Methodology for demonstrating the impact of a university-wide language development program:
The Academic Language Development framework at UTS

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What is the Academic Language Development (ALD) framework at UTS?

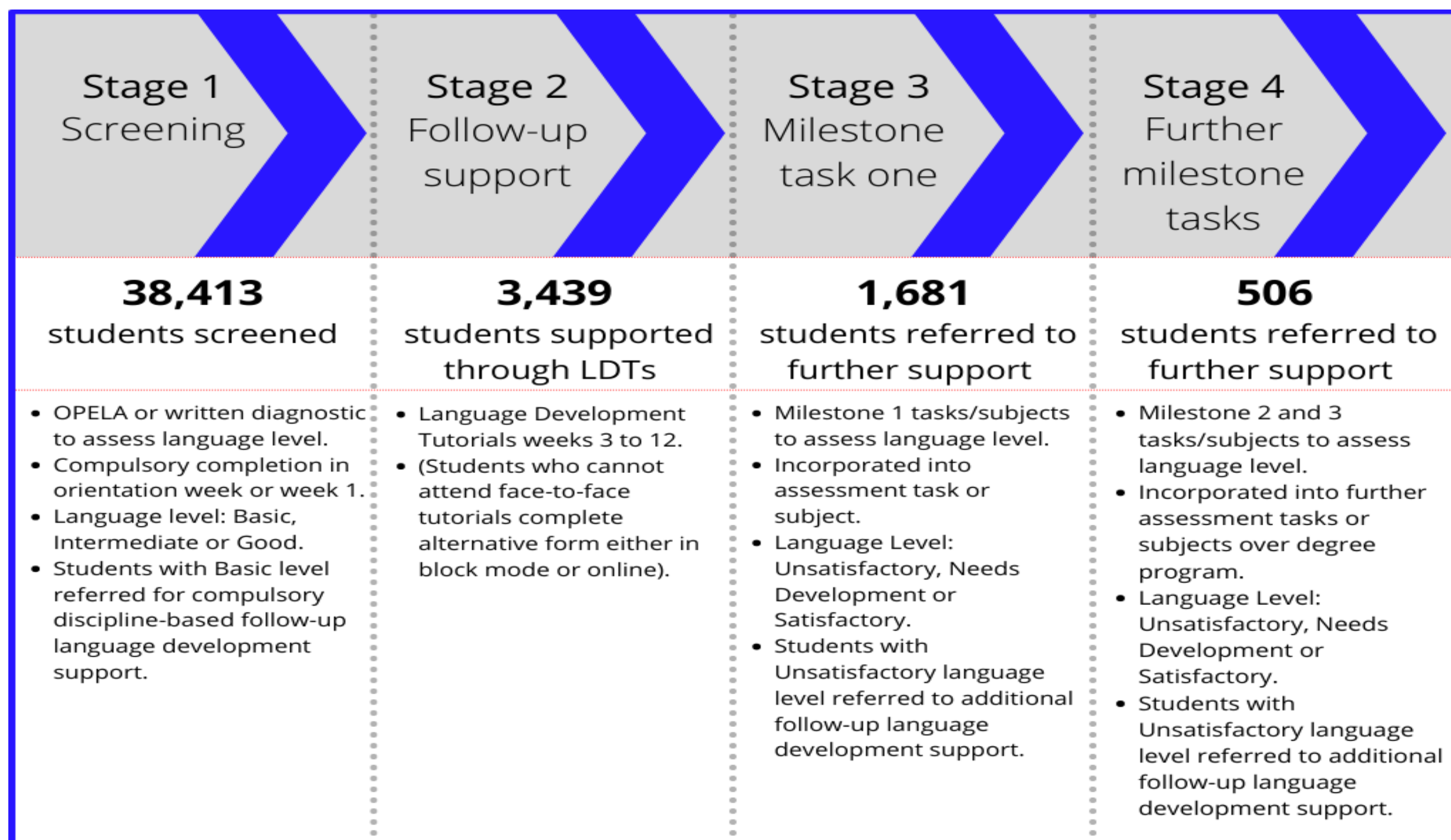A response to internal & external drivers (staff concerns, TEQSA)

