

## **International students' perceptions and behaviours of online written feedback provided by teachers in UK universities**

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### **Research Domains**

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

### **Abstract**

In the international higher education context, feedback plays an important role for international students (Tian & Lowe, 2013). However, the issues in feedback for international students have been widely noticed (Li & Curdt-Christiansen, 2020; Olave-Encina et al., 2021). This study used an online questionnaire to collect data from second and third-or-final-year international students who were undertaking an undergraduate taught course at the Department of Education in a Russell Group University in the UK. It provided insights about international students' overall perceptions and behaviours of online written feedback provided by teachers. It pointed out how students' personal characteristics, especially feedback skill confidence, previous study experiences, English skills, and enrolled years, impacted their feedback behaviours and perceptions. This study has reference value about assessment and learning practice for those with: academic responsibilities in English-medium Higher Education Institutions; substantial populations of international students in their class, and/or intercultural components in their curriculum.

### **Full paper**

In the international higher education context, feedback plays an important role for international students (Tian & Lowe, 2013). However, the issues in feedback for international students have been noticed by several studies (Li & Curdt-Christiansen, 2020; Olave-Encina et al., 2021). Therefore, studies, for example, Warner and Miller (2015), Lim (2019), and Burns and Foo (2013) have explored international students' perceptions and behaviours about feedback. Some studies, for example, Li and Curdt-Christiansen (2020), Lim (2019), Zhang and Zheng (2018) also mentioned factors that impact international students' feedback perceptions and/or behaviours. The mentioned factors include students' previous assessment and feedback histories, English skill proficiency, and gender.

However, firstly, there is limited statistical evidence to back up these findings. Secondly, very limited studies have examined the impact of some other factors, such as students' enrolled year, academic performance, feedback literacy, as well as other personal characteristics, on international students' feedback perceptions and behaviours. In addition, the relationships between international students' feedback perceptions and behaviours were also not clear. Therefore, to overcome the limitations, this study aims to provide insights about international students' perceptions and behaviours of online written feedback provided by teachers and how students' personal characteristics impact their perceptions and behaviours. This study could provide reference value about assessment and learning practice for those with: academic responsibilities in English-medium Higher Education Institutions; substantial populations of international students in their class, and/or intercultural components in their curriculum.

This study used an online questionnaire to collect data from second and third-year international students who were undertaking an undergraduate taught course at the Department of Education at a Russell Group University in the UK. In addition, by using a principal component analysis, the study developed three scales to further explain students' feedback behaviours and perceptions, and how different factors impact students' perceptions and behaviours. Scale 1: "internal use of feedback", which includes: "Carefully read feedback"; "Reading marking criteria or rubrics"; "Use feedback for later learning or study"; "I ignore feedback (opposite)". Scale 2: "External discussion of feedback", which includes: "Talk to peers on your course or programme on feedback"; and "Talk with family or friends about feedback". Scale 3: "Perceptions of feedback", which includes: "Indicates the weakness"; "How to improve or develop"; "Can be applied to help future assignments"; "Points out efforts I have made".

The findings indicated that from the students' perspective, teachers' feedback was good at academic function, but insufficient in emotional support. In terms of students' behaviours, students were more engaged with feedback but less engaged with marking criteria or rubrics. The insufficient use of feedback for later learning was also noticed by the study. In addition, the findings also indicated that students tend to talk with peers, friends, or family members about feedback rather than staff members at the university.

The results also revealed factors that impact students' perceptions and behaviours. Firstly, feedback skill confidence was a very important factor that impacted students' feedback perceptions and behaviours. This study found that students with higher feedback skill confidence tend to have more positive perceptions of feedback and are more engaged with internal use of feedback. Secondly, students with single-country study experiences and

higher English skills were more engaged with Internal use of feedback, while students enrolled in lower year were more engaged with external use of feedback. Thirdly, students enrolled in higher study years and with higher feedback skill confidence have more positive feedback perceptions, but students with higher English skills were less satisfied. In addition, the interrelated relationships can be noticed between international students' feedback perceptions and behaviours, with students who have higher feedback perceptions being more engaged with both internal use of feedback and external use of feedback.

As feedback skill confidence was a very important factor that impacts both students' feedback behaviours and perceptions, universities providing support or training to improve students' feedback literacy would bring value to students' feedback experiences. The interrelated relationships between students' feedback perceptions and behaviours further indicate the value for universities to improve feedback quality and facilitate a virtuous circle in international students' feedback experience. Students with higher English levels would have higher requirements for teachers' feedback, which is worthwhile to consider it during future feedback practice.