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**DUNDALK**  
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

# FOCUS ON FEEDBACK

Stories of what  
works and why.

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Finally, we would especially like to thank our colleagues and students who have taken the time to generously share their feedback experiences with us. We hope you enjoy reading their stories.



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## The Focus on Feedback Team



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# Introduction by **Moira Maguire**, Head of Learning and Teaching, Dundalk Institute of Technology



that provides an excellent evidence base to inform feedback practices, however, it is by sharing our experiences and practices that theory comes to life and cultures change.

This book, 'Focus on Feedback: Stories of what works and why', was developed as part of the 'Focus on Feedback' project, funded under the National Forum's 2020 Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) fund. A key aim of the project was to create space for staff and students to discuss feedback and share good practice - this book extends these conversations. Within, staff and students describe feedback practices that have worked well and analyse them to explain why. It includes examples and thoughtful discussions of a wide range of practices in a variety of contexts from a range of perspectives. As such, we hope it will be a useful resource.

I would like to pay tribute to the inspirational work of the project team, led by Gerry Gallagher with Breda Brennan and Aidan Garvey. I would also like to pay tribute to the contributors who have all demonstrated their commitment to good practice in assessment and feedback. I hope you enjoy 'Focus on Feedback: Stories of what works and why'.

**IN THEIR WONDERFUL BOOK, 'THANKS FOR THE FEEDBACK', DOUGLAS STONE AND SHEILA HEEN ENCAPSULATE THE COMPLEXITY OF FEEDBACK WHEN THEY POINT OUT THAT 'IN ADDITION TO OUR DESIRE TO LEARN AND IMPROVE, WE LONG FOR SOMETHING ELSE...TO BE LOVED, ACCEPTED AND RESPECTED JUST AS WE ARE'. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT BOTH GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK CAN BE VERY CHALLENGING!**

Most of us have had both positive and negative feedback experiences and often these experiences allow us to see just how powerful feedback can be. The central role of feedback in learning is widely acknowledged but often it doesn't fulfil its potential. Research is crucial to help us to understand why this happens and how we can improve this. There is an extensive academic literature on feedback





# If at first you don't succeed . . . using practice exams with automated feedback

BY ANGELA SHORT



DR. ANGELA SHORT IS A LECTURER IN THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND HUMANITIES AND A TUTOR IN DKIT'S CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING (CELT). AN EARLY ADOPTER, SHE IS A ENTHUSIASTIC USER OF TECHNOLOGIES THAT ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH THEIR LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT IN FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS.

## INTRODUCTION

Feedback is a process that allows learners make sense of information about their performance and to use that information to enhance the quality of their work and/or develop learning strategies [Henderson et al. 2019]. Feedback is particularly effective when it embeds opportunities for learners to develop feedback literacy, defined as "the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed

to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies" [Carless and Boud 2018, p.1316].

## WHAT I DID AND WHY

Despite the merits of embedding feedback in learning, students consistently decry the lack, absence or timing of feedback, particularly in advance of high stakes summative assessments such as final exams. While students crave more individual feedback, teachers bemoan the increasing burden of marking [Molloy and Boud 2013] with the use of computer-assisted automated feedback offering one solution [Conole and Warburton 2005] to what appears to be an intractable problem.

This case study describes the use of Practice Exams in Operations Management, a 5-credit module taken by Level 7 and Level 8 students and assessed 50% continuous assessment (CA) and 50% final exam. Students taking the module purchase licenses for the McGraw Hill Connect Platform where they access all their learning resources online: Core textbook [Smartbook] and the Practice Operations Simulation game. Continuous assessment consists of seven adaptive reading assignments and six modules of the Practice Operations Simulation game, all completed online.

A core ethos underpinning the design of all the assessment is student effort and persistence, with time functioning as the 'leveller' for those students who require longer to master concepts. Feedback opportunities are embedded throughout the module, particularly in all the CA tasks. The reading assignments drawn from the Smartbook offer students a personalised adaptive learning

experience, presenting them with probes to test their understanding of the concepts as they work through the readings. Similarly, students play the Practice Operations Simulation game which places them in the role of an Operations Manager running a clothing firm. The game modules are set for 'unlimited' attempts with feedback on performance against the module goals provided after each attempt, feedback that students can then use to adjust their strategies in subsequent attempts. In addition, during lockdown in Spring 2021, I used Practice Exams to provide automated feedback to students preparing for their final exam.

## HOW I DID IT

Class time is assigned to application of the reading assignment theory with particular emphasis on students solving operations management problems. This prepares students for the final exam which consists of theory questions, True/False, Multiple Choice and more heavily weighted algorithmic calculation questions. These algorithmic questions take the form of worksheets requiring calculations, and although each student get assigned the same question text, crucially each gets assigned different numbers. The following is an example of an algorithmic question.

## SAMPLE ALGORITHMIC QUESTION

Money Laundry has 30 washers and 30 dryers. All orders are first sent to wash and then to dry. It takes on average, 44 minutes to wash one order and 41 minutes to dry.

a. What is the capacity of the washing stage? (Round your answer to 2 decimal places.)

Capacity of washing stage  orders per hour

b. What is the capacity of the drying stage? (Round your answer to 2 decimal places.)

Capacity of drying stage  orders per hour

Students were offered an optional Practice Exam, which was structured like the final exam and required students to answer 55 randomly assigned questions drawn from a pool of 180. Students could take two attempts at this exam with each attempt using a new set of questions. However, students were allowed 75 minutes for the Practice Exam but only 60 minutes for the final exam. The exam was posted in Connect and available over a period of ten days, closing two days before the final online exam.

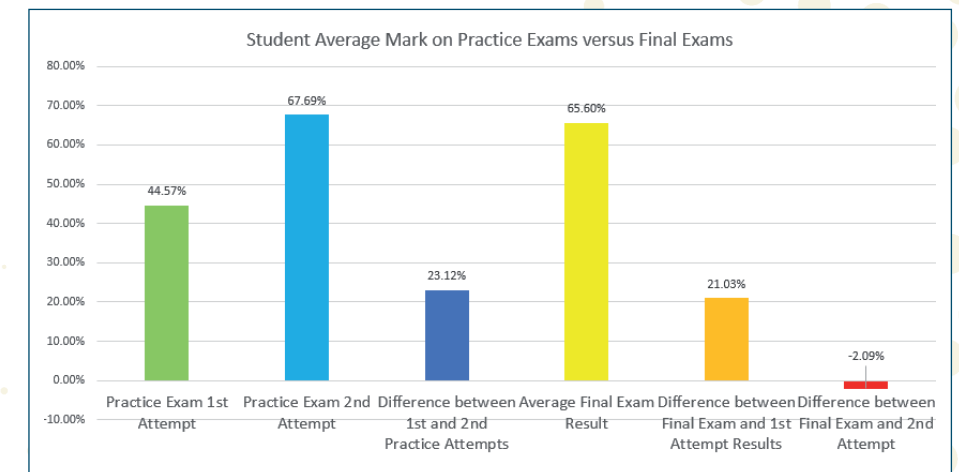
## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

Students received feedback that increased in detail on each practice attempt. The feedback provided after the first attempt was corrective [correct-answer only] as students who have been exposed to incorrect answers need to have the correct answer highlighted for them [Roediger and Butler 2011]. This task-level feedback provided students with diagnostic information about their overall knowledge of the subject that they could use to inform subsequent restudy efforts. However, the feedback increased in detail on their second attempt with elaborate feedback provided on the more heavily weighted algorithmic calculation questions. These are the questions that require students to demonstrate knowledge transfer and their ability to generalise learning from one context to another, an essential attribute of graduate employability. Essentially, the True/False and Multiple-Choice questions test students' knowledge about Operations Management while the application questions demonstrate students' competence to be an Operations Manager [Short, 2016]. As the Practice exams were open for ten days, students could use the time in between attempts to

self-regulate their learning [Boud & Molloy, 2013] and, in doing so, develop their feedback literacy [Carless and Boud, 2018].

74 out of a possible 119 students took the Practice exams representing 62% of the student cohort and demonstrating students' willingness to test themselves and use the feedback to adjust their learning strategies. Most students who used the second attempt completed it several days after the first, perhaps suggesting that they used the intervening time to reflect on their performance and work on the areas of weakness identified in the first attempt. The following graph shows student average grades on the Practice Exams and the average result on the final exam.

As the graph illustrates, the average mark increased by 23.12% to 67.69% between attempts. Importantly, as the second attempt on the Practice Exam generates a new set of randomly assigned questions, students potentially are exposed to 110 of the 180 questions in the question pool before they take the final exam. What is also interesting is the marked difference between student performance on their first attempt and subsequent performance on the final exam. Furthermore, the average final exam mark was only 2% lower than the average second attempt result. This is particularly encouraging



given the reduced time available in the final exam and the inevitable stress students experience when completing summative assessments.

## CONCLUSION

Summative testing is often viewed as a malign practice yet testing in general, and practice testing in particular, is a well-established strategy for improving student learning. Still, despite the evidence of its efficacy, it is an underutilised practice [Rawson and Dunlosky, 2011]. However, the use of computer assisted automated feedback combined with pools of questions in the McGraw Hill Connect platform makes it easy for teachers to adopt the practice. Practice tests or exams, as this short case illustrates, prompt students to generate their own feedback and empower them to use that feedback to self-regulate their learning and improve their performance in high stakes summative assessments.



# An opportunity for pastoral care in Enquiry Based Learning

BY ANITA BYRNE AND KATHLEEN NALLEN



DR ANITA BYRNE AND DR KATHLEEN NALLEN ARE MIDWIFERY LECTURERS IN THE SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND SCIENCE, DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (DKIT). THEY INTRODUCED ENQUIRY BASED LEARNING (EBL) INTO THE MIDWIFERY CURRICULUM IN 2009 AND HAVE BEEN DELIVERING ENTIRE MODULES THROUGH THIS FORMAT SINCE THEN. CONTEMPORANEOUS CONSTRUCTIVE STUDENT FEEDBACK IS A CORE PRINCIPLE OF EBL.

EBL is a pedagogical approach where the learner acquires knowledge and skills through enquiry rather than direct instruction with the lecturer acting as a facilitator. Working in small groups (5-6) students work through real-life scenarios (triggers) and demonstrate their learning (product) in a variety of ways to their peers and facilitators. EBL recognises two important learning elements: 'Product' - what is

learned and 'Process' - how learning happens. Marks are awarded for both elements. 'Process' marks are initially awarded by the facilitator and then by the students themselves and their peers. 'Product' marks are awarded by Facilitators [see Figure 1].



Figure 1

## WHAT WE DID AND WHY

Each EBL module has approximately three triggers lasting about two weeks each. Following the completion of each trigger facilitators meet with each student group to discuss marks and feedback on their 'product'. They also meet each student individually to provide feedback on their 'process' mark. As part of this engagement, the students are always asked about their general wellbeing and how they are finding the module/midwifery programme. What has become apparent over the years is that this time spent with individual students has, in many cases, become a valuable opportunity for pastoral care. Students use this informal, safe and private time with the lecturer to disclose issues that may be troubling them or impacting on their engagement with the module and peers. These issues have

included conflict with a peer, financial pressures, family issues and mental health issues.

## HOW WE DID IT

On some occasions it was sufficient for the student to simply unburden themselves in this manner and they left the consultation with the facilitator feeling more settled with no follow up required. If follow up was required, it was important that this was done in a timely manner to avoid further escalation of any issue. The facilitator would always check back in with the student via email or perhaps discretely at the end of class in the days/weeks following this discussion. They would also meet with the student again on two or more occasions for module/process feedback, allowing opportunity for further discussions of concerns if necessary. There have been occasions when students have been advised to seek more formalised care from the professional counsellors available to them in DkIT, advised regarding options of taking time out, deferring the module/programme etc. This has resulted in the timely initiation of wellbeing interventions for several students.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

It was evident that many of the issues that came to light during individual student feedback would not have been highlighted otherwise. Both facilitators agree that the opportunity to provide contemporaneous individual feedback to students opens the door to authentic discussion of student wellbeing and offers the space to consider appropriate student supports.

In their guidance document on 'Embedding Student Success', the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2021a) highlight the importance of connection, mutual regard, authentic partnership and fostering

a sense of belonging through institutional processes and practices in aiding student transition to, and navigation through, higher education.

The pastoral care element of student feedback in EBL aligns with and optimises these core principles. In doing so, it also contributes to the National Forum's 'Seven Cs Toolkit' [Figure 2] that supports higher education institutions to embed a process for the continuous enhancement of student success [National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2021b].

Student opinion about this feedback opportunity also highlights the enhanced partnership and merit of this intervention:

"The one-to-one feedback that was delivered in our EBL classes ... was something I loved because it provided constant assessment ... and I found myself gaining confidence and motivation from these reviews with our lecturers. Looking back on these sessions I found leaving them feeling positive about my progress and chilled out by the laid-back environment in comparison to other modules."  
[3rd year Student Midwife]

"I found the one-to-one feedback meetings with lecturers at various points during EBL to be very beneficial... the meetings give you the opportunity to find out what you did well in that trigger as well as how you can improve your mark for next time. I believe that this is very beneficial for students as it gives them the opportunity to reflect on their own performance and any improvements they must make for next time."  
[2nd Year Student Midwife]

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The approach to student feedback in EBL reflects many of the characteristics of the dialogic model proposed by Van der Kleij et al. (2019). This model acknowledges the emotional aspects of student feedback processes and the shifting role of the teacher from transmitter of feedback to one who fosters interactions with and between students and staff.

