




THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Dialogue as Pedagogy: *Designing Conversation-Based Assessment for Interdisciplinary Learning*

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In 15 minutes...

- The **LSE100** model
 - Dialogue and interdisciplinary learning
 - Designing conversation-based assessment
 - Insights from the data
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London School of Economics: institutional context



100

- Research intensive single-faculty institution specialising in the **social sciences** (~12,000 students)
- Majority postgraduate population – about 40% undergraduates
- Large international cohort – 55% UK, 45% overseas (UG)
- Almost 50% of undergraduates are on a dual/joint degree programme (e.g., *IR and History; Environmental Policy with Economics*)
- In general, highly prescribed UG programmes – limited selection of **electives/outside options**

Embedding interdisciplinarity

- **LSE100**: Flagship interdisciplinary course, **taken by all first-year undergraduates** as part of degree programme
- Established in **2010** to bring students into the LSE tradition of *'thinking like a social scientist'*
- Framed around **complex global challenges** which require an interdisciplinary approach
- Over **25,000** students have successfully completed LSE100 since its creation – average cohort size is **2000 students** each academic year



Embedding interdisciplinarity

- Teaching team of **twelve** full-time academics based in LSE100 – 2 permanent staff, 10 postdocs (3 years)
- Flipped classroom model – asynchronous preparation via bespoke videos and readings, **fortnightly seminars** with mixed groups
- Theme choice – students choose **one of three questions** as their starting point for the course



LSE 100

Guide for first-year
undergraduate students
in 2026/27

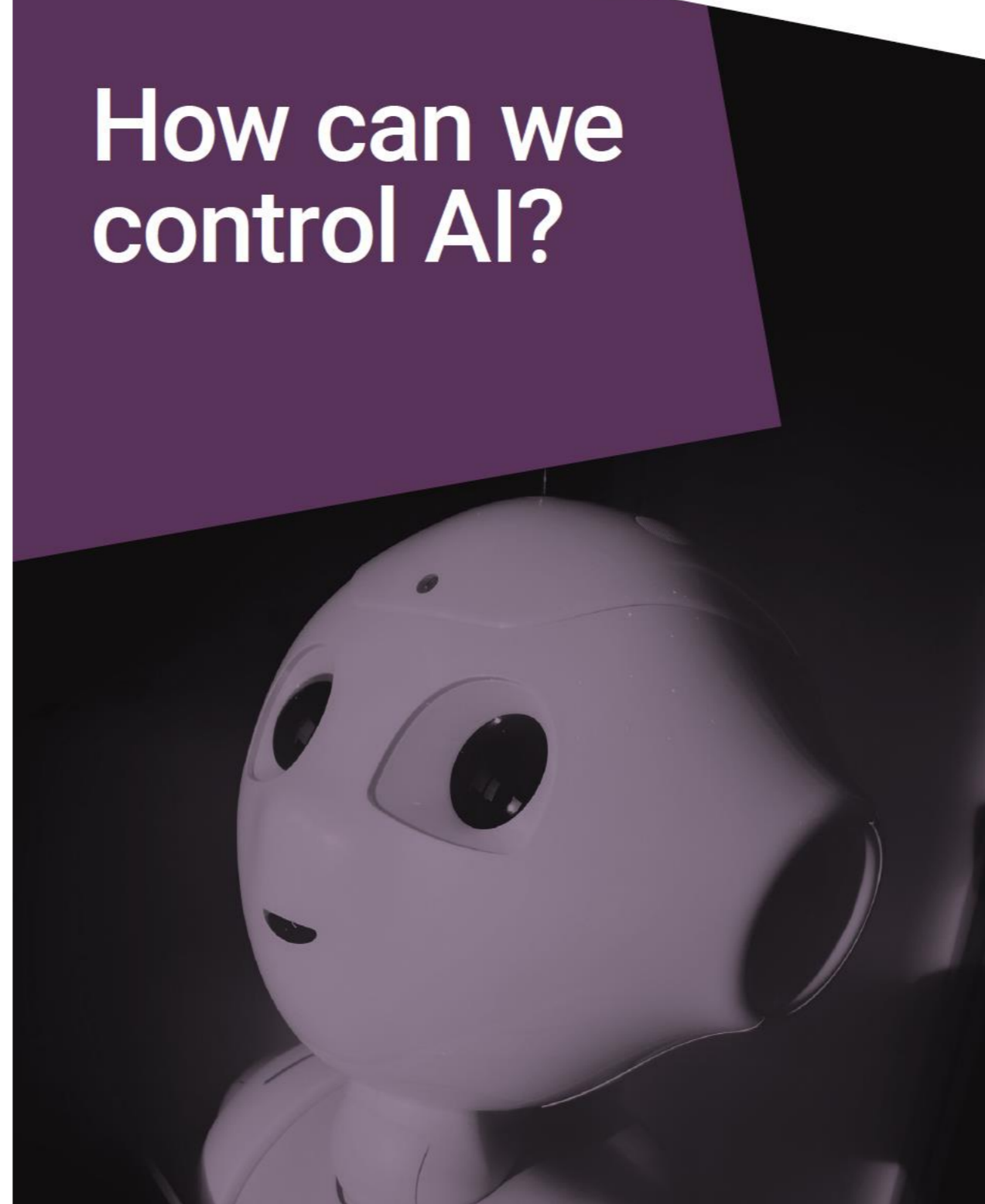
How can we transform our climate futures?



