

Online Assessment Submission and Feedback

Ursula Chaney RN, MSc¹, Helen McGarvey RN, PhD^{1,2}, Brian McGowan RN, MSc^{1,2}, Jerome Marley RN, MSc¹ & Vidar Melby RN, PhD^{1,2}, Briega M Lagan RN, PhD^{1,2*}

¹School of Nursing ²Institute of Nursing and Health Research (INHR), Ulster University

Introduction

Feedback is a crucial part of the student experience and helps learning (Parkin et al 2012; West and Turner 2015), encouraging teacher-student interaction and learner engagement. Good timely feedback is a benchmark of a high quality student experience, (Omer and Abdularhim 2017). The National Student Survey has highlighted feedback is an area where institutions do not perform as well as they would like. To better this, many universities have implemented strategies to improve feedback, which invariably involves technology facilitated learning, (HEA 2012). The School of Nursing addressed this issue in a progressive and student focused manner by moving towards online assessment and feedback in a coherent and evidence based fashion.

This has relevance in the international arena as universities seek to internationalise their products. Robust, valid and reliable assessment practices in the online environment will prove to be a key factor going forward. Teaching and learning practice must be based on reliable evidence therefore before implementing any change to how assignment feedback should be given it is important to evaluate the views of both students and staff about current practices of feedback.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study was to evaluate progression to online assignment feedback. To achieve this the following objectives were set :

- To identify if students and staff favour one system of submission and feedback above another
- To compare different forms of feedback from the student's perspective
- To compare different forms of feedback from the lecturer's perspective
- To determine what students and staff perceive the impact feedback has on learning.

Methods

Using on-line questionnaires, the study used a two-pronged approach. Students were asked to complete one questionnaire and concurrently teaching staff were asked to complete another.

Sample

Students: All current pre-registration and post registration students who had submitted a summative assignment in semester one or two of the 2015/2016 academic year were invited to take part.

Teaching Staff: All lecturers who were currently teaching a pre-registration and/or post-registration course or an undergraduate or post-graduate module in the School of Nursing at Ulster University were asked to complete the survey.

Data Collection Instruments

Both the staff and student questionnaires were informed by key themes in the literature and staff experience in engagement with student feedback and pedagogy. The questions in both questionnaires were interrelated and consisted of both open and closed questions sub-divided over four sections. The first section asked about submission of assignments. To identify if one system of feedback was preferred above another, questions about the different forms of feedback were asked in the second section. In section three, Likert type questions on perceptions and use of feedback were borrowed with permission from a study conducted by Adcroft (2010). The final section collected data on the characteristics of the responders. Prior to the main data collection a pilot study was conducted.

Ethical Approval

Approval for the study was sought and granted from the INHR Ethics Filter Committee at Ulster University.

Data Analysis

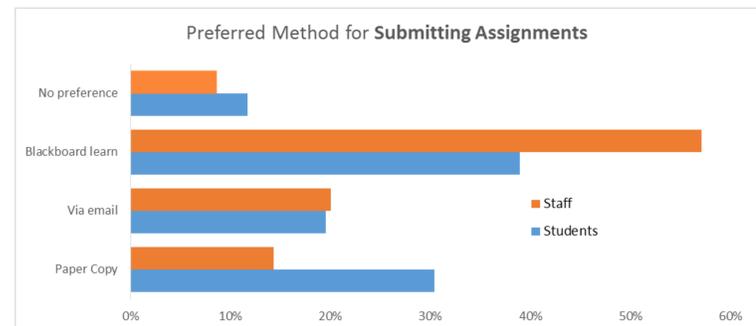
Data from both surveys was downloaded directly from the software (Qualtrics) into SPSS Version 23 for cleansing and subsequent statistical data analyses. For the purpose of this poster results from the descriptive analysis are presented.

Results

Of the 1054 emails that were sent to students, 493 (46%) participated in the survey. Approximately a third of the students described themselves as being a *tactile/kinesthetic* or *visual* learner. 43 students who participated were students who required reasonable adjustments.

Of the 50 teaching staff that were contacted by email, 35 (70%) participated in the survey. The majority of staff had more than 10 years experience in teaching.