FIGURE 2: NATIONAL FORUM'S 'SEVEN Cs TOOLKIT'

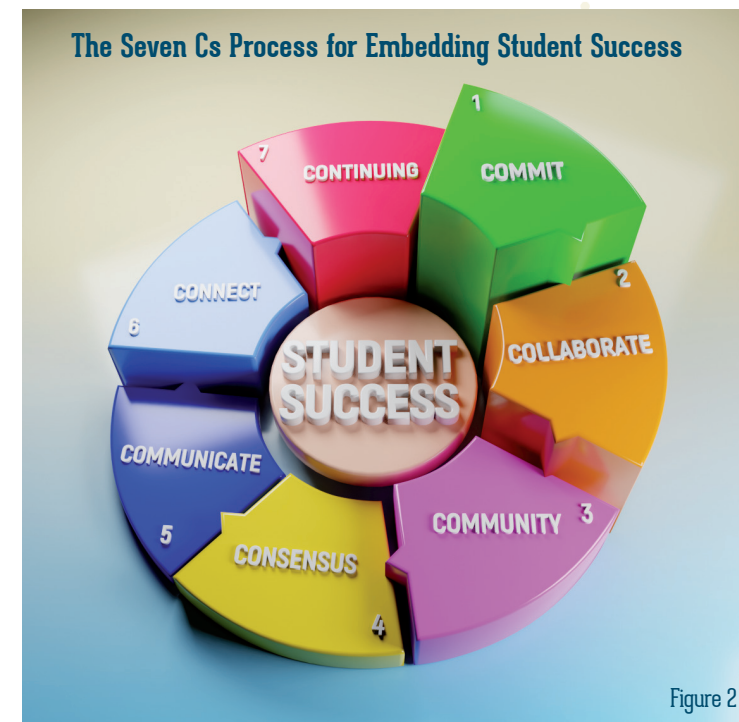


Figure 2

- Avail of all opportunities to ask students about their general wellbeing as many may be privately struggling with various issues
- Consider embedding space within/during your module to undertake individual student feedback and include an open question about general wellbeing
- Consider the physical environment, ensure that the student feels secure and does not feel rushed - make a follow up appointment if necessary
- If a student raises issues of concern, ensure they are followed up in a timely manner with the student and other channels as appropriate e.g. line manager
- Sustain the practice of providing contemporaneous individual feedback opportunities for students



ANITA BYRNE

# Self and peer assessment to generate peer and internal feedback

ANTOINETTE ROURKE, NOEL MURPHY AND YASMINE LOUGHRAN



THIS IS A COLLABORATIVE PIECE INVOLVING ANTOINETTE ROURKE AND NOEL MURPHY, LECTURERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, AND YASMINE LOUGHRAN, A THIRD-YEAR STUDENT ON THE B.Sc. HONS. IN ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY

## WHAT WE DID AND WHY

Most definitions of 'feedback' imply that the purpose of giving feedback to students is to give them information about their performance so that they may use it to improve their work [Boud and Molloy 2013; Nicol 2021; Nicol and Selvaretnam 2021].

Self and peer assessment activities have been identified as a means of developing students' assessment literacy [Hoo et al. 2022]. Nicol

[2020] explains the concept of 'internal feedback' which he defines as 'what students produce for themselves by making comparisons with other work'. Nicol further suggests that students frequently assess their own performance and/or work using information from informal sources, e.g. grading rubrics, marking schemes and the work of their peers. When these informal comparisons are turned into formal and explicit comparisons, students can generate better feedback than they would generate from the lecturer's comments alone.

Our intervention involves the first of four tasks in a 100% continuously assessed module at Stage 3 of the B.Sc. & B.Sc. Hons. in Architectural Technology. It is circulated in the first two weeks of the module and the students have two weeks to complete it. There has always been an opportunity for students to submit a draft for formative assessment that focuses on corrections in the work and to provide formative feedback. However, the uptake from students of this draft submission has been low and students tended to focus on seeking the marks for the assessment rather than the feedback.

## HOW WE DID IT

The task was re-designed to elicit internal feedback for the students which they could use to improve their work in a future task. It also had the objective of developing the students' capacity to assess their own work, the work of their peers and build their feedback literacy. Most advice in the literature suggests that it is best to position this type of intervention at a stage in the module where students have the opportunity to utilise the feedback in a subsequent task. Students were briefed on the task in Week 2 with the final

submission being made in Week 4. The outputs from the task inform Task 3 which occurs in Week 6/7

The task involved a simulated case study in which students draft a letter to potential clients explaining the process of making a planning application. Students were supplied with the task brief and a 'Tips & Tricks' sheet. This sheet included a list of suggested reading and resources, guidance on the layout and format for the letter and over twenty questions that the students should ask themselves when completing the task. They could compare their draft work against this 'Tips & Tricks' sheet to generate their own internal feedback on how well they were meeting the requirements of the task prior to submitting their work.

Following submission, space was made in one of the classes by Lecturer 1 to complete the self and peer assessment exercises with a group of eight students from the class. Students were given a copy of the marking and assessment sheets, a template letter and a model answer and were given an hour to mark, assess and give feedback on their own and another student's work. All of the students' work was anonymised for the peer assessment. Students were asked to write at least three separate pieces of feedback for themselves and their peers after comparing the work to the model answer and other information.

Finally, all of the submissions were marked (n=20) and students were given feedback by Lecturer 2.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

### STUDENT PERSPECTIVE: YASMINE

Firstly, having my classmate's letter enabled

me to see how my classmates had approached the assignment in terms of writing styles, depth of information, the use of jargon etc. When given the model answer, it was very easy to recognise the parts I had done correctly and the parts I had only covered at a surface level.

This, in itself, was a very useful task. However, I feel it would have also been helpful if, once the letters were self and peer assessed, the lecturer gave us feedback on why they agreed or disagreed with our marking styles, and the reasoning behind awarding these marks. I feel this extra step in the feedback process would enhance our learning. However, I am aware time was a constraint.

Feedback from other students in the class indicated similar views on the positive aspects of this exercise. However, it was suggested that the model answer be given prior to any self/peer assessment so we knew exactly what to look for when marking.

There was also some negative feedback on the exercise with one student stating,

*"I didn't quite see the point in it. Correcting exam papers is a skill that we as Architecture students don't need. I don't really feel it benefitted our education at all".*

Overall, this was an exercise with mixed opinions and feedback on its usefulness. The majority of students agreed this exercise was most definitely useful in some way, with myself being part of this majority.

### LECTURER PERSPECTIVE:

The student grades awarded to their peers were generally similar to those grades awarded by the lecturer. However, self-assessed grades were generally lower.

In terms of the feedback given, peer and self-feedback from the students was more focussed on improving the work and what could be done

better. However, it was also generally similar to the lecturer's feedback.

## CONCLUSION

### SUGGESTIONS FOR LECTURERS:

1. Prepare well in advance of the exercise - ensuring that you have a variety of exemplars of work at different levels.
2. Make self and peer review/assessment explicit to develop internal and peer feedback skills.
3. To improve student feedback literacy, prepare some generic feedback comments to illustrate those that students can give to themselves and their peers. This was a missing piece of guidance that could have helped the students when providing the feedback as part of the exercise.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

1. When self-assessing your own work be as constructive as if you were assessing the work of your peers.
2. Close your own feedback loop.
3. Look at the wider picture and longer term - i.e. evaluate your learning beyond the brief. Ask yourself, "In the long term what is this task going to do for me?"



NOEL MURPHY



# “I can see and hear it”: Screencasting for formative feedback

BY BERNIE PENTONY



opportunity to act upon them to improve their grade.

My intervention set out to improve feedback practices for this group of 10 first year part-time students by introducing formative feedback while they were developing their portfolios. The purpose was to provide feedback earlier in the process, encourage students to engage with it and ascertain any challenges or concerns that they may have had. In this way, the feedback could be acted upon and addressed for the final submission.

For the portfolio, students create four reflective entries (two on creative arts, two on drama) related to topics covered in a number of workshops. Having completed the workshops, students were invited to submit a draft of one portfolio entry. In consultation with my co-lecturer, we agreed that a draft of one workshop entry would be used for the purpose of providing feedback. All learners availed of this opportunity to submit a draft.

In providing feedback, it is essential for us as teachers to understand not only how best to design and send the feedback ‘message’, but also how to influence the way students receive that message and what they do with it. Screen capture software for screencasting has emerged as a feedback medium that teachers can utilise to provide feedback to learners in all disciplines. Screencasting involves a teacher recording their computer screen along with their voice, to create a video file that students can watch back.

Studies have shown that technology-enabled approaches to feedback such as screencasting are well received by students and there is evidence to suggest learners value this type of feedback and find it clearer compared to traditional forms.

Students also appear to value the personalised and engaging nature of audio feedback [Parkes and Fletcher, 2017], reporting increased engagement, including revisiting audio feedback multiple times. Additionally, one of the most critical aspects of how students react to feedback relates to the tone in which feedback is shared [Lipnevich et al. 2016]. It is noteworthy too that when teachers signify in writing and speech that they care about their learners, student engagement with feedback is enhanced [Sutton 2012]. Feedback should also be timely, with a focus on the particular qualities of the work and advice on what can be improved [Black and William, 1998].

## HOW I DID IT

I used Screencast-O-Matic, a screen and webcam recorder, to create the screencasts as it is user-friendly and easy to use. The free version of this application records all the activity taking place on the computer screen, along with the user’s voice to create a video of up to 15 minutes.

First, I used track-changes in Microsoft Word to add feedback comments to each student’s draft submission. I then recorded a 3 – 6-minute screencast to talk through the student’s draft document, where the feedback provided was based on the assessment criteria, signposted elements of good work, indicated what improvements needed to be made, and suggested how these could be made. Finally, the feedback in both the draft Word document and the screencast was made available to students on Moodle.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

Later in the module, I surveyed the students to evaluate the feedback process and to further understand how the students perceived and applied the feedback.

Students were very positive about the process, reporting that they found the screencast feedback easy to access and more personal. When asked if the feedback helped clarify the areas of the draft that were well achieved and those that needed improvement, the majority of students indicated that it had. They indicated that being able to see and hear feedback comments made it much clearer with some suggesting that it was explained in much more detail than a written comment.

Moreover, they commented positively on the feedback message contained within their screencasts. In virtually all cases, they reported that they could actually see how they could improve and apply the suggestions for improvement. Arguably, this is one of the key strengths of screencasting, as it enables learners to map their feedback against their work [Ribchester et al. 2007].

## CONCLUSION

For feedback to be meaningful, it should be ongoing and formative, reflecting a student-centeredness that enables learners to become more independent and self-reflective [Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006]. Studies show that students reflect on feedback, and their work, more deeply when the feedback is given in voice form. Screencasting can be a useful

feedback medium as it allows for the use of voice to add tone and tenor, the ability to visibly work through a document on screen, and the ability for students to store the screencast and replay it as often as necessary. Furthermore, by using screencasting to give formative feedback, teachers can create a personal, informal, and individualised dialogue with students, and in doing so, improve the teacher-student relationship, motivating students to make improvements to their work.

Although this small-scale case study involved only a small number of students, the results appear to support the literature which suggests that screencasting as a feedback medium enhances learner engagement, and is an effective medium for communicating feedback to learners.



# Figuring it out together: Involving students in the feedback process

BY CONOR MCKEVITT



## WHAT I DID AND WHY

Sadler [2010] and Cowan [2010] both argue that students need to become part of the assessment process if they are to truly learn and know what it means to assess and judge academic work. Like Sadler [2010], I believe that if students are to acquire the knowledge of assessing they must participate in doing assessments in the same way as lecturers and tutors do. The development of their assessment literacy [Price et al. 2012] will not only enhance their learning but allowing students to have a more active part of the feedback process within assessment would afford them an opportunity to develop their assessment judgement (e.g., Boud et al. 2018). Essentially, this could potentially support students in using feedback to enhance their learning [Carless and Boud 2018] and improve the quality of their work [Sadler 1989]. However, I was more interested in what could help students develop their assessment literacy and being part of feedback process was central to this.

I decided to include first year students in the assessment process to give them an insight into what it is like to judge work like a tutor/lecturer, but also to support their learning within a module. Therefore, I designed a formative peer review process where the students would submit a draft of their work at Week 7 of the semester which would be reviewed by two of their peers. The peer review was focused on the students writing feedback for their peers, but without a grade. In this way, students got to write two reviews of their peers' work and receive reviews from two of their peers. Critically, the focus of the feedback was not on a grade, but how to improve on their work. The students were actively involved in the feedback

process [Carless and Boud 2018] and were producing feedback and receiving it. Moreover, Nicol [2010, 2014] argues that producing feedback is more cognitively demanding for students. However, Nicol et al. [2014] also found that both producing and receiving feedback is good for students learning. Part of the rationale for doing this was to let students write feedback on real work, and by doing so, be more engaged with the feedback they received and be able to use it [Price et al. 2011] because they are part of the process [Winstone and Boud 2020]. The process was based on Nicol et al. [2014] peer review approach, but I wanted to ensure that the students had some preparation before reviewing their peers' drafts [e.g., Ballantyne et al. 2002].

## HOW I DID IT

Table 1 provides an outline of the timeline for the activities that were part of the process.

The grading and discussion of the exemplars was important because it provided feedforward on the assignment [e.g., Jones et al. 2017] while also giving the students some practice at assessing [Carless and Boud 2018] before the peer review. Involving students in the feedback process at the review stage was not only getting students to think about peer's work, but ultimately their own [Nicol 2021] and to use the processing of the feedback [Malecka et al. 2020] to help them detect anomalies in not only their peer's work, but their own [e.g., Sadler 2013]. However, my goal was not to see if students improved on their work, but to investigate what the significant elements of the process were.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

I gathered a lot of qualitative data in the form of

Week in Module	Activity	Description
Week 2	Introduction to Marking Rubric	Students discussed the marking rubric for the assignment.
Week 3	Grading Exemplars	Students used the rubric to grade two exemplars [one of good quality and one of poorer quality].
Week 4	Discussing Exemplars	Students discussed the quality of the exemplars in small groups deciding which was better.
Week 5	Feedback example & discussion	Students were shown how the tutor provided feedback on an exemplar.
Week 8	Draft submission	Students wrote up a draft of the assignment.
Week 10	Feedback provided	Students reviewed two drafts. Feedback was distributed to students.
Week 12	Final submission	Students submitted their final assignment.

