

**Clarity, consistency and communication: using enhanced dialogue to create a course-based feedback strategy.**

Sarah Nixon, Simon Brooman, Becky Murphy and Damien Fearon

Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

[s.nixon@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:s.nixon@ljmu.ac.uk)

Sarah Nixon – corresponding author

School of Sport Studies, Leisure and Nutrition

Liverpool John Moores University, I.M.Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, L17 6BD.

Email: [S.Nixon@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:S.Nixon@ljmu.ac.uk). Telephone: 0151 2315213.

Simon Brooman

School of Law

Liverpool John Moores University, Redmonds Building, Brownlow Hill, Liverpool, L3 5UG.

Email: [S.D.Brooman@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:S.D.Brooman@ljmu.ac.uk). Telephone: 0151 2313706.

Rebecca Murphy

School of Sport and Exercise Sciences

Liverpool John Moores University, Tom Reilly Building, Byrom Street, Liverpool, L3 3AF

Email: [R.C.Murphy@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:R.C.Murphy@ljmu.ac.uk). Telephone: 0151 9046255.

Damian Fearon

Department of the Built Environment

Liverpool John Moores University, Byrom Street, Liverpool, L3 3AF

Email: [D.J.Fearon@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:D.J.Fearon@ljmu.ac.uk). Telephone: 0151 2312805.

## **Clarity, consistency and communication: using enhanced dialogue to create a course-based feedback strategy.**

This article examines the outcomes of a study across four discipline areas in order to develop course-based assessment strategies in closer co-operation with students. Second year students (n=48) from different disciplines were engaged in two phases of activity-orientated workshops. Phase one sought their perceptions of feedback. Phase two saw students design a proposed strategy to present to the respective staff teams. We discuss the emerging themes which appeared to be very similar amongst this diverse cross-section of students: a lack of faith in marking consistency; the need for clear guidelines and criteria; the greater use of positive feedback language and a close association with tutors. The emergence of strategies specific to each course is discussed along with the alignment of the outcomes of this approach with pedagogic knowledge. It is suggested that enhanced dialogue enabled staff and students to develop a common understanding, and gave impetus to improving, assessment feedback practices. Outcomes recommended here include changes to practice such as the benefits of a team approach to feedback development, the content and style of feedback; developing the usefulness of feedback for future work and; the need for teams to periodically revisit staff development in this area.

Keywords: feedback; student voice; course-level strategies; co-creation

### **Introduction**

Assessment feedback is recognised as an area that can have the most impact on student development (Price and O'Donovan 2006; Carless et al. 2011) and the one that is the most problematic in terms of delivery and impact on learning (Scoles, Huxham, and McArthur, 2012). Evidence of this is shown by continually poor scores, relative to other areas, in the United Kingdom National Student Survey. This area of the student learning experience consumes a great deal of time and emotional energy for all of us. However, we remain uncertain as to whether those who produce or receive feedback have the same agenda or understanding of each other's perspectives. A key challenge for academics is to ascertain how students perceive feedback, and to develop strategies to increase its usefulness (Small and Attree 2015).

Within the literature the common intention of most studies is to analyse why feedback processes are not as useful as they could be for individual students, and what can be changed to make it more effective. Numerous studies examine the use, or non-use, by students, of their feedback (Winstone et al., 2016) and there is a wealth of evidence that examines why this may be the case (Deeley and Bovill 2015). In a study of first year students, Aoun et al. (2016) explore the antecedent constituents of feedback. They propose that the different elements of feedback need to be evaluated to assess the effectiveness of feedback processes within a course. Li and De Luca (2014) found contradictory evidence in relation to what students understood, valued and used from their assessment feedback. They suggested a need for further research to investigate general feedback issues, including the desirability of exploring issues from a cross-disciplinary perspective. This study, involving four discipline

areas, answers that call and aims to provide some insights into this developing area of research.