LSE 100

Guide for first-year
undergraduate students
in 2026/27

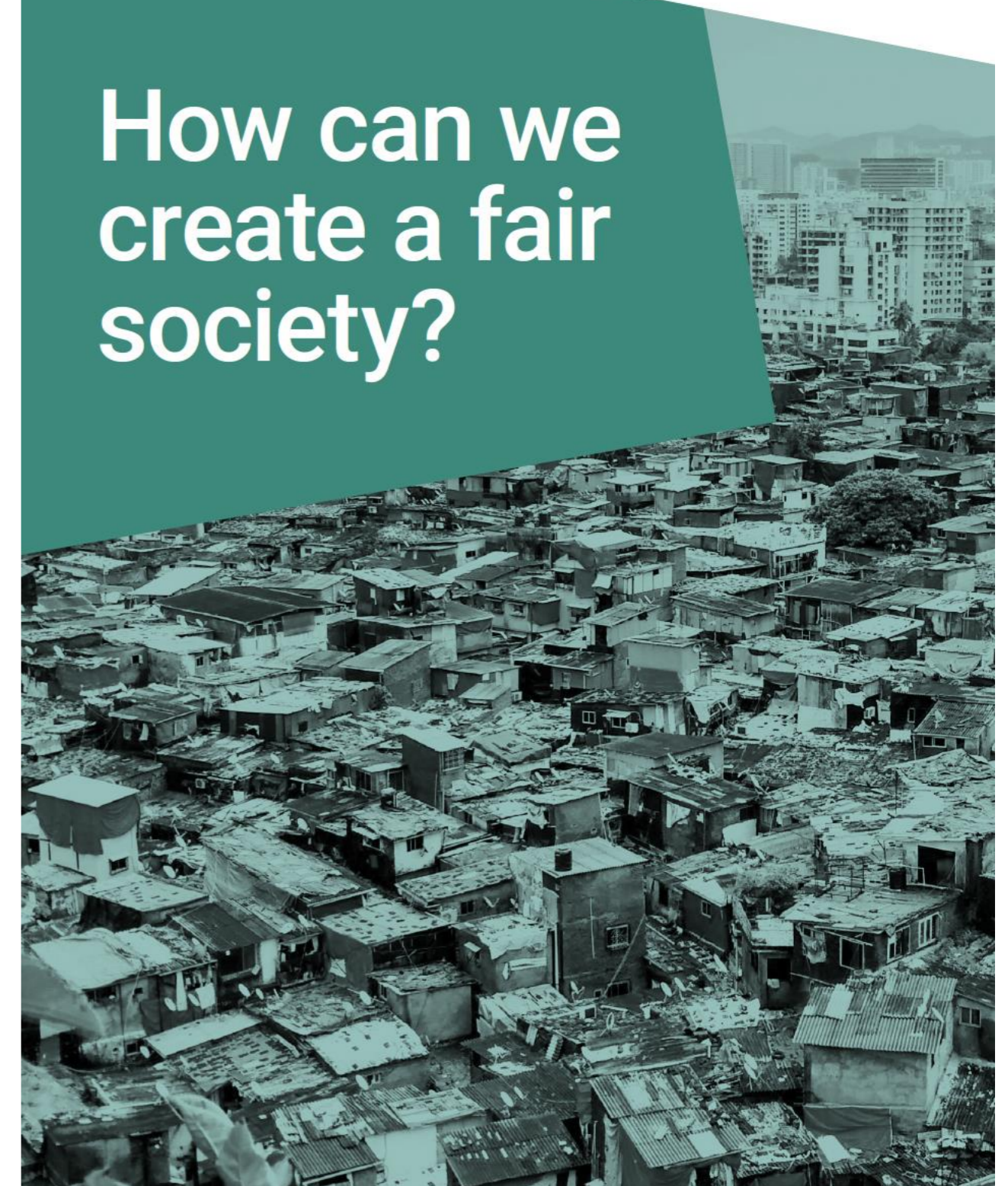
How can we control AI?



LSE 100

Guide for first-year
undergraduate students
in 2026/27

How can we create a fair society?



Dialogue and interdisciplinary learning

- Dialogue as a meaningful tool for *self-awareness* and *shared understanding*, reflecting on beliefs in relation to others (Rinkus and O'Rourke 2020)
- Dialogue among *heterogenous student groups* can lead to shared understanding of different experiences of education (O'Rourke et al. 2014)
- Imbruce et al. (2024): dialogue among peers from different disciplines can *raise interdisciplinary consciousness*



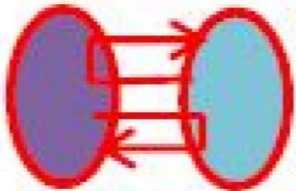
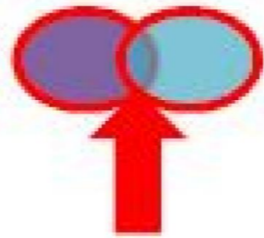
Dialogue and interdisciplinary learning




- Dialogue offers a space for reflection on how (disciplinary) identities, positionalities, and cultural contexts influence students' perspectives (Shaw et al. 2026)
- Using dialogue in interdisciplinary learning creates space for students to practice interdisciplinary skills of reflexivity, perspective taking, and integration (Shaw et al. 2026)