Table 1. A timeline of the peer review activity.

written reflections, audio recorded discussions [e.g., exemplar discussions among student groups], focus group interviews, and one-to-one interviews. Overall, the students had a positive experience of the peer review process even though they experienced some challenges, like difficulties in assessing peer work [e.g., Vickerman 2009]. I believe the process worked well because the students had access to guidance while they engaged with the process and judged the peer work and their own. Significantly, the feedback element of the peer review provided the students with guidance specifically on their own work which was facilitated through their checking behaviour and resulted in them making several judgements to better their own work.

A thematic analysis of the data distilled three main themes shown in Figure 1. Feedback was found to be part of the theme of Guidance, but it was a critical element of the judgements made by students, particularly on their own work. In

general, the feedforward received from the rubric criteria, the exemplars, and the discussing of exemplars along with viewing peers' work allowed students to develop their awareness of quality

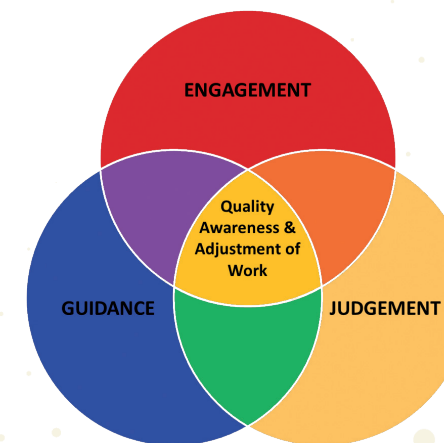


Figure 1. The themes distilled from students' experiences of peer review.

work and then to use that awareness to suggest amendments [in the form of feedback generated] to their peer's work as well as their own.

## CONCLUSION

At least once a semester, allow students to do one of the following within a formative assessment approach to help them develop their judgement:

Review exemplars and provide feedback on those exemplars.

Review peer's work and provide feedback on that work.



# Screencasting: A way to engage students with feedback

BY DAVID CRANNY



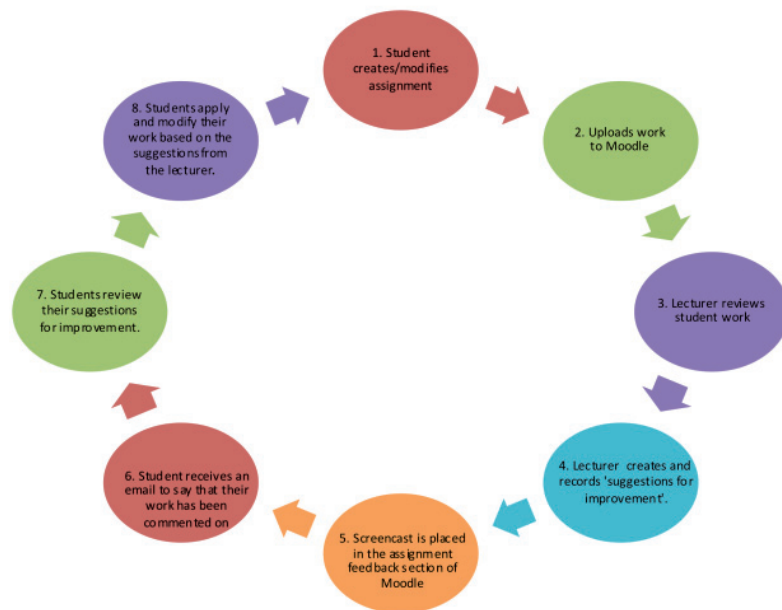
## WHAT I DID AND WHY

The study involved formative feedback provided to second year students of the BA in Sport Exercise and Enterprise on a multi-stage assessment in which they created a Mahara e-portfolio. Students were given the opportunity to submit for formative feedback mid-way through semester 1 with a proportion of the module marks [25%] being awarded for the end of semester 1. Students completed a final end-of-year portfolio detailing their semester 2 activities, which was submitted on week 12 of semester 2 and was worth 35%.

## HOW I DID IT

I used the following approach:

1. Students create a series of e-portfolio pages that are placed into a collection.
2. Once created, students upload their e-portfolios to the assignment submission link on Moodle.
3. Lecturer views the student work, records the feedback using screencapture software.
4. The lecturer records between 3-6 minutes of good quality, detailed formative feedback. This



MY NAME IS DAVID CRANNY. I AM A LECTURER IN THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND HUMANITIES AND ON THE MA IN LEARNING & TEACHING AT DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY.

## INTRODUCTION

The feedback that students receive on their work is a problematic area in Higher Education. Lecturers are concerned by a lack of student engagement with feedback, and students report a lack of feedback being provided, a lack of clarity in the feedback, or being provided too late to apply. This piece reports on a small-scale study, which sought to evaluate screencasting [digitally recording content on a computer screen along with audio/video narration from the teacher] as a means of enhancing the formative assessment process for students, and to develop guidelines for practitioners wishing to adopt its use.

feedback, based on the assessment criteria, signposts elements of good work, indicates what improvements need to be made, and suggests how these can be made.

5. Once finished, the lecturer generates a hyperlink to the screencast that is pasted into the comments section on the student's assignment submission page.
6. The student receives a notification email to inform them that they have feedback on their portfolio.
7. The student logs on to Moodle and views the feedback

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

In evaluating this case study, I used a mixed methods approach using an anonymous online survey and a focus group. For both students and the lecturer, using screencasting was an innovative and effective way to deliver formative feedback. Student responses indicated that students engaged with screencast feedback in a number of ways:

Ease of access facilitates engagement: By using Moodle students know where to access their feedback.

"It's very accessible, that is with the touch of a few buttons you are in. You know where it is [VLE] and once you've the internet you can access it anywhere. With my written feedback sheets I either lose, or I'll shove the feedback sheet in my bag, it ends up being crumpled and illegible."

There is a preference for the dialogic nature that comes through strongly in screencast feedback.

"It is very specific to you. It is something like a one-to-one meeting with a laptop but it is not really. If that makes sense."

Students engage and apply the feedback provided: On average the students viewed their feedback 3-4 times. More importantly they are applying the feedback to their summative submissions.

"When I'm watching it, I'll watch it the whole way through. Then I'll have two tabs open, going over and back playing and pausing and making the corrections as I go."

## CONCLUSION

The use of screencasting to provide feedback is an effective medium that engages students. The medium, however, is only as effective as the message contained within it (Cranny 2016). The structure of the feedback is crucial. Students need to be able to understand and act on the feedback provided. Where they need to improve, suggestions should be offered on how to do so. Likewise, where they have done well, they need to be told where their work is good and how they may improve this further. Students value the opportunity to submit for formative feedback early in their module as it provides them with some clarity on how they are 'doing'. It also provides the lecturer with an indication as to their progress and can flag some potential issues that some students may be facing. This can also be used as a tool to possibly improve retention.

## GUIDELINES FOR PRACTITIONERS WISING TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK USING SCREENCAST SOFTWARE

1. Use a good quality microphone/headset to capture your voice. It is important that the students can clearly hear your feedback.
2. Students are not expecting you to be a professional broadcaster. Be yourself and be genuine when recording.
3. Say Hi [student name], thank the students for submitting.
4. State which assignment you are giving feedback on.
5. Keep your recordings short. The recommended time for recording is between 3-6 minutes. Any more than that and you can overload the students. Should you have further information to communicate, invite the students to seek further guidance by contacting the lecturer directly.

6. Always address the assessment criteria.
7. Always try to be positive and give praise for good aspects of the work.
8. Offer a few, reasonably attainable suggestions for improvement [scaffold the feedback], even if the work is excellent.
9. Provide the grade band that the work is in [for formative submissions].
10. Round things off in a friendly way.
11. Generate hyperlink to screencast, this will ensure students can download it.
12. Use VLE [Moodle] assignment section to circulate feedback back to the student

# The road to student feedback literacy

BY DONAL MCMORLAND

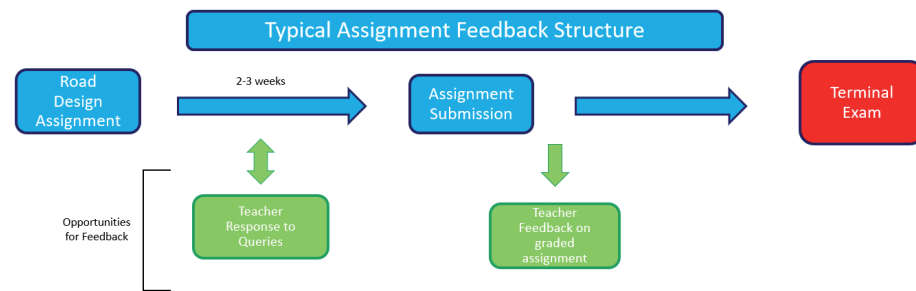
MY NAME IS DONAL MCMORLAND. I AM IN MY SECOND YEAR OF TEACHING CIVIL ENGINEERING AT DKIT AND AM COMPLETING THE MA IN LEARNING & TEACHING. MY PREVIOUS BACKGROUND WAS PRIMARILY AS A CIVIL DESIGN ENGINEER WITHIN INDUSTRY.

## WHAT I DID AND WHY

My feedback intervention was implemented with a group of 20 students in a third year Civil Engineering module, Highways & Transportation Engineering. Previously in this module, students completed three pieces of formative Continuous Assessment (CA) and were provided with teacher feedback on each.

On reflection, a number of issues with this feedback process became apparent. The feedback was teacher-driven and overly reliant on teacher input: there were minimal opportunities for students to generate and use feedback from alternative sources: there was little opportunity for students to put the feedback into practice until studying for the final exam. The process reinforced the notion of the teacher as information provider with the students in a more passive role and did not encourage the development of skills necessary for students to self-regulate their own learning and performance. I realised also that I never discussed the feedback process, expectations or roles with the students.

To address this, I designed a multi-stage assessment activity which would place more focus on developing student skills in seeking, interpreting and using feedback, skills referred to as feedback literacy. In designing the assignment, I planned to model the feedback on the way that it occurs in the profession (Dawson et al. 2021). This included peer feedback, which Nicol et al. (2014) argue can actually be more beneficial to the giver than the



receiver. To encourage students to consider the peer feedback comments, they were free to accept or reject these as long as they justified their decision. The assignment took place over four weeks with draft submission and peer review at the end of Week 2, leaving the final two weeks to apply the feedback.

## HOW I DID IT

The assignment, which replaced one of the existing CA elements, was based on a practical topic which involves using 3D software to design a road. The process of designing roads is an iterative one which can result in a number of valid designs. Part of this process in the workplace involves the continuous application of internal and external feedback to improve the design. Internal feedback is achieved by checking one's design against design standards, and the external feedback can be from a third party who is tasked with checking the design. The assignment was a practical road design mini-project which mirrored the real-world process and provide students opportunities to receive and apply feedback from multiple sources. The sources included:

- Informal class discussions to set expectations

around the feedback process, clarify teacher/student roles and outline how students could be proactive in seeking and acting on feedback.

- National road design standards to guide students' design decisions.
- Video exemplars of the design process so students appreciate quality work and begin to make judgements in relation to their own performance (Carless and Chan 2017).
- Individual face-to-face conversations where students sought feedback.
- Peer feedback in pairs on draft designs supported by a suggested feedback template and following guidance on providing peer feedback. To ensure peer feedback is given consideration, students were free to accept or reject peer comments as long as they justified their decisions, mimicking the real-world process of external feedback on designs.
- Facility to request particular feedback on draft submissions.
- Screencasted teacher feedback on drafts.

The process was designed to allow sufficient time

and opportunities for feedback to be applied at various stages.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

Feedback has been shown to have a powerful influence on students learning but it has also regularly been described as ineffective by students. However, in this assignment the activities appear to have increased student engagement with the feedback. Students were more proactive than previously in seeking feedback from alternative sources and they were not solely reliant on the teacher. There was also an improvement in submission quality and overall student understanding between the draft and final submissions.

On completing the assignment students were asked for their views on the impact of feedback during the assignment (n = 16). Most students (69%) believed they had a better understanding of the assignment topic as a result of the feedback. 87% believed that their final submission was better as a result of the

feedback process with 94% indicating that they would not change anything in the structure of the assignment.

When asked about the effectiveness of the various methods, students rated the exemplar videos highest. This may be because the videos demonstrated the design process. Students rated peer review and design standards as the least effective. Students do not appear to have viewed the comparison of their work with the design standards as feedback. In a follow-up class discussion, some students indicated that they didn't see their peers as experts and preferred to wait for teacher feedback. However, when asked about the process of assessing someone else's design and providing comments, some students noted that this process helped them spot issues with their own assignment. Also, their peer feedback comments indicated that they genuinely sought to identify issues and provide solutions on each other's designs.

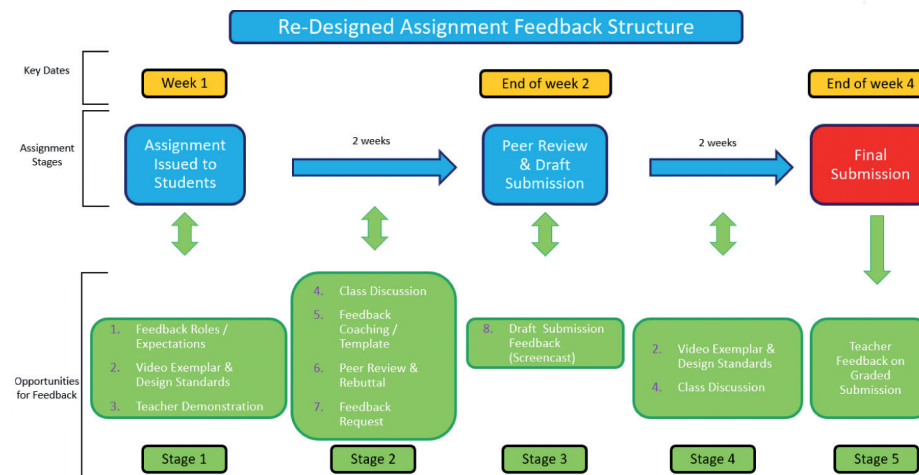
Although a small-scale intervention that may not

be as feasible with larger groups, this multi-stage assignment appears to have been effective as it gave students immediate opportunities to apply feedback with the incentive of improving their work, making them more likely to use the feedback.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Carless et al. (2011) note that the way educators design assessment can pave the way for effective feedback processes. Based on this experience, I would recommend designing assessment to shift the focus away from the teacher and onto the student in the feedback process, so that feedback is largely driven by the student and facilitated by the teacher.