The ‘curriculum’ sets-out the teaching and assessment practices that influence students’ learning experiences (Carey 2013). A focus on such practices at course level is an overlooked area of research in higher education (Barnett and Coate 2005) and is important as the effectiveness of approaches to feedback can be seen as a key indicator of the effectiveness of the whole course of study (Boud and Molloy 2013). The modular structure of many degrees in the UK may hinder students from gaining any sense of the overall course they are studying. Jessop, El Hakim and Gibbs (2014, p 3) suggest that: ‘there are compelling reasons to refocus attention on assessment and feedback at the course level’. We recognise that the international use of the terms such as ‘course’, ‘programme’, and ‘module’ etc. vary greatly. We use the term ‘course’ to signify the discipline area being studied by the student, and ‘module’ to signify the subject areas into which that course is broken down. Academics often focus their own module without any real reference the generality of the student experience of feedback. If this is the case, it may be a false hope that students can navigate around multiple approaches to feedback across modules.

We postulated that, by taking a whole-course curriculum development perspective, we might gain a sense of feedback being seen as a central feature of student engagement (Boud and Molloy 2013). Students may experience more consistent and meaningful feedback when it is linked to the opportunities across the whole course (Jessop, El Hakim and Gibbs 2014). To facilitate a better mutual understanding of assessment feedback the research team employed a modified method of incorporating the ‘student voice’ in curriculum development (Bovill, Bulley and Morris, 2011). This term has been widely adopted and developed to include increased student involvement in quality assurance processes, and listening to what students say about their educational experiences so as to inform the process of educational enhancement.

In the context of curriculum development processes, use of the ‘student voice’ can vary from genuine co-creation partnership to enhanced student involvement and then, at the least participative end, to gathering student feedback which is used in the design process by academic staff. Previous studies have shown that genuinely collaborative, and equal, development partnerships continue to be elusive as breaking down power relationships is difficult (Deeley and Bovill, 2015). One reason may be reluctance on the part of academic staff to relinquish control (Bovill, 2014). The research team wished to better understand the student perspective through the use of student workshops, staff-student meetings and enhanced dialogue which would then inform the development of a feedback strategy across the whole course of study. It is not the intention of this study to examine the participants’ perspectives of the pros, merits, or otherwise, of the *process* in this ‘student voice’ study. The outcomes in that regard are worthy of detailed commentary in their own right and will be examined elsewhere. The intention of this study is to discuss the *outcomes* of this process in terms of creating an overall course strategy for feedback. Did the outcomes here match practices identified as beneficial to assessment/feedback strategies suggested in the literature?

## ***About this study***

We sought to investigate the core components of what the students perceive would be important in a course-level feedback strategy, to both support module teams in formulating their feedback approach and offer students a greater degree of consistency. We viewed this as important as the academics in the research team all had experience of expending time and effort to provide what we thought was good feedback, only to have it rejected by non-collection. This raised in all of us questions as to whether our feedback is quite as useful as we believe it to be (Carless 2006) and led us to this study.

This multi-disciplinary medium-sized study involved second year students from four different courses and faculties across one United Kingdom (UK) university. The project ran over one semester and had two phases. Phase 1 involved student groups sharing their thoughts and experiences of feedback and in phase 2, the groups devised a feedback strategy for their respective courses. Representatives of each student group met with relevant staff teams to present their suggestions and to engage in a dialogue about the feasibility and implementation of their findings. This paper discusses the themes which were raised by students in the different discipline areas and those which appeared to be common to all those involved. What did students suggest was most in need of attention from academic staff? What was suggested as good practice? We then move to discuss the findings of this study in terms of what we suggest may be transferable aspects of curriculum development practice in the area of assessment provision which could be utilised elsewhere in enhancing practical course and module level strategies for assessment feedback.

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

All participants were second year students on one of four courses. (Sport Science, n= 16; Event Management n = 6; Quantity Surveying, n= 11 and Law, n= 15). The courses were chosen as they were each in a different faculty in the university. The sampling strategy aimed to access a range of students from each course. The students were listed in relation to their average first year marks and 20% of students from across the range were invited via an email from their course leader to join the project. A £20 voucher was offered for taking part. The response was poor with only a small number of students replying to the invitation. Interestingly, these were almost all students who had attained 60% or above in their first year marks. After trying to connect with the rest of the identified sample in lectures with little success, this strategy was modified. Eventually the approach adopted was to speak directly to students in class in order to request volunteers. This was successful after taking the further step of asking those who volunteered to bring a friend from the course. The lack of diversity in the abilities of students that took part in the project is a recognised limitation to this study that may have affected the suggestions for developing course-level strategies.