A university-wide language development program which screens and supports all commencing coursework students

❑ In operation since 2018 and is also known as the Embedding English Language (EEL) Program

❑ Implemented and managed by the Academic Language and Learning (ALL) team at UTS

❑ Intended to provide support and follow up for students whose language needs are identified as being inadequate for their success at university

For more details on ALD, see:

Edwards, E., Goldsmith, R., Havery (formerly San Miguel), C., & James, N. (2021). An institution-wide strategy for ongoing, embedded academic language development: Design, implementation and analysis. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning, 15*(1), 53-71. **https://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/745**

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ALD framework: 4 stages

Stage 1 Screening	Stage 2 Follow-up support	Stage 3 Milestone task one	Stage 4 Further milestone tasks
38,413 students screened	**3,439** students supported through LDTs	**1,681** students referred to further support	**506** students referred to further support
• OPELA or written diagnostic to assess language level. • Compulsory completion in orientation week or week 1. • Language level: Basic, Intermediate or Good. • Students with Basic level referred for compulsory discipline-based follow-up language development support.	• Language Development Tutorials weeks 3 to 12. • (Students who cannot attend face-to-face tutorials complete alternative form either in block mode or online).	• Milestone 1 tasks/subjects to assess language level. • Incorporated into assessment task or subject. • Language Level: Unsatisfactory, Needs Development or Satisfactory. • Students with Unsatisfactory language level referred to additional follow-up language development support.	• Milestone 2 and 3 tasks/subjects to assess language level. • Incorporated into further assessment tasks or subjects over degree program. • Language Level: Unsatisfactory, Needs Development or Satisfactory. • Students with Unsatisfactory language level referred to additional follow-up language development support.

numbers of students for each stage are from Autumn 2019-Autumn 2021

ALD Framework evaluation: Research design

Why evaluate?

- to satisfy all stakeholders at UTS including students
- to demonstrate that the project is evidence-based and research-producing (Fenton-Smith et al., 2017)

Purpose: to measure outcomes from the participants in the framework: students, faculty staff, language development tutors and the ALL staff

How to design?

Pragmatist research methodology combining qualitative and quantitative data (Feilzer, 2010)

To include the (often neglected) **affective domain** of students' language development (Bond, 2019; Choi, 2019)

Resources we used:

- publications from Fenton-Smith & colleagues
- the graduate skills model from Arkoudis & colleagues
- the IMPEL (Impact Management Planning & Evaluation Ladder) model (Hinton, 2014)

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Necessary ingredients for evaluating this program

