

A win-win: Developing student assessment feedback literacy whilst lessening marker workload

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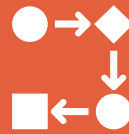
TANYA CHANDI – UG STUDENT INTERN

NGHI LAM – UG STUDENT INTERN

Intended outcomes...



To present data from student emotional and academic response to assessment feedback – year 1 of the two-year fellowship



Look at new resources that lessen marker time and support students with next steps. (Year 2)



Over to you – feedback on the resources and suggestions forward/ Q&A

Introduction - Context

- ▶ A Masters in Teaching and Learning
- ▶ My previous work on assessment:
 - ▶ To respond to PG student voice on their perception of formative assessment feedback in assignments
 - ▶ Ensure student parity of feedback experience
 - ▶ Develop clear advice for markers

A difference of opinion...

Staff

- 3% of comments identified as 'unhelpful'
- 36% of comments guide future practice

Participants

- 10% of comments identified as 'unhelpful' (option to look at examples)
- 9% of comments guide future practice

Formative comments need to be more explicit for our students to understand clearly what their next steps are!

Rationale – Assessment Feedback Literacy

Cognitivist

Strengths and weaknesses and how to improve

- Student voice
- Staff workload
- Student agency
- Parity of experience



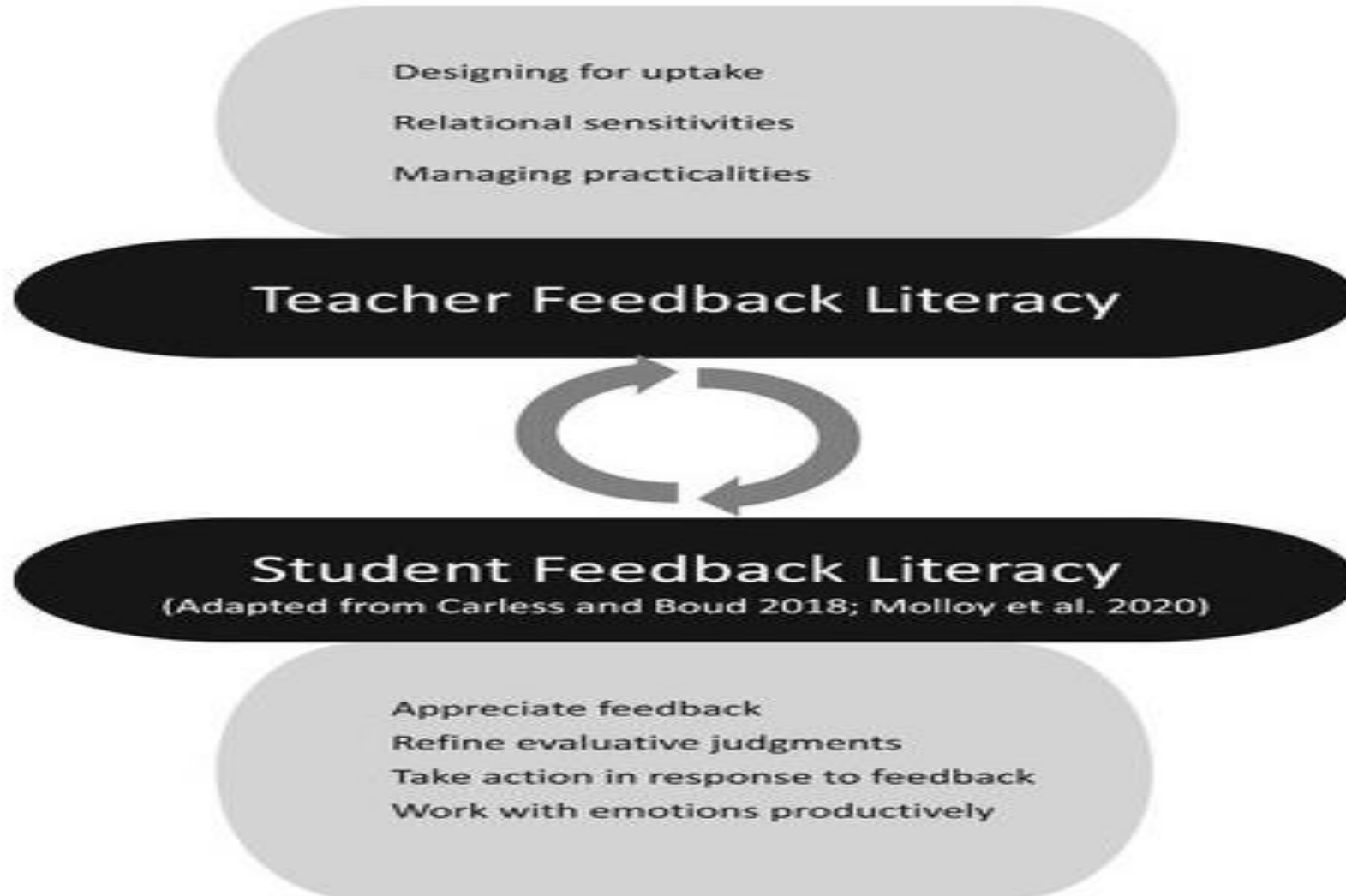
Process-orientated social constructivist