### ***Ethics***

Three of the authors teach on the courses central to this study. The potential for bias created by power imbalances in those relationships was alleviated by employing three post-graduate students. These project officers co-ordinated communications, the workshops and the data collection. Full university ethical approval was granted for the project. All students received participant information sheets, were verbally briefed about the project including their right to withdraw at any time, and asked to signed consent forms. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, data from the project have been held in secured locations.

### ***Data collection***

Data collection took place in two phases with the four student groups kept separate to allow any subject differences to emerge. A total of eight sessions were facilitated by the project officers, with support from one academic staff member from the project team in a different discipline area. This study adopted a participatory approach as the aim was to involve the students in the knowledge-production process (Bergold 2007) and allow them a safe space to disclose their views (Bergold and Thomas 2012). Phase 1 involved students in a workshop activity where they were asked to talk about their experiences of feedback - positive experiences, difficulties, general perceptions and feelings. This method was employed as we wanted the students to decide and discuss what they thought was important with the aim of eliciting richer dialogue rather than that which might be restricted by set questions (Colucci 2007). This active participatory session enabled a more open discourse to take place, and to support students moving freely between discussion areas as they explored personal experiences. Phase 1 discussions were drawn together on 'post-it' notes and participants were asked at the end of the session to theme these. In phase two, a month later, the same workshop groups of students were re-formed. Groups were presented with the themes from the first session plus a summary of the discussion, and were tasked with designing a course level feedback strategy which might be used to support other students studying the same subject in the future. At the end of the session the project officers produced the final strategy summary, which was agreed by each group. The final strategies can be seen in Tables 1-4.

### ***Data analysis***

All sessions were taped to allow for deeper analysis and cross-checking of information. In phase 1, the project officers themed Post-it-notes into three areas; what worked well; what didn't work so well and what the students would like in relation to feedback. These were written up for the four groups and presented back to the students for checking in the second phase and any resultant changes were then made. In the second phase the feedback strategy was developed during the session and sent out over email the following week for final adjustments.

### **Findings**

Clear themes emerged from the workshops in relation to student perceptions of feedback which we were able to group into seven areas:

#### ***Overall uncertainty and hostility***

All the workshop groups discussed a sense of uncertainty around the whole issue of feedback, its purpose, the meaning of feedback comments and how it could help them to judge the standard of their work in future. This confirmed previous findings that feedback is a multi-dimensional and complex component of the student experience which elicits the most extreme of responses, often less than favourable (Poulos and Mahoney 2008).

### ***Inconsistency amongst staff.***

A repeated theme amongst the subject groups was that of staff inconsistency in their provision of feedback. All workshops focussed on an apparent lack of communication between staff, differences in depth and quality of feedback and uncertainty as to what staff were looking for in a piece of work, even amongst staff on the same module. Students also frequently mentioned problems contacting some staff with students reporting that they had not received responses to emails or raised concerns at having had no opportunity to receive formative feedback. However, there were also positive themes which emerged with examples of having received constructive feedback and formative feedback on drafts.

In this respect, there was a good deal of uniformity amongst the groups. An apparent feeling of inconsistency has never been resolved in HE and literature on the subject suggests a number of causes. For Poulos and Mahoney (2008) one potential cause was the perceived biases on the part of the lecturers which detracted from their credibility in giving feedback. For example, students in that study suggested that agreeing with the lecturer's views on a subject might attract more marks. Whatever the cause, and in light of the dissatisfaction also found in our study, it appears no resolution to this problem of perceived inconsistency has yet been found.

### ***Concerns over clarity of information***

A major theme which emerged from the discussions was around issues of the assessment and feedback process. This links to the inconsistencies mentioned above. Marking criteria were discussed in all groups, with issues mentioned such as vagueness, lack of detailed guidance on expectations, lack of clarity about the task and comments describing descriptions in module handbooks as being unhelpful. For the Social Sciences group the grading criteria for each module were the same at each level. Students discussed how this was unhelpful as it lacked specificity.