The challenge (and benefit!) of dialogue

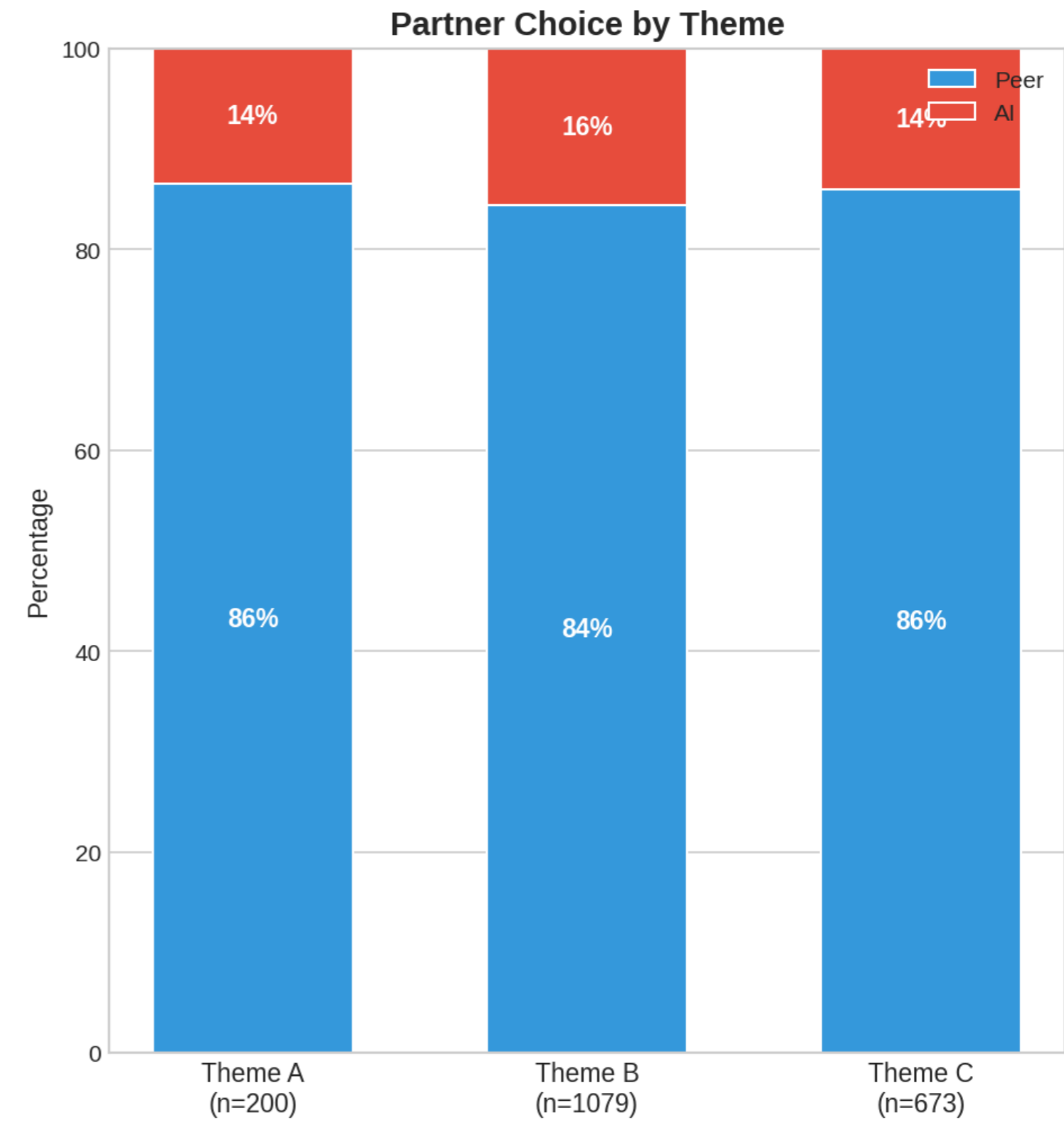
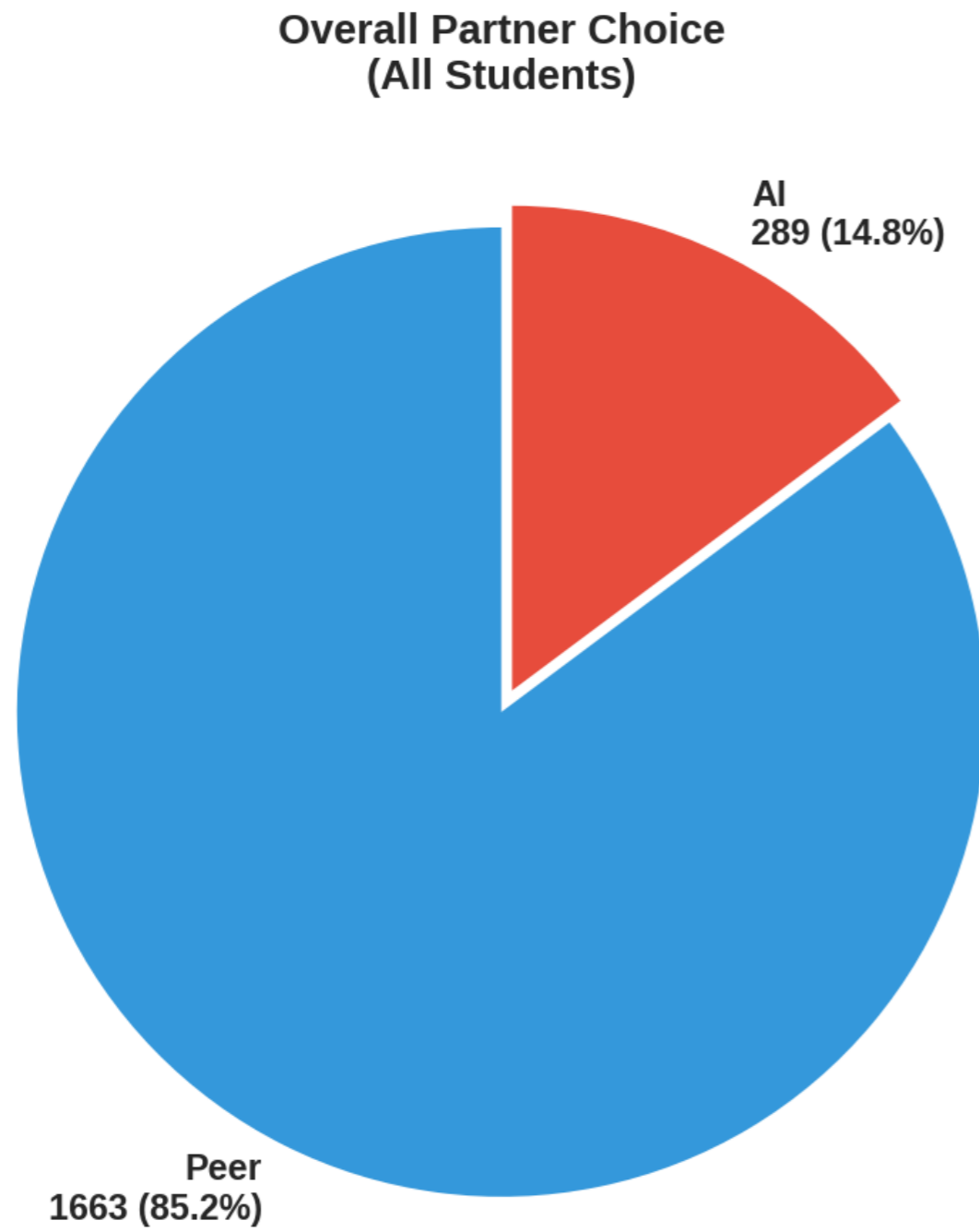
- Fostering students' abilities in **boundary-crossing** as a core skill for interdisciplinary learning – difficult to learn without collaboration (Gulikers and Oonk 2019)
- Developing and pursuing an **argumentative thread** – talking through arguments in conversation and dialogue (Smithson and Zweber 2024)

Visualisation of the learning mechanism	Aim of the learning mechanism	What questions to ask yourself to stimulate the learning mechanism
	<p>Reflection</p> <p>Learning to see the problem through the eyes of another. Both defining and exchanging perspectives focused on mutual meaning making and connecting different perspectives and expertise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I help other stakeholders understand my perspective? • What can I learn from the perspectives of the other stakeholders involved? • What can we learn from each other?
	<p>Transformation</p> <p>Development of new knowledge/practices; an end result that could not have been developed without actual collaboration and integration of perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is my vision on the new practice? • How can we combine our knowledge and perspectives into a (innovative, but realistic) solution? • How can I get others enthusiastic for this new practice? • How can I stimulate follow-up to build on the new practice (towards a sustainable new practice)?