Students as active generators
Using feedback to guide their own development

What about student's emotional response to feedback?

Theoretical Frameworks

Figure 1. Interplay between teacher and student feedback literacy.



- Carless and Winstone's Conceptual Framework (2023)

Focus group: student to student

Data was gathered during a focus group of year one undergraduate students on the BSc Education and BSc Education Psychology. There were **two main foci** for the discussions:

- ▶ To examine **how they perceived marker feedback** and whether there was any emotional response
- ▶ To examine what they understood of marker feedback and **what actions did they take** following any advice given by the marker

Semi-structured Focus Group questions

1. Which comments in your assessment feedback do you think were the most helpful in explaining what you need to improve?
2. When you had improvement targets – did the feedback explain where you can get help to support you with this?
3. From your feedback, which comments did you not find supportive and why?
4. Of all the things we discussed, what element of assessment feedback to you is the most important?

Thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2012) Thematic analysis guide:

- ▶ Read and re-reading of Focus group transcript
- ▶ Coding: identify meaningful 'snapshots', highlight repeated elements
- ▶ Grouping codes and identify overarching themes

Three themes identified:

Emphasis on importance of clear improvement targets in feedback

- ▶ Clear improvement targets + examples for high band grade

Feedback inconsistencies

- ▶ Feedback release date is key
- ▶ Difference in feedback given between lecturers and teaching assistant

Challenges of receiving vague feedback

- ▶ Unclear/Vague feedback on critical analysis
- ▶ Learning from writing experience > understanding feedback

Speaker 3: I think saying to "stick to the rubric" is so vague [Others: yea] Like there is so many things to the rubric...

Speaker 4: They also say something like "Outstanding", "Excellent application", or "Great practically". And sometimes I'm like, "What is great? What is excellent? What is the difference?"

Speaker 1: Like we have a rubric, and sometimes across all of them [the assignment] is "good", "excellent", "outstanding", and how do you show that? It's not clear what they expect us to do.

Speaker 5: I think there is also inconsistency (in the feedback) as well. One time I did this for this piece of academic writing, and one said it was great, while for another assignment they told me "Please check Harvard referencing". And I'm like, "So who's right and who's wrong?"

Interviewer: Which comments in your assessment feedback do you think were the most helpful in explaining what you need to improve?

Speaker 2: I would say, I know it's different for each coursework format, but I like it when they highlight parts of your work and put comments next to that. Like...that shows you exactly what they are referring to, and what was good, and what exactly needed improvement...rather than just the general overview.

Speaker 4: Yea, and showing like "This is what you could improve better", or you need to work on your citations...all be more related to the point.

Speaker 3: It sometimes happens. And they get us to do something formative to theoretically have feedback on and then improve for the final assignment. But then the feedback, like they told you to improve on something. And then you might improve on it. But then they might say, well, this would have been different. Because it's different people marking our work.

Another thing that is really, really not helpful as a comment, that we talked about before, is being more critical, which is so general. Like, I don't want to be mean, but I've heard this comment more from PGTAs. Because you can always say, be more critical. And if you'd like, if I were working, and I wanted to make my life easier, because I didn't know what to say, I would just give you a comment on critical analysis because you can't go wrong. But that is really not helpful. Because yes, we can always be more critical towards what, where? And what part of the essay?

