

Case Study: Implementing Active Self-Feedback

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Course information

This course, led by Craig Davis in Autumn 2024, was a pre-sessional course. Pre-sessional courses at the University of Manchester are intensive English Language courses for students who do not yet meet the English language requirements for their degree course. These courses can take place online or on-campus, and last between four and ten weeks, depending on the student's prior ability and the level of English required for their degree. Around 93% of pre-sessional students are Chinese, and around 75% are online students.¹

This course was taught to around 2000 students and delivered by over 120 tutors. The implementation of active self-feedback in this course was focused around improving students' academic writing skills, and therefore their ability to critically analyse their own academic writing.

The task

Students were asked to write a 1,200 word argument essay on the topic of generative AI and academic integrity in higher education. This essay was a summative assessment and was supported by several previous formative assessments. For each formative assessment, interactive coversheets were also used to capture student self-assessment and inner feedback.

This was scaffolded in a 3 stage process detailed below:

- **Stage 1:** Lesson on academic standards and expectations with writing.
- **Stage 2:** Early use of interactive coversheets to build dialogic feedback processes and make inner and peer feedback explicit.
- **Stage 3:** use of interactive coversheets eliciting inner feedback guided by a template and guiding questions.

Stage 1

Students co-create a set of criteria based on developing a shared understanding of standards and expectations. They:

1. Discuss their own thoughts on good academic writing/practice,
2. Compare with Gen AI response to the same question and add any relevant ideas

¹ University Centre for Academic English (2025). *Pre-sessional courses*. Available at: <https://www.ucae.manchester.ac.uk/study/pre-sessional-courses> [PPT] (Accessed: 8 July 2025).

3. Analyse an annotated student exemplar and further add to their ideas
4. Compare their developed set of criteria with the actual assessment criteria – identify similarities/ differences and seek opportunities for clarification
5. Use their co-created criteria to analyse a GAI essay on the same topic as the student exemplar used in stage 3.

The purpose of this stage is for students to use own knowledge of what ‘good’ looks like as a starting point and develop this through multiple scaffolded comparisons with GAI outputs, student exemplars and the assessment criteria.

Stage 2

Students took this co-created knowledge from stage 1 and applied it to self and peer feedback, made explicit with interactive coversheets. For example:

Table 1: Example worksheet for self and peer feedback

Have you included the following?		Student comment
A clear position		Yes / Not sure / No
An outline		Yes / Not sure / No
A clear topic sentence		Yes / Not sure / No
Relevant links (cohesion)		Yes / Not sure / No
Evidence / examples that support the main point		Yes / Not sure / No
Explanation of evidence		Yes / Not sure / No
A concluding sentence		Yes / Not sure / No
Answer the following:	Student comment	Tutor comment
Where are some similarities or differences between your writing and your peer’s writing?		
What peer feedback did you receive? (please summarise peer feedback)		
What did you change based on peer feedback?		
Overall comments (please add any comments or		

questions based on your response to the checklist)		
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Table 2: Example worksheet for self and peer feedback

Question	Student comments	
What did you find useful about completing a notetaking template?		
What did you find difficult about complete a note-taking template?		
What were the key similarities and/or differences between your notes and your peers?		
What would you do differently next time?		
	Student comments	Tutor comments
Do you have any questions about reading / notetaking?		
Overall or additional comments		

These aimed to scaffold self-assessment/ inner feedback. Tutors also provided feedback on the coversheet directly next to students' self-feedback for comparison purposes. This hopes to improve feedback literacy by enabling comparison with tutor feedback, which can be seen as a model. This also aimed to build confidence in student inner feedback by further guiding and validating their own comments and seeing value in their own voice as a key part of their learning.

Stage 3

Students completed the interactive coversheet and submitted this along with their final essay draft.

By the time students came to use the interactive coversheet and engage with self-assessment/ feedback for the draft of the assessed writing, they were already familiar with the process and the focus. This increased engagement with the task and enabled more insightful reflection/ inner feedback.

Table 3: Example worksheet for self-feedback

Checklist		Student comment (please expand on answers below)
Have you included a position?		Yes / Not sure / No
Is your position supported with evidence?		Yes / Not sure / No
Have you included critical analysis?		Yes / Not sure / No
Are your paragraphs clear and well organised?		Yes / Not sure / No
Have you used a range of linkers?		Yes / Not sure / No
Have you proofread for grammar, vocabulary and punctuation errors?		Yes / Not sure / No
Have you checked for academic style?		Yes / Not sure / No
Have you used a range of sources effectively to support your points? (please comment further on this below)		Yes / Not sure / No
Please comment on the following:	Student comment	Tutor comment
What do you think you have done well? (link to the points above)		
What do you think you need to improve? (link to the points above)		
How well do you think you have used and synthesised sources from the source pack? (Your feedback here will be used for Synthesising Sources 4)		

Students then compared their feedback with their tutors before further discussion in a 1 to 1 tutorial, and shared feedback on the synthesis question in a group study session focused on source synthesis.

Comparators

For developing an understanding of standards and for comparison to written work, comparators included outputs by generative AI, student exemplars and assessment criteria.

Students also compared their self-feedback, created via interactive coversheets, by using peer feedback and peer outputs, guiding questions linking to the assessment brief and criteria, as well as previously received feedback.

Reflections by teaching staff

The course was delivered by 120+ temporary tutors – many bought into the process, but more scaffolding is needed for both students and tutors. There are still quite a few – those who tend to be lower performing – who don't engage as well as others with the process. Further support needs to be provided/ built into the course to support this, especially to be valued and seen as more than a box ticking exercise.

In addition, feedback from tutors was gathered, which was overwhelmingly positive. The reported benefits include:

- Focusing feedback
- Saving time
- Enabling more productive one-to-one tutorials
- Insightful reflection
- Better awareness of student needs
- More individualised feedback

Some feedback was not entirely positive. This was reported to be due to concerns with student engagement, and some tutors were not entirely convinced by the process.

Reflections by students

In an end-of-course confidence survey, an interesting finding was that students felt more confident giving themselves feedback and identifying mistakes in their own work than giving peers feedback, despite using the same templates/frameworks for both. This could suggest that inner feedback is a gateway to meaningful peer feedback as it addresses the affective element and builds confidence in the process.