Conversation-based assessment

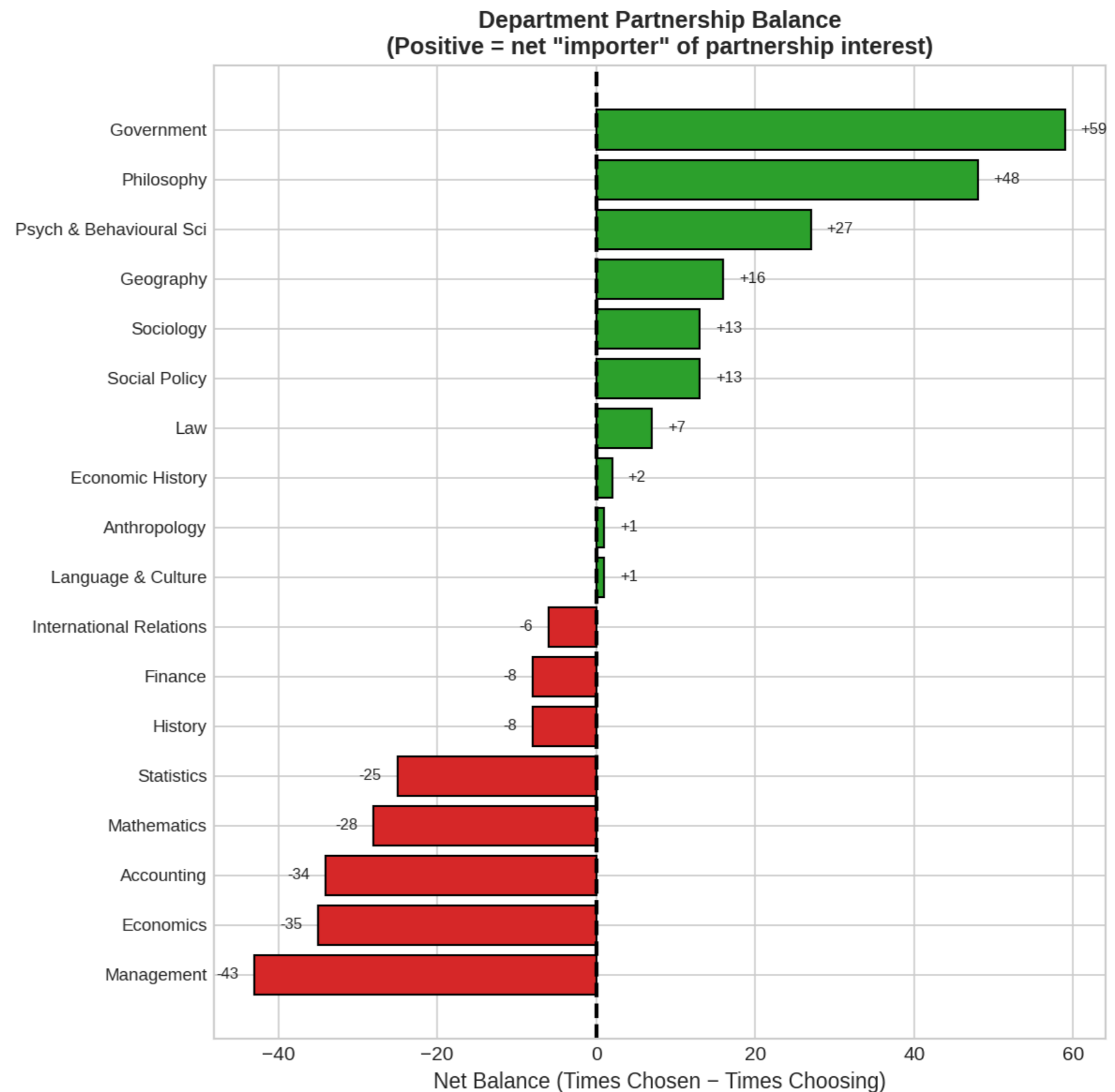
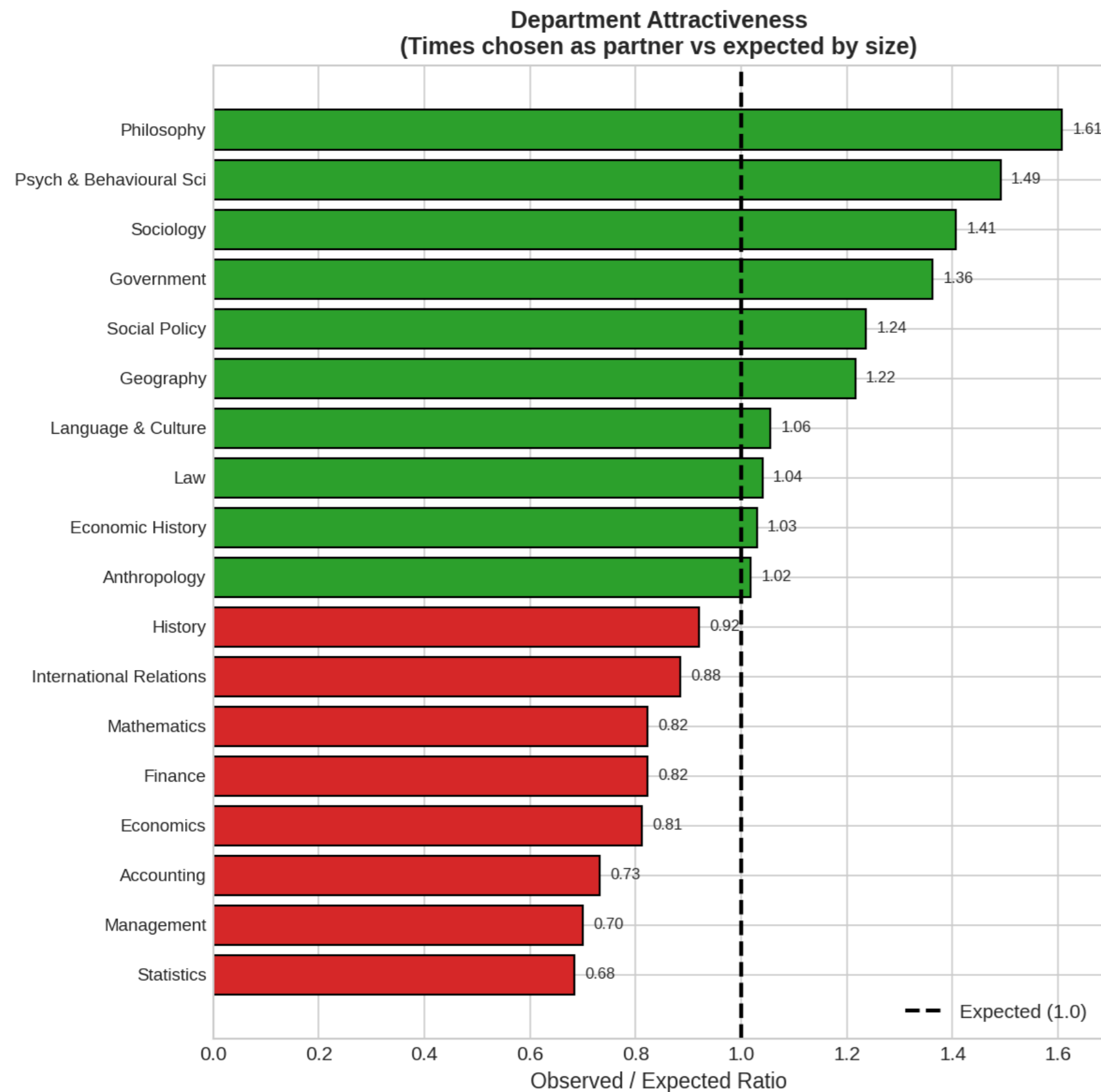
- **Interdisciplinary commentary** – 1000 words
 - Aim: write in response to a seminar question, integrating **multiple disciplinary perspectives**
 - Each student conducts a **structured conversation** with a representative of a different discipline to inform their individually-written assessment
 - Students could choose between a **peer conversation with a student** from a different degree programme or a **conversation with Claude AI**, prompted to act as disciplinary conversation partner
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Peer or AI Conversation?



