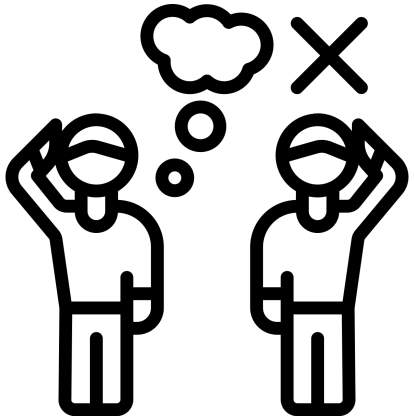

How many years has your institution been using the LMS Template?
Responses
0.2
0.15
0.1
0.05
0
0-1 years
1-2 years
2-3 years
3-4 years
4-5 years
5-6 years
6-7 years
7-8 years
8-9 years
10+ years

Why Some Institutions Don’t Use One

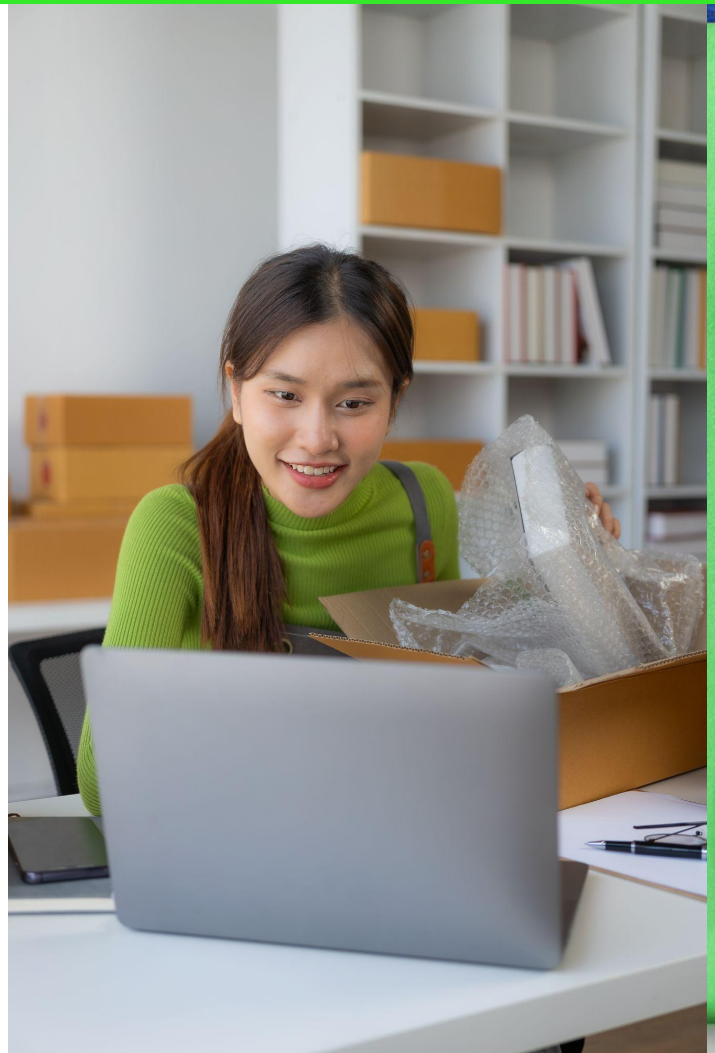


Addressing Misconceptions

- Does **not** impact design creativity or academic freedom
- Does **not** have to be administrative-led/created
- ***Can be created with flexible options:***
  - Required elements (institutional support, etc.)
  - Suggested elements
  - Examples
  - Structure



Why create an LMS template?