- ✓ Budget

- ✓ A (fabulous) project manager
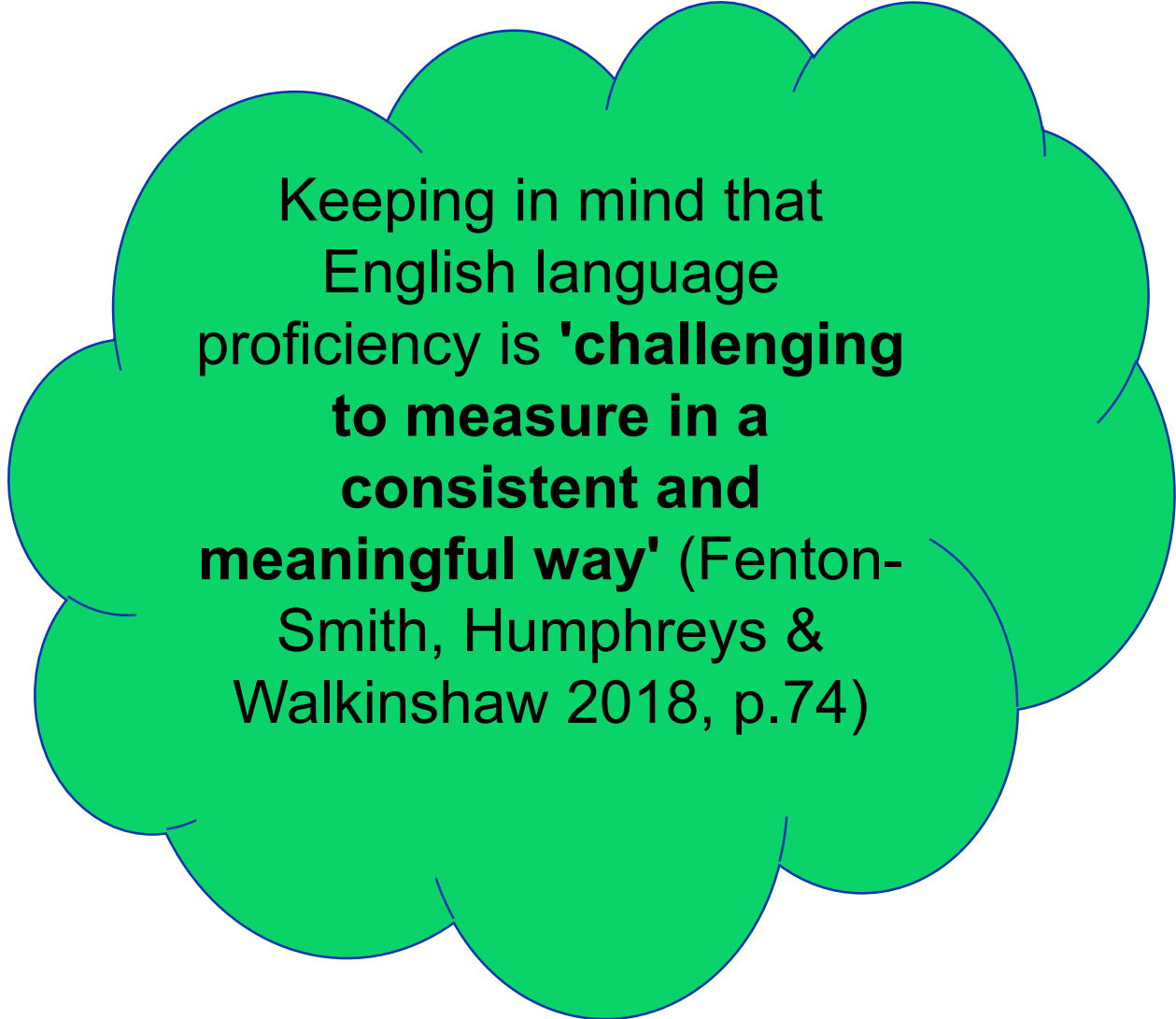
- ✓ Ethics approval (very important for data collection & for disseminating evaluation findings)

- ✓ A cohesive and hard-working ALL team

Image Source: Canva.com

ALD Framework: What data are we collecting?

- ✓ **Academic outcomes** (WAM, GPA, retention, progression)

- ✓ **Attendance** (of identified students) at language development tutorials

- ✓ **English language proficiency** and **academic literacy development** through the initial language screening and then milestone tasks

Keeping in mind that English language proficiency is **'challenging to measure in a consistent and meaningful way'** (Fenton-Smith, Humphreys & Walkinshaw 2018, p.74)

ALD Framework: What data are we collecting?