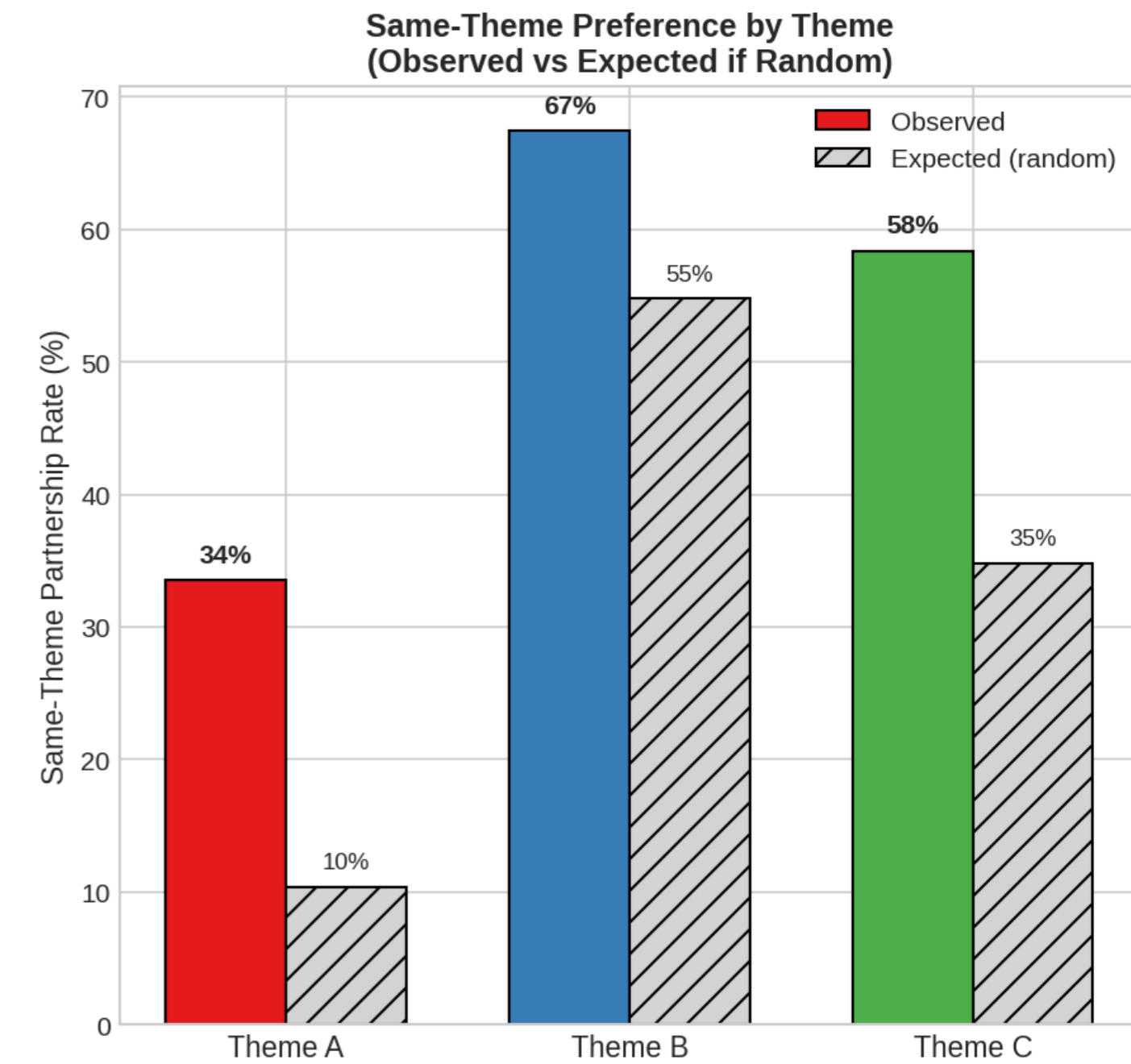
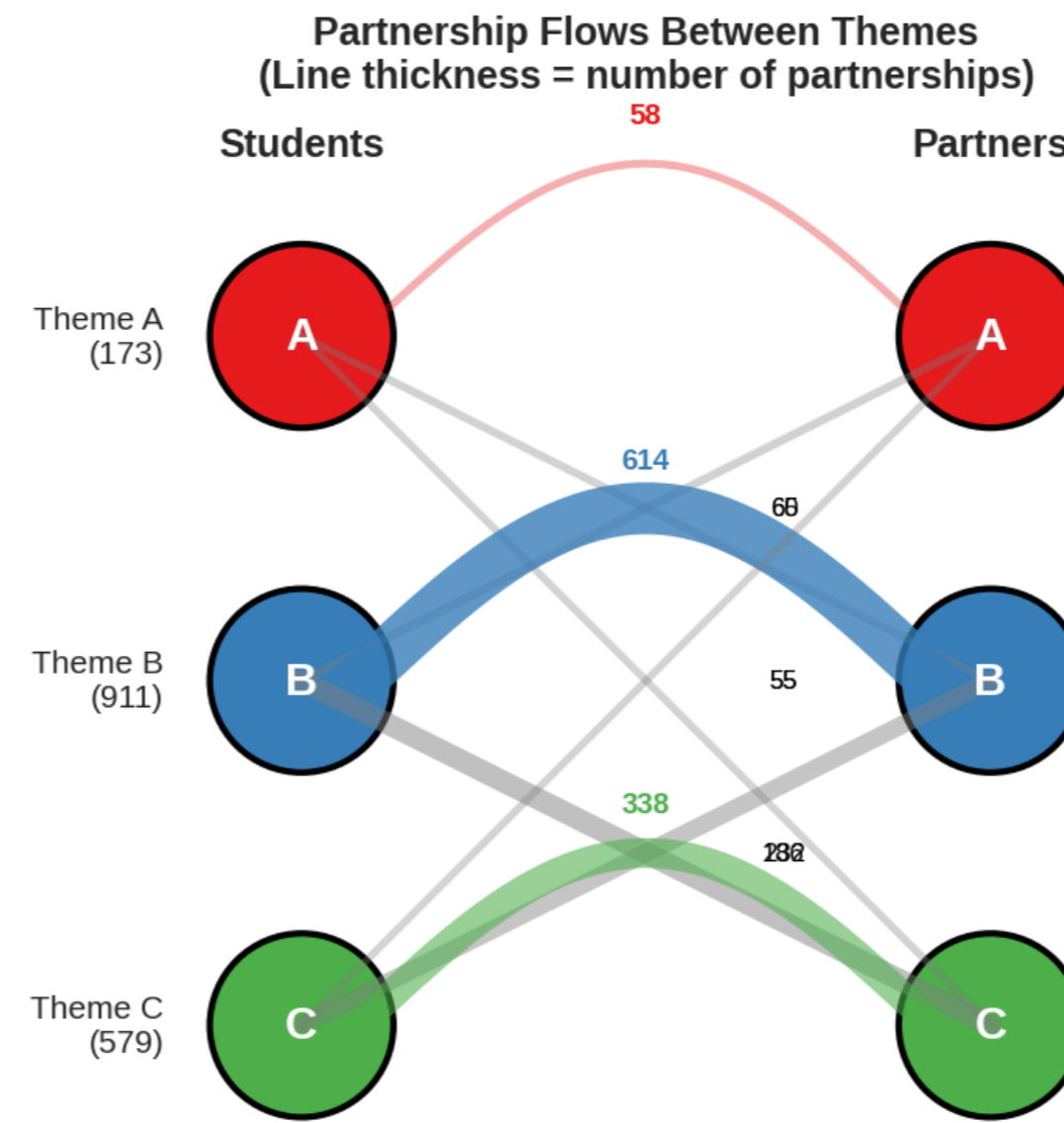
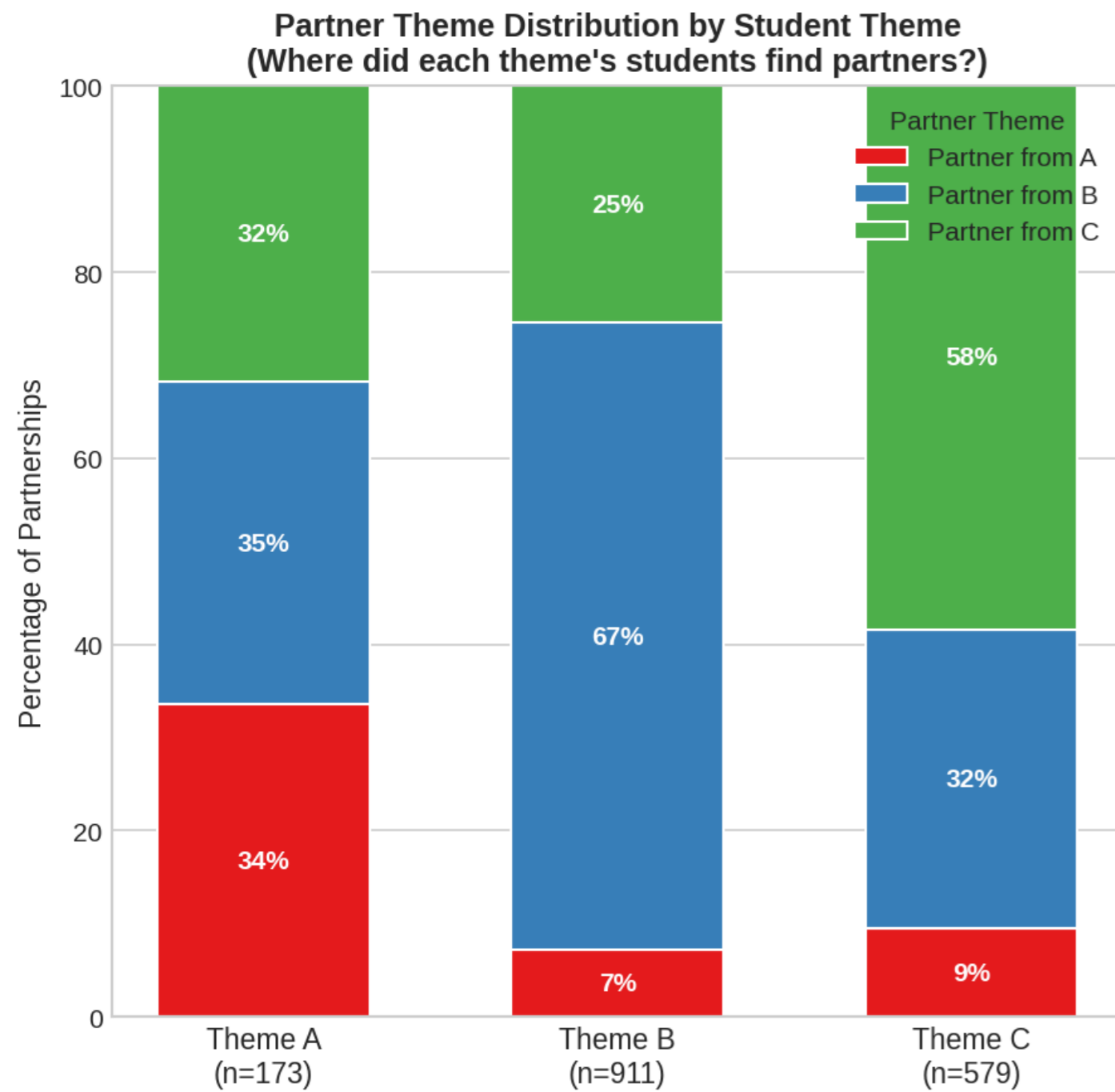
Disciplinary Conversation Preferences