Research Shows that Templates Improve the Student (and Faculty) Experience

LMS Templates can…

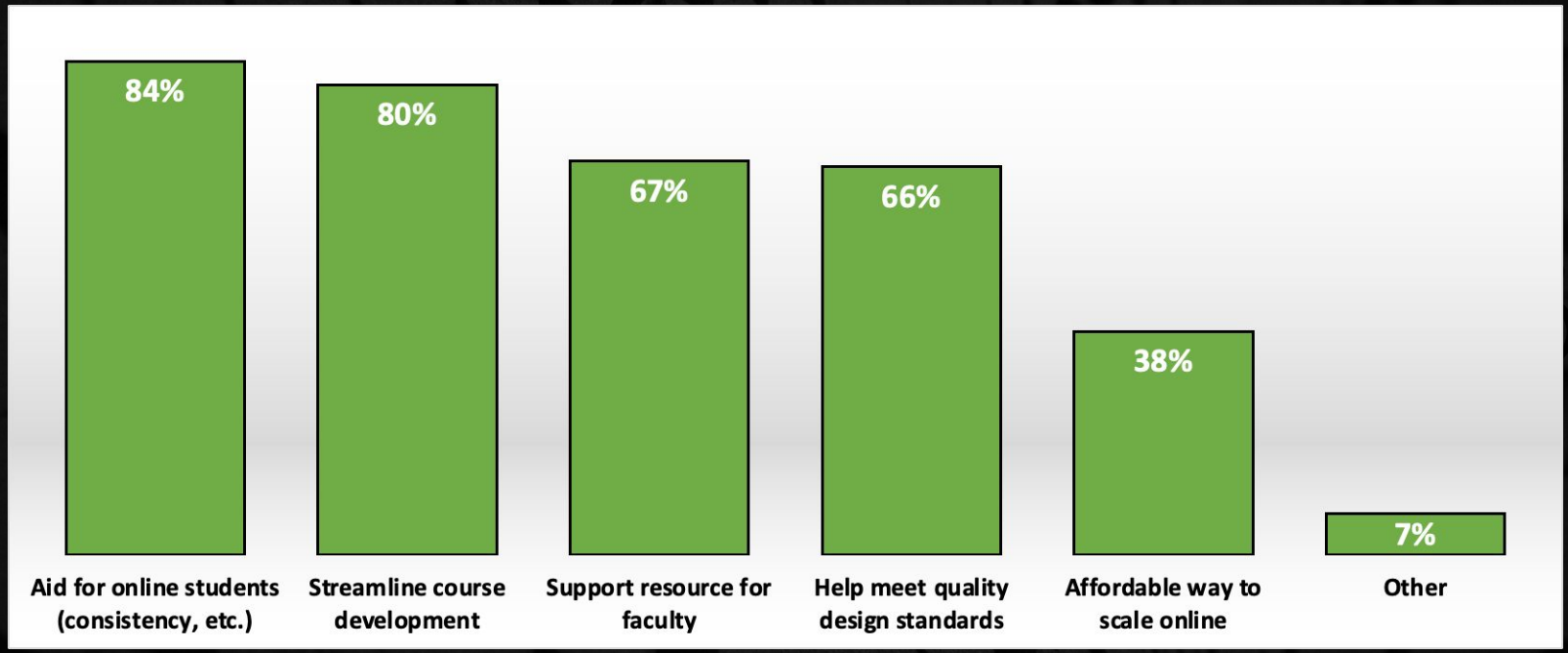
affect student engagement, self-efficacy, motivation, & learning outcomes.

affect satisfaction in online courses by positively impacting social presence, perceived usefulness, and engagement with course content.

facilitate monitoring student participation and use of course materials – and learning analytics can enhance engagement and academic performance.

be useful for creating and managing online courses and can affect faculty satisfaction.

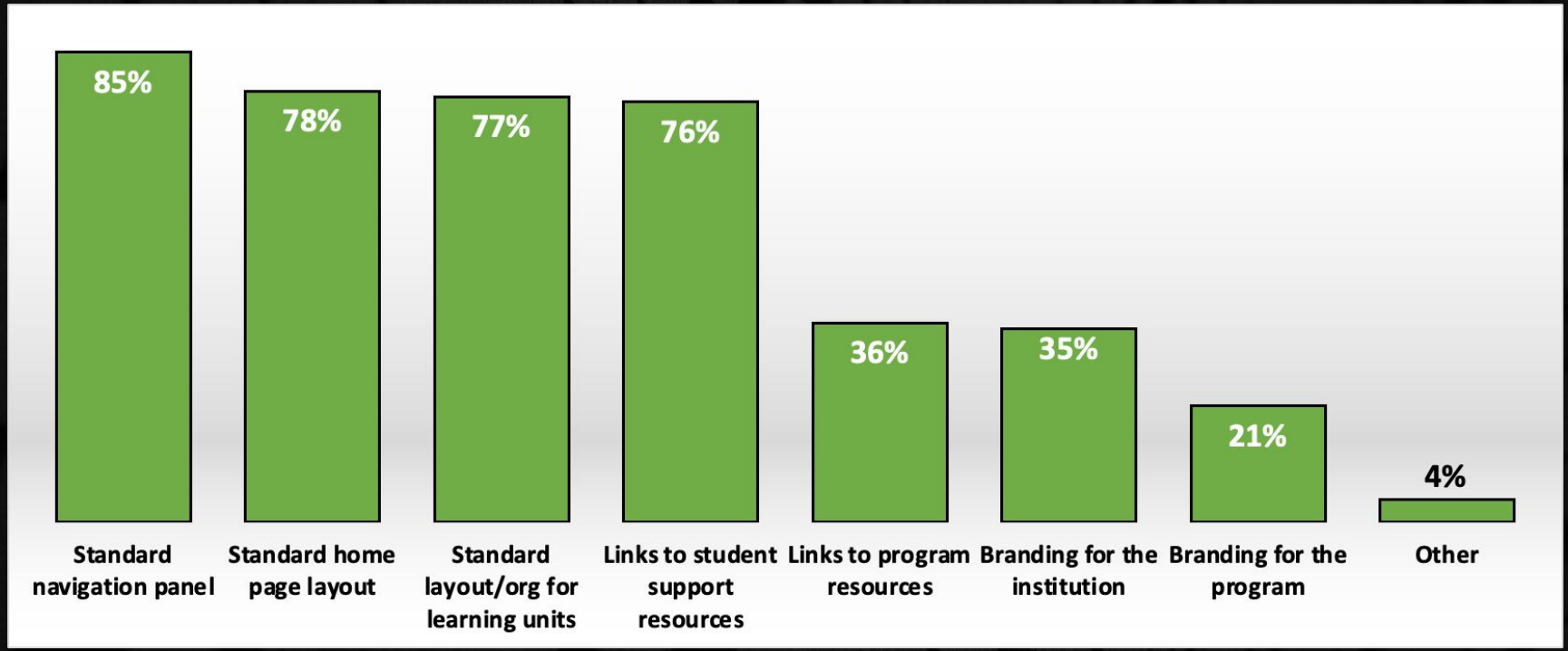
Consistency and Efficiency Top Reasons Institutions Create an LMS Template