✓ **Student perceptions** of the language development tutorials (LDTs) and of themselves as proficient communicators (including confidence and identities)

✓ **Student perceptions** of their self-directed learning & their level of access of English language resources to support self-directed learning

✓ **LDT tutor perceptions** of the effectiveness of the tutorials

✓ **ALL staff perceptions** of the ALD framework

✓ **Faculty staff perceptions** of LDTs, the milestone tasks, & their support of students' disciplinary literacies

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How we collect the data for evaluation

Qualitative data:	Quantitative data:
• student pre and post online **surveys** about attending language development tutorials	• **student performance** in language screening tasks such as OPELA
• **focus groups** with students who have attended language development tutorials	• student pre and post online **surveys** about attending language development tutorials
• **focus groups** with tutors who are teaching the language development tutorials	• **student performance** in ALD-targeted subjects and in milestone tasks throughout their degree programs
• individual semi-structured **interviews** with subject coordinators whose subjects are part of the ALD program (either as a stage 1 screening/language development tutorial/milestone task or as a stage 2 milestone task)	• statistics on **students accessing UTS language support services** such as workshops and consultations, and on **incidences of academic misconduct** (plagiarism and cheating)
• individual semi-structured **interviews** with ALL team members	• **student progression and retention**

Evaluation results 2019-2021

> I've got two [goals], basically to improve my writing skills and reading skills … I read a lot of articles during this semester so I think this subject really helped me to improve many things in my [life].
>
> Undergraduate Business student, 2020

(see following slides for graphs)

➢ Students increased their **agency** in the LDTs by setting learning goals to focus on aspects of academic language they needed to develop

➢ Students report increased **language confidence**

> This is my second semester, and at the start of it, I was afraid of the assessments on my course, and speak to others. Now I'm - I feel free to speak out. Yes, because as a foreign student, it's not easy to use the second language to communicate with others, yes.
>
> Engineering student focus group interview, Autumn 2020

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Figure showing students' self-reported ability to set language goals by the end of the LDTs, 2019-2021 (n=1697)

Ability to set language goals

14%   57%   27%

Stongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

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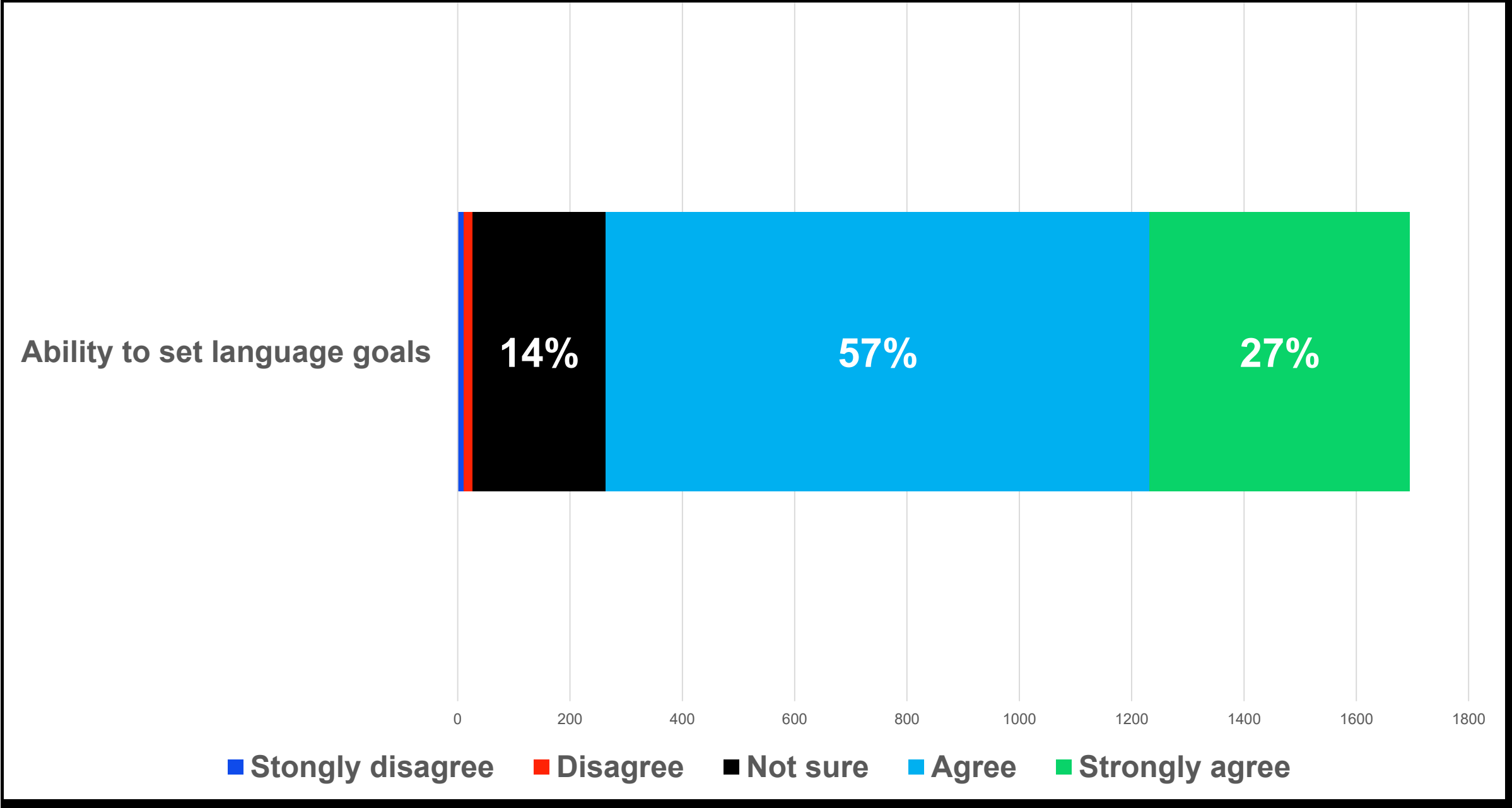
Figure showing changes in students' overall academic language confidence between start- and end-of-session LDT surveys, from Autumn 2019 to Autumn 2021 (n=829)

