

Moving Effective Feedback from Hand Written to Online Through Turnitin Grade Form

UWL Impact Case Studies 2013/2014

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Description:

Prior to this case study, two Research Methods modules (RM1 and RM2) within the Psychology degree programmes were returning feedback to students on paper, despite the coursework being submitted online. The move to online feedback saves time in returning the feedback, and enables staff and students to review feedback given for all assessments through Turnitin at any point and from any device. This helps to fulfil a number of the principles set out in the NUS feedback Charter (see also Ferrell, 2012). In RM1 and RM2 the 'feedback/feed-forward' loop is particularly pertinent as they submit a total of four Research Reports at Level 4, with feedback on each being applicable to how they can improve their performance on the next.

The aim of this current study was to move to the online system without compromising the high standard of detailed feedback that students currently receive (or needlessly increasing the workload and stress of the staff). Feedback from the students has repeatedly confirmed that they do value this standard of feedback and understand the importance of feed-forward.

Approach:

Turnitin provides a number of ways to create and present feedback to students. 'Comments and Quick Marks' are free text options, while 'Grading Rubrics' are far more structured, making use of pre-defined weighted criteria (see Appendices I and II).

Somewhere between these two approaches is Grade Form, which is less structured (and therefore more personalised) than a full Rubric, but more structured than the Quick Mark approach. Each section has a percentage allocated to it by staff as an indication to students as to the weighting of each section. When tutors mark the work, they add comments for each section, indicating which of the criteria have been met, and which have not been (see Appendix III).

In RM1, students received grade letters (i.e. A indicates a first, B a 2:1 etc) for each section, and feedback indicated that they like this approach. For each section of their report, the student received a list of the criteria, then a list of those they had met, those they had not met, and further comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the section. A 'General Comments' section was also used, where students were given marks for grammar and correct use of sections. The tutor would also indicate one overall aspect that needed improvement and should therefore be given extra attention in their next assignment.

Outcomes:

The teaching team are able to see who has read their feedback, and who has not. In this way the module leader could email each student who had not checked, and query why this was. There were two main reasons given by students for not having checked their feedback. One was that they were using a device which does not support this application, and one was that they did not know how to check their feedback. For those students who gave no reason there is also the likelihood that a minority of students still do not engage with the feedback process, failing to recognise the difference it will make to their own performance.

A final advantage for the module leader is that it is easy to compare feedback given by different markers, to maintain parity of both quality and quantity of feedback not just for each report, but for each individual section.

Impact:

Direct feedback from students confirmed that they liked being able to find their marks and feedback online, and that the level of detail was maintained. As noted above, a minority did struggle to find their feedback within the Turnitin package.

Staff feedback was also very positive, with all agreeing that using Grade Form was a clear improvement on the paper feedback. The main limitation with this method was that a lot of text was copied and pasted from the marking criteria to the grade form for each student, in creating the lists of 'have met' and 'have not met' criteria. As the students are given the marking criteria at the beginning of the semester, this method gives very precise feedback on which they have and have not achieved, but is time consuming for staff.

The clearest indication of impact will be seen when the method is refined and used in RM1 (in the first semester of 2014-15). The measure of success will be whether it is possible to identify a reduction in the number of mistakes that are repeated by students across reports.

Lessons learned:

There need to be clear instructions to staff on how to use the tool in general, as well as in this specific context, and to students on how to access and use their feedback. Equally important is that all users need to be fully informed on the benefits of this method, and of the logic for using it in this context. This is particularly relevant when changing from one feedback method to another, and users are being asked to learn something new.

The benefits in terms of accessibility of feedback were immediately evident to staff and to students, meaning that it was apparent to all involved that the very small initial learning curve would rapidly be outweighed by the benefits in the long term.

Where next?

The natural progression of this use of TEL is to refine the use of grade form to take on board staff feedback, and to apply it to both RM1 and RM2. In the longer term, the Module leader for Further Research Methods (at Level 5) has also expressed an interest in providing feedback in this way.

