



Assessment and Feedback Literacy

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Session Format

- Introduction to Assessment and Feedback Literacy (AFL)
- Practical Approaches to embedding AFL in your programme
- Discussion/ Q & A



Assessment Literacy

“students’ understanding of the rules surrounding assessment in their course context, their use of assessment tasks to monitor or further their learning, and their ability to work with the guidelines on standards in their context to produce work of a predictable standard”

Smith et al., 2013



Feedback Literacy

“ the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies. Students’ feedback literacy involves an understanding of what feedback is and how it can be managed effectively; capacities and dispositions to make productive use of feedback; and appreciation of the roles of teachers and themselves in these processes.” (Carless & Boud, 2018, p.1316)



Pre requisites

- Students need to understand the *purpose* of the assessment (intended learning outcomes)
- What assessment guidance and marking criteria mean
- What good, fair and poor performance look like
- How to critique their own work against these standards
- How to understand feedback they receive and how to put learning from it into practice in future assessments
- That they need to be active participants in the feedback process



What is needed for students to understand assessment criteria and feedback and act on it?

Student

- Understanding of the role assessment and feedback play in learning and enhancement of performance
- Combination of knowledge and skills
- Personal attributes, attitudes, resilience, mindset and emotional intelligence of student
- Motivation
- Acceptance of own active role in the process

Staff

- Spend time helping students to understand assessment criteria
- Develop students skills to critique and evaluate work in line with assessment criteria
- Demonstrate the importance of learning and improving from assessment and feedback as a life skill
- Encourage a 'growth mindset' and student ownership of their role in the feedback process



Five Lessons Learned (Winstone & Nash, 2016)

1. What seems patently obvious and unambiguous to the academic who gives feedback can often be highly unobvious and confusing to the student who receives the feedback.
2. Talking to students about the specific instances of feedback they have received is important, but insufficient; we must also more actively and critically discuss the concept of feedback in general, and the experience of receiving feedback.
3. We as teachers are frequently in the same boat as students, being reluctant to engage with feedback from journal peer-reviews, for example, or from teaching evaluations. Reflecting on these experiences can help us to identify the problems and some solutions, and to discuss the pertinent issues openly with our students with some humility.
4. The barriers to using feedback are as much emotional as they are practical; dealing with feedback effectively may require us to nurture students' emotional intelligence.
5. There is no magic bullet – the students who need most to engage with their feedback may still be those who use these kinds of support least. Promoting engagement with feedback may therefore require us to embed resources and opportunities within the compulsory curriculum, rather than making engagement optional.



But what do you mean?!

Whilst we know the meaning of statements like “engage more critically with your sources” or “you need to provide structure for your argument” or “you need to synthesise your findings” students may not have a clue!

This is where assessment literacy comes in.

3 ideas to try and help your students understand the meaning of assessment criteria

- Create a glossary of terms used in marking criteria/ feedback, add short examples of good work to illustrate ([resource](#))
- Spend a synchronous session discussing, with examples what good and poor critique, analysis, evaluation etc. looks like in your discipline, explaining why it is good or poor ([tutor led activity](#))
- Share some annotated, marked examples of student work on the VLE (made up/ conglomeration of past, anonymised work) with a rationale as to why the work justifies the feedback given ([resource](#))



Developing students ability to critique

Learning to critique your own work, or that of others is a skill that takes time to develop. We cannot expect students to just 'be able to do it' with no training. Here are 3 ideas of how to do this:

- Share short snippets on the VLE (from previous work or externally sourced) of good, adequate and poor examples of criticality, synthesis etc. Don't tell students initially which is which. Ask students to read them and rank them individually as an asynchronous activity, then discuss in a synchronous session their ideas, and why each example is poor, adequate and good. (student activity)
- Encourage students to read and critique articles in your disciplinary area as part of module activity and discuss their findings with their peers. Practicing these skills, and seeing examples of good practice will help in their own work (IF YOU MAKE THAT LINK FOR THEM) (student activity)
- Use some asynchronous time to get students to try and assess a draft piece of their own work and evaluate it using the marking criteria (research has found giving them marking criteria or examples when they have already done some work helps them to contextualise criteria*). Then ask them to peer review each others work and provide written feedback to each other. Run a synchronous session with the group discussing how their own evaluation compared with their peers and exploring the experience of evaluating work against marking criteria. (student activity)
- *HEA Paper 2020



Preparing students to receive feedback

- Feedback can often be taken as personal criticism, leading students to ignore or dismiss it as a means of protecting their feelings, and they are not the only ones who do it! (reviewer 1 anyone?!)
- Setting the scene doesn't take long, but may well be worth it. If we are clear as to the purpose and intentionality of feedback we provide, and how feedback on one piece of work could be used to improve future work, that can help
- Let's take care. Consider how you give feedback and, if it is written, the way you write it, is it the sort of feedback you would like to receive? Is it clear what the student should do next time?
- Ensure your students know how they are going to get feedback, i.e. what counts. Receiving oral feedback on a presentation from peers and or staff is still feedback!



Motivating students to engage with feedback

- Pitt (2020) talks about the importance of feedback “having somewhere to land”. In a broad sense, this is about having timetabled space and activity requiring students to engage with their feedback and take action upon it.

His example: Management School switched to several lower stakes presentations as assessment, each with peer and tutor feedback the student should incorporate in the next presentation- they built a culture of feedback within module by timetabling feedback sessions (**tutor-led/ module design**)

Other ideas:

- Tasking students to reflect on their feedback and identify what they can take forward from it to improved their next piece of work, this means they need to clarify feedback meaning with tutors if they do not understand it. Alternatively this could be the first task in a module, to reflect on feedback from the previous. (**student activity**)
- Reviewing assessment strategies and considering if the ability to understand, reflect on and implement change as a result of feedback is a skill that should be recognised as important, if so design assessment (or some assessments) to include such reflective activity and action (**Tutor-led/ programme design**)
- Consider a longitudinal, low credit bearing personal development module that requires students to identify their development areas and reflect on their feedback and learning over the course of a year (**programme design**)



Discussion/ Q & A

- Which of these ideas can you use in your programme team?
- How could you work together as module leads to share the workload of Assessment and Feedback Literacy amongst you and ensure sequential scaffolded support for students in developing their literacy?



References

- Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315-1325.
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