End of Session	9.7% — 41.5% — 36.1% — 11.9%	
Start of Session	22.2% — 46.5% — 22.6% — 5.9%	

Legend: ■ Not at all confident ■ Not very confident ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat confident ■ Very confident
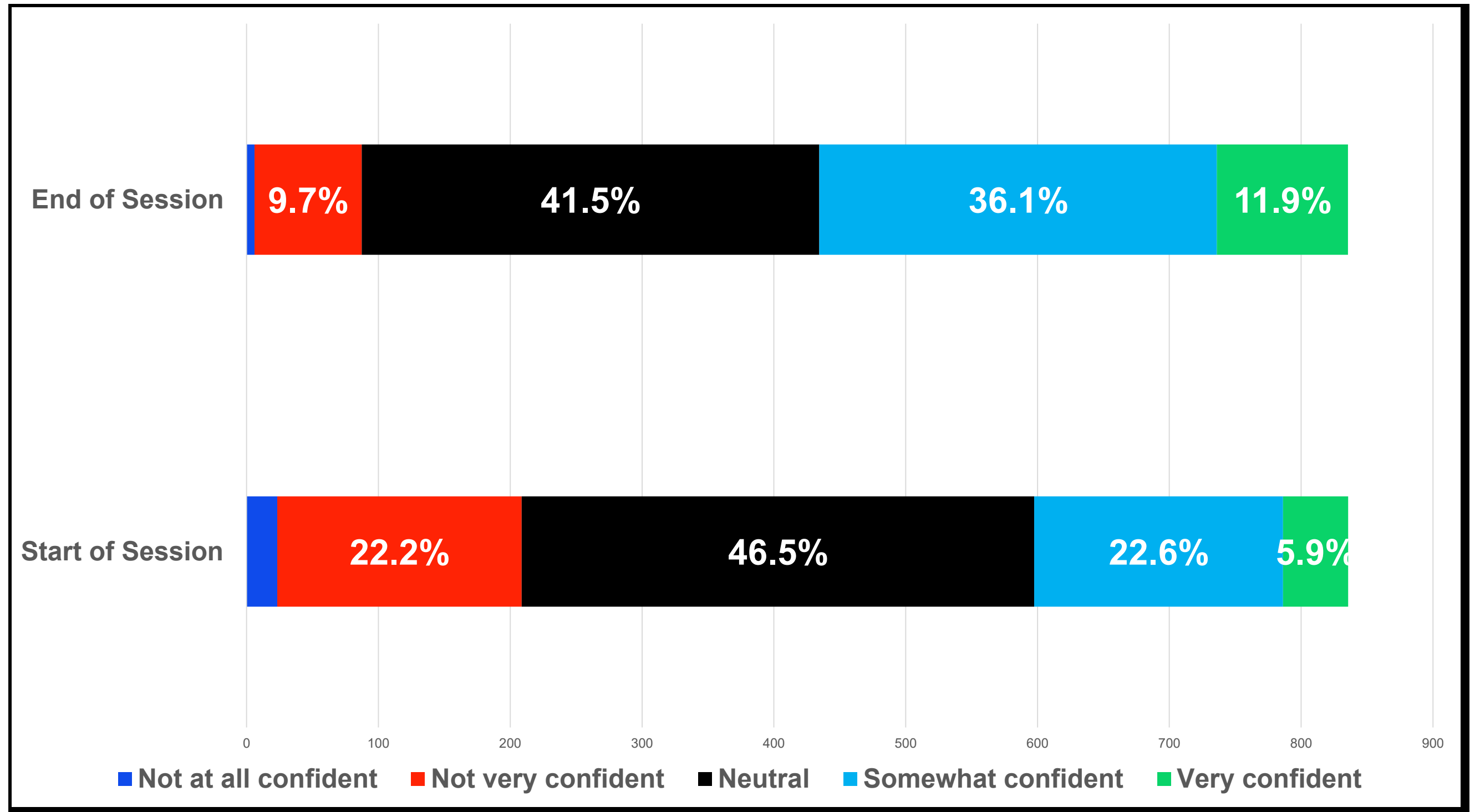