### ***The language of feedback***

The language of feedback was also highlighted as an issue by all of the workshop groups. Students most often perceived a core of negativity in staff feedback comments: For example: '*Feedback is all about what you've done wrong, not positive in any way*' and '*you never get any praise for what you have done correctly*'. These findings also confirm the findings of previous studies which suggest that the language of feedback should focus more on its motivational qualities and potential (Hyland and Hyland 2001; Lizzio et al. 2003; Lipnevich and Smith 2009). However, this does have to be balanced with an element of criticality as

suggested by Holmes and Papageorgiou (2009). This study did not specifically set out to explore the balance of critical/motivational feedback language needed by students. However, the findings of this study tend to align with those of Pitt and Norton (2016) in that the overall tone of feedback is an area which is in need of further research.

### ***Usefulness of feedback***

The overall usefulness of feedback was also a key issue. Sadler (2010) suggests that feedback should support students in understanding the quality of their work rather than just telling them about it and these students seemed to want to understand this. One group suggested that it might be useful to know the sections of the essay where they had done well, and that this should be conveyed in specific feedback information. The groups commented that feedback should be less generic and should contain specific commentary on their piece of work. This was summed up by the comments of one student who suggested that: ‘...saying a report is ‘fair’/ ‘good’ but with no direction for future pieces of work is not helpful’. One group suggested that the feedback was too vague to enable them to know what to do with it. The same group discussed the fact that they felt that feedback didn't help clarify why their performance had been good or bad. The transferability of feedback to help improve future essays in other modules came out strongly. Two of the four groups felt that effective feedback could be judged by its usefulness for other pieces of work.

### ***The importance of good working relationships with academic staff***

Students' familiarity with the staff member giving the feedback was also considered to be important. Not knowing the academic staff, or the person who had marked the work, was a particular issue for the group in the science faculty. Comments such as: ‘*I don't know the lecturer so tutor meetings are awkward*’ and ‘*you don't know who has marked the work, so who do you ask?*’ These students suggested that knowing the tutor and who has marked the work may help further conversations to clarify the feedback and would make it more accessible to them. This aligns with the work of Poulos and Mahoney (2008) who found a lack of an established relationship with a lecturer can be a barrier to feedback in a face to face setting. For example, the science group appeared to be unaware of where to obtain further feedback voicing uncertainty as to whether this should be sought from the module leader or the first marker.

### ***Course level feedback strategy: suggestions for intervention***

After the discussions about the types of feedback they had been exposed to and exploring what feedback meant to them, each group was asked to decide on what they would include in a course level feedback strategy for their discipline area. The aim of this being to help both staff and students in understanding and interacting with feedback. Each workshop group came up with similar suggestions. These included the use of marking criteria specific to each module, breakdowns in relation to how much each section is worth, feedback in relation to the criteria, help in the direction you need to go in for the next piece of work and a desire to be informed who marked the work. Formative feedback was discussed as a positive element,

when it was offered, and two of the groups felt this should be more available. The same two groups suggested specific feed-forward should be available to prepare for the next assessment. All the groups suggested the need for new students to be supported in what to do with the feedback, how to use it and the benefits of it in helping them learn. They were uniformly of the view that there should be more emphasis by the course teams in creating situations in which they might be showed how to use and understand feedback.

However, all the groups also acknowledged the fact that there are times when they were only interested in the grade and feedback became more relevant when the mark wasn't what was expected. This suggests that work may be needed to engage students, as well as staff, in the importance and usefulness of feedback.

Tables 1-4 show the key suggestion made by students, as noted by the project officers, in each discipline area. Issues highlighted in bold occurred in more than one group.

Table 1: Law

Table 2: Sport Science

Table 3: Event Management

Table 4: Quantity Surveying

## **Discussion**

There were clear links between the perceptions and suggestions of our students and previous pedagogic research. The concerns and remedies discussed appear to be responses to what the groups perceived as not working well. Students suggested course level approaches that they thought might help them and fellow students. The strategies proposed were generally concerned with engaging and understanding the feedback. Including the process from module guides, tutorials, feed forward sessions, staff availability and timings rather than requesting that more be given. This aligns with a study by Winstone et al (2016) which suggests changing the type of intervention may be more beneficial than simply creating the necessity for academic staff to create more feedback.

