Transforming feedback (Panel review session)
Joint 'Transforming Assessment' & 'AHE' webinar, 11 July 2018

Chair: Sally Jordan (Open University, UK)

Host: Mathew Hillier (Monash University, Australia)

Selected speakers from *Assessment in Higher Education* conference, 28 June 2018, Manchester, UK

Frequent rapid feedback, feed-forward, and peer learning, for enhancing student engagement in an online portfolio assessment

Speaker: Theresa Nicholson, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

This paper presents outcomes from a 3-year initiative to enhance student engagement through weekly summative and formative feedback. The research concerns a first year undergraduate, tutorials-supported, academic skills module, with an assessed online portfolio. In phases 1 and 2, half the student cohort submitted a printed portfolio, while half completed an online portfolio. In the final phase, all students completed an online portfolio (c.190 students). The research design has enabled a robust comparison of the influence of assignment mode on the efficacy of marking and feedback, attainment, student engagement, and tutorial management. The aims were to enhance student engagement, improve digital literacy among staff and students (Clarke and Boud 2016), and to raise employability awareness by developing a showcase of skills for prospective employers (Simatele 2015). The online mode challenges the orthodox approach where the classroom is the focus of learning, to a student-regulated mode, where learning is facilitated by tutors' regular, individual, written feedback. Thus frequent and interactive feedback, including elements of feed-forward and peer learning, help develop students' thinking and learning skills (Clark 2012). Qualitative analysis reveals that the provision of rapid and regular feedback on work is the aspect most valued by students. Tutors valued the ability to track students' progress by accessing online portfolios and providing rapid feedback on completed work. Feedback and progress tracking is easy to give and to receive online (Heinrich et al., 2007), but also creates accountability that is often absent in relatively remote institutional monitoring systems (Stork and Walker, 2015). Some tutors found the marking and feedback process easier online and that there was a positive impact on tutorials, while others found the process more challenging. The online approach had an adverse effect on face-to-face meetings for some, highlighting the need for guidance on tutorial management. Quantitative analysis of student grades tentatively indicates higher attainment levels in the online mode, where progress tracking and regular feedback occur. There are some tensions between meeting the desire to provide very regular, rapid feedback, and associated practical constraints. Barriers sometimes presented through non-engagement of learners, likely influenced by an array of external as well as internal pressures. Nevertheless, engagement on the whole was much improved. There were also constraints due to limited digital literacy, and tutors' workload pressures. The findings suggest that personalised progress tracking, prompt, regular feedback on tasks, and multiple opportunities for group-based discussion of feedback, can promote student engagement in both self-regulated and face-to-face learning activities.

References

Clarke, J. L., Boud, D. (2016). Refocusing portfolio assessment: Curating for feedback and portrayal. Innovations in Education and Teaching International. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2016.1250664, 1-8.

Clark, I. (2012). Formative assessment: assessment is for self-regulated learning. Educational Psychology Review, 24(2), 205–249.

Heinrich, E., Bhattacharya, M., Rayudu, R. (2007). Preparation for lifelong learning using ePortfolios. European Journal of Engineering Education, 32(6), 653–663.

Simatele, M. (2015). Enhancing the portability of employability skills using e-portfolios. Journal of Further and Higher Education 39(6), 862–874.

Stork, A., Walker, B. (2015). Becoming an Outstanding Personal Tutor. Critical Publishing, Northwich.

VACS - Video Assessment of Clinical Skills

Speakers: Mark Glynn, Dublin City University, Republic of Ireland; with Evelyn Kelleher Dublin City University; Colette Lyng, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin; Adele Keough, Dublin City University; Anna Kimmins Dublin City University; Patrick Doyle, Dublin City University.

This paper describes an innovative assessment that was introduced in response to educational and logistical challenges presented in identifying appropriate assessment strategies for assessing practical skills with large cohorts of students. The aim of the innovation was to replace a face-to-face practical exam with online submission of a video recording of the student performing the practical skill. Every year we have in excess of 200 first year undergraduate students. Each student must demonstrate competency with respect to a variety of practical clinical skills. Each skill can take up to 10 minutes. It is necessary for students to individually demonstrate each skill, therefore a lecturer must sit through over 2000 minutes (33+ hours) of individual student assessment for each skill that must be assessed. With five different skills required for first year students the logistic challenge for managing the assessment is very difficult. This normally involved up to ten different staff members supporting the assessment over a week long period. Each lecturer would use a paper based rubric to assess the students and then hand back their evaluations to module coordinator so feedback could be centrally issued to the students. From a student's perspective they are given a time and date and they have a one off opportunity to perform. Therefore we needed to determine a more effective and efficient way of assessing these key clinical skills. Face-to-face practical exams present many challenges; they are inflexible and resource and time intensive. Furthermore they cause pressure, nerves, anxiety and stress for students, fatigue and loss of concentration for examiners, and inconsistency and errors in marking leading to disputed results. Online video submission is a simple approach that can overcome many of these challenges. Video has been used successfully in education for many years, however, this approach of using online video submission to replace face-to-face practical exams appears to be a new innovation. This new assessment method has transformed the way not only the way we assess but the way students learn their clinical skills. We have moved from just assessment of learning to have assessment of and for learning. Instead of a one off performance in front of a lecturer, students pair up with a colleague and use their own phone to record themselves performing the skill therefore also introducing peer learning/feedback into the process. We first implemented this assessment method for first year students in 2013/14 and have used it every year since. Every year, based on feedback we make slight changes to optimise the process. Preliminary evaluation of the first cohort of students to participate in this innovation suggests that the majority of them preferred the online submission format and that it did enhance their learning. This paper outlines current more in-depth research to assess the full benefits and potential of this assessment method.