Figure showing the retention rate of students who attended the required number of LDTs and those who did not attend the required number of LDTs
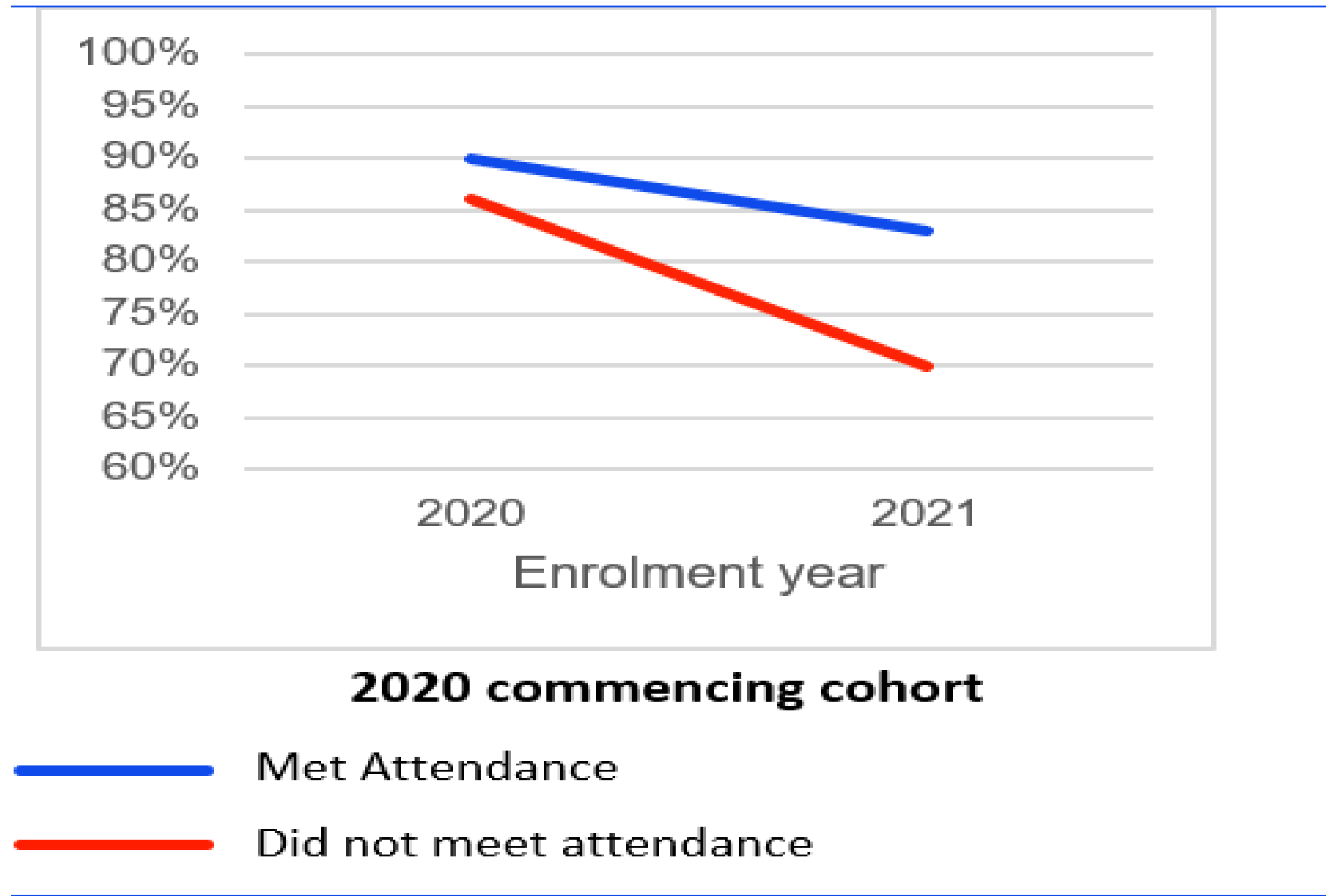
Faculty staff comments on the ALD framework