- 99.3% of peer conversations were cross-departmental, but some disciplines were more popular than others



Cross-thematic Conversations

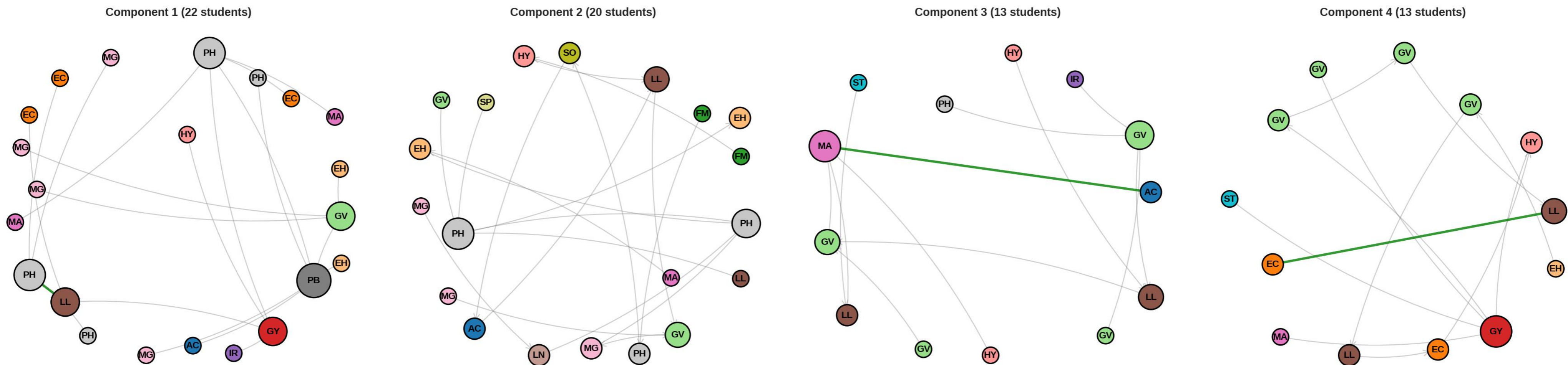
- Only 61% of students (1,010) chose a partner from the same LSE100 theme