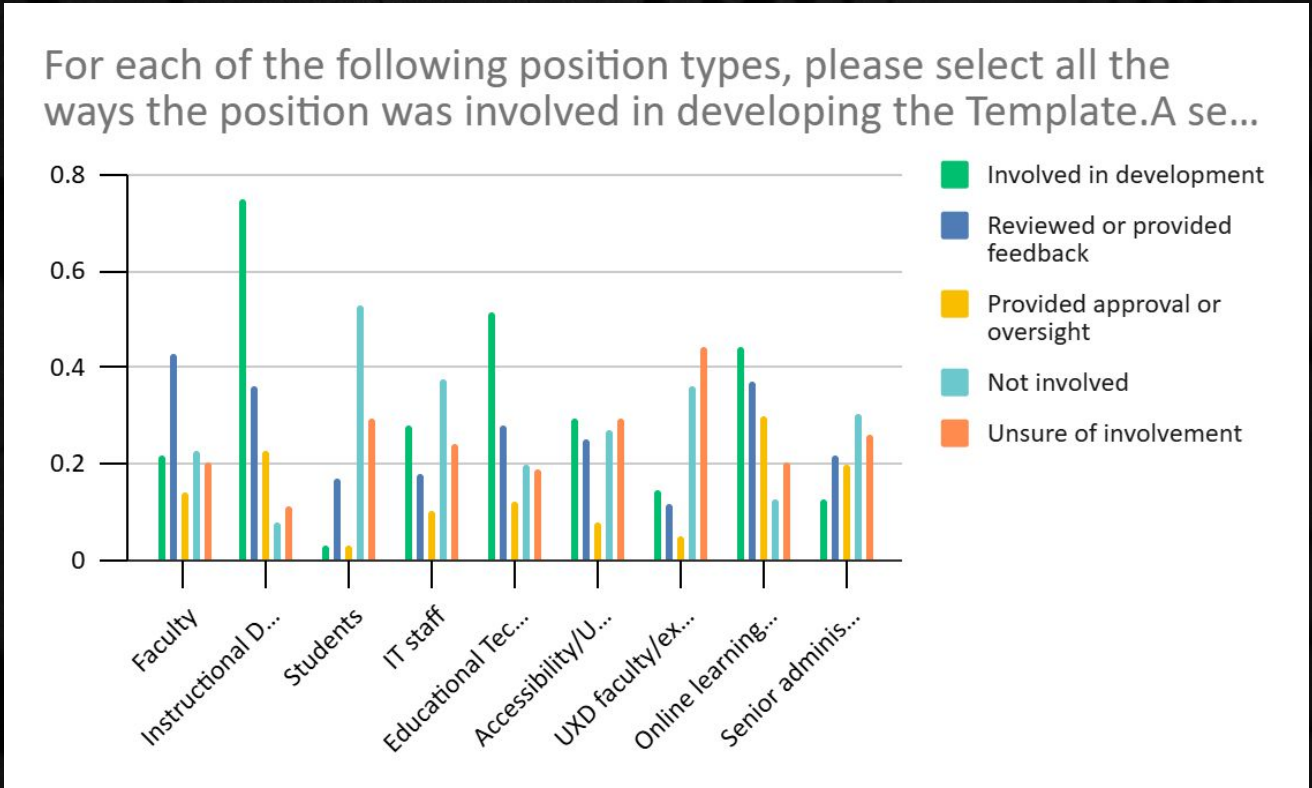
Supporting Online Learners & Instructors

- LMS templates provide a **consistent student experience** across courses or within a degree program.
- Well-designed LMS templates are **easy to use** and provide **embedded student support.**
- For students, this **reduces cognitive load**, increases support, and allows them more time to spend on course activities.
- For instructors, templates reduce student support questions, leaving **more time for engaging, guiding, and connecting** with online learners.

