Case Study: Implementing Active Self-Feedback in Teaching

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Course information

This course in Academic Skills was taught in Autumn 2024 by Simon Raw, a senior English language tutor and lecturer on the Foundation Studies programme for the Faculty of Science and Engineering. The course was delivered to approximately 350 foundation year students on a pathway to progress into undergraduate courses in subjects in FSE such as maths, physics, chemistry, engineering, etc. The course was organised by Simon Raw, but the tutorials in which active self-feedback was implemented were also run by a number of additional tutors.

In this course, the active self-feedback approach was used to improve students' academic writing skills. Active self-feedback was implemented in a formative activity, focussed on the planning and writing of a particular piece of academic writing. This formative activity was directed towards improving a piece of work which would later be submitted for summative assessment.

The task

Students were asked to write a short plan for a piece of academic writing in preparation for an activity implementing active self-feedback in a supervision class. In the supervision class, a portion of time was dedicated to allow students to read and reflect on a few of their peers' essay plans.

Students were asked to give constructive feedback to their peers as a preparatory exercise for generating self-feedback. They were then asked to reflect on their own work and feedback, and to make explicit their own feedback going forwards. The questions included the following:

Peer Feedback task (tutor and peer)

Refer to the feedback you received from your tutor and your peers, and the feedback you gave to your peers. Identify 2 key areas of feedback which helped you with your research and writing the final essay. Explain why they helped you (or could help you in your future studies).

Reflective Learning Log

Referring to your Reflective Learning Logs, identify 2 points you made on your personal action plans and explain how these may help you in your future studies.

This task was integrated into a worksheet which included a template for recording research notes, a personal checklist, and questions to structure the peer/self-feedback task.

Throughout this activity and the course as a whole, students were also encouraged to complete a reflective learning log. The complete worksheets can be found below.

Comparators

The main comparator used was peer work, which students were asked to generate feedback on before producing feedback on their own work.

One limitation of this approach was that some students did not complete the initial task of producing an essay plan; this meant that some students did not have any peer work to give feedback on, and some students did the drafting but did not receive any feedback, preventing them from progressing to the 'self-feedback' stage.

Reflections by teaching staff

Some tutors found the task onerous, having to remind/chase students to complete the task.

Reflections by students

Similarly, some feedback from students was negative, reporting that the task was unnecessary and time-consuming. This feedback came from the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meeting and from end of course unit surveys.

Appendix: Worksheets

Template for recording research notes for Academic Essay

My Name:	Write your notes here
My Tutorial Group:	
My main source (Progression textbook):	
The main topic I chose and reason/s why I chose it:	
My specific focus will be:	
My possible "working" title for my essay:	
My possible draft Introduction:	
Notes I have made which may be useful: *(h*ere you could sketch out a plan/outline for the essay*)*	
Other possible sources I have found: *(record the citation for these as you'll need them for your list of references)*	
Overall reflections on doing this task: *(Write these on your Reflective Learning Log for Week 6)*	

Personal Checklist

Have I included the following?	Yes/No/Maybe + other comments
The main source I'll use for my topic	
A working title with a specific focus	
A draft Introduction containing: • a clear focus • a definition (if needed) • a statement of purpose	

• content which relates directly to the title	
Other notes or an outline/plan	
A list of other possible sources	
Anything else of relevance	

Formative Feedback task

Peer Feedback: In the box below, give some brief <u>constructive feedback</u> to your peer based on their writing/ideas so far. What have they done well? What needs more work/thought?
Tutor feedback: You tutor will write some brief comments here
Summary of my feedback: Summarise the feedback you have received. How are you going to act on this? Do you need to make any changes?

Foundation Studies: Academic Skills Unit - Reflective Learning Log

Use this Reflective Learning Log template to record your thoughts and experiences as you learn. The template encourages you to reflect on your learning experiences, helping you to understand what you have learned, how you have learned it, and how you can apply this knowledge in the future.

Name:	Tutorial Group:	Progression next year:
Week number:	**Tutorial Number and Main Learning Aims:**	

Description of the Learning Experience:

Briefly describe what was covered in the tutorial:

Feelings/Reactions:

How did you feel about this?

What were your reactions/thoughts?

Evaluation

What was good about the experience? What went well?

What was more challenging?

Were there any unexpected outcomes?

Analysis:

Why did things happen like that?

What factors influenced the outcome?

Conclusions:

What have you learned from the experience?

How has this experience contributed to your understanding/learning?

Action plan:

How will you apply this to what you need to do next?

What specific steps will you take to improve/build on this experience?