Academic Advising: Lessons Learned & Best Practices

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Determining How to Help – Academic Support Angle

1) Listen to understand
   - Some students have “common” challenges and some uncommon challenges might be described in ways that sound like common challenges
   - Big breakthroughs often happen with follow up questions
   - Sometimes it takes multiple meetings until a breakthrough happens

2) Narrow potential causes to potential primary issues

3) Determine if you have the ability to address issue directly or if a referral is best (both may be appropriate)

Get the Student Talking

1) How would you describe the difficulties you're having? Where do you see it manifest?
   - Specific course? Type of question on the exam? The exam itself? Recall vs. application? Time to do everything? Balancing commitments?
   - Any history of this before?

2) What have you done to "fix" the problem you're having? What effect has that had?

3) Listen to how they describe their situation.

Check What They're Doing for Study

Students often don't know how to talk about why they're struggling.

Most students have a relatively long history of doing their study in a specific way. Some will have made bigger changes frequently as they try to find something that works.

Many will use generic language oriented around how long something takes. Focus on the *practice* not just the time.

Describe your current process. If you had a class this morning, walk me through what you would do from the class session to the exam to prepare for the material.

Time Management Clues

It's common for students to talk about how busy they are.

Are they getting everything done? Do they have the time to complete their preferred study approach for all the content by the exam?

If not, they may struggle with balancing their time *and/or* their approach is not effective or not efficient (See Study Section).

Do they have multi-tasking issues? (Multi-tasking does *not* work for studying.)

- Consider something like Pomodoro Technique

Wellness Clues

Struggling students often cut these practices and may view them as competing for time.

- Poor wellness practices tend to compound over time, becoming more negatively impactful for learning
- Can lead to burnout

Do they talk about what they do to help maintain mental and physical wellness?

If you suspect this area, explicitly asking is ok. Students should have something clearly identified here.

Accommodations Clues

Will often casually disclose it.

- You should *not* try to diagnose them. If you suspect they may have a disability, you can refer them to Academic Support.

You may see students identify issues with anxiety or stress specific to an exam.

- Note: “Test Anxiety” is often how students will describe it but does not fall under ADA
- If a student says they have test anxiety, please refer to Academic Support.

You can refer to Academic Support and Counseling.

- If a student discloses a disability, you should let them know about the Accommodations process and refer them to Academic Support. They may not take your referral, but it should be made.

Speaker Intro

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Anatomy

Theme 1: Expectation Setting (DR)

- How do you talk to students about Imposter Syndrome or self-doubt? Is this a problem you experience? How does it impact your advisees?
- What do you do to set expectations with your advisees in a supportive way?
- What is needed for students to be “primed” for a conversation about expectation setting or “re-aligning” their expectations/priorities, especially throughout the curriculum?
- When a student comes with a complaint and no plan, how do you guide them in generating their own next step? Why is this important?

Theme 2: Communicating with Advisees (AL)

- How do you establish communication (and communication expectations) with advisees? What communication practices help you build trust early so students might reach out *before* a crisis moment?
- How do you approach conversations with an advisee when they're visibly stressed or emotionally elevated? What things have you found to matter the most in these moments?
- How do you balance being available with protecting your own boundaries? What things weigh on that balance?

Theme 3: Situational Awareness and Anticipating Student Needs

- How do you use past knowledge of advisees and the curriculum to anticipate student needs? Do you have examples of this in action?
- What do you look for in identifying a student that may be in need of intervention?
- Can you describe observing a student deviate from their typical behavior? What things might you look for and how did you navigate this conversation? What was the outcome?
- How do you determine what a student might actually need for support? Any examples where it wasn't straight forward?

Theme 4: Institutional Awareness (SW)

- Can you describe a time when you didn't have the "answer"? How did you help your advisee (or student)? What was the impact on the student?
- Can you describe a student with a complex or ambiguous concern? How did you navigate the situation? What implications were there for referring the student?
- What do you do/can you do to support a student before and after a referral?

Questions?

General Best Practices in Study

Study effectiveness and efficiency can help overcome a lot of other challenges

Poor strategies can drive more anxiety, less time, and less confidence in material

In general, poor approaches don't ask the student to work with information in ways that drive long-term learning

Effective strategies tend to ask students to remember information (before telling the answer) or use information to solve problems (before telling them how to solve the problem)

Efficient strategies tend to be adaptive or offload a time intensive task (spacing flashcards over time and Anki, for example)

Study Continued – All of these are common

Students may do things that don't tend to be effective:

- Re-reading notes, re-watching lectures, re-writing notes (especially from existing notes)

Students may do things that don't tend to be efficient:

- Making individual flashcards (if a pre-existing resource exists), writing practice questions (if faculty provide questions, and if others exist)
- *Extensive* writing out objectives work (may not be enough for recall)