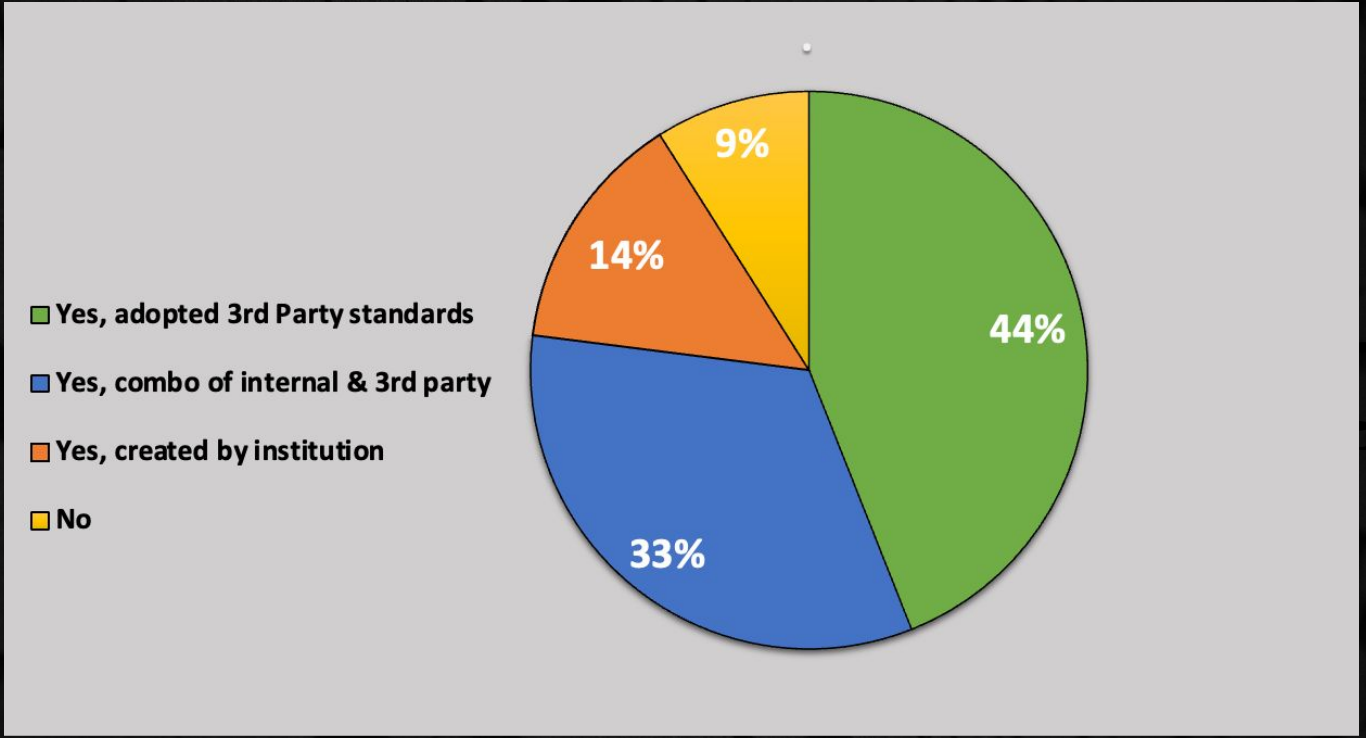
Beneficial Features of LMS Templates



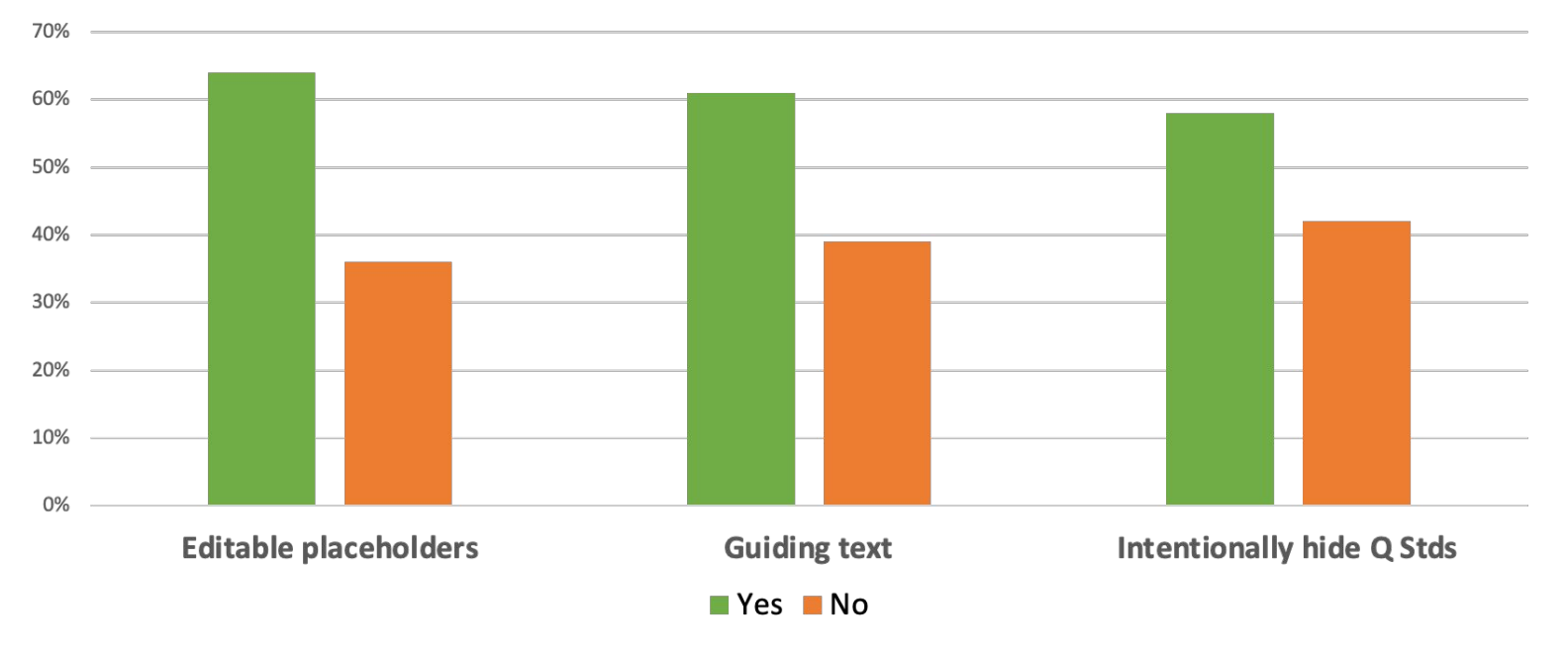
LMS Template Require Community



Most Institutions have Quality Standards

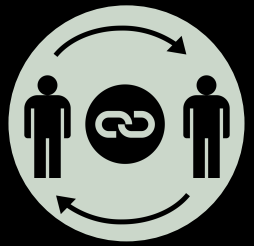


Quality is Integrated in a Variety of Ways

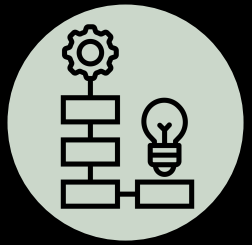


Creating Efficiencies

Templates **streamline course creation** by having a good web layout that faculty can design within.