All of the students who reliably attended the LDTs and who submitted all their work have passed the subject … I think it's positive news overall that students engaged with the LDTs have been passing all the assessments they have submitted.

Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences subject coordinator

…has had a positive impact on both students and staff … increased student confidence and competence … and greatly enhanced their opportunities for success. Staff learned to re-imagine assessment tasks and rubrics and to develop more inclusive curricula.

ADTL, Faculty of Health

ALD framework impact mapped to the IMPEL ladder

Team members	• Recognition of project participants' contributions to learning and teaching through university networks
Immediate students	• Students report benefits of being more supported and more confident in their studies through participating in language development activities • Changes to curriculum by project team members equip students to feel they are better communicators
Spreading the word	• Invited to contribute to Special issue of EJALTEFL that further explore themes of the project • Materials used to promote language development for international prospective students and partner universities • Cascading influence through engagement with the academic language & learning community and with the student transition, achievement, retention and success community • sustained high rates of downloads, views and linking to project resources
Narrow opportunistic adoption	• All university students supported to develop academic and professional communication practices
Narrow systemic adoption	• University-wide embedding English Language program with ongoing funded based on the success of the grant project
Broad opportunistic adoption	• An estimated 5,626 students benefited from language development activities across the whole university
Broad systemic adoption	• ALD program recognised by national leaders in academic language and learning as national best practice

In conclusion:

It's vital to evaluate AND to report on our work

- There are many models of evaluation to use, but one is purpose-built for ALL work: **Evaluation of Academic Language and Learning Development Provision** (Hamilton, Gao, Lynch & Briggs, 2019)

 https://atlaanz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ICALLD_Evaluation_Report__final_.pdf

(It wasn't published when we developed our methodology for evaluation!)

Academic Language Development framework: Feedback survey

Thank you for attending our conference presentation. We are really interested in your feedback and would appreciate you answering these anonymous questions. Your responses will be used to provide feedback on our framework and will not be used for publication purposes. Thanks in advance.

https://utsau.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3RfBaDP8UKiY1v0

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