Students may prioritize certain types of knowledge study habits

- Over reliance on Anki/flashcards or over reliance on practice questions
- The best study approaches *balance* study approach with current need

Students may not give a study approach sufficient time to know its working

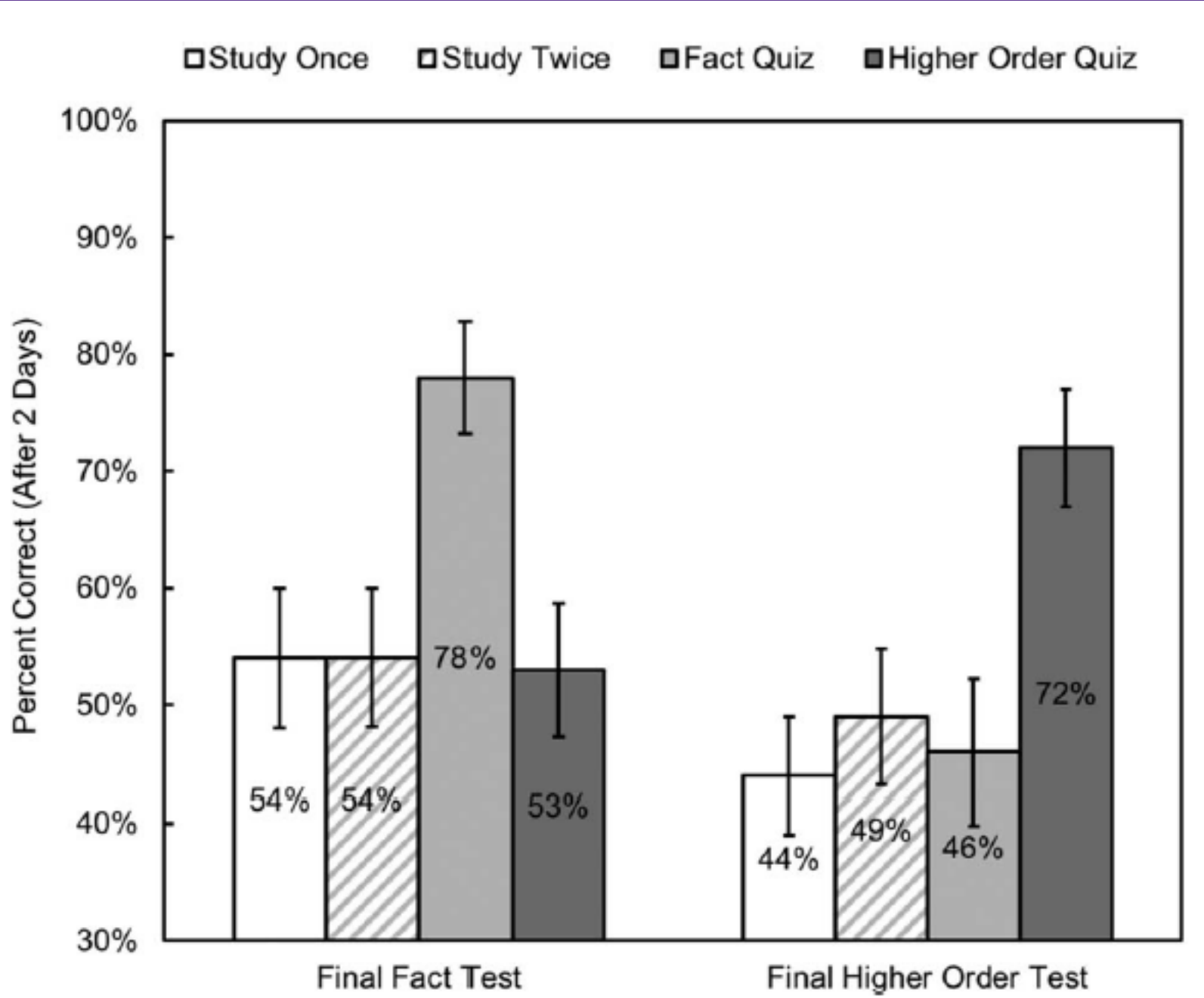
Long-Term Retention in Graduate Health Sciences Learning Practices (Urrizola et al., 2023)

Table 3. Effect sizes for all learning techniques.

