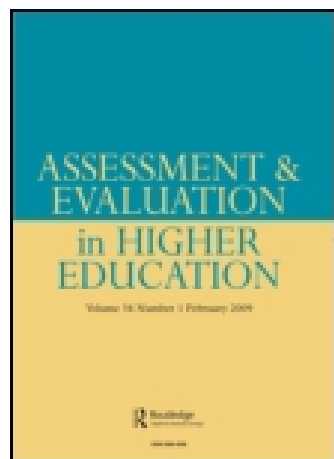


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Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/caeh20>

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Published online: 23 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Peter Ferguson (2011) Student perceptions of quality feedback in teacher education, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 36:1, 51-62, DOI:

[10.1080/02602930903197883](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930903197883)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602930903197883>

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Student perceptions of quality feedback in teacher education

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Many reports have identified a perceived lack of quality in regard to assessment feedback in higher education contexts. One research study in 2007 on undergraduate university students found that less than half of the students (46%) collected their formative feedback, suggesting that from their perspective feedback clearly was not fulfilling the role it should. This is a study of 465 graduate students and 101 undergraduate students studying teacher education at a major Australian university. The study investigated what students perceived to be effective, quality feedback based upon their extensive higher education experiences. Students identified preferences in regard to form, detail and timing of assessment feedback. The data were collected by means of pen and paper survey and identified which strategies the students perceived to be the most effective, particularly within the context of large cohort teaching and written assessment formats. Findings agreed with research elsewhere regarding problems with assessment feedback quality and quantity, but students also provided clear indications of how realistic improvements could be made in terms of assessment feedback processes and strategies.

Keywords: assessment; teacher education; assessment feedback; student perceptions

Introduction

Considerable research exists to establish the importance of assessment feedback in school-level education (Wiggins 1998; Hattie 2003). This research has reached a point of it being an influential issue in curriculum design and planning (Wiggins 1998). In recent years a growing body of research in tertiary education contexts considering feedback and its importance in student learning has appeared (e.g. Higgins, Hartley, and Skelton 2001; Hounsell, Hounsell, McCune, and Litjens 2005; Weaver 2006; Brown 2007; Case 2007; Huxham 2007; Rushton et al. 2008). Part of the reason given for this late consideration of assessment feedback in higher education is the historic emphasis placed upon summative assessment at university level (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2007). The research that has been undertaken clearly confirms student discontent with the quality of feedback and/or the feedback processes used in universities. The national student satisfaction surveys conducted in England identify this as an area of low student satisfaction as recently as 2007 (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2007). In one research study, Wojtas (1998, as cited in Higgins, Hartley, and Skelton 2001, 270) reported that 'some students threw away the feedback if they disliked the grade, while others seemed concerned only with the final result and did not collect their marked work'. This particular

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response may suggest student disinterest in assessment feedback, but the research overall discounts this and highlights that effective feedback is an important and valued component of student learning at this level. The identified problem within the research is that what often occurs with assessment feedback in higher education is not what students would regard as optimal or even helpful. This gives rise to a level of dissatisfaction or even disinterest by many students therefore decreasing the potential learning value from the marking and feedback process.

In one recent study on undergraduate university students, Sinclair and Cleland (2007) found that less than half of the students (46%) even collected their formative feedback, clearly a signal that they found it to be of minimal use. However, although the problems have been identified, and are clear, the solutions may not be simple. Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell, and Litjens (2008, 64) indicated that 'enhancing the quality of feedback ... may be harder to achieve in larger team-taught courses' (such as the two units selected for this study) for a number of reasons. Students within the Hounsell study reported they were frustrated with delays in receiving feedback as well as being dissatisfied with the variable quantity and helpfulness of feedback comments they received from teachers. A review of assessment studies within Australia (Krause et al. 2005) noted ongoing student discontent over assessment feedback for at least a decade. The presence of compressed curricular timetables in some universities and the trend of the crowding of assignments at the end of the semesters are both contributors to students getting less benefit from teachers' feedback on their work (Higgins, Hartley, and Skelton 2001).

Other research studies in higher education indicate the necessity of providing quality feedback to students to facilitate their development as independent learners (Brown 2007). Assessment feedback is vital for promoting learning and motivating students to improve by facilitating reflection and self-evaluation, as well as highlighting errors, deficiencies and problems (Case 2007). However, Hounsell, Hounsell, McCune and Litjens (2005, 3) remarked that 'while feedback seemed to be widely valued by students, their experience of getting feedback from their tutors had been uneven ... The quantity of feedback provided by tutors, and its helpfulness to students, appeared to range widely, and could give rise to uncertainty and confusion ...'. Research into feedback in England (Rushton et al. 2008) revealed that students within one business faculty placed higher value on the role of feedback than did staff. A review of assessment in higher education in Britain concluded that the focus of assessment within those contexts was primarily summative in nature resulting in reduction of formative assessment elements and therefore provision of meaningful feedback (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2007). Research conducted in Australia within this area highlights similar student perceptions of deficiencies in feedback quantity and quality (Krause et al. 2005). One review of students across 14 universities within Australia (Scott 2006) rated assessment feedback as a dimension in clear need of improvement by 90% of the student respondents. Issues identified included 'poor quality and low quantity feedback' and 'time problems' as well as 'inconsistencies' generally, and 'a lack of clear requirements and expectations'. The report also suggested that quality management for assessment was a 'key area requiring attention' within higher education.

