HOW CAN ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK ENHANCE STUDENTS' LEARNING?

Dai Hounsell
1. Assessment and feedback in transformation

2. Feedback & high-quality learning

3. Assessment and feedback in transformation

4. Assessment and feedback in transformation
I. assessment and feedback in transformation
### ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK IN TRANSFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>from</th>
<th>towards</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assessment as primarily summative/judgmental (assessment of learning)</td>
<td>assessment as primarily formative/developmental (assessment for learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>assessment as separate from teaching &amp; learning</td>
<td>assessment and learning as closely interrelated</td>
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<td>feedback as optional, assessment-focused, generated by the teacher</td>
<td>feedback as optional, traversing learning, generated by teachers &amp; students in dialogue</td>
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Rethinking feedback in higher education:

1. Is rich in formal feedback
2. Is rich in informal feedback
3. Emphasises authentic assessment
4. Offers opportunities for low-stakes assessment practice
5. Develops students’ independence and autonomy
6. Balances formative and summative assessment
ASSESSMENT for LEARNING in HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Is rich in formal feedback
2. Is rich in informal feedback
3. Emphasises authentic assessment
4. Offers opportunities for low-stakes assessment practice
5. Develops students’ independence and autonomy
6. Balances formative and summative assessment
2. feedback and high-quality learning
'It has long been recognised, by researchers and practitioners alike, that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings. We learn faster, and much more effectively, when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might do in order to improve . . .'

WHY FEEDBACK MATTERS

Learning without feedback is 'blind archery'

[tiro con arco ciego]
WHY FEEDBACK MATTERS

Feedback is indispensable to high-quality learning, teaching and assessment, at its most effective, it can enable all students to achieve their best.
FUNDAMENTALS OF FEEDBACK

What forms does / can feedback take?

pro forma  written comments  exemplars
exams  guidance  feedforward  traditional
collaboration  on-display learning  peer  audio
past questions  screencast  whole-class
clickers  in-class assignments  cumulative  editing
using feedback well  elective  self  co-revision
e-feedback  redrafting  reviewing progress
criteria  dialogue  supervision  interaction
new  briefing  involvement  faster feedback
model answers  training  video  online
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FEEDBACK'?  

A RETHINK

- it needn't be written
- it needn't be from the lecturer/tutor
- it needn't consist of comments
- it needn't focus on students' written work

A MORE INCLUSIVE VIEW

- it can be spoken, signalled, emoted, visualised, digitally recorded
- it can be self-generated or from peers or others, or ...
- ... it can come via an activity, or process, or experience
- it can focus on a reflection, a response or answer to a question, a note, an idea, a first attempt, work-in-progress
FEEDBACK: A WORKING DEFINITION

Feedback comprises:

information, processes, activities or experiences

which aim to

synthesise, enable or accelerate students' learning
ABUNDANT RECENT EVIDENCE THAT FEEDBACK HAS NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE

1. Pervasive evidence of wide-ranging student concerns about feedback

- quantity
- frequency
- consistency
- quality
- helpfulness
- distance/interaction
- promptness
- transparency/accessibility
ABUNDANT EVIDENCE OF INEFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

2. The evidence spans subjects, institutions, & national systems of higher education

- **evidence from the UK**
  
  e.g. National Student Surveys (2007-14); QAA Learning from Subject Review (2006); Crook et al. (2006); Maclellan, (2001); Hounsell (2003, 2005); Price et al. (2010); Beaumont et al. (2011) Sambell et al (2013)

- **evidence from Sweden, Australia and Hong Kong**
  
  e.g. Jonsson, (2013); Krause et al. (2005) and Orrell (2006); Carless (2006, 2010)
3. improving feedback and assessment-for-learning
IMPROVING FEEDBACK
Four Approaches

- TEACHER FOCUS
  a. more effective feedback comments

- COURSE FOCUS
  d. feedback-rich course design

- STUDENT FOCUS
  b. more active student engagement with feedback
  c. better opportunities to put feedback to good use
TEACHER FOCUS

a. more effective feedback comments
'It has long been recognised, by researchers and practitioners alike, that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings. We learn faster, and much more effectively, when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might do in order to improve.

And while we can of course monitor, and reflect on, our own performance, there are many situations where self-appraisal is of only limited value: we also need feedback from someone more expert (more knowledgeable, better informed, more highly skilled) than ourselves.'

