

Gemma Gelder

Coventry University, UK

Outline

Feedback on students' work according to Lunt and Curran (2010) is probably one of the most important aspects of learning and yet, after decades assessment and feedback still remain areas that students are least satisfied with within the United Kingdom National Student Survey (NSS) (Munro and Hollingworth 2014).

A study carried out in 2014 discussed and examined a particular method of providing summative assessment feedback to undergraduate leisure students studying a level 5 research methods module via audio feedback and aimed to explore both the efficiency and effectiveness of this format. In addition staff perceptions of audio feedback were also evaluated. Conclusions were then drawn as to whether this type of feedback should be embedded into the curriculum and adopted by the team and/or faculty, as currently only traditional written feedback sheets on student assessments is encompassed.

This study took an Active Research (AR) approach and helped to determine whether alternative (audio) feedback processes should be adopted by the leisure department, along with what actions need be taken and embedded going forward in order to improve the student experience but also improve working practices for staff. Students were asked to complete an on-line survey through Survey Monkey on audio feedback and tutors were given an unstructured interview. 27 students responded in total and the results were very positive on the audio feedback they received and the importance of dialogue was noted.

It was identified through the research that feedback is a fundamental part of the learning process. It enables students to develop, shape their learning and promotes a greater self-esteem. There has been limited research focused on the students' perspective of the value and usefulness of audio feedback. The positive findings of previous studies are confirmed by this study, not only did lecturers find this method to be effective but the responses from students were also very positive. We are now

facing increasing numbers of 'tech savvy' students who will demand better standards of feedback so audio will go some way to addressing their needs (Lunt and Curran, 2010).

While there are issues to be addressed relating to the use of audio feedback including the time it takes, the confidence and ability of the tutor and issues around students with hearing impairments the overall response to this paper and others research is encouraging. Students appear to enjoy audio feedback as opposed to written feedback and personally collecting feedback in person. Given the importance of feedback and the findings of the NUS Survey (2008), audio feedback offers significant advantages over the uncollected and written alternative. As Weaver (2006) contended there may be some truth to the claim by a number of academics that some students do not bother with written feedback but in light of these findings this may be because either the feedback does not contain enough guidance, or they have insufficient understanding of academic discourse to interpret comments accurately. Although it appears that tutors try to provide helpful and detailed feedback it is evident this practice is not always consistent across different modules.

It is vital in HE to provide quality feedback to students in any way shape or form that will facilitate their development as independent learners. As education practitioners it is essential to explore how teaching and learning can be improved by studying our students, their learning and listening to their needs. Ramsden (2003) believes that higher education will benefit if those who teach inquire into the effects of their activities on their students learning. Carless (2006) discovered assessment was a topic that students were very willing to discuss because it is central to their university experience and something they have a lot to say about. It was expressed by a student that *"no tutor has ever asked us what kind of feedback we would like"* (Carless 2006, p.231) This is an important topic and more research is needed, however any findings that go towards developing a student-centred approach to learning and best practice of feedback should be shared with others in order to improve learning and help towards raising standards.

It was suggested that as long as feedback that is provided by academics, aims to make it more useful and meaningful to students in the context of progressing their

learning then the most effective method for that HEI should be adopted. The paper concludes with recommendations and areas for future research.

Limitations

It should be noted that the main limitation imposed on this research has predominantly been the time period in which it had to be conducted. Given the multi-faceted nature of the topic, a greater length of time in which to conduct the research would have been beneficial as audio feedback could have been explored and critically evaluated against the existent literature in more depth however these could be areas for future research which are detailed below.

It was also a rather small scale study with a response rate of 48%, whilst the student feedback was very valuable and their evaluations relate with the limited research available on audio feedback, it could be argued as Gould and Day (2013) also found that the results cannot be generalised entirely to the wider student population. The small sample size may slightly skew the results. Furthermore this may indicate as Munro and Hollingworth (2014) found that students may not use their feedback no matter what form it is in and that those who did respond may have been more likely to have found it a positive experience. Further research is definitely welcomed to larger and diverse groups of students to strengthen the warrant for the need of audio feedback. This is further supported by Fox *et al* (2014) who state that for the research to be accurate a good response rate must be achieved.