For students to have adequate time to develop the skills for engaging with feedback, these types of feedback approaches should be introduced to students during first year. The student survey responses seem to support this as 94% suggesting that, beginning in first year, students should be taught how to seek, understand and use feedback.





# Taking shape: The many sides of feedback

BY ELLEN CONNOLLY



themselves. I had a very similar experience in the next session with them. This time, I asked them to write their response on a mini white board and display it. While this worked, there was still a great hesitancy in communicating.

I used a Think-Pair-Share activity to encourage the students to talk with each other and then give feedback verbally to the whole class. However, when it came to the sharing with their partner, the students seemed to be content in reading each other's points and writing down any additional to their own, but without talking to each other and discussing the points. If the students were to participate fully in the formative assessment activities in the class, learn from each other through peer feedback and begin to monitor their own learning, I needed to find ways to build their confidence and their communication skills as a first step.

## HOW I DID IT

To provide a structure in some of our formative activities and encourage interaction among the students, I introduced a technique called Cubing. Cubing is a technique to encourage looking at a topic in six (each side of a cube) different ways. Often, we think about a topic in one or two ways alone, preventing us from fully understanding its complexity. Cubing also allows you to focus on each side a bit longer than you may have with other forms of brainstorming [Kent State University n.d.]. Cubing is an interactive method that includes both physical and mental activity and can be applied in any area of teaching and learning. It can be used to determine students' prior knowledge or for assessing their learning progress. With the cubing technique, each of the six sides of the cube can

represent a different keyword or point which should be considered when answering a question on any topic. The steps are:

- Choose a topic/ area
- Choose six key points/ words from the topic and write them on each side of the cube
- Choose different perspectives or levels such compare, describe, analyse, apply, agree, disagree. These can link to Blooms Taxonomy with different levels being represented by different colours.
- Students then roll the cube and respond to the topic on the upper side.

For the topic of World Religions, I made cubes and added the following phrases to the sides: Founder / When / Communal prayer importance in contrast religion / Moral code/ Gods / Compare to other world religions. I also used different colours to differentiate the levels of Bloom's taxonomy. However, the students were unaware of these levels.

Cubing can be used as an individual activity, in pairs or in groups. Initially, I had the students work individually and then working in pairs. The pair work encouraged peer learning as students began to talk to one another on what they had written and what areas they could improve, creating a more positive classroom environment by having students talk comfortably with each other.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

I noted in my reflective diary that, with my guidance, the cubing method was prompting students to talk and discuss ideas with each other. However, by the third class this began to happen naturally without my guidance. As the

weeks progressed, students began to monitor their learning and become conscious of how they could improve if they completed each side of the cube. It was clear from their work that the students were using the cubes, asking their peers and then finishing off their work.

Students said they found the method very useful as it gave them ideas as to what to write about if they were unsure of what to do next. It also helped them to understand how they would be assessed and what points they needed to include. This was especially interesting as we often assume that

students will know this without us informing them. Many of the students said that they looked forward to coming to religion class as they could talk and share their answers in their pairs.

## CONCLUSION

The cubing method can work very well with junior classes but also perhaps as a revision method with more senior students preparing for exams. One colleague suggested that a next step might be to eventually get students to create their own cubes to increase their self-regulation.

As a formative activity, cubing allows thinking time for students and encourages them to develop answers further, depending on the topic of the cube. Using the method has created a more positive classroom environment where the students feel more confident in their work and more comfortable sharing with each other. This has helped to initiate the process of giving and receiving peer feedback and regulating their own learning.



# Experiments in feedback: Responses to student essays

BY HELEN MARIE HOWLEY



## INTRODUCTION

Written assignments such as essay-type or short reports have long been used for assessment purposes in third-level institutions. The formal end-of-semester examination typically involves a number of essay-style questions which are used to assign grades. What often gets lost in this process, however, is the opportunity to provide meaningful feedback to students. When essays or written tasks are used as part of a Continuous Assessment process, lecturers may take the opportunity to include feedback, but as Newell [1994] explains, we are more likely to 'assign a grade or correct errors' in surface-level mechanics. Studies have shown however, that essay-style tasks are linked to students developing and using deep learning strategies [Freestone, 2009]. In the same way, 'carefully designed' feedback has been shown to enhance the learning process [Henderson, 2019]. I wish to share my experiences with asking students to submit drafts of written work and attempting to provide 'carefully designed' feedback as a support for learning.

## WHAT I DID AND WHY

The focus of this article is on my module - Intercultural Studies [America] - a 5-credit module taught to second year students of Business Studies [NFQ level 6] at Dundalk Institute of Technology [DKIT]. The aim of the module is to build students' intercultural competence through an exploration of the politics, society and culture of North and Latin America. The module is assessed by 100% continuous assessment involving a written component and a group presentation. I designed a written assessment incorporating four key content areas [4 X 500 words]. Using rubrics as a scaffold,

students were asked to answer a content-based question, but they were also given a space in which to comment and reflect on the content [see Figures 2a and 2b]. The assessment was designed to enable students to present work that demonstrated a basic level of knowledge and understanding, but also the ability to critically engage with the material.

## HOW I DID IT

Students were encouraged to submit a draft of their written work in Week 8 of the semester with a view to giving them feedback. Marks [10%] were awarded as an incentive for submitting the draft and also for acting upon the feedback to improve the final version. As Freestone [2009] has put it, 'when students are given feedback that relates to a specific future task and are encouraged to understand and act upon the feedback, this will improve their performance'. On receiving the first draft of the assessment, I found that the students were comfortable with the content-based questions but were very uneasy with the requirement to comment on or to analyse the material. The task for me was to provide directional feedback which would induce students to revise and improve the quality of the written responses. At the same time, there was a danger that my feedback would result in just 'fixing-up' the superficial elements of the answer. What, if anything, would students learn from such a response?

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

In the end, the solution came from the research. In particular, Newell [1994] describes an approach to feedback which functions as a 'dialogue' with the material. This approach assumes the written work to be a work-in-progress and attempts to pose

questions, initiate a dialogue and offer strategies to support the student. Taking this approach, my feedback on draft comments often took the form of questions which focused on students' interpretations [see Figure 1]. By encouraging students to reformulate their own responses and to consider their constructions of meaning, it meant that the final piece of writing contained more considered responses. In addition, I included directional comments as well to deal with issues of structure and organisation of the material - so for example, I instructed the student to create a new paragraph and introduce a topic sentence. By using both directed comments and the dialogue stance, I found that students were more inclined to revise their answers.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, I found that the practice of including written commentary as feedback and in particular introducing the 'dialogue' element, meant that I was able to directly engage with the students. A survey of students conducted after the written assignment found that the experience was highly valued by them as well. However, there are a number of caveats. First of all, the practice of providing feedback is extremely time-consuming and I was fortunate in that I had a small class comprising only 12 students. Second of all, I feel that I could have spent more time laying the groundwork. I think that time spent teaching about the role of feedback could have helped create a mind-set that would lead to the creation of a 'feedback template' [co-constructed with the students] to reduce the amount of time given to individualised feedback. But that's for another day ...

New paragraph - start with an opening or topic sentence - what is this paragraph going to be about? With the immigration of travellers from many different parts of Europe to this new world looking for an independent land to be free from the rulings of the old world to practice their own ways and different faiths showed that that people back then are no different to people of today in many lands, wanting to move away from certain religious ways or dictatorship to a land where they feel they can be free. Reading up on the Declaration I found it really interesting in the 'all men are

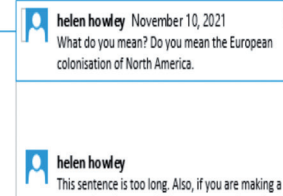


Figure 1.

## INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT

### Reflective Report [50%]

Students must write FOUR reflective reports reflecting on these four topics

1. American Core Values [choose any TWO]
2. Cultures in Latin America [choose ONE or more]
3. Political systems of the Americas
4. The experience of immigration in the United States [4 x 500 words each]

Include at least two sources and reference using the Harvard Referencing System.

Times New Roman font size 12

Figure 2a: Assignment

TOPIC 1	QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED	MARKS
AMERICAN CORE VALUES	Describe the subject area. What are the main themes, concepts or ideas that you are reflecting on?	
DESCRIPTION	Include at least two sources of information [along with the lecture notes]. In-text citation example [Howley, 2018] Include reference list at the end.	30
ANALYSIS	What was new about this information? Can you relate it to something in your own [cultural] experience? Are there aspects you found particularly interesting or challenging? Did it change your thinking about something - what was this? Did it confirm what you already knew [what]?	30
APPLICATION	What aspects of this topic do you think require further research? How might this knowledge be used/applied in the future? Where might you use this information?	30
DRAFT	Students submitted a draft and made revisions to the final document.	10

Figure 2b: Reflective Report Template



# Wings to fly - Fledgling feedback

BY ISOLDE GAVIN, MARY MCSKEANE AND CATHERINE O'CONNOR



ISOLDE GAVIN

WE ARE ISOLDE GAVIN, MARY MCSKEANE AND CATHERINE O'CONNOR - THREE LECTURERS WHO TEACH ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES PROGRAMME IN THE DEPARTMENT OF NURSING, MIDWIFERY AND EARLY YEARS.

OUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE MODULE CHALLENGES STUDENTS TO DEVELOP ASPECTS OF THEIR PRACTICE IN NEW AND COMPLEX WAYS BY SETTING UP AND RUNNING A PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP WE ENVISAGE OUR MODULE AS A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SPACE FOR STUDENTS TO TRY OUT INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND LEARN FROM TRIAL-AND-ERROR AS, IN PRACTICE, STUDENTS OFTEN FEEL WARY OF RISKING INNOVATIVE IDEAS OF THEIR OWN.

## WHAT WE DID AND WHY

While our students have told us they find the module a valuable and rewarding experience, many also feel anxious about the assessment. We want our students to grow in confidence and be ready to take flight as competent and capable professionals. The assessment and feedback process seems to be a barrier to that aim.

The assessment consists of several components. Students complete practical work, reflective diaries and written observations of children's learning, receiving detailed feedback on each. However, anxiety remains because students often find it difficult to apply the feedback from one component to another as these often relate to distinct aspects of professional practice.

For the practical component, students participate in weekly large group discussion and group feedback on their collective practical work. Ad-hoc individual verbal feedback is provided throughout the semester with written individual feedback at the end of the semester. Students are sometimes unsure and anxious about how best to apply group feedback to their own individual practices.

## HOW WE DID IT

We changed the structure of our submission and feedback process so that each component was broken down into smaller pieces [with lower stakes] with 'rolling' feedback which students could feel confident to apply to the next component. For example, students could readily apply feedback from initial reflective diaries to the remaining ones. To reduce students' anxiety about their practical performance, we divided the semester into four 3-week blocks of 'practice and review'. Students had four dates in the

semester when they knew that they would receive individual feedback on the previous three weeks' work. Students were also assigned a designated lecturer/mentor' who would consistently feedback to them. A portion of the marks of the practical component was awarded on each of these dates, which included an individual session with their mentor.

## WE HOPED THAT THE STUDENTS WOULD:

1. Find this process more meaningful and engaging since the feedback all related to their performance over the previous three weeks [a much shorter time than previously].
2. Be better able to identify how to apply the individual feedback to professional challenges in the next three weeks and feel more ownership for improving their own practice.
3. Feel more confident to explore best practice when they were rewarded repeatedly for innovation, quality and aspirational practice even if everything did not work out perfectly.
4. Have increased confidence in their emerging identity as professionals, since they knew what they were doing well.
5. Experience less anxiety as the timing of individual feedback would be predictable. Facilitating a Parent and Toddler Group for members of the public already creates much unpredictability and uncertainty for the students, so we wanted to minimise this.
6. Benefit from the consistency of one mentor, with whom they could discuss and clarify their understanding of the feedback.

The changes we made related solely to lecturer

feedback and were in addition to the existing feedback. The weekly practices of group reflection, group discussion and group feedback continued. In addition, the students continued to have access to authentic, real-world feedback from those attending the parent and toddler group. This consisted of both formal and informal written and verbal feedback from parents and observational feedback representing the voice of the young children. The students also continued to receive peer-feedback on their written work before sharing with families.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

We noticed that, as typically happens in this module, the students grew in confidence in their practice as the semester progressed. However, many students were hugely reassured by the marks that they were awarded, particularly after the first 'practice and review' cycle and to have the opportunity to understand in detail what these were awarded for. We observed that, in comparison to other years, the students seemed calmer, more confident and better able to focus on the important aspects of their practice, particularly after the delivery of the first couple



MARY MCSKEANE

of pieces of feedback. As the weeks progressed, they appeared increasingly comfortable engaging in feedback as an on-going conversation, often having prepared questions to ask about feedback to better tease out how exactly they could improve. The assessment process was no longer a barrier to student confidence and learning but rather an enabler of those very things.

We gave the students a survey at the end of the semester. 19 students out of 25 responded. Students' feedback about our changed approach was overwhelmingly positive with most strongly agreeing that the regular feedback and incremental marks helped them improve their practice.

When asked which aspects of the module were most useful, some responses included:

*"Mentor meetings were most valuable to me as they allowed feedback and constructive criticism to provide me with the opportunity to better my practice."*

*"I really found the mentoring meetings and feedback, as the weeks progressed, very useful as it allowed me to work towards improving my practice and overall grade."*

Interestingly, the students continued to also value highly both the group feedback and the feedback from parents who attended the group, suggesting that multiple sources and types of feedback are valued by students in progressing their learning in diverse ways. We were glad that we had not lost these types of feedback when introducing new ones.