MORE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK COMMENTS

- aligning feedback to criteria & standards
- clarifying commenting purposes
- three-step comments
- audio and video feedback
MORE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK COMMENTS
aligning feedback to criteria & standards

[Image of a feedback form with various criteria and comments]

Dai Hounsell  
_How Can Assessment & Feedback Enhance Students’ Learning?_  
UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE CATALUNYA, APRIL 2014
CLARIFYING PURPOSES

- recommending
- correcting
- explaining
- suggesting
- advising
- criticising
- questioning/probing
- praising & encouraging
- discussing
- evaluating quality
- justifying the mark
In your discipline/subject area, which of these functions would you see as most important (and which least important) if you were giving feedback to:

a. a student at your University doing their first piece of assessed work?

b. a final-year student at your University?
CLARIFYING PURPOSES
MINI-ACTIVITY

- recommending
- correcting
- explaining
- suggesting
- advising
- criticising
- questioning/probing
- praising & encouraging
- discussing
- evaluating quality
- justifying the mark
CLARIFYING PURPOSES
MINI-ACTIVITY

TYPES OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

- Evaluating
- Validating
- Explaining
- Encouraging
- Conversing
- Guiding towards improvement
THREE-STEP COMMENTING
(Based on Brown & Glover, 2006; Walker 2009, 2013)

pointing out the error
identifying the shortcoming
naming the issue

clarifying/explaining why
indicating how/where

suggesting what would be better/how to improve
FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMENTS

① focus on the work or task undertaken, not the student personally
② avoid imperatives (!), private symbols (sp) and cryptic comments ("evidence?")
③ comments are particularised or illustrated with a specific example
④ focus on two or three key areas for improvement
⑤ suggest how the student can aim to improve
STUDENT FOCUS

b. more active student engagement with feedback
MORE ACTIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH FEEDBACK

- Elective feedback
- Exemplars
- Peer and self-generated feedback
MORE ACTIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH FEEDBACK

elective feedback

what is 'elective' feedback?

WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO PHILIP MALLETT
Exemplars

"[Students] need to learn to discover what quality looks and feels like, and the aspects – whether large or small – that detract from it. They need to develop a vocabulary for expressing and communicating what they find. Furthermore, they should gradually attune their growing realisations and discourse to the norms of the discipline, field or profession"

(Sadler, 2010)
peer and self-generated feedback
Welcome to PeerWise

**PeerWise** supports you and your peers in the creation, sharing, evaluation and discussion of assessment questions relevant to your studies.

**You design the questions**
Creating a question requires you to reflect on what you are learning in a course. Explaining the answer to your question in your own words helps to reinforce your understanding. *If you teach it, you understand it.*

**See what everyone thinks**
Attempt questions written by your peers, and see how everyone else has answered. Feedback is immediate, you have access to explanations and you can participate in discussions. *See what others think is important.*

**Learn from your peers**
Search by quality, difficulty and topic to find questions of interest to you. Follow authors who contribute questions that you like, and request help when you need it. *Help your peers, and let them help you.*
Welcome to PeerWise

To log in, select your school / institution from the list below

Just type the first few characters...

Go »

PeerWise supports students in the creation, sharing, evaluation and discussion of assessment questions.

What is PeerWise?
Students use PeerWise to create and to explain their understanding of course related assessment questions, and to answer and discuss questions created by their peers.

Any subject
PeerWise is used in a wide range of subjects, including Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Physics, Population Health, Pharmacology, Medicine, and many more...

Free and easy to use
PeerWise is free and very easy to use. Students are presented with a simple, intuitive interface and instructors can easily view student content and monitor participation.

Find out more
Want to get started? View student and instructor guides, watch screencasts of PeerWise in action, and hear what students and instructors think in the Information about PeerWise section.

"I just wanted to say thank you for PeerWise! We've just finished using it in a class with 400 very diverse students and the outcome was excellent. The students loved the site and using it vastly improved their understanding of the material covered in class. The only down side was complaints from other staff members that students were not attending to their work in other subjects because they were 'playing' with PeerWise on their mobile devices. Oh, and now we are getting complaints from students who want to know why we aren't using PeerWise in all of our subjects. Great work!"

Dr. Pauline Bennett
Associate Professor of Psychology
La Trobe University, Australia

"As well as using PeerWise with my own students in Physics, in my role as Dean of Learning and Teaching I am able to promote effective tools such as PeerWise to take forward the aims of our learning and teaching enhancement strategy. All too often such strategies have grand visions and wise words that leave academic staff at the coalface wondering "All very well, but what can I actually do with my students to deliver this?" PeerWise represents an effective, easy to use tool that instructors can readily appreciate the educational benefits of using."