The outcomes of the workshops suggest that these students wanted to be able to access different types of formative feedback. This accords with other findings of Winstone et al (2016) in that students often desire, for example, oral feedback with a known tutor. This may not necessarily suggest the need for more feedback but stresses the importance of tutors in the process. Nicol (2010) suggests that increased student numbers means that feedback can appear detached from a supportive tutorial system leading to dissatisfaction in the feedback process. This seems to be the case for the students in this study and this raises potential challenges for an already stretched system.

Clear marking criteria were highlighted as important and this may help grading consistency between markers (Price and Rust, 1999). Consistency in terms of inter-assessor reliability was highlighted as a problem area and confirms the findings of previous studies (Lizzio and Wilson, 2008). Students wanted to know how to make the work better next time.



Orsmond and Merry (2011) suggest that this lacuna in developmental emphasis may be part of the reason that students find feedback hard to engage with. Students felt that feedback was on the whole negative and wanted to know what they had done well. This is congruent with findings by Rae and Cochrane (2008) that learners valued feedback that gave them positive encouragement.

It is also notable from our study that certain elements of good feedback practice identified in previous literature were barely mentioned, or given low importance. For example, Nicol's (2010) emphasis on creating a dialogue around feedback in order to make it more effective did not appear to be a priority for students in this study. Most of the comments and suggestions reflect a view of students seeing themselves as the recipient of feedback, not the active participant in it. This possibly reflects the fact that students can sometimes be reluctant to take the initiative in utilising or reflecting upon their feedback (Winstone et al, 2016). This evidence confirms previous findings that students may need to be given better support in order to appreciate the value of feedback, how to use it, and how to understand it, as educators we need to find ways of turning students into 'active players' in the feedback cycle (Aoun et al, 2016). This will help to educate students, as well as staff through dialogue around the feedback process (Price et al, 2010).

## **Conclusions**

The need for students to engage with and for staff to provide, effective feedback is a highly emotive area and is frequently an aspect that both protagonists find to be problematic. Modular courses, so ubiquitous in modern higher education, do not encourage best practice in providing useful feedback as it is often received after modules have finished. It may then be seen by students as having limited value for subsequent assessments on the course (Li and De Luca, 2014). However, the practical suggestions made by students here suggest that current feedback processes have the potential to deliver more relevance through, for example, enhancing a focus on feed-forward. Findings of this study support those of others in that a scholarly approach needs to be taken to solving the challenges posed by bringing the often divergent desires of staff and students into a single process.

A feedback strategy at course-level may require the support of institutional policy (Rust, 2002), as it is often difficult for individual discipline areas to work in isolation where assessment practices are concerned. For example, the three-week assessment turnaround in the institution concerned here was noted by both staff and students as creating a tension between the quality and timing of feedback which is not easily reconciled.

The approach taken in this study added a 'student voice' aspect which focussed on the practicalities of how course and modules might adjust or enhance their practices. A key finding is that a course-level strategy is desirable as it provides consistency and connectivity so as to encourage students to engage with, and utilise, feedback that staff spend a considerable amount of time creating. Seeing the issues through the eyes of students tended to focus our suggestions for practice on how to transfer well-established pedagogic suggestions (O'Donovan, Rust and Price, 2015) into practice, via modular and course-level

strategies, rather than individual pieces of work. This confirms the findings of previous studies that the value of the student voice in curriculum development may be to provide a valuable lens through which to implement pedagogic knowledge (Brooman, Darwent and Pimor, 2015).