## CONCLUSION

We found that greater use of formative assessment need not add to marking workload. For example, splitting the reflective diary into two parts did not add any additional reading time as the amount of written material produced by the students remained the same. While it did involve an increase in the time spent writing the feedback for the



CATHERINE O'CONNOR

additional submission, we considered this time well spent as the students valued it greatly and were able to use the feedback to improve their work.

While allocating class time for ongoing constructive feedback and individual discussion can feel like a luxury when we need to 'get through' so much content, students value this time to engage with the feedback to progress their skills.

Our students' learning was enriched by the multiple sources of authentic feedback that they had including the 'real-world' voices in addition to their academic mentors.





# That Girl – The power of feedback BY JOHDI QUINN



taken aback read the title and blurb. '100 Years of Solitude' by Gabriel Garcia Márquez, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Colombian author of magic realism, whatever that was. That night, she started reading the book. She took it everywhere with her and read it hungrily. Being given the prize-winning book made her feel valuable, seen, heard in the classroom. The task required of her, to fall in love with a language, tapped into a young heart which ached for something more. Reading it made her see her own reality from a different perspective. The night she finished it, she promised herself that one day she would go to Colombia and read the book in Spanish. The girl went on to read that book in Spanish while tracing the steps of the characters in Colombia. She spent most of her 20's living, working and studying in Colombia, where she found her passion for teaching.



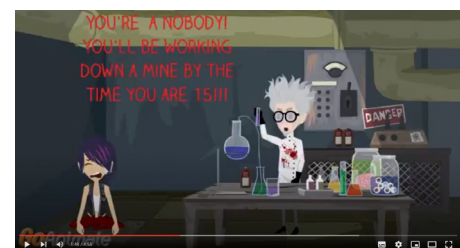
MY NAME IS JOHDI QUINN. I TEACH IN THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND HUMANITIES. I WROTE THE FOLLOWING PIECE TO ACCOMPANY AN ANIMATION ABOUT FEEDBACK AND THE IMPACT THAT IT CAN HAVE ON LEARNERS AS PART OF MY MASTERS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING.

## INTRODUCTION

There were two girls who went to the same school in London Town. One day in their 13th year, one girl went into a Spanish class and the other girl went into a Physics class. This is what happened.

At the end of the Spanish class, the Spanish teacher handed the girl a book in English with a jungle scene and tropical yellow butterflies on the front. He said to her, "You got 19 out of 20 in the Vocab test, read this novel, fall in love with Spanish". The girl, somewhat

Meanwhile, the other girl went into her Physics class, where the whole class was messing around, albeit with Bunsen burners. In a fit of rage, maybe frustration, the Physics teacher singled out the girl who lived on the wrong side of town and shouted at her, "You're a nobody. You'll be working down a mine by the time you're 15!". The girl did not respond. But she did the maths and figured she had two years left at school until she would inevitably drop out. Within the year, dropout she did. She didn't work in a mine, but she drifted from job to job. Nobody was surprised. Nobody called to see why she wasn't coming back to school.



These two girls were actually just one girl, the same girl. The same girl hearing different feedback messages from two teachers on the same day. The girl went with the "Colombian book" feedback and not the "Working in a mine" feedback, the reason being due to wider circumstances in the girl's life, her family, her self-esteem and sense of self. But she could list a number of her peers who were given similar "down the mine" messages and, in the absence of any other feedback, it went into their belief system, and they followed a similar path to the dropping out example.

I'm not sure that we know how powerful our feedback can be on our learners. Not all feedback is life changing, but it is the conduit between educator and learner and the human thread that links us as educators with our students. Literature suggests that this human thread needs to be nurtured by showing sensitivity to students' emotional responses and psychological needs, provide little threat to the person and encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.

The book conversation gave feedback on the task, the process and self-regulation, which encouraged the girl to take her first step in becoming a lifelong learner. The 'mine' feedback however was personal

and threatening to the student's self. Evidence suggests that this type of feedback, when positive, is ineffectual and, when negative, unthinkable. These two students may represent the opposing sides of Carol Dweck's Fixed and Growth Mindset model which suggests that educator's and student's own theory of intelligence can orient students either towards or away from learning. Students with a fixed view of intelligence are discouraged from taking active charge of their learning and had the girl shared the fixed view of intelligence, which the Physics teacher evidently had, she could have taken the view that he was right: It was not worth her studying hard because she would never amount to anything. However, students with a malleable view of intelligence are encouraged to participate in, regulate and motivate their own learning process. The girl had a Growth Mindset and a strong but as yet unexplored belief in the transformative power of learning. She had a deep-rooted motivation to learn, which is the first step on the road of self-regulation. The Spanish teacher saw that in her and brought it to life with the gift of a few words and a piece of literature. May we end his story with a metaphor. Feedback, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish your learners' growth without destroying his or her roots.

## THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO THAT GIRL.

This piece is based on very real-life experiences that I had at school in an unwieldy, bursting at the seams, comprehensive school in North-West London. The feedback is verbatim and the fact that I can remember word for word what both teachers said to me some 35 years ago, I feel, is testament to the power of feedback.

The Colombian book feedback was life-changing for me. I did fall in love with Spanish and I have dedicated my life to cultivating and nurturing my relationship with the Spanish language and the Spanish speaking world in all its breathtaking cultural, political and geographical richness. But the 'down the mine' feedback was also life changing for me. I have also spent my life working to ensure that people from backgrounds similar to my own, who may have been given similar 'down the mine' messages because they came from the wrong side of town, get a second chance at education, a real chance at education, a chance at an education that is based on humanity, dignity, respect and equality. A chance at an education that emancipates rather than domesticates. A transformative education that does not merely give the person the fish, nor does it just teach the person to fish, but it asks why that person or community has no fish in the first place. It took quite a lot for me to publish this piece because for a long time, it felt too revealing and I think I carried a lot of shame from those teacher's words. But it feels like the time has come to share this story, my story, well part of my story, to shed that shame... Thank you for listening.

Scan here to view the video on YouTube.





# A new world: Assessment and feedback from the living room

BY JONATHAN BRENNAN



[VLEs], and there was little guidance from the Department of Education and Skills as to the most effective VLE, certainly at Primary level. As one teacher quoted in the Irish Times in April 2020 remarked, "Distance learning was never mentioned in primary education until after we were closed abruptly. It was not discussed at all and no one has training in it" [Wayman 2020]. An INTO report warned that the experience of remote teaching would be "negative for those whose parents do not do work with them at home and also for 6th class pupils who will miss out on some key learning of Maths concepts before secondary school which they cannot teach themselves at home and we cannot expect parents to teach them" [Burke and Dempsey 2020, p.42]. Luckily for me, taking part in MALT in DKIT had given me an excellent foundation in setting up a VLE for my pupils.

Determined that the students would not have a negative experience, I decided to use Google Classroom to engage with my 6th class pupils on a daily basis. Google Classroom is a free web-based VLE that allows educators to engage with pupils by setting assignments, communicating with them, giving instant feedback as well as allocating grades.

## HOW I DID IT

As Google Classroom was completely new, I made myself as familiar as possible with it a week in advance of introducing it to my pupils and their parents/guardians. I felt it was important to keep the parents/guardians well informed of my intention to use Google Classroom as they would be the first port of call for my students if they had any technical issues. I felt that Google Classroom would permit me to have daily communication with my students to provide continuous support and

feedback that was as close as possible to the face-to-face teaching that occurred in my classroom daily.

I spent the first fortnight easing my students into using Google Classroom, gradually increasing the daily exercises they had to complete, and they got to grips with it quickly. Each morning, I would schedule an announcement outlining the work for the day and emphasising that I was available should anyone have any problems. I focused on the core subjects of English, Irish and Maths and some days I would assign tasks from other subjects. Rather than just assigning tasks to the children, I prepared and uploaded daily exemplars detailing how to do particular tasks in each subject. Using Microsoft Word and Google Docs meant the children could print them and have them in front of them. To coincide with these documents, I used screencasts to give detailed exemplars of how to do the tasks to be submitted. The beauty of this was that they could be watched as many times as necessary, and the children could refer back to them if needed.

Once the formative exercises were assigned and exemplars provided, the children were ready to work. They could upload the completed tasks on Google Forms and Google Docs throughout the day. I could then grade the work and give detailed individual feedback through the comments space attached to each upload. From the children's perspective they were getting almost instant feedback. I could identify very quickly who was meeting the learning outcomes and who was struggling and arrange for one-to-one intervention if needed. For those children who were struggling, I could also create specific screencasts targeting the area where they were in difficulty.

For my assessment records, I wanted to assess the children on how they engaged with and comprehended the lessons each week so that I could identify where extra support was needed.

I used a traffic light system for a quick and easy visual representation of children's performance. Each child was allocated points for engagement, concentration and comprehension ranging from 3 point for a high level to 1 point for a low level. At the end of each week, I calculated the child's total under each criterion. This weekly total was then allocated a traffic light colour indicating their achievement as follows:

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

From an assessment and feedback point of view, Google Classroom provided opportunities to give daily constructive feedback to the children and pinpoint areas of weakness on a topic, allowing for one-to-one intervention if needed. I could evaluate whether the learners were achieving their learning outcomes for each topic. If a child was having a specific problem, screencasting allowed me create a video specifically for that child that was as close as possible to face-to-face teaching. I could also assess the children from an engagement, concentration and comprehension point of view to ensure the best possible learner experience for them. This was a very important aspect of remote learning as it was a new experience and a worrying time for parents and children in relation to their education. This was reflected by the positive feedback I received from parents and pupils.

- Green: 11-15 points [High achievement]
- Amber: 6-10 points [Average achievement]
- Red: 0-5 points [Low achievement]

Pupil A: Low Achiever	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	TOTAL
Engagement	1	2	1	0	0	4
Concentration	1	1	0	1	0	3
Comprehension	1	1	0	1	0	3

Pupil B: High Achiever	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	TOTAL
Engagement	3	3	3	3	3	15
Concentration	3	3	3	3	3	15
Comprehension	3	3	3	3	3	15

## CONCLUSION

From a primary education point of view, Google Classroom is an effective VLE for children nearing the end of their primary cycle. Other VLEs such as Seesaw, Microsoft Teams for Education and ClassDojo are also widely used by schools, meaning that we are now better prepared to return to remote learning if necessary.

Based on my experience, I would also recommend seeking feedback from learners and parents. This can help you assess your own teaching and alter your lessons to be more effective, especially in a remote context, where help from parents was often sought by the learners.





# First-time feedback for second-chance learners

BY KAREN HARRISON



feedback intervention was developed around the latter project, worth 10% of the overall grade, which involves learners investigating sporting amenities in the locality, then designing and presenting a poster on one such amenity. Two key feedback activities carried out during the project were the assessment of exemplars using the assessment rubric and anonymous peer feedback on learners' draft posters and accompanying oral presentations.

## HOW I DID IT

The learners tend to have little experiences of peer feedback. So, when I mentioned that feedback, including peer feedback, would form part of the project, I was met with silent scepticism. When asked about it, the learners indicated a fear of the unknown and fear of failure and were concerned about not "being qualified" to give feedback. However, once I clarified the assessment brief and rubric, explaining how the feedback process could help improve their work, their concerns were somewhat alleviated.

Once learners had identified their sporting amenity, they began to work on the posters. When some began to struggle with content and graphics, I showed two exemplars of different standards from previous learners. To help the learners better understand what was needed, I asked them to use the rubric to assess and give feedback on the exemplars. They engaged well, with some even enjoying the "assessor" role. Others, however, said the exemplars were "off-putting" as their own work looked "rubbish" by comparison, so they would have to award "top marks".

Once the posters were completed, I gave the learner's time to plan and practice their

presentations. At this point, I showed them a recording of a previous presentation, which I asked them to consider using the assessment brief. In the discussion that followed, we explored what good quality work looked like and how to obtain the marks awarded.

For the peer feedback activity, I distributed short feedback forms to the learners asking them to make some brief comments on each presentation under the headings of Content, Organisation and Delivery skills.

I collated the completed feedback forms and gave each learner their feedback to read. I then held one-to-one conversations with each learner to discuss the feedback and any questions or comments they had.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

In these one-to-one conversations, most learners said they "enjoyed" the process indicating that they felt the "focus" was on them and they were the drivers of the process. Others remarked on being the "assessor" rather than the "assessee", something which can contribute positively to academic self-belief [Simonsmeier et al. 2020]. Some learners also mentioned it was good to hear another point of view, other than the teacher's one, as their peers offered "suggestions" rather than "telling" them what to do.

Almost all learners said they felt it was much easier to give feedback anonymously, saying they would have almost felt compelled to only give positive feedback if they were to give it face-to-face. Many felt it would be "very awkward" trying to be "diplomatic" and not "hurt anyone's feelings".

In relation to improving on their work, half of the learners said they had already decided what they would change about their work as soon as they saw the exemplars of what other learners had produced. A further three learners said they would only make changes based on the written feedback received, making comments such as "I liked reading the comments" from my peers, and I found them "helpful". Some also added that without the feedback, they would have left the work unchanged. Only one learner remarked that they would not be making any changes to their work, stating they "appreciated" the feedback and "would keep it in mind for future work".

## CONCLUSION

This intervention appeared to give the learners greater agency and confidence. By asking them to provide feedback to each other, they became active participants in each other's learning, were able to

articulate positive aspects of each other's work. Most decided to change their work based on either reviewing the exemplars or receiving comments in the peer feedback [Winstone et al. 2017]

There may have been an element of novelty for the learners in participating in this activity as it was a little different from the norm. Interestingly, the learners also said the feedback felt more "formal" when they received it from their peers. I had not expected to hear this remark, but at the same time, I was not surprised as projects of this type often do not "feel" like an assessment to this cohort, and that is where programmes of this type differ from the school environment.