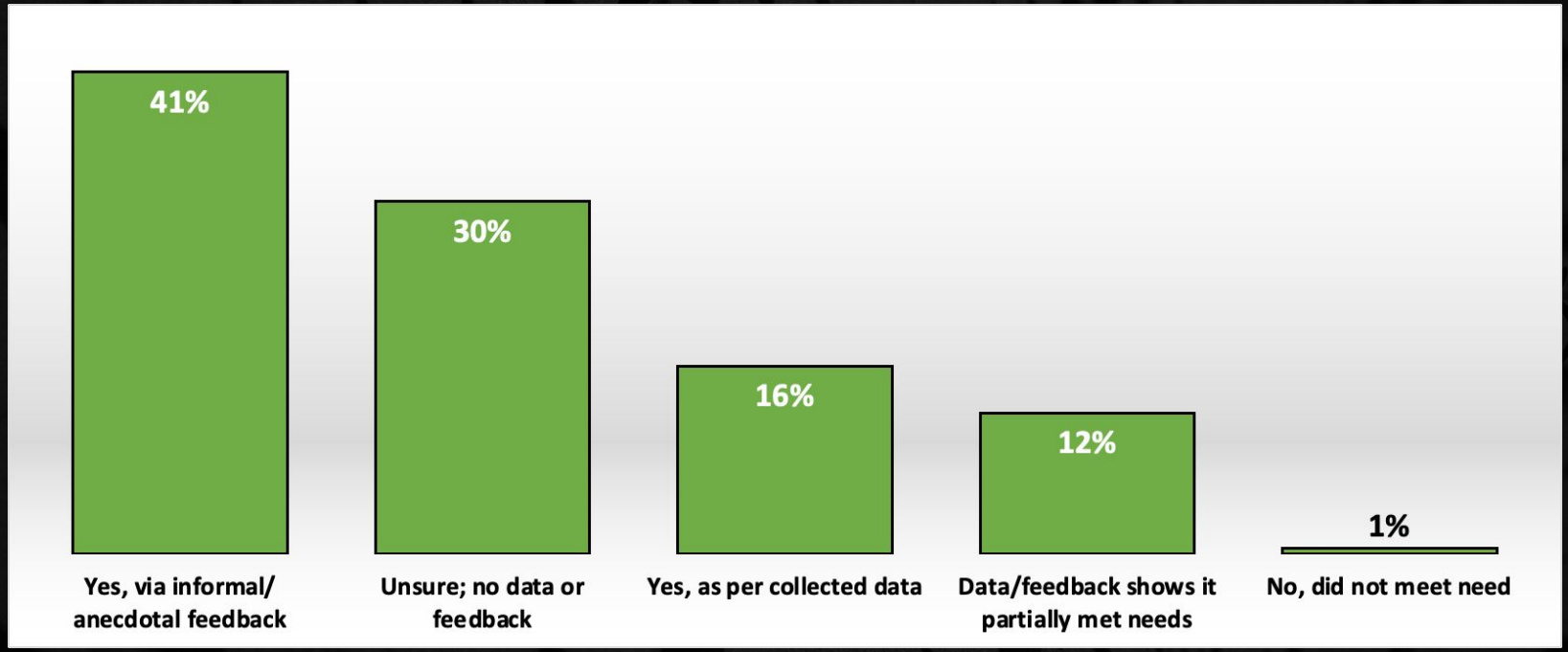
Faculty/designers can better spend their time on developing **engaging content and activities**.