Conversation Pairs and Networks

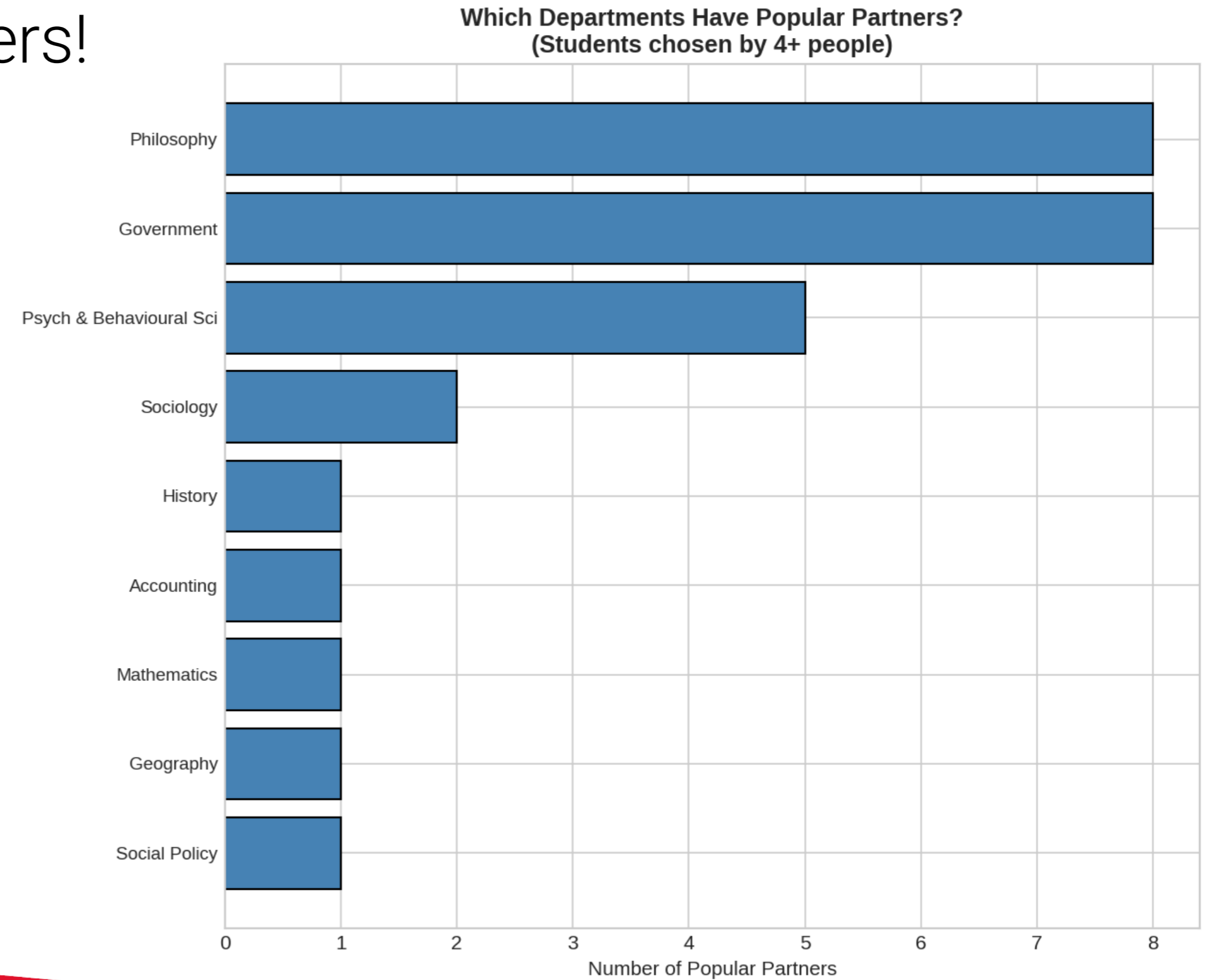
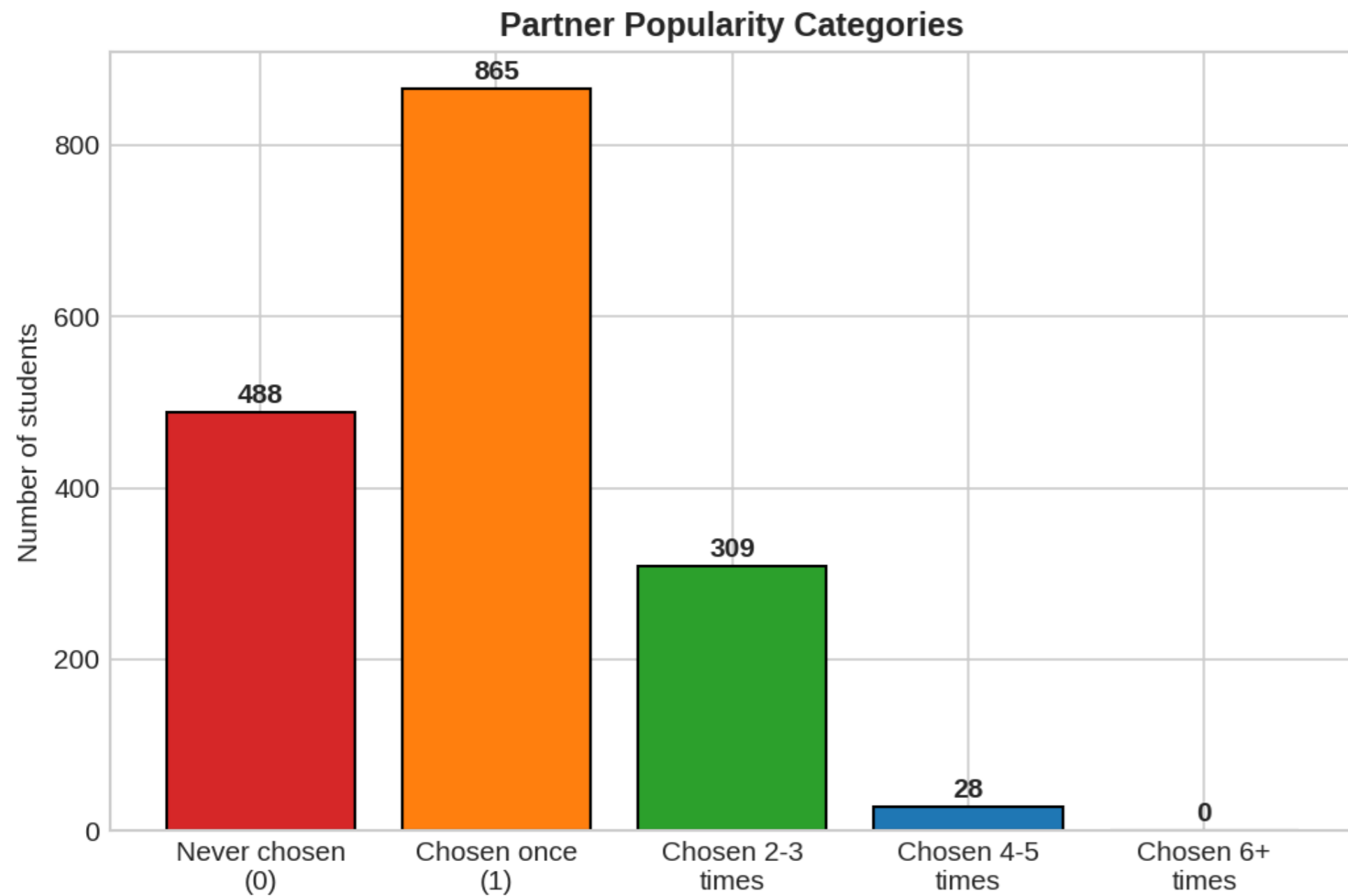
- 1012 students (60.9%; 506 pairs) were in reciprocal conversation pairs, but more complex networks emerged