While I hope that this small-scale intervention may provide important insights to be gained for teachers of second-chance learners, many of whom may share the challenges that this learner cohort experienced, there could have been a different

result with a different group. The age profile and socio-economic background of second-chance learners mean the diversity of the groups change each year, resulting in different levels of interest and engagement. Based on this experience, I hope to build similar feedback activities involving peer feedback into the programme curriculum, with it becoming the norm rather than the exception.





# The problem with feedback . . .

BY KATE JOHNSTON



MY NAME IS KATE JOHNSTON. I TEACH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL STUDIES AT DKIT.

## INTRODUCTION

I recently came across an online article, in which an English school teacher in the US wrote a really insightful and honest account of her challenges with feedback. It caught my attention because it reflected in part my own experience as an educator. We all know that from a learning and teaching perspective feedback is one of the pillars of student-centred learning. We also know that students value feedback. But the practice of giving feedback is fraught with challenges. For many of us interested in this space, our own direct experience plus a wealth of empirical research points to challenges in terms of students'

engagement with feedback [Hyland 1998; Gibbs and Simpson 2004; Hounsell 2007].

## WHAT I DID AND WHY

This was the problem I faced a few years ago. I was teaching an undergraduate module, Research and Writing Skills, in which student groups were asked to develop a research proposal, which they had to submit for formative feedback. This research proposal was a central element to a larger research project and, like all good research proposals, was the building block upon which the entire project rested. During one feedback session, in which I was giving constructive feedback, I became acutely aware that the students were interpreting the feedback as a criticism and becoming quite defensive. Picking up on these cues, I wrapped up the session quickly and hurried back to my office. Instead of informing and motivating the students to make the suggested changes, the feedback had the opposite effect. I needed to find a different approach to delivering feedback.

At the time I was studying for the MALT at DKIT, so my first reaction was to go back to the literature. Dr. Naomi Winstone, a cognitive scientist, who has written and researched extensively in this area was my first port of call. Reading through the literature, studies by Nicol [2010] and Beaumont et al. [2011] suggested that framing feedback as a two-way communication process, a "dialogic cycle" in which the student has multiple opportunities to engage in the process was an important component within the feedback process. This idea of delivering feedback as a two-way conversation was interesting.

By pure chance, I came across a newspaper article about how Starbucks radically reshaped their employee training program for dealing with customer complaints following a rather public PR disaster involving a customer and a cup of coffee. They developed what they termed the LATTE approach, an acronym for dealing with customer complaints. LATTE stands for Listen, Acknowledge, Thank You, Take Action, and Explain. The approach was simple. When dealing with a customer complaint, the Starbucks employee was trained to deal with the situation from the LATTE perspective: first Listen to the customer, Acknowledge the complaint, Thank the customer, Take Action [in the form of offering a solution - a new cup of coffee] and finally close with an Explanation. I began playing around with the idea. Could this approach work for student feedback? It certainly seemed to align with framing feedback as a two-way communication process.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

In my next feedback session, I adopted the LATTE approach. I began by **Listening**, asking the students for their feedback and assessment on their work - what they felt was good, what they saw as areas that needed development. Then, I simply **Acknowledged** their input [effectively summarising what they had said] and said "Thanks. That's great". I then **Took Action** in the form of giving my feedback to the student. In most cases, I found the students more receptive to the feedback session and overall the sessions became more like a two-way conversation. I closed the session with an **Explanation** of how the proposed changes and feedback would improve their work and impact on their grade. Needless to say, the

feedback sessions went much better. They were more open and interactive. Students were more engaged with some even identifying areas for improvement themselves before I had given any feedback.

## CONCLUSION

Reflecting on using the LATTE method, it has certainly changed my approach to feedback. I now approach feedback as a two-way communication process. Like all communication, it has an emotional component. Often, for the most part I had ignored or underestimated this. The LATTE method is a consistent approach to delivering feedback that has helped me frame feedback in a more open and inclusive way with some surprisingly positive results.

Finally, it is easy to remember, given that most of us are familiar with a LATTE coffee. The idea of **LATTE Your Feedback** brings an element of softness to something that can, in some cases, be difficult.

## The LATTE Approach to Delivering Student Feedback

The **LATTE** is a simple 5 step approach to student feedback. The idea is that feedback is best delivered as a two-way communication process [a dialogue] between the student and tutor.



- L** **LISTEN TO THE STUDENT**  
Listen to the student first. Begin by asking what the student considers the strengths and weaknesses in the project.
- A** **ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR INPUT**  
Acknowledge and summarise what was said. This validates and clarifies the student's input.
- T** **THANK THEM**  
Thank them for their input. Simply saying "Thank you, that's really useful", shows mutual respect and builds trust.
- T** **THEN PROVIDE YOUR FEEDBACK . . .**  
Now put forward your feedback. What the tutor considers the strengths of the project and proposed changes. The student has the opportunity here to ask questions/seek clarification.
- E** **EXPLAIN THE OUTCOME**  
Explain how the changes will impact on the project and the grade.



The LATTE coffee mat.

# Building student confidence: Feedback using rubrics and exemplars

BY MAEVE MCARDLE



the standards required but to do so they must have a clear understanding of assessment and know what superior quality work looks like. This is the third year in which I've used an e-portfolio task as part of the continuous assessment of the Business Ethics and Corporate Citizenship module. In the previous two years, there were some very weak submissions, with some students failing this element. I always explained the task and the assessment criteria at the start of the semester, yet there was still a problem.

The literature indicates that in order to improve students' learning, we must develop their understanding of assessment [Rust et al. 2003]. My first thought, then, was to distribute the grading rubric to the class at the outset, something which I had not done previously. Nowadays, this "secret scoring sheet held by the teacher" is more widely distributed, prompted by policy change and the desire for transparency and consistency [Dawson 2017, p. 347]. However, while the rubric explicitly articulates the grading criteria, it still doesn't address the gap in tacit knowledge that can arise in assessment tasks. Such tacit knowledge is experience-based and 'difficult to transfer verbally or in writing' [Carless and Chan 2016, p.931], rather than being generated from reading grade descriptors. To build both explicit and tacit knowledge, I decided to provide students with the explicit criteria coupled with exposure to exemplars [Carless and Chan 2016], which I hoped would help them generate internal feedback and self-regulate their learning.

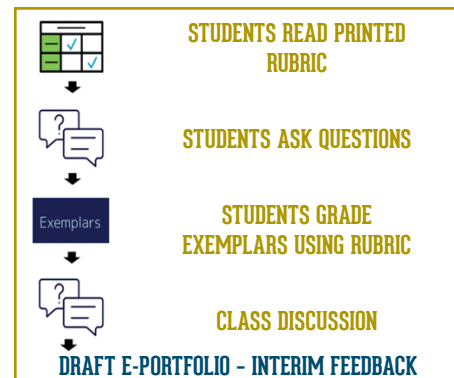
## HOW I DID IT

As there are 130 students in the Business Ethics class, I decided to implement the intervention

during three smaller group tutorial sessions to facilitate discussion. At the start of each session, every student was given a printed copy of the rubric. They were asked to read this and were then encouraged to ask questions. This was a good opportunity to clarify the assessment criteria. The students were engaged and asked questions.

Next, the students were shown three exemplars of e-portfolios which they were asked to grade using the rubric provided. These exemplars were authentic, of different standards and chosen to find a "balance between building confidence and overwhelming students" [Dixon et al. 2020, p. 465]. They were anonymised and shown on screen. The process took around thirty minutes, giving the students plenty of time to read and reflect on the grading. Once graded, students were invited to share with the class which led to a discussion on the appropriate grade for each exemplar.

Finally, students were invited to submit a draft e-portfolio for feedback. Students who submitted the draft received individual feedback and general feedback comments were later given in class.



## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

The intervention was timely, conducted in week seven of a twelve-week module. Students were already working on their e-portfolios and some had started to ask questions. The combination of the grading rubric and the exemplars eliminated most of the more common questions. I used personal observations, a survey and a short discussion in another tutorial class to evaluate the intervention. Student reflections on the intervention were positive. One student commented,

*"We saw other students work, which I thought was fantastic, but [they] still didn't get the highest grades possible. This made me rethink the content that I had put into mine".*

Another welcomed the opportunity for feedback on the draft portfolio.

*"After class we were given the opportunity to submit the material we have so far and receive feedback. I was delighted with this opportunity as there is over 100 students in my business ethics class, and personal feedback before the exam is priceless".*

The final proof was the higher standard of e-portfolio submitted by the students. The average grade awarded to the students in the class was higher than previous years with fewer low pass or failing grade submissions.

## CONCLUSION

Why are we sometimes disappointed in our students' submissions? We often convince ourselves that, as we have explained the task in detail, there should be no confusion. However, when I reflect on this, I am aware that a gap can still persist in student understanding of assessment. The rubric reduces student's anxiety by emphasising what is important and can be used to self-assess before submission. On their own, though, rubrics can be confusing and can lead to misinterpretation [Hendry et al. 2011]. Distributing the 'secret scoring sheet' in the form of the grading rubric articulates expectations but it doesn't address the gap in tacit knowledge. Exemplars can help bridge this gap. Concerns around the use of rubrics have prompted

some to examine the use of exemplars [Dixon et al. 2020]. There are a number of options when using rubrics and exemplars combined. Hawe et al. [2021] summarise four methods of using exemplars [1] in-class analysis of annotated exemplars followed by discussion; [2] students marking exemplars using rubrics followed by a discussion; [3] co-construction of rubrics followed by analysis of exemplars and [4] student analysis and marking of exemplars using rubrics followed by pair share in class and presentations.

## INFOGRAPHIC

The following infographic provides a guide to using the rubrics and exemplars as a method of improving student's understanding of assessment criteria.

**How to Improve your Students' Understanding of Assessment Criteria**

If you ever wondered why there is a gap between your expectations and student submissions, then this is the guide for you.

This guide will explain how you can improve your students' understanding of assessment using rubrics and exemplars

**1 Benefits**

- Build explicit and tacit knowledge: Using rubrics and exemplars will help build explicit and tacit knowledge in students.
- Self-regulation: Encourage self-regulation through an iterative process.
- Build an ability to distinguish quality: Using rubrics and exemplars will help build explicit and tacit knowledge in students.
- Clarify expectations: Expose the hidden scoring sheet.

**2 Rubrics and Exemplars**

Rubrics and exemplars serve different purposes but working together can provide students with additional learning support.

**Rubrics** and **Exemplars**

A rubric is 'a document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria that cover' (Hendry & Hendry 2010).  
 A rubric has three essential elements (Popkhan, 1997):  
 1. Evaluation criteria  
 2. Quality definition  
 3. Scoring sheet

Exemplars are "carefully chosen samples of student work which are used to illustrate dimensions of quality and clarify assessment expectations" (Carless and Chan 2016).  
 - Embed in-class discussion/dialogue  
 - Build tacit knowledge

**3 Suggested implementation**

**Implementation Process (Option 1)**

Distribute Rubric → Discuss Assessment Rubric → Discuss grades/offers feedback → Grade Exemplars → Distribute/Display Exemplars

**4 Alternatives**

<b>Option 2</b> Student use of rubrics during class to analyse annotated exemplars with class based discussion	<b>Option 3</b> Lecturer and student co-construction of marking criteria followed by analysis and discussion of selected exemplars	<b>Option 4</b> Student analysis and rubric-based marking of exemplars prior to class, pair sharing of outcomes, followed by group presentations
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**\* Additional information**

<b>Rubrics</b> Rubrics are practical, they are easy to use and provide consistency in marking. Students like rubrics because they provide criteria for success and offer a sense of stability	<b>Choosing Exemplars</b> Select exemplars that are authentic and student centered. They should be inspirational not intimidating. Find a balance between building confidence and overwhelming students	<b>Achieve academic success</b> The use of rubrics and exemplars can: 1. Develop self-efficacy 2. Build tacit and explicit knowledge 3. Promote student self-regulation	<b>For more information</b> <b>Key Authors:</b> Popkhan 1997; Hendry et al. 2011; Dixon et al. 2020; Carless and Chan 2016; Smyth and Carless 2021; Hawe, Dixon and Hamilton 2021; Bell et al. 2013; Hendry et al. 2012. Follow <a href="#">this link</a> for more details
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MY NAME IS MAEVE MCARDLE, I HAVE BEEN TEACHING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL STUDIES AT DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. THROUGHOUT THE YEARS I HAVE TAUGHT VARIOUS BUSINESS SUBJECTS INCLUDING STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, MARKETING, AND BUSINESS ETHICS AND CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP. I ENJOY TEACHING ALL THESE SUBJECTS, BUT BUSINESS ETHICS AND CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP IS A PARTICULAR FAVOURITE OF MINE. STUDENTS ON THE MODULE UNDERTAKE A SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT, WORKING ON BEHALF OF LOCAL AND/OR NATIONAL CHARITIES AND, IN ADDITION, TAKE PART IN TUTORIAL CASE DISCUSSIONS ON CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL ISSUES IN BUSINESS.

## WHAT I DID AND WHY

To achieve academic success, a student must meet



# Calculating the right dosage: Using feedback to develop clinical competence

BY MARESE MCCABE



MY NAME IS MARESE MCCABE. I WORK AS A PART-TIME REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSE IN A SMALL ANIMAL PRACTICE AND ALSO AS AN ASSISTANT LECTURER ON THE BSC IN VETERINARY NURSING COURSE IN DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. I AM CURRENTLY REGISTERED ON THE DKIT MA IN LEARNING AND TEACHING.

## WHAT I DID AND WHY

During their studies, Veterinary Nursing students learn new techniques and procedures that are essential to the survival of their future patients. Prior to entering practice, students take an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), which is designed to test clinical skill performance and competency so that they can join the Veterinary Nursing register. Key competencies assessed in the OSCE are the calculation of drug dosages and the calculation of fresh gas flow rates for anaesthesia.