Focus Group Findings: Emotional response

“...I like it when they highlight parts of your work and put comments next to that...shows you exactly what they are referring to, and what was good, and what exactly needed improvement...rather than just the general overview.”

“I heard that [tutor X]...I can't remember, but he would give links like if you need help or something. But I heard that from someone else, there is nothing like that for my feedback though. Like, they only tell me “*could show improvement here, and there, etc.*” So I'm just like “*okay, got it*”. And mine is different from other people's feedback, and I'm quite jealous of that.”

“But also office hour is very short. Like, if I want to have a longer conversation, it's difficult, since other people also waiting to talk. It's hard to get in-depth with anything.”

Evaluation Exercise:

Examples of good feedback

38

Please note: your essay has a 45% similarity rate with other sources, and large chunks of the text are direct quotations taken from elsewhere, without quotation marks. Even if you reference the source at the end of the sentence, it is still bad practice to copy-and-paste without using speech marks. For this reason, the mark has been reduced by 10 percentage points.

Understanding

The extent of content copied from elsewhere makes it difficult to gauge how much you have understood the topic yourself. **This is a shame, as there are definite flashes of insight** in the sections that haven't been copied, such as the conclusion.

Literature

Even though the reference list is impressive, it's hard to be sure how well the literature has been digested, or even what has really been read, again because of the poor referencing practice.

Organisation and structure

Related to the fact that a lot of content has been directly copied from elsewhere, the **essay jumps around a lot between topics**

The second paragraph talks about socio-economic status, and **only turns to disability, which is the essay's topic, in the final sentence.**

Within paragraphs, **for instance the one that goes over pp. 3-4, it isn't always clear how the different sentences fit into a coherent whole.**

Presentation

Despite the problems of copying, there has been a decent attempt made to cite sources. Watch out for issues of consistency like italicising journal titles. Please don't number the reference list, and ensure it's in alphabetical order. See the essay itself for some other issues I have marked on it.

Overall feedback

It is such a shame that so much of this essay has been copied without speech marks. There are flashes of insight and your own voice, and this is what we base our mark on - not copying from other sources. **If you're still not sure what the issue is, do go and see your academic advisor for some advice. You can also find courses on good academic conduct through My Learning Essentials: <https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/>**

Students prefer the feedback given in lower grade bands (38 and 48), emphasis on:

- Length of feedback
- Details of feedback
- Aim for improvement
- Encouraging tone, BUT with clear reasons WHY the work is good.

Presentation

Your writing is a little difficult to understand at times. Perhaps read your work back to identify gaps which require further information. **There are minor errors in grammar, punctuation and referencing- see my learning essentials and academic phrasebank for support with this (links in text)**

Overall

This is a solid first-year undergraduate essay. The main advice I have is as follows:

- **Structure short assignments around an introduction, 2/3 main discussion sections and a conclusion which summarises and recommends**
- **Remember to add sufficient context and exemplification to the points you make you make**
- **Justify statements with a source and make sure you have unpacked key concepts.**

48

The student really likes this clear outline of the suggestions, as it gives the student an aim to improve upon.

- Good in terms of length and details,
- The tone can be interpreted by the students as being condescending, which offends them → More objective
- Good because it signposts to relevant resources and who to ask for advice

Exercise:

Examples of unhelpful feedback

- Feedback is not long enough to convince the student why they have this score and not higher.
- Overall, not enough feedback to know how to improve to a 2:1.

58

68

Understanding

You cover a good range of points and seem aware of the nuanced and complexity of the topic. This means you didn't take a simplistic perspective on ipad use but recognised the challenges and how to overcome them.

Literature

You have clearly engaged with some studies that look at ipad use in classrooms and you use that to support your sentences. I would encourage you to go further and try to write about the study - what they looked at and what evidence they found. This will make your use of the literature more detailed.

Organisation/structure

You provide a strong introduction and the assignment flows well.

Presentation

Good

Overall

This was a good assignment for year 1 which demonstrates a growing awareness of research and how to use this in writing an argument.

78

Presentation

The writing is clear but sometimes extra words are included that get in the way of meaning - I've marked a few instances in the first paragraph only. Try to simplify your writing to aid in clarity, and also to give yourself more space to make more points.

