

**Subject:** Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education - Decision on Manuscript ID CAEH-2015-0437

**Date:** Monday, 15 February 2016 at 9:03:41 PM Australian Eastern Standard Time

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**To:** Kirsten Zimbardi

15-Feb-2016

Dear Dr. Zimbardi:

I have now heard from referees about the paper Are they using my feedback? The extent of students' feedback use has a large impact subsequent academic performance. that you were kind enough to send to Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education. Referees' comments can be found at the foot of this letter. The reviews are in general favourable and suggest that, subject to minor revisions, your paper could be suitable for publication. Please could you now submit a final version of your article within eight weeks, correctly prepared according to the instructions and guidelines on the Journal homepage.

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All good wishes, Prof. Malcolm Tight  
Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, Editor  
[m.tight@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:m.tight@lancaster.ac.uk)

Referee(s)' Comments to Author:

Referee: 1

Comments to the Author

Overall, this is an important piece of work, clearly reported, which adds to our knowledge of students' use of feedback. It is original in offering a reasonably large scale study drawing on assessment analytics made available through on-line submission, marking and feedback. Whilst it doesn't move us much further in discovering how students actually use feedback, it provides some important pre-requisite data in terms of their access and length of engagement with data including click through. I eagerly anticipate the follow on research using think aloud, etc to penetrate that puzzle. The article also provides important empirical support for the assertion that students will use feedback where they perceive it as useful for other upcoming assignments and, therefore, the benefits of designing assessment in ways that enable students to practice and refine similar tasks within module/ subject.

The article has a clear and inviting abstract which outlines the paper well and identifies its original contribution.

There is a good introduction and use of extensive prior literature to situate the study and explain its rationale. The introductory sections make a useful point about many feedback evaluations tending to report the work of enthusiastic academics and the added value in this study of drawing on a large number of teachers/markers across several modules.

The article includes a clear description of the assessment tasks and feedback used in some repeated first and second year modules and the analytics capture system used to collect the data.

The results section is generally readable and the findings are related to and discussed in the light of previous

research. The only suggestion I would make is page 12, para 2. This paragraph is hard to follow because of all the embedded technical data. It might be more accessible if the author/s were to separate the figures (table?) from the prose.

It is interesting that 2nd year students are less likely to access feedback in comparison with 1st year students and this may link to other recent work in A&E showing how it takes several semesters for students to obtain a cross-module understanding of quality.

The article also shows how web-based applications open the door, not only to more flexible feedback practices, but also to much more extensive understanding of how students access and interact with feedback in future research.

I recommend publishing this well written, very readable, original study which both confirms and challenges existing theory. It also identifies future complementary research which might be used to further understand the quantitative findings reported here.

Referee: 2

#### Comments to the Author

This is an interesting article. The feedback tool described is worth documenting and the findings derived from the analysis of might inspire further work. The main value of this article has to be seen in the insights in the student's use of feedback, it's development through time and, it's relation to the grades received. I strongly recommend publication and hope these comments are useful to the authors:

The context of the study is described precisely, as well as the methods. The fact that the analysis of audio feedbacks is based on a random selection is only reported in the findings section (p 11) and might be better fit in the methods section.

In particular on p 10 to 12 and on p 15 there is a lot of numerical data integrated in the text; I would suggest to transform this into a table because in the present form they disturb the train of reading.

As I understood the article, the feedback tool allows to use and combine different feedback channels (written, audio). Is there any information available about the preferences or strategies of the markers? If so this might be interesting, too.

While reading I first wondered whether the results might be transferable or even relevant for others who don't have access to such a feedback tool. But my doubts were dispelled because of the wide-ranging finding that feedback on the first assignments is read more intense by the students. At the same time the essential impact of interaction with feedback is underlined by this study.

As these interrelations are derived from a large scale, the results are very useful in the context of assessment and evaluation in higher education. For sure (as the authors state themselves) there are further investigations necessary for a deeper understanding of the results and to refine hypothesis. Nevertheless, the article provides highly relevant and inspiring data which might stimulate further development of feedback.

Referee: 3

#### Comments to the Author

This was a well-written paper which I enjoyed reading.

The one change I would recommend is to dispense with the tables and figures. The key information is in the text and most of the figures will not adequately reproduce when published. Removing these will also bring the final paper back to a more appropriate length.