Effectiveness	Learning Techniques	Global (155)	Spaced (100)	Crammed (55)	Above-avg (96)	Below-avg (59)
Most effective	Metacognition	**0.96**	**0.84**	–	**0.54**	–
	Cornell notetaking	**0.38**	**0.26**	–	**1.00**	–
	Elaborative interrogation	**0.37**	**0.37**	−0.26	**0.53**	−0.51
	Imagery for text	**0.33**	–	**0.45**	**0.37**	−0.13
	Distributed practice	**0.32**	–	–	**0.24**	−0.05
Effective	Setting objectives	**0.26**	**0.32**	0.03	**0.35**	−0.01
	Practice testing	**0.20**	**0.35**	−0.25	0.00	−0.28
	Keyword mnemonic	**0.20**	**0.28**	0.01	0.14	0.10
	Retrieval	0.17	**0.32**	−0.92	**0.61**	−0.25
Neutral	Self-explanation	0.12	0.18	−0.18*	**0.26**	−0.40
	Concept mapping	0.10	0.13	−0.01	0.13	−0.10*
	Silenced notifications[a]	0.02	−0.08	0.12	**0.26**	−0.02
Detrimental	Rereading	−0.14	−0.07	−0.31	−0.08	−0.23
	Mobile use[b]	−0.17	−0.03	−0.33	−0.04	−0.01
	Summarization	−0.21	−0.27	−0.05	−0.18	−0.03
	Listening to music[b]	−0.23	−0.17	−0.28	−0.37	0.17
	Underlining	−0.52	−0.34	–	−0.30	–

Results stratified by learning approach, spacing of study sessions and academic performance.
[a]Silenced notifications in their mobile devices during study sessions.
[b]During studying sessions.
*Groups with ≤1 student using the technique.
Bold: Values with ES ≥ 0.20 (Threshold for effectiveness).

