

2B Using Mahara to improve students' perceptions of, and ability to effectively utilise, feedback on assessment

Presenters: Lorna Morrow and Niamh Friel, Psychology

Feedback seems to be an issue of perpetual mystery in academia – staff spend considerable time composing feedback for students; students frequently ask for more detailed feedback. This issue is compounded by the fact that we are now learning and teaching in a changing environment with increases in student numbers. Research has highlighted that discussing feedback with students can be effective (Orsmond, Merry and Reiling, 2006); however, in the current climate of the “massification” of higher education this is not always practical. Further, students often lack time to reflect on their feedback, and may only attend to their grade (Higgins et al., 2002). Thus, students often seem unable to benefit from feedback and engage with it in a way that allows feed-forward to other assessments, and they subsequently report dissatisfaction with feedback (e.g. NSS scores).

Improving students' ability to use feedback could significantly enhance support of learning, change their experiences and perceptions of feedback, and so increase satisfaction. This project investigates the use of web-based e-portfolios (Mahara) for encouraging L2 psychology students to build reflective e-portfolios of the feedback they received. These portfolios encourage students to upload the feedback they received and then reflect on this using a standard pro-forma. This encourages them to summarise their feedback; think of areas of strength and weakness; and target their next steps.

Detailed evaluation of the resource is through the use of focus groups and questionnaires collected at the end of semester one and semester two. Students' development as learners is ascertained through semi-structured interviews with a subset of these students.

This paper will discuss the key findings which have emerged, outlining the advantages of web-based technology for encouraging students to reflect on their feedback. This research could have significant practical implications for students' engagement and satisfaction with feedback.

References

Higgins, R., Hartley, P., & Skelton, A. (2002). The conscientious consumer: Reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27, 53-65.

Orsmond, P., Merry, S., & Reiling, K (2006). Biology students' utilization of tutors' formative feedback: A qualitative interview study. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30, 369-386.