Whilst limitations have been identified the current study has provided supportive findings to strengthen the growing evidence that audio feedback and creating dialogue is greatly welcomed and a practice that HEI's should adopt and try out. It further emphasises the important of keeping up with a techy savvy students and using technology for assessments and feedback.

Objectives/Outcomes:

- To analyse the use of audio feedback and dialogue in feedback to try and improve NSS results in this area, the paper will focus on the following objectives;
- In relation to leisure students, what were the learners' responses and perceptions about the provision of feedback in audio format?
- To consider how leisure students use feedback when it is provided in audio form and how this usage might differ from the use of conventional written feedback.
- With regard to leisure academic staff, what were their experiences about the processes involved in providing audio feedback?

References

Bailey, R. and Garner, M. (2010) Is the feedback in higher education assessment worth the paper it is written on? Teachers' reflections on their practices. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(2), pp. 187-198.

Bloxham, S. and P, Boyd. (2007) *Developing effective assessment in higher education: A practical guide*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Bloxham, S. and Campbell, L. (2010) Generating Dialogue in Assessment Feedback: exploring the use of interactive cover sheets. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(3), pp.291-300.

Brown, G., Bull, J. & Pendlebury, M. (1997) *Assessing student learning in higher education*. London: Routledge

Boud, D. (2007) Reframing assessment as if learning were important. In *Rethinking assessment in higher education: Learning for the longer term*, ed. Boud, D. and Falchikov, N. 14-28. London: Routledge.

Brown, S. (2007) *Feedback and feedforward*. Higher Education Academy.

Carless, D. (2006) Differing perceptions in the feedback process. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), pp. 219-233.

Cooper, S. (2008) Delivering student feedback in higher education: the role of podcasting. *Journal of Music, Technology and Education*, 1(2).

Cramp, A. (2006) Developing student engagement with, and reflection on, feedback through the tutorial system. *Learning and Teaching Projects 2005-2007: Enhancing the student experience*. University of Wolverhampton.

Crisp, B. (2007) Is it worth the effort? How feedback influences students' subsequent submission of assessable work. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32, pp.571-581.

Duncan, N. (2007) 'Feedforward': Improving students' use of tutors' comments. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(3), pp.271-283.

Elwood, J., and Klenowski, V. (2002) Creating communities of shared practice: The challenges of assessment use in learning and teaching. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27(3), pp.243-256.

Ferguson, P. (2011) Student Perceptions of Quality Feedback in Teacher Education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(1), pp.51-62.

Gibbs, G. and Simpson, C. (2004) Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 1, pp. 3-31.

Gould, J., and Day, P. (2013) Hearing you loud and clear: student perspectives of audio feedback in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(5), pp. 554-566.

Grove, J. (2014) National Student Survey 2014 results show record levels of satisfaction. *Times Higher Education* [Online] 12 August 2014 [Accessed 1st September 2014]. Available at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/national-student-survey-2014-results-show-record-levels-of-satisfaction/2015108.article>

Hattie, J. and Timperley, H. (2007) The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), pp.81-112.

Hennessy, C. and Forrester, G. (2013) Developing a framework for effective audio feedback: a case study. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*.

Higgins, R., Hartley, P. & Skelton, A. (2002) The Conscientious Consumer: reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(1), pp. 53-64.

Hounsell, D., McCune, V., Hounsell, J and Litjens, J. (2008) The quality of guidance and feedback to students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 27(1), pp. 55-67.

Hyland, P. (2000). Learning from feedback on assessment, in: A. B. P. Hyland (Ed.) *The practice of university history teaching* (Manchester, Manchester University Press).

Ice, P., Curtis, R., Phillips, P., and Wells, J. (2007) Using asynchronous audio feedback to enhance teaching presence and students' sense of community. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 11(2), pp. 3-25.

Irons, A. (2008) *Enhancing learning through formative assessment and feedback*. Routledge: Abingdon.

