

Facilitating uptake of feedback: providing feedback literacy skills to students

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Introduction

Feedback is a key instrument in the development and enhancement of learning, despite this there is a strong body of evidence which identifies that students are often disappointed with the feedback they receive in higher education institutes (HEIs) (Carless & Boud, 2018; Office for Students, 2018; Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching, 2017).

Higher education students are frequently considered to be 'consumers' of their education (Woodall, Hiller & Resnick, 2014) therefore there is a need for HEIs to rethink student feedback and increase the satisfaction among students (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Background

HEIs are often criticised for inadequacies in their feedback (Boud & Molloy, 2013). While it is acknowledged that current demands faced by academics in terms of larger class sizes, less face-to-face contact and the demands of research and administration can hinder delivery of feedback that is of sufficient quality and quantity (Brearley & Cullen 2013). In an attempt to overcome these demands new innovations in feedback delivery have been adopted such as audio feedback, this is well received by students and favoured by academics (Parkes & Fletcher, 2017; Brearley & Cullen, 2013). However, innovative methods do not guarantee students will engage with the feedback. There is evidence that suggests one of the main barriers to effective feedback is in fact low levels of student feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018). This is not an attempt to void academics of responsibility, rather an insight into improving student's engagement and satisfaction with feedback (Carless & Boud, 2018). To improve student feedback literacy, there are several actions required which are interlinked and multifaceted (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Role of the student

Appreciate feedback

- Use technology to enhance this, voice notes in particular
- Recognise feedback comes in different forms
- Understand and appreciate the role of feedback

Make judgements

- Develop capacities to make sound academic judgments about their own work & work of others
 - Participate productively with peer feedback
- Refine self-evaluative capacities over the year to make more robust judgments

Manage affect

- The student needs to maintain emotional maturity and avoid being defensive especially when feedback is critical
 - The student needs to be proactive in eliciting suggestions from peers/teachers and continue communicating with them
- Develop habits of striving for continuous improvement on the basis of internal & external feedback

Take action

- The student needs to be aware of the imperative to take action in response to feedback
- Draw inferences from a range of feedback experiences for the purpose of continuous improvement
 - Develop a repertoire of strategies for acting on feedback



Conclusion & Recommendations

- The Lecturer needs to set expectations that students need to be proactive
- Reinforce the importance of independent learning
- Effective and clear communication can reduce conflicts about feedback, set expectations
- Lecturers need to motivate and guide students to navigate opportunities to use their feedback
- Use diverse methods of feedback, i.e. audio-recording
- Incorporate student feedback literacy into the curriculum design (Carless & Boud, 2018).