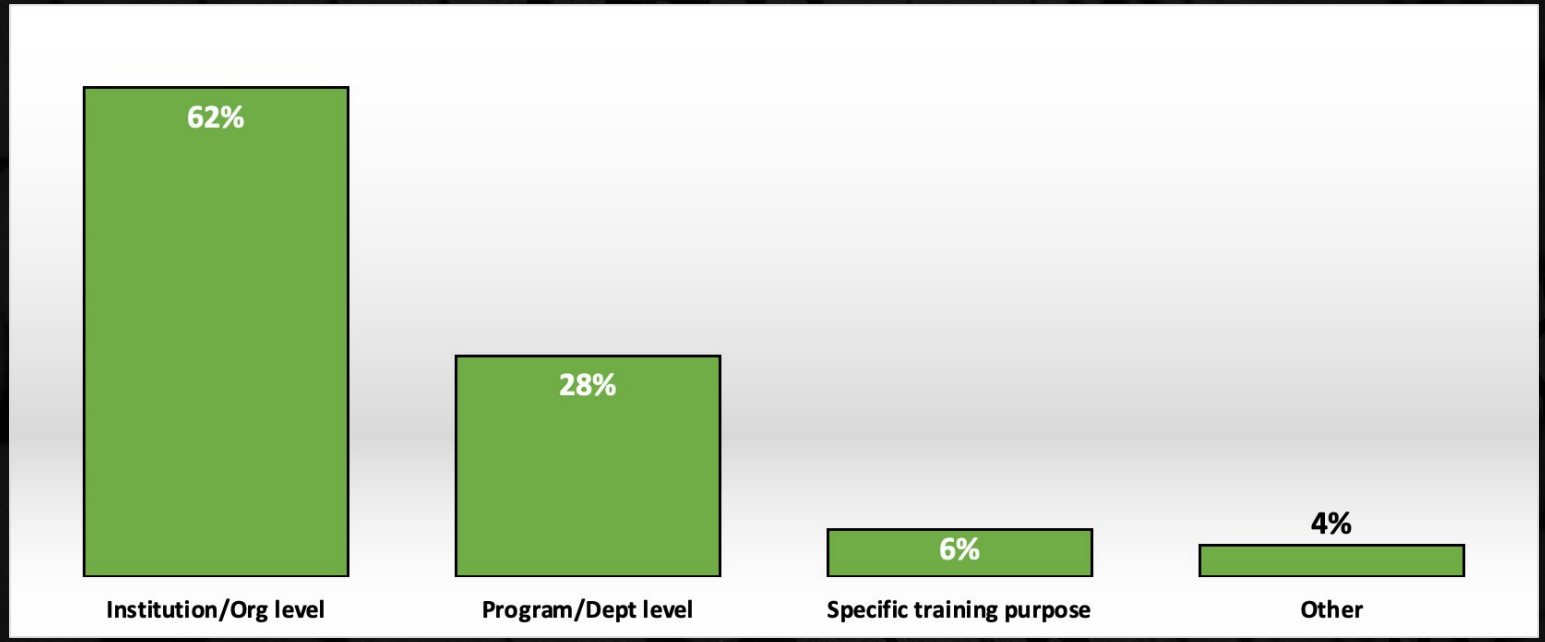
Many LMS templates come with **pre-built structures** for modules, pages, and even assignments.

These pre-designed elements **save** course developers a substantial amount of **time and effort**.

Majority Report that LMS Template Met the Intended Need



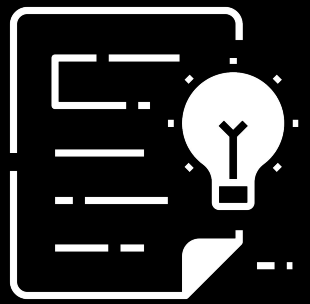
Most LMS Templates at Institutional Level



LMS templates as a Program Resource

Imagine you are creating a new, fully-online program at your institution…

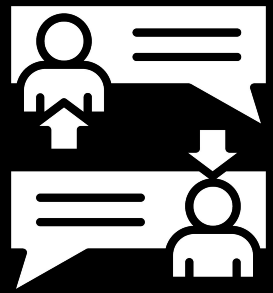
- Creating an LMS template for the program allows you to customize and brand something specific to the students who will enroll.
  - You can create a custom Banner or graphic for the template, and include a common navigational structure and layout.
  - You might also include relevant professional resources as part of the left-hand navigation, along with institutional support resources.



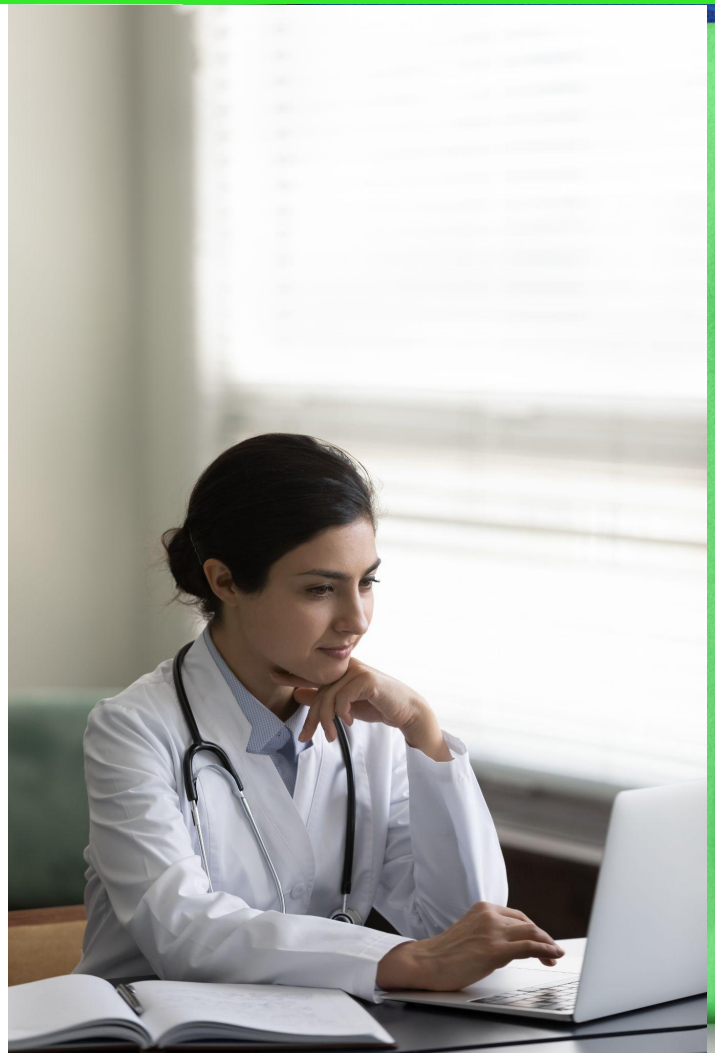
LMS Templates Within a Program

Creating an LMS template for an online program can also enable:

- Students to feel a greater sense of belonging (“cohort feel”) & to quickly learn how to navigate all courses in the program.
- Good departmental conversations around program competencies and curriculum mapping.