References

Deborah J. Jones, Margaret Anton, Michelle Gonzalez, Amanda Honeycutt, Olga Khavjou, Rex Forehand, Justin Parent, (2015) Incorporating Mobile Phone Technologies to Expand Evidence-Based Care, Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 22(3), 281-290,

Zick, Amanda et al. (2007) First-year medical students' assessment of their own communication skills: A video-based, open-ended approach, Patient Education and Counseling, 68(2), 161 – 166

Mrudula Patri, (2002) The influence of peer feedback on self- and peer-assessment of oral skills Language Testing, 19(2), 109 – 131

Nicol, Maggie et al. (1998) Assessment of clinical skills: a new approach to an old problem, Nurse Education Today, 18(8), 601 – 609

Feedback Footprints: Using Learning Analytics to support student engagement with, and learning from, feedback

Speaker: Naomi Winstone & Emma Medland, University of Surrey, UK

Student satisfaction with assessment and feedback has been described as the sector's "Achilles' Heel" (Knight, 2002, p. 107). Many students express dissatisfaction with the utility of feedback

(Medland, 2016), citing difficulties understanding comments, knowing how to take action, and how to connect feedback from different modules and assignments (Jonsson, 2013; Winstone, Nash, Rowntree & Parker, 2017). In the 'new paradigm' of feedback practice (Carless, 2015), emphasis is placed not on feedback as comments (i.e. the 'old paradigm'), but on feedback as dialogue, where the impact of feedback on students' learning is of key concern. This approach should lead educators to reflect on where students are enabled to enact feedback in a dialogic cycle, and to find ways of supporting students' self-regulatory development by providing opportunities for them to experience the impact of implementing feedback. As researchers and practitioners, a key difficulty in understanding students' engagement with feedback is that once marked work is returned, we know very little about what students actually do with feedback information. There is a real, but largely untapped, potential for learning analytics to illuminate this 'hidden recipience'. Where feedback is given to students via Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), learning analytics can provide insight into when and how students engage with feedback (e.g. Zimbardi et al., 2017). Furthermore, student-facing analytics can inform students about their own engagement, thus supporting the development of self-regulated learning. Here, we report on an evaluation of a HEFCE-funded project through which we worked in partnership with students to develop a VLE-embedded feedback portfolio to support students to synthesise and act upon feedback (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1eqx09MUhok3O-PDHvKPfVB7cMl9gA8Y). The portfolio first includes a 'feedback review' tool through which students can extract key messages from feedback, which they can then categorise into a comprehensive set of academic skills. Also housed within the portfolio is a large resource bank, aligned with each of these identified academic skills. The tool synthesises feedback from multiple assignments so that students can see a visual representation of the areas in which they are performing well, and the areas that may need some development. Finally, students can use an action-planning tool to set goals for their use of the resources, and engage in dialogue with their personal tutor. The portfolio incorporates a student-facing analytics dashboard to enable them to track their engagement with feedback, and the impact of this engagement. In this project, we employed a co-design method through which students, researchers, and learning technologists worked in partnership to develop the feedback portfolio. We will present the key messages emerging from our evaluation, which employed self-report measures (e.g. orientation to feedback, assessment literacy, academic self-efficacy), quantitative analysis of learning gain and learning analytics, and qualitative analysis of user experience. Crucially, our data demonstrate disciplinary differences in engagement with the portfolio and also provide further insight into the challenges students face when using feedback to develop as autonomous, self-regulated learners. The evaluation also demonstrates that students see digital tools as possessing great potential in bringing meaningful dialogue into the feedback process.

References

Carless, D. (2015). Excellence in university assessment: Learning from award-winning practice. London: Routledge.

Jonsson, A. (2013). Facilitating productive use of feedback in higher education. Active learning in higher education, 14(1), 63-76.

Medland, E. (2016). Assessment in higher education: drivers, barriers and directions for change in the UK. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 41(1), 81-96.

Winstone, N. E., Nash, R. A., Rowntree, J., & Parker, M. (2017). 'It'd be useful, but I wouldn't use it': barriers to university students' feedback seeking and recipience. Studies in Higher Education, 42(11), 2026-2041.

Winstone, N. E., Nash, R. A., Parker, M., & Rowntree, J. (2017). Supporting Learners' Agentic Engagement With Feedback: A Systematic Review and a Taxonomy of Recipience Processes. Educational Psychologist, 52(1), 17-37.

Zimbardi, K., Colthorpe, K., Dekker, A., Engstrom, C., Bugarcic, A., Worthy, P., & Long, P. (2017). Are they using my feedback? The extent of students' feedback use has a large impact on subsequent academic performance. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 42(4), 625-644.

Register for this Transforming Assessment webinar

Further information and registration

http://ta.vu/11jul2018