Prof. Simon Bates
Professor of Physics
University of British Columbia, Canada

"PeerWise is a terrific tool for encouraging students to "own their own learning" in a sharing and supportive environment. Posing good, thoughtful questions with supporting explanations is an excellent application of critical thinking skills. Similarly, asking questions and offering comments offers opportunities to improve one’s communication and self-reflection abilities. MAKING multiple-choice tests requires a much higher level of understanding than simply TAKING them!"

Dr. Mark White
Associate Professor of Commerce
University of Virginia, USA
STUDENT FOCUS

c. better opportunities to put feedback to good use
MISSING THE FEEDBACK BUS?

Why is feedback often uncollected?

Does some feedback always come too late?

with acknowledgements to Dr. Judy Hardy
“When we desire a motion to follow a given pattern, the difference between this pattern and the actually performed motion is used as a new input to cause the part regulated to move in such a way as to bring its motion closer to that given by the pattern.”

(Wiener, 1961, p.6)
FROM FEEDBACK TO FEEDFORWARD

- **feedforward assignments**
- **cumulative assignments**
- **'threaded' feedback**
**FULLER USE OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS**

**FEEDFORWARD ASSIGNMENTS**

- *draft/comment/revise/resubmit*

  Feedforward and tracking progress on dissertations
  The dissertation is the most challenging piece of writing that Edinburgh University's undergraduate Business School students have to undertake. Since the target length is a daunting 18,000 words and the process takes place over a full year, it has to be carefully managed to ensure that it stays on track and blends in with the various other assignments and assessments that the students complete in their final year.

- *parts-to-whole*

  In the Business School, this is being achieved with the aid of a computerised 'dissertation support system' (DSS for short). The DSS operates across across eleven degree programmes, helping to match around 180 students with topic supervisors and enabling both to keep tabs on how the dissertation work is progressing over the course of the year. There is a minimum of four supervisory meetings associated with each dissertation, and the students get 'feedforward' comments on two draft dissertation chapters.

- *threading and chaining*
COURSE FOCUS

d. feedback-rich course design
d. FEEDBACK-RICH COURSE DESIGN

- **On-display learning**
  
  e.g. oral and poster presentations

- **Collaborative tasks & activities**

- **Clickers & 'real-time' feedback**
d. FEEDBACK-RICH COURSE DESIGN
ON-DISPLAY LEARNING AS FEEDBACK PROXY

(from HOUNSELL & MCCUNE, 2003)

A social sciences student
Someone had a list of questions that they were going to ask at the beginning, then they went through them. I think it’s a really good idea ...

Two physical sciences students
S1: You’ve got hands when you’re presenting, it’s so good.
S2: I was noticing that when I was doing it.
S1: You used your hands when you were talking about the Northern and the Southern Hemisphere, and it was great because you don’t actually have to give all the details. Like a diagram, you can point to bits.

A humanities student
I think it helps if you follow a structure. Like [lecturer X] always tells you what he’s going to say and then elaborates on all the points, which is really good for notetaking...
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING
co-planning, co-creating, co-writing, co-editing
CLICKERS AND REAL-TIME FEEDBACK

4. new directions for feedback and assessment-for-learning
ASSESSING WORK-IN-PROGRESS

b. feedforward & assessing work-in-progress

- wikis
- blogs
- databases
- glossaries & encyclopedias
ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, 1

- Class blogs and discussion boards
- Group wikis
- Team portfolios
- Shared databases and compendia
- Collaborative writing tools
ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, 2

SOME CHALLENGES

- **social loafing, the sucker effect, ‘diligent isolates’** (Peterse & Thompson, 2010)
- **who gets the credit?**
- **evaluate the processes or the product?**
- **the moral economy of grading peers' work**

EVIDENCE-INFORMED TASK DESIGN

- **peer feedback vs. peer marking** (Carless, 1999)
- **designs for groupwork** (Davies, 2009)
  - conjunctive, additive, disjunctive & discretionary
- **alertness to destructive & constructive friction** (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999)

A MORE ACTIVE STUDENT ROLE IN ASSESSMENT

- graduates adept at evaluating the quality of their own and others' work
- students given opportunities to become skilled at giving feedback to others
- greater student choice over how/when/where they will be assessed
- student involvement in determining the criteria (and weightings) used to assess a given piece of work

http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/books/assessment_literacy.html
KEY REFERENCES


http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/pages/docdetail/docs/publications/transforming-assessment-and-feedback