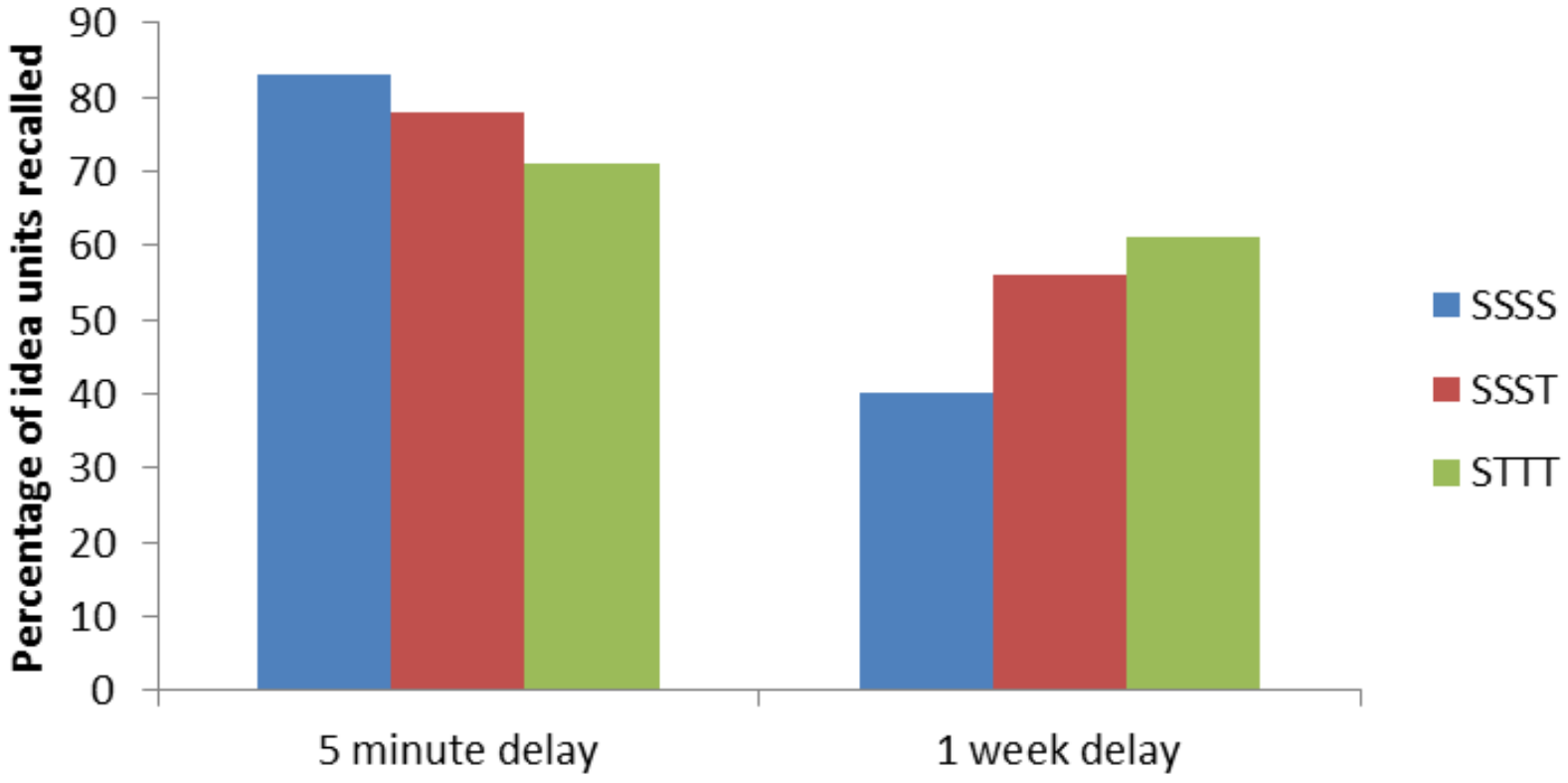
Bloom's Levels and Study Approach



Agarwal, 2018

Testing (Flashcards or Practice Problems) Drives Retention

Figure 2. Effects of repeated studying versus repeated retrieval practice. Derived from Roediger and Karpicke, 2006.



Distributing Practice Over Time is Critical to Time Management and Long-Term Learning

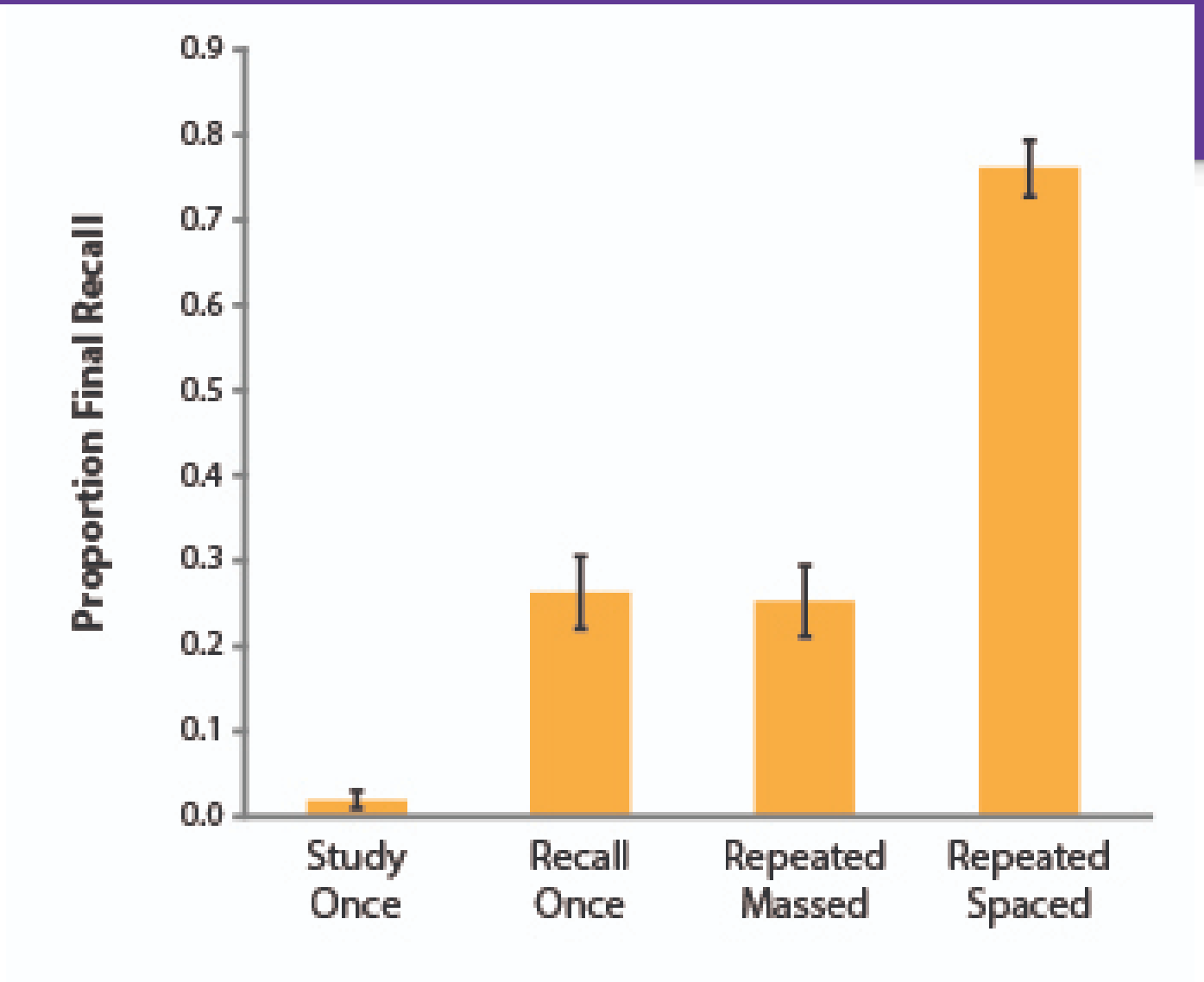


Figure 1. Data from Karpicke & Bauernschmidt (2011).