



L^AT_EX 101: Making Publication-quality Papers and Professional-grade Presentations

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L^AT_EX 101

Introduction

What is L^AT_EX?

- L^AT_EX (“lay-tex” or “luh-tex”) is an open source typesetting system used to generate scientific and academic documents with high typographical quality. [1]
- For graduate students, L^AT_EX is part of the hidden curriculum – it is rarely taught formally, and learning to use it can be a frustrating and isolating experience.

Workshop Details

- **Goal:** To introduce L^AT_EX to novice users in the graduate community at UC Davis. No prior L^AT_EX or coding experience was required.
- **Duration:** Three sessions (March 21st to 23rd, 2022) lasting 2 hours each (1 hour of interactive lecture + 1 hour of L^AT_EX exercises).
- **Content:** Days 1 and 2 focused on the basics of L^AT_EX. Day 3 focused on common L^AT_EX templates (CVs and beamer slides).

Materials and Methods

- Workshop registration was conducted through Eventbrite.
- Workshop materials (Zoom recordings, slides, other resources) are available at mdelrosario.com/latex101/
- Lectures were adapted from the online L^AT_EX tutorial, learnlatex.org. [2]
- Participants used Overleaf, a free L^AT_EX system which can be loaded in a browser
- A post-workshop survey was sent out using Google Forms.

Attendance

- Out of 79 registered people, 42 people attended at least one session (≈ 52%). See Table 1 below.

Registered	Total Attendees	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
79	42	40	24	21

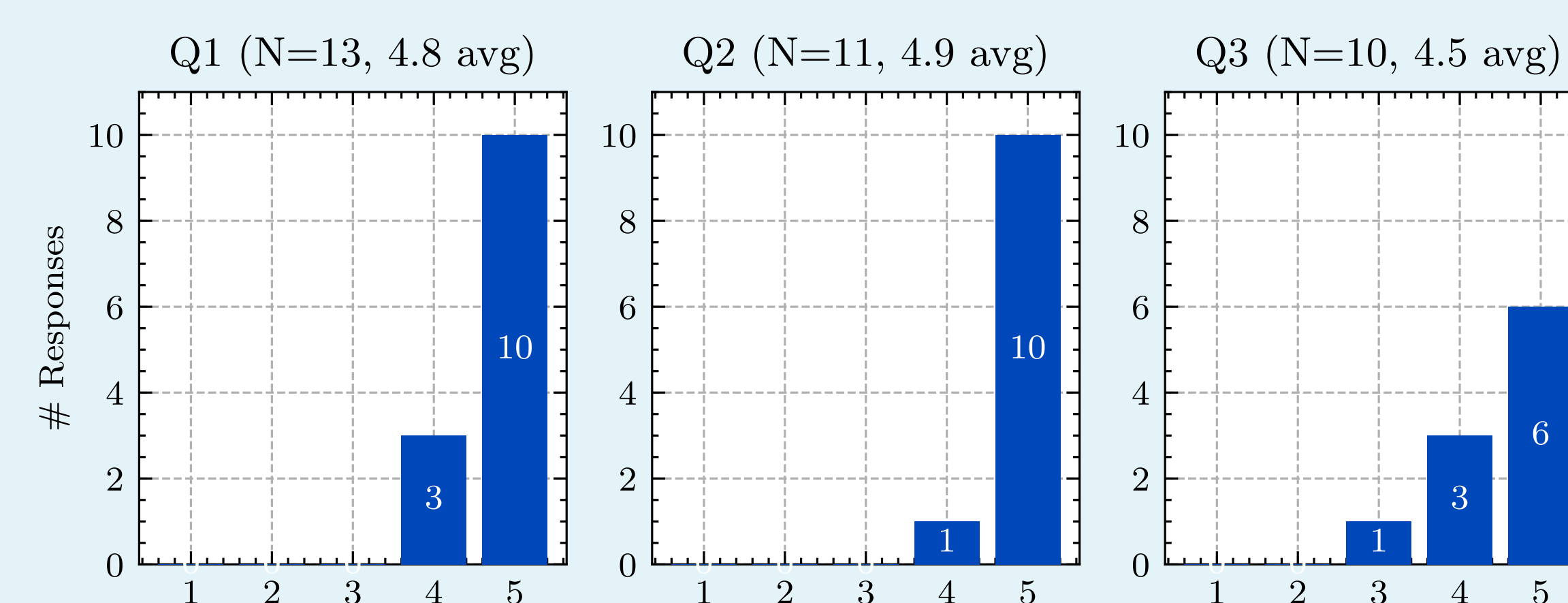
Table 1: Summary of participant registration and attendance.