These topics are covered in the final year module, Anaesthesia and Analgesia. This module is very technical and requires the use of a variety of formulae and calculations ranging from patient drug dosages to the provision of the correct level of oxygen gas flow to ensure patient survival during general anaesthesia. Students at this stage are preparing for the transition into practice and are focused on elements that they feel will impact on their daily responsibilities within the Veterinary team.

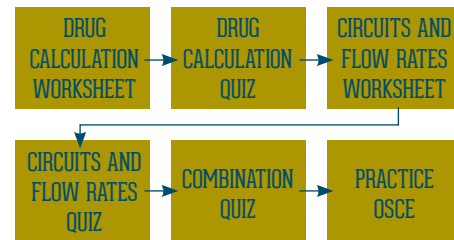
In preparing previous groups for the OSCE, I used interim assessments involving worksheets, which the students completed in class or at home. I then graded these and gave the students individual written feedback. However, students did not have an opportunity to utilise their feedback, which I always felt was a missed opportunity.

While reflecting on the literature, it became apparent to me that I needed a new assessment design where the students were given more opportunities to receive formative feedback on their work so they could act on it to improve their performance.

## HOW I DID IT

The approach that I introduced combines formative and summative aspects. The formative element ensures students have an opportunity for informal dialogue and feedback. They complete worksheets in class, each followed by a summative assessment consisting of a Moodle quiz, designed around patient case scenarios. The final quiz contains questions that encourage students to evaluate their choices and solve problems based on real life situations. Using the feedback from both sources, I hoped that students be better able to demonstrate their competency.

The worksheets were still completed in class. They



were not graded but, on completion, students were given an answer sheet to assess how they got on, meaning that they received immediate feedback.

The Moodle quiz based on each worksheet consisted of twenty-five randomly selected questions from a question bank with a maximum allocated time of thirty minutes. In the quiz, each question was based on a real-life scenario. The quizzes increased in difficulty as students progressed through the module with the final quiz combining the previous topics. The earlier quizzes consisted mainly of multiple-choice, true-false or short answer questions to test conceptual understanding [Martin-Blas and Serrano-Fernandez, 2009], while the third quiz was more challenging as it required students to use the data given to make decisions and provide a correct answer. Students received immediate feedback from incorrectly answered questions while completing the quizzes.

For the final quiz, I introduced a 'Simple calculated question' type. This allowed each student to have a different set of parameters for patient weights and respiration rates. The final quiz also allowed the students to attempt each question multiple times, with new patient parameters for each attempt. The marks allocated for the question were reduced each time the question was attempted as they were given hints indicating where they may have made mistakes. On completion of this quiz, I felt that the

students should have an excellent foundation for their final OSCE exam.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

In my reflective diary, I questioned numerous times whether the students would actually find extra assessment a bonus or a chore. Thankfully, they appear to have enjoyed the process and indicated in their feedback after each stage that they believed

Doug is a Labrador who weighs 9.3kg. He has been admitted for an extensive stitch up under General Anaesthetic.

Doug has a respiration rate of 4.3 breaths per minute. Calculate The Fresh Gas Flow rate for Doug if he is placed on the anaesthetic circuit pictured below.



Answer: 39.99 ✓

You did not give the correct unit.

The correct answer is: 39.99mls

## QUESTION 1

Partially correct. Mark 0.90 out of 1.00

Flag Question

Edit Question

they benefited from the activities. I have also noticed a marked improvement in the grades for their continuous assessment for these elements.

The formative assessment worksheets in class allowed the students to gain confidence while carrying out the task. They also allowed me to immediately identify gaps in the student learning and assist them with their understanding. Students engaged readily with the process and relished the constant feedback and assistance in class, the

tone of which was friendly, helpful and positive. The students were then given opportunities to act on feedback to enable improvement. Students were positive in their comments about the introduction of the online quiz after each worksheet and accompanying feedback has encouraged them to take charge of their own learning. I feel this year the students were more comfortable asking questions when they were stuck as the class is a relaxed environment allowing them to gain confidence much more quickly. In my reflective diary I had noted the improved attitude towards the calculation worksheet in class when the students knew it wouldn't be graded. One student described it as 'a practice run for the real thing' which was exactly what I wanted it to represent.

The most important feature of the quiz is to ensure the question level is appropriate. I feel that the increasing difficulty of questions for the final quiz challenged the students sufficiently allowing them to prove their level of learning and understanding of the topic. As the level of difficulty progressed, so did the students' recognition of the importance of the linked assessment. This quiz provided feedback and allowed multiple attempts on questions. Students availed of this opportunity to ensure they could complete the questions correctly, increasing their problem-solving techniques. I believe that, because these quizzes were related to and followed on from the worksheets they had completed in class, the students approached them with a positive attitude and placed more importance on the outcome of the quiz.

## CONCLUSION

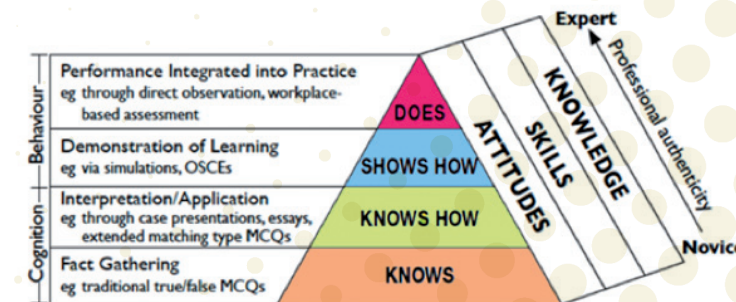
Throughout the Veterinary Nursing course, we aim to bring students from a novice level to a competent qualified registered Veterinary Nurse capable of working as part of a team of professionals.

Drawing from Miller's Pyramid, a model used in Health and Veterinary education to assess clinical competence, I can see where the student begins with their class worksheets assessing the 'Knows' level of cognition. This is the foundation of their competency and is assessed in the first quiz with the more basic questions.

Moving further up the pyramid, students demonstrate 'Knows How'. The second and third quizzes with case details allow them to apply this knowledge to solve the problem they face for each individual patient. This prepares them for the 'Shows How' as they use these learned skills as part of their OSCE exams.

As one student commented that she now felt ready to enter the workplace, remarking that prior to this she had not realised that it was necessary to calculate oxygen levels to suit a particular situation.

Planning for next year, I intend to keep this new model of assessment in place with minor adjustments. I will amend each quiz so that students can have multiple attempts at questions in the simple calculated question format rather than the multiple-choice format. I will also increase the level of question difficulty in the second quiz so that it will be a more gradual process towards the final quiz.



Miller's pyramid for assessing clinical competence



# Navigating peer feedback: A guide for students

BY NIALL COGHLAN



## CREATIVE SKILLSETS ACROSS A RANGE OF AUDIO MATERIALS.

### WHAT I DID AND WHY

Music production is frequently a collaborative and public-facing activity, with activities and artifacts subject to examination and critique at all stages of the process. Producers may be required to give and receive feedback from a range of stakeholders such as musicians, managers, record labels and the public. This makes the ability to deliver and receive meaningful and constructive feedback among peer groups a critical dimension of music production training. Receipt of high-quality feedback can help learners to reflect on their practice and influence future approaches. However, many students are unused to being asked to critique others work, or to having their own work critiqued outside of formal examination. This can make it difficult for them to provide structured and actionable feedback for others, and to use peer feedback to develop and elevate their own work.

Opportunities for peer feedback have been embedded into the music production programmes in DkIT since their inception, both informally and as assessed components. However, the quality of feedback provided was typically lacking in detail that could be used to address identified issues [e.g. “Your drums sound bad”] and without evidence that feedback received led to action from the recipient. While individual modules on the programme focus on technical skills, critical listening, academic and musical development, the ‘soft’ skill sets required for productive and collegiate collaboration are not always explicitly taught.

Noting the apparent knowledge gap relating to peer feedback in the student cohort, and its necessity in professional environments, I developed a presentation on the topic to be delivered to students on the programme, outlining to students likely sources or topics of feedback and how it might be given and used effectively. The presentation challenged students to structure feedback in three stages:

- **What?** [What is the issue?]
- **So What?** [What is causing it or might solve it?]
- **Now What?** [Implementing a solution]

[Borton 1970; Rolfe, Freshwater & Jasper 2001]

I also included a structured document that could be used as a starting point to deliver, receive and contextualise feedback. This helped students to compartmentalise the process of giving and receiving feedback and provided heuristics for subsequent action. Students were then asked to apply this model by exchanging one of their music productions in progress with another student from their peer group and providing written feedback on the production.

### HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

Providing explicit training on the rationale for and process of feedback proved highly beneficial from both student and lecturer perspectives. There was a noticeable improvement in the quality and focus of peer feedback provided, with the What/So What/Now What model helping learners to not only identify perceived ‘issues’ with the productions in progress but also to highlight the likely causes of the issues and suggesting approaches to remedy the identified problems. This led to submissions

moving from the “Your drums sound bad” level of detail to far more specific and actionable feedback such as: “Your drums have timing issues in the chorus that could be fixed using warp tools”.

Providing opportunities to receive objective feedback on their work in progress outside of the student/lecturer dynamic was helpful in getting students to think about their productions as works that may ultimately be in the public domain. Students also found the checklist and staged structure useful in critiquing their own work, a factor in reflective learning and practice. I have continued to develop and use the presentation in subsequent teaching

semesters and its effectiveness is clear in the quality and focus of feedback provided. Colleagues have also adopted it for use in other programmes where feedback on creative works or process is required.

### CONCLUSION

Providing high quality feedback and learning to apply that in a meaningful way are core to developing self-regulated learners [Nichol Macfarlane-Dick 2006]. While this is often provided to students by lecturers, peer feedback can be valuable at formative stages and is often aligned with the ‘on-demand’ and ‘social’

nature of contemporary student experience [Voss 2016]. However, provision of good quality feedback is not always straightforward and may be new to learners. Therefore instruction, and if necessary assistive tools, should be used to develop this in students. These supports give students starting points and structure that can help speed up the development of good feedback practices. In addition, asking students to document the feedback process and their response provides valuable insight into common issues, the factors leading to them and strategies for rectifying them that may influence future teaching approaches.





# Striking several student-centred chords with just OneNote

## BY RONAN BREE AND OLYA ANTROPOVA



IN THIS PIECE, RONAN OUTLINES A FEEDBACK INTERVENTION FROM THE STAFF POINT OF VIEW, WHILE OLYA CONSIDERS ITS IMPACT WITH A REFLECTIVE STUDENT LENS.

### WHAT WE DID AND WHY - RONAN:

As someone who personally places a huge value on receiving and acting on feedback, using it to enhance work and performance, I have always been keen to engage my students in this mindset. Some of my previous research established approaches to change views around feedback and assist the development of an always improving mindset [Bree et al., 2014]. Building on this work, I was keen to develop digital modes to share feedback, to engage learners so they can easily assimilate, synthesise, and act on it. As part of the multi-institutional TEAM [<https://www.teamshp.ie>] project, we engaged with digital modes of assessment in practical sessions - however, it was feedback that also took a front seat across many of the technologies and themes. I was keen to identify and develop a platform whereby multiple modes of feedback could be explored to support students and learning as best as possible.

One aspect engrained in science is the generation of practical, or lab, 'write-ups' where students submit formal reports of the experiments performed. Traditionally, students produced hand-written reports however there has been a recent shift towards developing electronic lab notebooks [ELNs] with many vendors now available. An inspirational colleague in DkIT [Dr. Sinead Loughran] pioneered the implementation of ELN s in the Irish sector, being the first nationally to employ the 'LabArchives' licensed platform [Loughran 2016]. Hearing her regularly speak of its associated benefits, I was keen to identify a sustainable and

cost-effective approach that might benefit my own students. Hence, as our students had access to the Microsoft Office365 suite, I employed Microsoft OneNote for this work. Here, you can set up a class notebook approach which provides students with three dedicated sections. The first contains the collaborative space, where everyone can add to, or edit content in - very useful for students to pose questions and/or share helpful material or resources, in addition to answering questions asked by their peers. The second is essentially the lecturer's space, and while the content is visible to everyone, only the lecturer can add or edit it - useful for providing instructions, protocols, resources etc. Finally, the third section is each student's virtual notebook space where they enter/type their report[s], add images etc. Educators see the lab notebooks for every student in the class, while each student only sees their own notebook.

This platform allowed me to develop an online space for my lab class to engage with pre-practical materials, collaborate, receive relevant documentation and ultimately generate and submit their lab reports. What drew me to this platform was the wide array of feedback options I could engage with. I was able to type text, add audio, as well as hand-written comments to support my students. While some of these features may sound common to other platforms, there were aspects here which really stood out in supporting feedback communication and learning.

### HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY - RONAN:

To maximise the feedback opportunities, I employed an Apple iPad and Apple pencil. This allowed me to place coloured hand-written comments in the appropriate place on submitted reports. I found this more personable than the typed text option.

The major advantage for me was my combined use of audio feedback. I was able to leave multiple short audio comments 'on' specific places of the document for the student to listen to. It meant I could speak to a particular point 'on' the digital page, almost as if I was sitting beside the student, pointing to the place on the page as I spoke. Other platforms often let you record a single audio comment to be shared with learners, but this approach was more effective in my view for showing the student exactly what you were referring to in comments. Audio also allows you to expand, contextualise and enrich the feedback being presented via the handwritten comments. Hence considering the title of this piece, this approach really struck several chords.

### HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY - OLYA:

Considering things from a student point of view, Olya acknowledges "... the collaborative space is a major attraction. I really enjoyed being able to put in a question and know I would get an answer either from the lecturer or another student. It enables learning and collaboration, and lets you know you're not alone. This is of particular importance in current times with many students studying remotely. Also, the collaborative space is great for students to share experiences and their understanding with each other. For example, sometimes the way a lecturer may explain something may not resonate with everyone in the class, but here, another student may explain it in different terms that may make sense to classmates. Overall, the collaborative space has so much potential for students.