King, D., McGugan, S., and Bunyan, N. (2008) Does it make a difference? Replacing text with audio feedback. *Practice and Evidence of scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 3(2), pp.145-163.

Knight, P. & Yorke, M. (2003) *Assessment, learning and employability*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Laughton, D. (2013) Using audio feedback to enhance assessment practice – an evaluation of student and tutor experiences. *Student Engagement and Experience*, 2(2).

Lunt, T. and Curran, J. (2010) Are you listening please? The advantages of electronic audio feedback compared to written feedback. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(7), pp.759-769.

Macgregor, G., Spiers, A., and Taylor, C. (2011) "Exploratory Evaluation of Audio Email Technology in Formative Assessment Feedback." *Research in Learning Technology*, 19(1), 39-59.

Merry, S., and Orsmond, P. (2007). Students' responses to academic feedback provided via mp3 audio files. Paper presented at the Science Learning and Teaching Conference in Stafford, UK. Available at <http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/projects/merry.aspx> (accessed 5th June 2014).

Middleton, A. (2007) Audio Feedback for the iPod Generation. *International Conference on Engineering Education – September 3-7*.

Munro, W. and Hollingworth, L. (2014) Audio feedback to physiotherapy students for viva voce: how effective is 'the living voice'? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*.

Mutch, A. (2003) Exploring the practice of feedback to students. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 4(1), pp. 24-38.

National Student Survey Connect (2010) *Charter on feedback and assessment*. [Online] available at www.nusconnect.org.uk/ (accessed 4th June 2014).

Nesbit, P., and Burton, S. (2006) Student Justice Perceptions Following Assignment Feedback. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(6), pp. 655-670.

Nicol, D., J., and Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006) Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), pp. 199-218

Nicol, D. (2010) From monologue to dialogue: improving written feedback processes in mass education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), pp. 501-517.

Nortcliffe, A. and Middleton, A. (2011) Smartphone Feedback: Using an iPhone to improve the distribution of audio feedback. *International Journal of Electrical Engineering Education*, 48(3), pp.280-293.

Poulos, A. and Mahony, M.J. (2008). Effectiveness of feedback: the students' perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(2), pp. 143-154.

Price, M., Handley, K., Millar, J. and O'Donovan, B. (2010) Feedback: All that effort, but what is the effect? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(3), pp. 277-289.

Rotheram, B. (2007) Using an MP3 recorder to give feedback on student assignments. *Educational Developments: Staff and Educational Development Association*. Issue 8.2.

Rotheram, B. (2009) Sounds Good: Quicker, Better Assessment using Audio Feedback. [Online] Accessed 28th July, available at;

Rust, C. (2002) The impact of assessment on student learning. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 3(2), pp. 145-158.

Savin-Baden, M. (2010) The sound of feedback in higher education. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 35(1).

Sellgren, K. (2014) Degree courses 'not value for money', say many students. BBC News [Online] 21 May 2014 [Accessed 5th July 2014]. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-27486606>

Walker, M. (2009) An Investigation into written comments on assignments: Do students find them useful? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(6), pp. 67-78.

Ward, P., Clark, T., Zabriskie, R., and Morris, T. (2014) Paper/Pencil versus Online Data Collection: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 46(1), pp.84-105.

Waters-Adams, S. (2006) Action Research in Education. [Online] Accessed 20th September, available at; <http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/actionresearch/arhome.htm>

Weaver, M., R. (2006) Do students' value feedback? Student perceptions of tutors' written responses. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(3), pp. 379-394.

Williams, J., and Kane, D. (2008) Exploring the national student survey, *Assessment and Feedback Issues*. The Higher Education Academy.

Winter, C. and Dye, V.L. (2004) An investigation into the reasons why students do not collect marked assignments and the accompanying feedback. *Learning and Teaching*.

Voelkel, S., and Mello, L.V. (2014) Audio Feedback – Better Feedback? *The Higher Education Academy*.

Yorke, M. (2003). Formative assessment in higher education: moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education*, 45, pp. 477-501.