How do you develop an LMS template?



Begin with Collaboration and Needs

- Consider a committee of stakeholders, including faculty and students
- Determine what needs you want the LMS to meet; collect baseline data
- Discuss structure and functionality
- Provide flexible ways to use and integrate; provide training and resources
- Collect evidence for efficacy and improvement; Communicate ROI

Global Items for Every Course

QUICKLINKS to SUPPORT RESOURCES
(Tech help, Acad. support, etc.)

GS 7: Learner Support

LINKS to IMPORTANT &/or FREQUENTLY USED ITEMS
(Syllabus, Tools, Modules, etc.)

Standard 1.1 and 8.1

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES & GUIDELINES
(Req'd tech, comm. policies, etc.)

Standards 1.4, 1.5, 1.6

Placeholders to Help Learners Get Started

QUALITY MATTERS QM

GS 1: Course Overview & Introduction

A **"Start Here" Folder** to organize (usually sequenced) items for learners to review on day one.

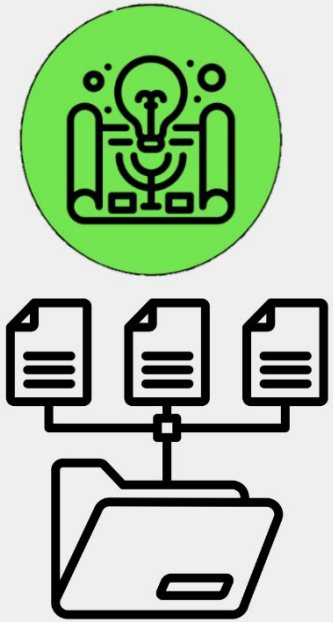
A **Course Overview** that explains the purpose of the course and how its structured.

Vital course items, such as the **syllabus**, **schedule, learning objectives** & relevant **course policies**.

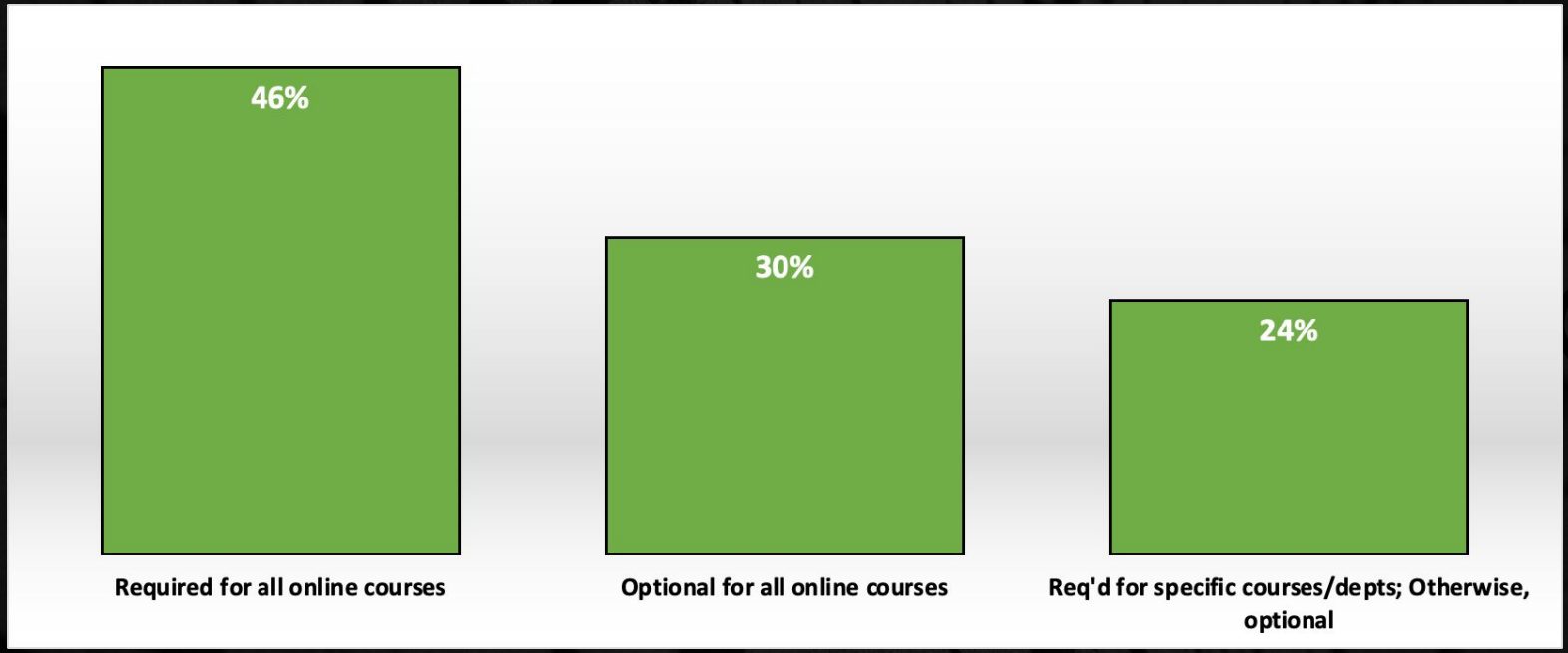
Placeholders for building community: **instructor & learner introductions** to create a welcoming environment.