A limitation of this study is that we were only able to gauge the success of the process at the time of the creation of the strategies. The studies time limit and the employment of the project officers did not allow us to return at a later date to assess whether strategies to improve student perceptions of feedback processes had been successful. Whilst the study involved a number of courses and discipline areas which may enhance its wider applicability, the findings relate to one university and may be limited by the demographics of those studying there. The primarily student-centred method employed in this study may also have led to students being less aware of academic staff concerns around the marking process until the final presentation meeting. These include, for example, the time made available by university feedback guidelines, student numbers, the problems associated with writing assessment criteria and the impact of other aspects of the profession such as research and pedagogic knowledge. The lack of this specific knowledge may have hindered a deeper dialogue from taking place. We also noted that student perceptions may be affected by the way in which expectations are managed by staff teams and view this as a potential area for future research.

We found value in involving students more closely in looking at assessment feedback processes which as has been recommended in previous studies (Deeley and Bovill, 2015). The value of enhanced student involvement in curriculum development by way of enhanced dialogue, which may fall short of full partnership, shown in previous studies is also supported (Brooman et al, 2015). Although the personal impact of involvement in this process is limited to these particular students, their contributions may help future students if the new suggestions are implemented and followed up by course teams. It would be beneficial to investigate whether this is the case in future studies in order to discover if benefits are permanent or transitory.

We confirm the findings of previous studies that students need to be specifically taught about the feedback process so that they more fully understand their own responsibilities (Price et al, 2010). The suggestions made by students in this study tended to reflect a view of their part in the process being as recipients rather than the active participants that previous research suggests that they should be. Our study revealed the value that students can add to the dialogue around creating useful feedback practices. However, it also revealed that educators may need to do a lot more to inform and motivate the student body as to the worth of truly engaging with their feedback. Just as staff need to know more about effective feedback, so do students need to appreciate the value of a more positive interaction with it. If staff provide better feedback processes it is of no avail if students fail to utilise it. Here lies the pedagogic challenge, especially in areas such as law where there is a well-known reluctance to engage with external education evidence (Stolker, 2014).

Both parties are heavily invested in this aspect of the student experience. Managing conflicting staff and student expectations is a key factor in reducing the difference between what the staff can deliver, and what the students might want from assessment feedback. Reducing inconsistencies in practice, operating from a course level and offering a very clear strategy in relation to the practice of feedback may produce higher levels of satisfaction. Approaching feedback development as a member of a course or module team, supported by better communication and awareness of student perceptions, has the potential to play a vital role in creating clarity and consistency.

### **Recommendations for course-level feedback**

The authors of this study used an analysis of students' perceptions of feedback practices as recorded in the notes of meetings by the project officers, together with transcripts of group discussions, to create the following set of guidelines. In table 5 we suggest the overarching themes which appeared to support a greater connection between the intentions and needs of both interested parties in relation to feedback in this study.

Table 5: Supporting good feedback

An analysis of the course-level feedback strategies devised by students, together with contextual evidence from previous studies, suggests the following practical components for developing and implementing course-level feedback strategies to implement the themes in Table 5. Specific interventions would be dependent on local circumstances and could be the subject of future research. The suggestions are not exhaustive and are meant to be an indicator for potential discussions by course-teams, the adoption of which will be determined by local circumstances (Table 6):

Table 6: Course/Module level feedback strategy

### **Notes on contributors**

All authors work in academic positions at Liverpool John Moores University and have responsibility for aspects of teaching and learning.

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Table1: Law

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Consistency in the module handbooks about the format of work (each module should not be asking for something different)</li><li>2. <b>Requested responses to all email queries and that students should always be able to approach marker to talk about feedback</b></li><li>3. All work should be moderated, not just a sample</li><li>4. Students should be advised that they can keep their feedback and don't have to hand the work back in for external marking</li><li>5. <b>Accepted that it was OK for feedback to be given after university prescribed 15 day period - as long as the date for this is clear</b></li></ol> |
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Table 2: Science

1. They wanted a feed forward session before the learning starts for each piece of work that covers the expectations and criteria
2. Feedback dates in the handbook must be correct and not be changed
- 3. Formative feedback to be available on drafts of work**
4. Feedback to be about both the content and also the transferrable skills e.g. scientific writing
5. Work to be annotated (suggestion that staff needed to have had training to be able to do this electronically)
6. Hand-written feedback should be legible
- 7. Explain the positives of the work in each section of the feedback**
- 8. Every lecturer to be available for tutorials (they thought they should be able to book these online)**
- 9. Overall generic feedback lecture on what the group generally did right and wrong should be provided**