Thinking generally about feedback, receiving it is invaluable to students as it creates opportunities to improve. Considering what Ronan has emphasised above, I feel the comments combined with the audio feedback is the perfect combination. I like the fact lecturers can insert audio comments under certain paragraphs for example, so students can hear the feedback actually being explained to them. It's much easier than having to try and follow up for further clarification on text comments. I feel

efforts that lecturers are placing on feedback, such as with the OneNote platform described here, are effective, greatly appreciated and can help build trust between lecturers and students."

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - RONAN AND OLYA

Here, we outlined the feedback potential of this technology and highlighted elements of the educator and student perspective. For anyone trying a new technology for the first time, our recommendation is to test, pilot, troubleshoot and learn exactly how it functions in advance. This builds confidence and the ability to assist once everything is launched. It's equally important to develop training and support materials for learners - and engage with your students on it, be open to feedback and evolve the process together.

While we are all used to receiving constructive feedback in some shape or form, sometimes it's not always what we want to hear [as we learned during an excellent DkIT CELT feedback workshop with Rob Nash & Naomi Winstone]. We need to consider how students receive and interpret our feedback, and ensure it is supportive, that it references positive aspects of their work and includes an actionable focus.

On the whole, it is beneficial to remain open to engaging in a dialogue with students around feedback, and instead of working on feedback loops which are geared towards being closed, consider David Carless' [2019] work on feedback spirals where the dialogue continues after any given assessment, supporting longer-term learning.



## Impactful FEEDBACK DESCRIPTIONS

REALISING THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

✓	"...single most powerful moderator to enhance student activity"	Hattie, 2003
✓	"...one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement"	Hattie & Timperley 2007
✓	"...oil that lubricates the cogs of understanding"	Brown, 2007
✓	"Information only becomes feedback when is used productively"	Carless, 2015

• Brown, S. (2007). Feed-back and Feed-forward. Centre for Bioscience Bulletin, HEA Academy.  
 • Carless, D. (2015). Excellence in University Assessment. Abingdon, UK.: Routledge.  
 • Hattie, J. A. C. (2003). Teachers Make a Difference: What is the research evidence? Paper Presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What Does the Research Tell Us ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia, (2003), 1-17.  
 • Hattie, J. A. C. & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. Review of Educational Research, 77(1), 81-112.

Figure 1: An overview of key quotes around feedback which always remind me of its importance.





# FOCUS ON FEEDBACK

## Student Stories

## Feedback: a useful tool for learning and developing

BY XIN (CAROLINE) XU  
4TH YEAR EVENT MANAGEMENT

AS FEEDBACK VARIES DEPENDING ON THE WORK OF EACH INDIVIDUAL, IT INDICATES THAT FEEDBACK IS TAILORED AND PERSONALISED TO EACH STUDENT TO FURTHER IMPROVE THEIR WORK. FOR STUDENTS WHO MIGHT STRUGGLE WITH SOME BASIC AREAS, FEEDBACK FROM THE LECTURERS FOCUSES ON AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, FOR SOME STUDENTS WHO ARE MORE ADVANCED, FEEDBACK HELPS THEM TO REFINE THEIR WORK FOR BETTER GRADES.

One example of how feedback has helped me to improve my work is the research paper I was required to conduct for my Honour's degree. It was a year-long project and had a research proposal assigned to us in the first semester. After receiving feedback on the proposal, we then started to work on the whole paper in the second semester.

The feedback I received from the module leader was very detailed. From the Aims and Objectives to the Presentation of the proposal, each section had its own feedback comment, allocated mark and the mark awarded. It was so clear and detailed that I knew what section I had done well and what section I should be more aware of for refinement and improvement.

As it was my first time conducting a formal research paper, there were many things that I was not familiar with and needed to learn to pick up myself. For example, I did not know I should support my research design and methods with evidence from research methodology textbooks. However, the feedback pointed out this, thus I started to read literature on my chosen methodology and added it to my paper. I would not have been aware of this if not for the

feedback, which could make me lose a few marks on it.

Personally, I have always read the feedback from my lecturers and take it on board as much as possible. To me, the feedback does not only guide me on how I can improve in my next assignments but the feedback also encourages me to keep on producing work that is of a high standard or to achieve higher personal goals. My confidence in my academic skills has been continually boosted by taking the feedback on board since the first year of college.

Additionally, feedback is reflective and can pass positive messages to students. When it comes to modules that are year-long or consist of several assessments that are separate but linked to each other, feedback plays a vital role in helping students make progress in the next assessment.





# Zooming in on feedback - A student's story

BY DAINA LEKERAUSKAITE

MY NAME IS DAINA LEKERAUSKAITE. I HAVE JUST FINISHED MY SECOND YEAR STUDYING PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCE IN DKIT. IT IS A DIFFICULT COURSE AND INVOLVES LOTS OF CHALLENGES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, WITH PLENTY OF ASSESSMENTS AND LAB WRITE-UPS. RECEIVING FEEDBACK HELPED ME IMPROVE MY WRITING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS. HOW TO WRITE UP EXPERIMENTS CORRECTLY AND HOW TO GO ABOUT IMPROVING IN MY WORK. I AM ENTHUSIASTIC WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING INVOLVED AND HELPING FELLOW STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR GOAL. I ENJOY PROVIDING SUPPORT AND HELP TO OTHERS IN ANY WAY I CAN.

## WHY FEEDBACK

Science modules are very full on, there is so much to learn throughout the year, and this would be very difficult if feedback was not provided where applicable. Certain science modules are practical classes, which consist of learning and understanding the theory before a practical experiment can be completed. When an experiment is completed, it needs to be written up step-by-step including the theory behind it, how it was completed, any findings or results, as well as a conclusion. When a student writes up their first practical experiment, it is impossible to know the exact layout or information that is required, and so, any help or feedback provided by the lecturer is of utmost importance, as that is how a student learns and improves for future write-ups. Communication is key in these situations, as without communication the student cannot progress and grow.

## WHAT THE LECTURER DID

Most of my first year was completed online due to COVID-19 public health restrictions, which meant that

practical experiments had to be completed using a computer, making it quite difficult to understand why or how a particular experiment is completed due to not being able to physically complete the experiments. Usually, experiments are completed on a weekly basis, but due to the experiments being done completely online, there were only a limited number of experiments that could be done using a computer. It proved difficult to comprehend fully what was expected of us. One of the lecturers had a strategy that I found worked extremely well. This consisted of meeting on Zoom for one hour prior to commencing the experiment, where the lecturer would go through the expected layout of the experiment, explain what experiment required to be completed as well as answer any questions that students had. After the lecturer corrected the write-ups, there would be a little bit of written feedback provided with the corrections. Then, every two weeks the lecturer would allocate different times for the students to meet with them via Zoom, where the student's write-up would be shared on the screen and the lecturer was able to go through it step by step with comments and recommendations for improvement.

## HOW WELL DID IT WORK AND WHY

I found the meetings on Zoom worked extremely well as it was dialogue feedback. We were provided the opportunity to directly ask the lecturer about any questions we had, as well as being given the opportunity for the lecturer to screenshare the lab write-up and give feedback whilst showing you exactly where and what can be improved on, and even where the student did very well. With this type of feedback, it was possible to improve with each lab write-up, and by the end of the year it was much easier to write the experiments up, knowing exactly how to do it and what was expected of us.

## ADVICE FOR OTHER STUDENTS

Feedback is very important if you want to do well. It is important to communicate with your lecturer. If there are any questions, ask them early. The lecturers are there to help students achieve their goals and to help them improve in any areas they may need help with. By taking the feedback received and breaking it down step-by-step, it is possible to tackle any problem without putting yourself under too much pressure. Sometimes, all it takes is to reach out and ask for help, rather than trying to tackle it yourself which leads to worrying and stressing unnecessarily, which can also result in getting poor grades and not being able to improve. Never be afraid to ask for help, if you don't reach out, your lecturer may not be aware that you're struggling!

# Feedback is not just a number

BY JAMES WHITE

MY NAME IS JAMES WHITE, I AM AT STAGE 3 - BACHELOR OF SCIENCE [HONOURS] IN GENERAL NURSING

When you receive your exam results, whether you're satisfied, disappointed or confused, remember that the mark you're looking at is representing an entire module. Within it, there may have been many components: an essay, a CA piece, group work or a final examination. This is why it is essential that you make constructive use of the feedback given to you by your lecturers. If you receive a mark and you're overjoyed that your hard work has paid off, congratulations! However, it is important to avoid becoming complacent.

Even when I'm happy with results, I ensure to review the feedback given to me by lecturers. Why is this? It is so that I can affirm what has contributed to a good grade and apply those same principles in future work. If you open your results page and you're unhappy - don't worry. These marks do not reflect you as a person. These are the instances where it is essential that you utilise the feedback your lecturers will provide. In the case of a written examination - take the time to book a consultation. The facility is there for you to discuss what has been both good and bad with your lecturer so that you can learn from both your mistakes and your attainments.



# A first year student's experience

BY STEPHEN J. SHARKEY

HELLO! MY NAME IS STEPHEN J. SHARKEY AND I'M A 1ST YEAR BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY STUDENT AT DKIT.

WHILE MANY OF MY MODULES ARE TECHNOLOGY AND FINANCIALLY BASED, I CHOSE INTERCULTURAL STUDIES AS AN ELECTIVE OPTION HAVING SPENT TIME RESEARCHING EACH ELECTIVE.

I DID THIS IN AN ATTEMPT TO BALANCE AND ROUND MY STUDIES. CONSIDERING I KNOW MY STUDIES WILL BRING ME IN CONTACT WITH MANY DIFFERENT CULTURES.

As a subject, Intercultural studies examines cultural differences and similarities of people around the world. A situation that was replicated within my actual class, with students representing six different nationalities, from Africa, South America, and Europe!

To demonstrate the learning outcomes of the module we were required to complete an assignment on a number of areas, such as "The role of women in Irish society" and "The media as an agent of socialisation". This required a very different approach to complete from say completing financial accounts or building a database!

I spoke to my lecturer about this concern as it was the first written type of assignment due, and they offered to run a feedback session for those that were interested. It was made clear that the feedback if necessary would not pull any punches and would be very direct.

In order to participate in the feedback round, it was up to the student to complete the first of four sections of the assignment by a certain date with the following areas selected for review:

- Ensure academic writing standards had been followed
- Ensure research standards had been followed
- Ensure Harvard reference standards had been followed
- Ensure adequate assignment layout utilised

When I received my feedback, it was very clear that I had a number of deficiencies, in particular with academic writing and Harvard referencing. However, the feedback was very clear.

Sections where I had come up short with academic writing, the lecturer had taken the time to dissect

a particular section, highlighting what was wrong, and suggested corrections. For Harvard referencing, again, the section was dissected, with the issues highlighted and suggestions made.

This enabled me to immediately recognise where I had gone wrong, especially when looking at the structuring of sentences and how to reference correctly.

From my perspective, I was incredibly grateful for this intervention, especially as it was so early in the semester and ensured some bad habits did not form. With this feedback, I was able to correct what I had written and followed through with the lessons learnt, not only with this assignment, but subsequent assignments.

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## Useful resources:

Assessment Management Toolkit [Online] Available at: [https://utaresources.mmu.ac.uk/assessment\\_toolkit/#/lessons/WXhrPt03ggENM0bqiPGEubzofBuj5kP4](https://utaresources.mmu.ac.uk/assessment_toolkit/#/lessons/WXhrPt03ggENM0bqiPGEubzofBuj5kP4)

Fledgling e-Handbook. Available at:

[https://studentdtkit-my.sharepoint.com/:w/g/personal/oconnorc1\\_dkit\\_ie/ERToXDckXChLn7vq\\_RuveuQBf9Q3RWwH-hs4WuSoxW\\_Bg?e=U6vbpI](https://studentdtkit-my.sharepoint.com/:w/g/personal/oconnorc1_dkit_ie/ERToXDckXChLn7vq_RuveuQBf9Q3RWwH-hs4WuSoxW_Bg?e=U6vbpI)

Fledgling Interactive e-Handbook. Available at:

[https://studentdtkit-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/oconnorc1\\_dkit\\_ie/EbWa3vMhraVElgo2TUqsFQMBsM05IK8I3N6y-BGbt3wvc5g?e=yAh5sA](https://studentdtkit-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/oconnorc1_dkit_ie/EbWa3vMhraVElgo2TUqsFQMBsM05IK8I3N6y-BGbt3wvc5g?e=yAh5sA)

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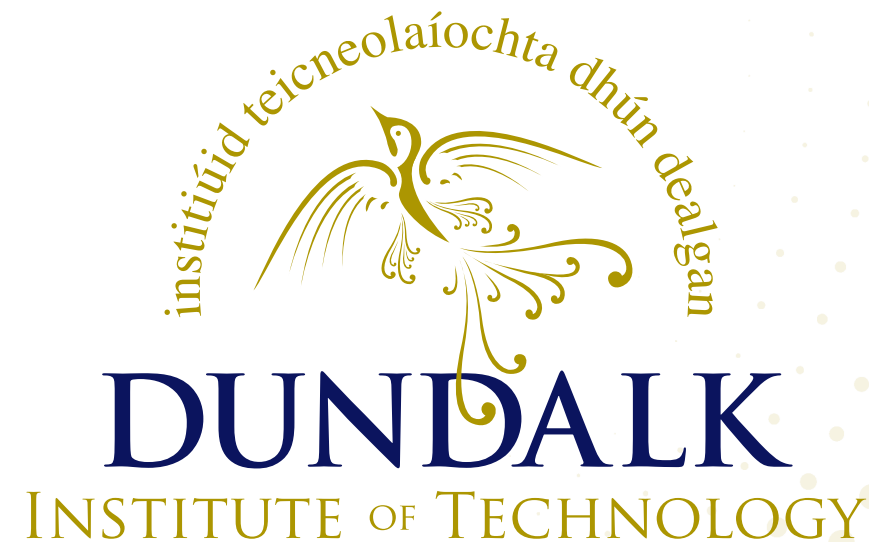
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