Examples of Pre-Built Organizational Structures

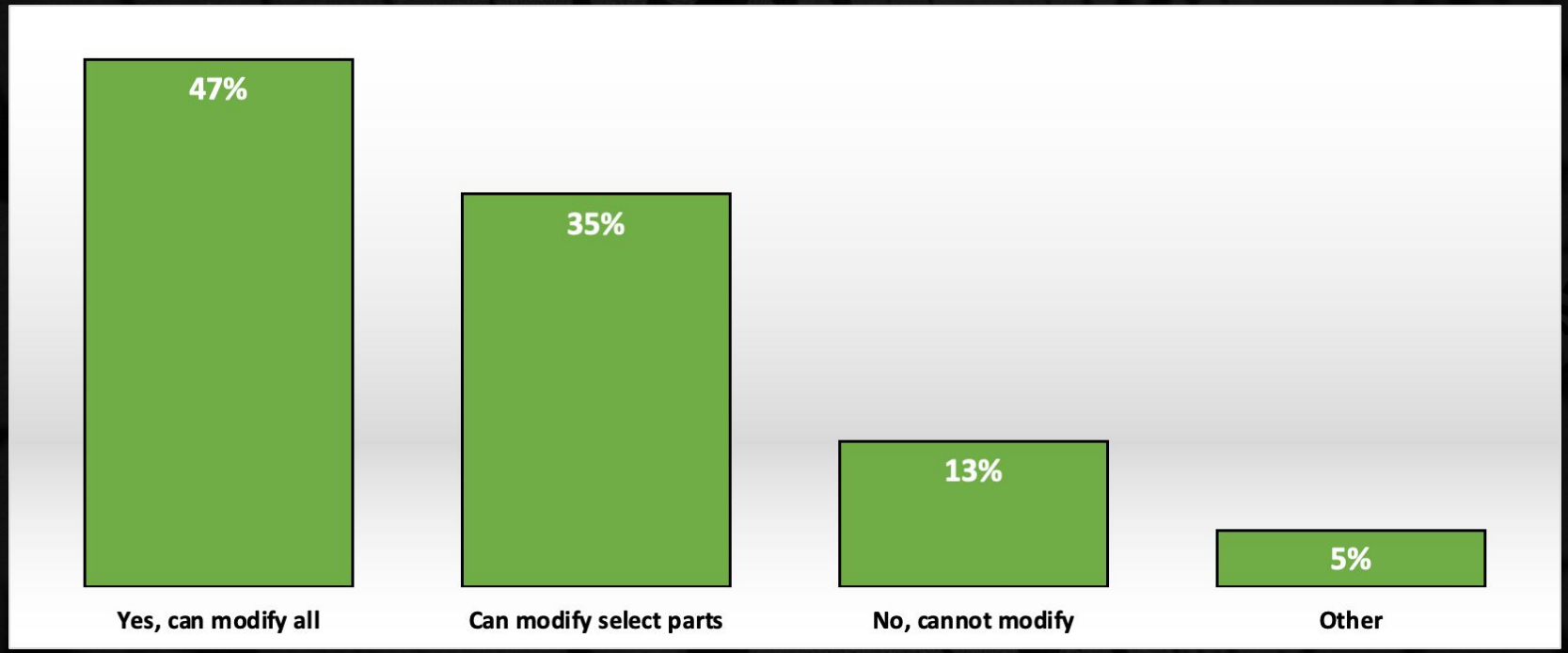
- **The “Start Here” Folder**: welcome, orient, ⇧ presence
- **The Home Page**: Announcements, Calendar, etc.
- **Module Layout, with aligned placeholder items**
  - Module introduction/overview
  - Module objectives & relevant Course Objectives
  - “Read/Watch/Do”: content, activities, & assessments
  - Module summary and next steps



Should It Be Required?



Most Institutions Allow Modification



Action Steps & Discussion

Collect Data

Half of responding institutions did not collect data on the Template and its use.

- **Do you currently collect data on LMS usage?**
- **Do you plan to?**

- **Some ideas:** faculty satisfaction, reduced number of help tickets, student satisfaction, student learning

Providing support

Most institutions provide training, resources, or other types of support.

- **If you have an LMS template, what types of support do you provide? Which are most helpful?**
- **If you currently don’t have resources, do you plan to create some?**

Learn more:

QM/D2L MasterClass

- D2L launched a MasterClass on elevating quality with LMS templates:
  Quality Learning With Quality Matters
- FREE and publicly-available
- 3 short modules + example Templates
- Can use templates as model

bitly

D2L
MASTER CLASS

D2L.co
© 2022 D2L Corporation

Learn more:

D2L/QM LMS Template for Quality Design

- Contact your account manager for more information
- Available for purchase by any D2L client
- Customizable with institutional/program banner and more
- Faculty have full freedom to edit; any required components are an institutional decision

D2L MASTER CLASS

© 2022 D2L Corporation

Thank You!

Questions?
Comments?