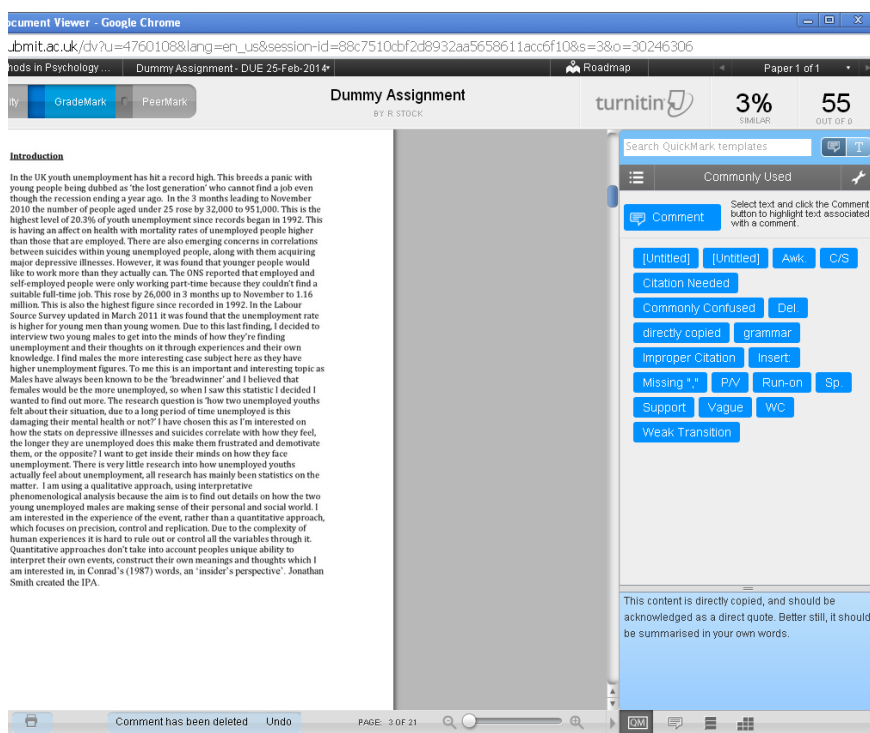
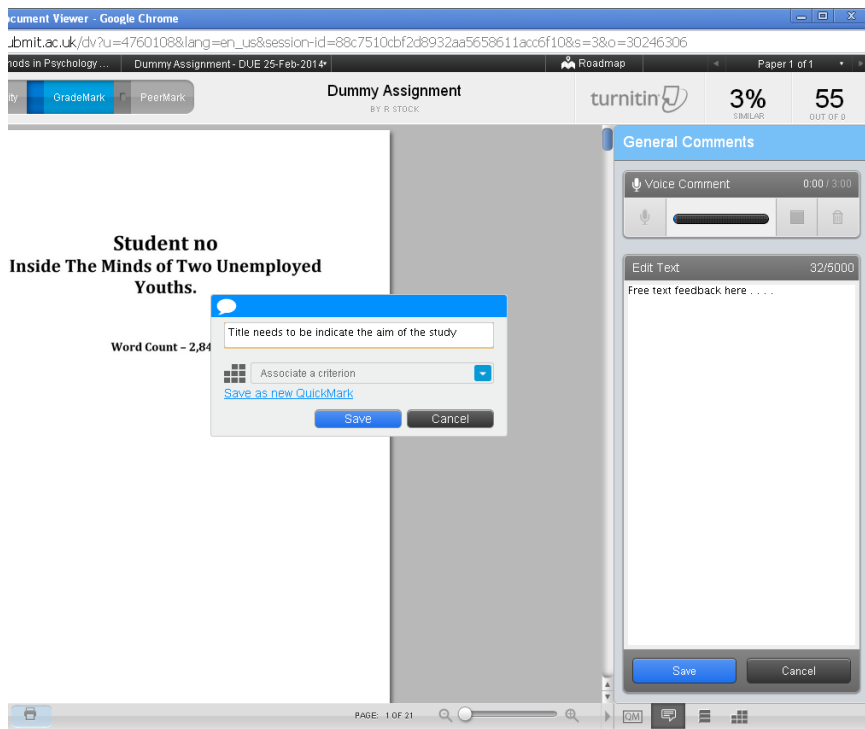
References

Ferrell, G (2012) A view of the Assessment and Feedback Landscape: baseline analysis of policy and practice from the JISC Assessment & Feedback programme
JISC Advance. Downloaded from
<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/elearning/Assessment/JISCAFBaselineReportMay2012.pdf>

NUS (2010) NUS Charter on Feedback & Assessment. Downloaded from
<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/asset/news/6010/FeedbackCharter-toview.pdf>

Appendix I: Quick Mark Screenshots

The most commonly used method within the Psychology department is Quick Mark, where comments are added directly to the paper, and free text is also added to a side panel (see below). The marker can also use the pre-set 'commonly used' comments, or can create and save their own. The student sees the abbreviation appear on their page, e.g. 'directly copied', and can see more detail by clicking/hovering over that phrase. The full text of each comment can similarly be seen by the marker in the panel at the bottom right (the second image below). You can also see the similarity report and the final mark given to the student in the top right hand corner of the screen.



Appendix II: Grading Rubric Screenshot

A much more structured method is the rubric – a partially complete example is shown below. In this case, feedback is pre-set, and the student will see whichever level is most appropriate to their work. Marks are allocated for each section to calculate a total (each section has a weighting, although these and the feedback can be over-ridden, and/or added to).

The screenshot shows a rubric interface with the following elements:

- Buttons: Add Row, Add Column
- Rubric Type: Percentage Range
- Checkbox: Show Criteria Weight
- Levels of Achievement: First, 2:1, 2:2, Third, Fail
- Criteria: Title & Abstract (Weight: 10%), Introduction (Weight: 20%)
- Feedback text for Title & Abstract:
 - First: Per cent 70 to 100. Title is clear it was an experiment testing differences, mentions LOP &
 - 2:1: Per cent 60 to 70. Title is relevant but required more detail OR is too wordy . . .
 - 2:2: Per cent 50 to 60. Title mentions relevant factors but has one or more major errors.
 - Third: Per cent 40 to 50. Title mentions one relevant issue, but makes no real attempt to desc
 - Fail: Per cent 0. Title is mis gives no ind of the natur
- Feedback text for Introduction:
 - First: Per cent 0 to 0
 - 2:1: Per cent 0 to 0
 - 2:2: Per cent 0 to 0
 - Third: Per cent 0 to 0
 - Fail: Per cent 0

Appendix III: Grade Form Screenshot

In the Grade Form, the tutor can include notes on what each section should include. For this module, an indication of the proportion of the grade allocated to each section was also included.

The screenshot shows a grade form interface with the following elements:

- Header: RM2 Qual Assignment 2014 v1
- Warning: Please note: Grading forms are not yet available on the iPad app.
- Section: CRITERIA
- Criteria and Notes:
 - Title and Abstract 6%
 - Title: Appropriate to the study.
 - Abstract: Identifies a research question, explains the type of material collected, mentions Semi-Structured Interview (SSI). Offers a conclusion.
 - Introduction 20%
 - Background: Appropriate length. Relevant background reading and research; good theor conducting a qualitative not quantitative study. Leads well into the aims and research qu
 - Research Question: NO HYPOTHESIS but a clearly stated research question in agreement
 - Method 20%
 - Design: Overall outline of the design of the IPA and SSI.