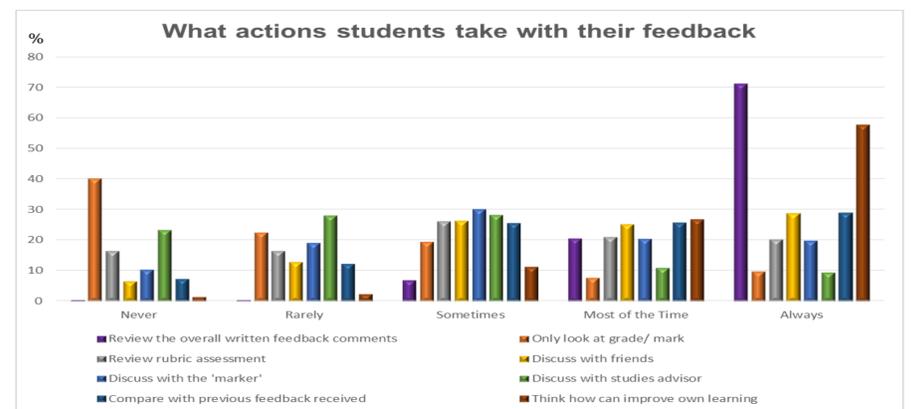
When asked what was their preferred method for submitting assignments, both staff and students preferred to submit assignments via blackboard (Figure 1).



Staff were asked to rank what their three most preferred methods for *giving* feedback, and students their most preferred method for *receiving* feedback (1= most preferred 2 = second and 3 = third). The lower the mean the most preferred option (Table 1).

		Electronic via Blackboard	Typed by Email	Hand Written	Face to Face	Audio/Voice
Staff	Mean	1.37	2.09	2.15	2.50	2.27
Students	Mean	2.05	1.85	2.13	1.89	2.17

Not all staff or students were aware of the online rubric within Blackboard. Many students were also unaware of the purpose of the rubric. Both staff and students highlighted inconsistency among markers. Figure 2 provides an overview of what student did with the feedback they received from assignments.



Conclusions and Recommendations

- The preferred method for submitting assignments for both staff and students was electronically via a virtual learning environment and course management system (Blackboard Learn).
- Students prefer feedback to be typed rather than handwritten.
- Providing feedback online can be beneficial in terms of practicality and pedagogy.
- Feedback was seen as essential and beneficial for learning by both staff and students.
- To ensure consistency among markers there should be a clear marking criteria for individual assignments. It is also essential markers adhere to the criteria marking and giving feedback on assignments.
- The purpose of the rubric for staff and students needs to be reviewed.
- Further exploration needed on the use of e-submission and e-feedback for other forms of student coursework such as e- portfolios.

References

1. Adcroft, A. (2010) Speaking the same language? Perceptions of feedback amongst academic staff and students in a School of Law. *The Law Teacher*, 44(3), 250-260.
2. Higher Education Academy. (2012) A marked improvement: transforming assessment in higher education. York: HEA.
3. Omer AA. and Abdularhim ME. (2017). The criteria of constructive feedback: The feedback that counts. *Journal of Health Specialist*, 5:45-48.
4. Muir Gray, J.A. (1997) Evidence-based healthcare: How to make health policy and management decisions. London: Churchill Livingstone.
5. Nicol, D. (2010) From monologue to dialogue: improving written feedback processes in mass higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 501-517.
6. Parkin, H.J., Hepplestone, S., Holden, G., Irwin, B. and Thorpe, L. (2012) A role for enhancing student's engagement with feedback. *Assessment and evaluation in Higher Education*, 37(8), 963-973.
7. West, J. and Turner, W. (2015) Enhancing the assessment experience: improving student perceptions, engagement and understanding using online video feedback. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2014.1003954>
8. Ulster University (2011) Principles of assessment and feedback for learning. Available at: http://ee.ulster.ac.uk/assessment_and_feedback/index.php?principles/
9. Ulster University (2015) Digital Learning Strategy - Digital Futures: a strategy to shape the future of Blended, Open and Online Learning at Ulster University. Available at: <http://addl.ulster.ac.uk/digitalfutures/view/digital-learning-strategy-digital-futures>
10. Ulster University (2016) Ulster Student Learning Experience Principles. Available at: <http://documentslide.com/documents/ulsteracuk-learning-at-ulster-student-learning-experience-principles.html>

*Contact for further Information:
Dr Briega M Lagan, Email: bm.lagan@ulster.ac.uk