Table 3: Social science

1. A clear outline for each assessment (both given in the module guide and in the lecture) in relation to what is needed for the introduction, main body, conclusion etc.
2. **In the grading criteria they wanted explanation of what the language means e.g. what is 'good'**
3. **Assessment surgeries and formative feedback about 10 days before the work is due**
4. The person who gives the formative feedback should mark the work
5. Prepared to wait longer for feedback if it was to be given in person and was constructive
6. **Lecturer to be available for tutorials (they thought they should be able to book these online)**
7. **Overall feedback lecture on what the group generally in relation to what was a 1<sup>st</sup>, a 2.i etc.**

Table 4: Quantity Surveying

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|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Feedback to be specific to the coursework but also generic in relation to writing style etc. so it can be transferred to other work</li><li>2. They wanted a session in the first year explaining the importance of feedback</li><li>3. <b>Staff to respond to emails about assessments</b></li><li>4. <b>Students should be able to get formative feedback on a draft a week before submission</b></li><li>5. <b>They wanted an explanation of the grade and comments on what needed to happen to make the work better</b></li><li>6. <b>Lecturer to be available for tutorials (they thought they should be able to book these online)</b></li><li>7. <b>Overall feedback lecture on what on what the group generally did right and wrong should be provided</b></li></ol> |
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Table 5: Supporting good feedback

1. A course-level strategy, supported by tutors, is needed to ensure consistency for students
2. Communication and discussion of the course level strategy with students
3. Clear, specific and relevant marking criteria for each module
4. Breakdown criteria to indicate where the marks are allocated
5. Formative feedback on work should be given where possible
6. Improve communication between staff on all modules to ensure a common feedback message
7. Improve staff availability to support assessments
8. Provide for students guidelines on what constitutes a good piece of work i.e. what is being marked should be provided, possibly including exemplars
9. Use positive language in feedback and highlight transferable elements for subsequent assessments
10. Develop a 'partnership' strategy - being able to approach a tutor known to the student makes asking for further feedback or assessment support easier
11. Sympathetic institutional policy to recognise and balance the needs of timely and useful feedback
12. Course and module teams should meet yearly/regular intervals to discuss overall and module-specific assessment feedback strategies and consider research evidence of good assessment practice
13. Staff development and on-going communication in the area of awareness of good assessment/feedback practice is often desirable

Table 6: Course/Module level feedback strategy

**Module team**

1. Teams should set, and publish, clear assessment expectations
2. Marking criteria for different grade bands should be available for continual assessment (not necessarily examinations)
3. Publish guidelines and timing of formative and summative feedback processes
4. Email response protocols should be clear to both staff and students i.e. staff should respond to appropriate questions within a reasonable time
5. Partnership approach - if possible, the same member of staff should provide formative and summative assessment feedback

**Prior to submission of assessment – informing and motivating students to engage with feedback**

6. Course teams should provide taught opportunities for first-year students to explore the value and importance of feedback, including how to use it. This could be supported by 'reminder' sessions in future years
7. Feed-forward sessions are desirable prior to each assessed piece to work through the criteria and general expectations
8. Lecturers should be available for guidance (possibly consider online support)
9. Availability of staff to support build-up to the assessment should be clear
10. Assessment surgeries and formative feedback would be beneficial if offered within two weeks of submission
11. Teams should formulate a clear and consistent strategy for formative feedback on drafts of assessed work

**Feedback on work**

12. Feedback should aim to be both evaluative and transferrable to future work
13. The language of feedback should be precise e.g. 'good work' or 'structure needs work' should be explained for clarity
14. The marker should highlight positive aspects of the work
15. An overall explanation of the grade should be given indicating what is needed to improve future work
16. Feedback must be legible and intelligible e.g. language used should be accessible

**Post-return of work**

17. A generic group-level feedback session on what the group generally did right and wrong and on what the group did generally in relation to what was a 1<sup>st</sup>, a 2<sup>nd</sup> etc. should be given
18. Students should be informed of who to go to for more detailed feedback or explanation