Survey (Quantitative)

13 PhD students answered the following questions in a post-workshop survey.

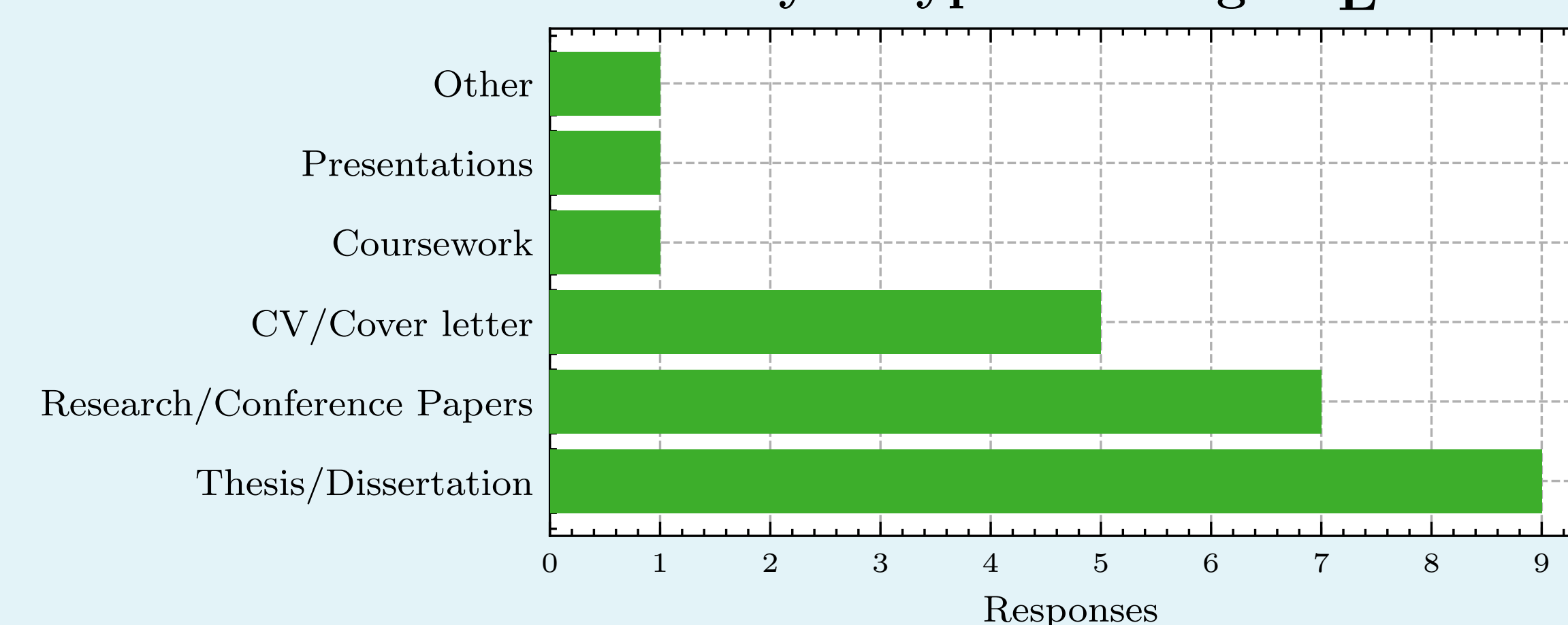
Lecture/Review Session Sentiments

- **Q1:** How useful did you find the lectures?
- **Q2:** If you attempted them, how useful did you find the exercises?
- **Q3:** If you attended them, how useful did you find the exercise review sessions?



Document Types

What documents will you typeset using L^AT_EX?



Insights/Improvements

- **Review sessions:** Respondents found these sessions less useful than the lectures or the exercises. The sessions could be improved by changing exercises to be group-based or by changing the workshop format (i.e., in-person over Zoom).
- **Templates:** Given the high interest in using L^AT_EX for dissertations and research papers, the templates we review on Day 3 should be changed accordingly.

Survey (Qualitative/Feedback)

Respondents provided free-form answers to two questions. The questions and a few representative answers are included below.

What did you like about the workshop series?

- “The lectures were great! I feel like I learned so much in just a few hours. It helps that people were asking really good questions and then the answers were very insightful.”
- “[The exercises were] where the rubber hit the road for me; they were very effective for reinforcing the topics discussed in the lectures, and even gave rise to new questions that I wouldn’t have otherwise encountered.”
- “It is a very organized workshop, lecturer mason did very detailed explained and question answer, and great demonstration, kind attitude! and we also have Carlos cover the chat part!”

What suggestions would you make to improve the workshop series?

- “I’d like to have gone through other templates for resumes or posters that were coded in Latex...”
- “...[S]ometimes folks’ questions were a bit tangential to the topic – I thought it would have worked well to take slightly fewer lecture breaks for question answering and lump the questions into a few time slots.”
- “I think adding an extra hour to each day and making it more interactive so that people can follow along with their own Overleaf documents would help.”

Insights/Improvements

- **Answering questions:** Some folks appreciated my willingness to answer questions, but others found it distracting. Setting aside time at the end of the lecture to answer questions might be a good way to address this.
- **Timing:** Some participants wanted more time to work on exercises in a group setting, so a longer review session (≈1.5 or 2 hours) may be warranted.

[1] T. Oetiker, H. Partl, I. Hyna, and E. Schlegl, “The not so short introduction to L^AT_EX2 ϵ ,” 1995.

[2] J. Wright, “Learnlatex.org,” <https://www.learnlatex.org/>.