Student Partnership Network Components
(Nodes colored by department, green edges = reciprocal partnerships)



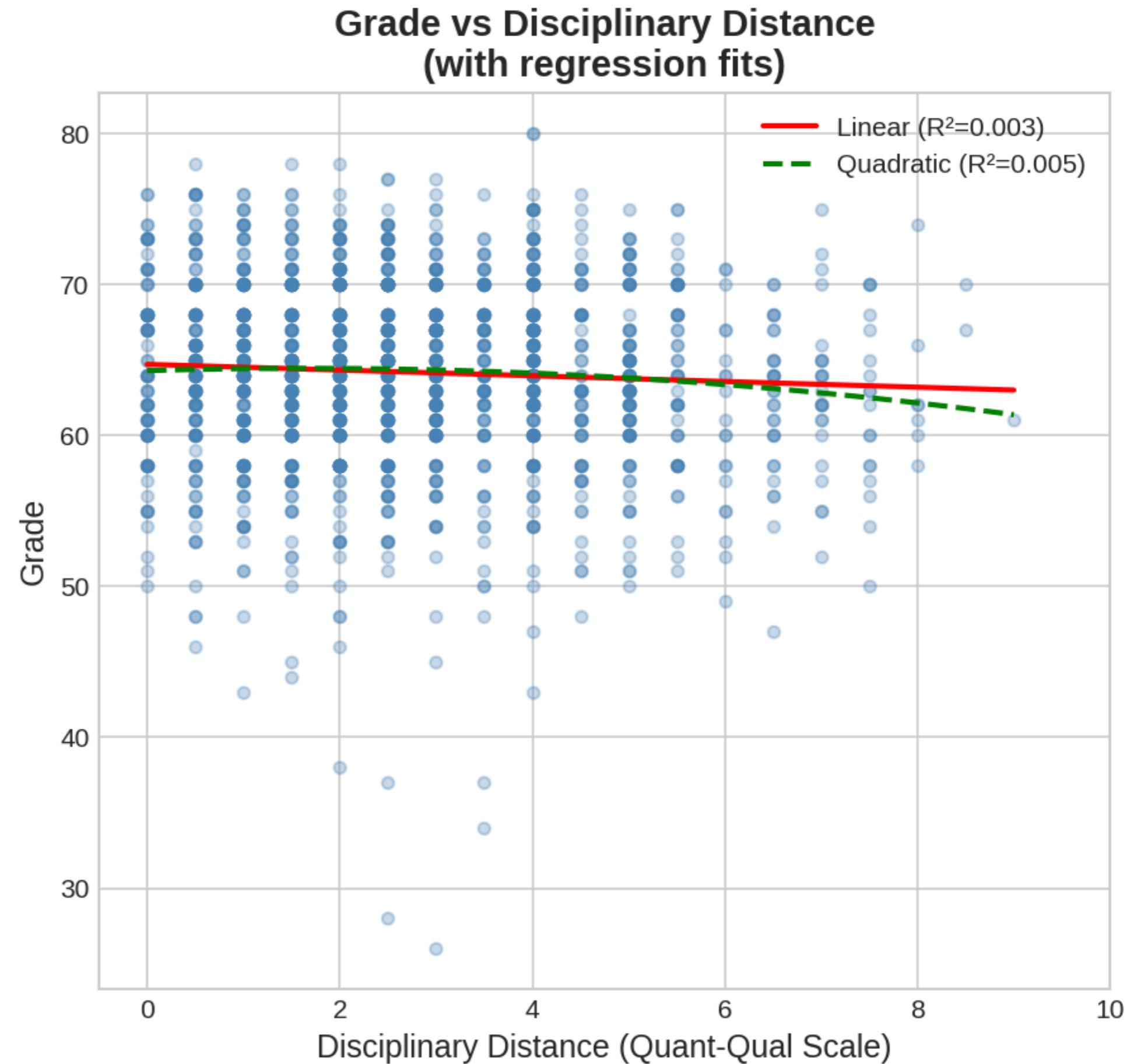
Conversation Enthusiasts

- 28 students were the partner of 4+ peers!



Disciplinary Distance

- Did the distance between the students' two disciplines impact their grades?
- To measure this, we created an informal scale of the 18 disciplines taught to UGs at LSE from quantitative to qualitative
- So, does disciplinary distance matter?
- **No!** Explains only 0.3% of variance




Student Perspectives

*“I definitely enjoyed a lot of aspects of it, there were definitely a couple people who I really got into our conversation, and **found myself fascinated** by their questions” - SR, Philosophy*

*“An amazing opportunity for me to **delve deeper into several disciplines** and research topic areas I probably wouldn't have if it wasn't for the conversational aspect of our assessment” - SM, Psychological & Behavioural Science*

*“Speaking with students from different courses gave me a helpful notion of **how different subjects might approach a similar question**. My conversation partner in Geography was much more focused on physical results and tangible outcomes than the conversation partner in Economics” - MT, Psychological & Behavioural Science*

Key Outcomes

- 1) Dialogue across difference:** students reported that these conversations helped them “*become more comfortable*” with unfamiliar approaches and reflect on their own disciplinary assumptions
 - 2) Assessment integrity:** all conversations are recorded and retained. Assessments require quotes from conversation, creating *verifiable evidence of genuine intellectual exchange* - resistant to problematic AI use
 - 3) Community building:** created partnerships between students across departmental divides, making new connections among students from different disciplinary, cultural, socioeconomic backgrounds
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Thank you!

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