The formatting of the reference list is quite inconsistent, with different elements included for different sources. Sometimes it isn't clear what type of source is being referred to. Review the University guidance at <https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/styles> carefully to do better on this aspect next time.

Overall feedback

Overall a sound piece of work that covers the important bases. Writing style and references are the big things to work on next time.

Understanding

You cover a comprehensive range of points regarding the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phone use in classrooms. What particularly stood out was how this content was driven by your reading of the literature. You did not just give your opinion, but properly engaged with the arguments of others. This is an important skill - well done.

Literature

You seem to have read a lot and this shows in your writing. You present the arguments of others well and relate your own points to them. You do this a lot more than we see in other students' work - and so this is reflected in your grade.

Organisation/structure

Some really excellent transition sentences between the sections. It flowed very smoothly. Try to offer a statement about your conclusion in your introduction - so the reader knows what you are going to argue.

Presentation

Excellent

Overall

This was a really excellent piece of work and I can see how you have used my formative feedback. Well done

- Unclear what is meant by "Good", the student would like to know WHAT is good and WHY it is good.
- Feedback too short, it does NOT offer helpful advice on how the student can IMPROVE to a first or MAINTAIN the good grade.

- This band grade offers some brief suggestion.
- Prefer detailed feedback on 'good' part that should be maintained than shallow compliments.



How can we support our student's feedback literacy without overburdening our markers?

What resources/ support do we have available?

Tile Title	Tile Description	Weblink
Information Sources	To develop your range of sources further, here are a range of strategies which will help to ensure that you are incorporating the widest range of credible information sources in your work.	https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/packages/searching/
Using References within your work	Points and arguments you make should be fully supported with data or evidence. This resource explains and clarifies how to make appropriate use of references within your work.	https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/sls/packages/referencing/
Referencing Format	This referencing guide is designed to provide support for all referencing requirements at the University of Manchester	https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing-new
End Note	EndNote Desktop is a popular reference management software which enables you to store, organise and retrieve your references in one place. You can easily cite them in your work and produce bibliographies in a variety of referencing styles.	https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing-new/endnote
Critical Analysis	This interactive guide will help you develop essential critical skills. It introduces key writing strategies that can elevate the critical aspects of your work, enabling you to demonstrate a more integrated understanding of the subject while effectively incorporating opposing viewpoints into your analysis.	https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/being-critical/
Writing an abstract	This guide will take you through the process of writing an abstract by helping you to understand its purpose, structure, and key components. This will enable you to make effective use of others' abstracts as a strategy for searching and critical reading.	https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/writing-abstract/#/

How do we make this accessible and inclusive?

- ▶ All students can access this resource
- ▶ It considers study preferences such as those who prefer to work independently from home, those who prefer workshops and those who require one-to-one support
- ▶ It is timely, they can access from the day of their results.
- ▶ Support is organised into themes typically used by markers



How do we prevent cognitive overload?

Here are a range of strategies which will help to ensure that you are incorporating the widest range of credible information sources in your work.



Points and arguments you make should be fully supported with data or evidence. This resource explains and clarifies how to make appropriate use of references within your work.



This referencing guide is designed to provide support for all referencing requirements at the University of Manchester.



EndNote Desktop enables you to store, organise and retrieve your references in one place. You can easily cite them in your work and produce bibliographies in a variety of referencing styles.



This session focuses on how you should use references to the literature (quotations, summary, paraphrase) to develop a more critical style of writing and avoid plagiarism.



Tiles example from sourcing and referencing section



How do
we ensure
the
resource is
current?

New tool to support markers in developing student assessment literacy



Support and resources for students to help enhance your assignments - Overview



Nuts and Bolts Scaffolds to support writing and structure

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

The Nuts and Bolts of Academic Writing

Karen Beswick

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

The Nuts and Bolts of Academic Writing for Action Research

Karen Beswick

Conclusion: How do the resources support students and markers?



For markers: ONE LINK to all resources can be dropped into the main feedback comments



For students: Tiles give an overview of the different areas of academic writing development



For students: Support can be remote independent study, online workshops, or face to face



For students: The opportunity to develop their academic writing is in real time with feedback

ANY
QUESTIONS



References

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

Shields, S. (2015). 'My work is bleeding': exploring students' emotional responses to first-year assignment feedback. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(6), 614–624.