Anecdotal evidence arising from student discussions and staff planning meetings at the University of Melbourne (Graduate School of Education) suggested that similar issues may be at play there. Many assignments were returned in class and so the non-collection issue was reduced, however, where students were required to collect

assignments outside of class from a central distribution point, the non-collection rate was often well in excess of 15% even though all efforts were made to communicate to students and to get assignments and comments back to them. This non-collection rate rose steeply for work completed near the end of a semester, a year or a course.

The research reported in this article was designed to investigate the type, quantity and quality of assessment feedback students would prefer to receive within both graduate and undergraduate pre-service teacher education programmes.

Existing research clearly identifies deficiencies within the area of assessment feedback within higher education even though it is an element of their learning valued by students when they consider what they receive to be of helpful quality and quantity.

This research was not designed to replicate earlier studies in identifying students' views of deficiencies in feedback practices but to determine what students believed would constitute effective, quality feedback procedures for them. In other words, how might the 'poor quality and low quantity' issues best be addressed from the perspective of the students?

To this end, the following key research questions were set:

- (1) What types of assessment feedback were perceived as useful by students?
- (2) Did students prefer their assessment feedback to incorporate comments more on the structure, content, style or all aspects of their work?
- (3) What was the preferred nature (e.g. oral versus written) and level of detail or quantity of assessment feedback for students?

This study considered the issue of feedback quality and process, and identified the forms of assessment feedback and assessment procedures students felt they were/would be getting most benefit from within such higher education programmes.

Method

The study used a questionnaire (with a mix of open and closed questions; Appendix 1) as the data collection instrument. Participants were from three different pre-service education programmes within the university: one a four-year undergraduate programme (BEEd), one a one-year graduate programme (DipEd), and the third a two-year graduate programme (BTch). This distribution meant a wide range of participants in terms of ages, educational background, university experience, gender and so forth. The graduate students all came to the programme with pre-existing degrees from other faculties and other universities, including some with postgraduate qualifications. Participants were in both primary and secondary education streams with the secondary stream drawn from all discipline areas (arts, humanities, sciences, human movement, etc.). Specifically, the participants were enrolled in the core curriculum, teaching and assessment units within the three programmes mentioned. For each of the student groups, the questionnaire was administered about three quarters of the way through their course (for the undergraduates, e.g. it was half way through the third year of a four-year course) after they had been exposed to content on assessment and feedback within the course. The questionnaire was administered to these students during tutorial time (but not by tutors or lecturers).

Students were requested to fill in a questionnaire, and, although done in class time, was completely voluntary and anonymous (resulting in about 80% completion rate for

the undergraduate cohort and 72% of the graduate student cohort). To avoid dependent relationship issues with tutors, the protocols used with student course reviews were used for distribution and collection of questionnaires. A student within the class handed out the questionnaires, collected them when completed, and placed them in a sealed envelope that had no identifier other than for the overall cohort. This envelope was then collected by a research assistant and placed into a container with those from other classes. This container was not opened until all returns were in. The envelopes were then opened by the researchers for collation and analysis. For analysis, the quantitative data were summarised using means and standard deviations (for questions requiring student ratings). For qualitative data, verbatim, but abbreviated, summaries were transferred to spreadsheets against each question (using Microsoft Excel). These summaries were then used to identify emergent themes, common answers and the scope and range of answers overall. Some answers were in the form of recommendations for improved practice, others simply a response to the issue raised. The themes were identified using the question focus aligned with recurring key words, concepts or phrases derived from the data. Although not strictly quantified, student responses were clustered according to the identified themes and categorised according to the degree of support that particular response represented in terms of the total sample. Specific quotations were then selected (with reference back to the complete, original response) that were thought to be representative of the identified themes. Finally, other quotations were selected to provide a sense of the scope and range of the responses overall.

Questions requiring a rating within the questionnaire focused on the range of assessment designs, quantity and targeting of the feedback and the tone of the feedback provided. Students were asked not to draw on experiences from the current course exclusively, but to include any university-level experiences they may have had.

Students were also asked what they felt the best balance between competing feedback issues (such as turn around time versus quantity) would be for them personally as well as general suggestions to improve feedback quality. Students were instructed to be realistic when filling in their responses and not ask for processes or levels of detail that clearly could not be possible given the timeframes and workload constraints that academics are working within. The specific questions contained in the questionnaire are attached as Appendix 1.

Findings and discussion

In total the sample consisted of 566 students who completed the questionnaire from a full cohort of approximately 750. The students who completed the questionnaire totalled 101 in the undergraduate programme and 465 in the graduate programmes. Given the diversity of university experiences participants brought to the study, there was an unexpectedly high degree of consistency across the sample. This suggests that regardless of discipline background and the nature of university experience, students had considerable agreement about what constituted quality assessment feedback and process.

Table 1 outlines the mean and standard deviations for responses to perceived usefulness of forms of feedback. Students were asked to rate usefulness of feedback on a 1–5 scale with 5 = very useful for the forms of feedback listed ‘i–vii’ above.

The results of the two cohorts were very similar with ‘brief written comments throughout’ (iv) and ‘written summary/overview’ (v) being rated the most useful. The

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation for usefulness of a range of forms of feedback (scale 1–5).

Form of feedback	Undergraduate (BEd)	Graduate (DipEd/ BTch)	Total sample
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
(i) Stated grade	3.14 (1.17)	3.25 (1.24)	3.22 (1.23)
(ii) Numeric mark	3.43 (1.24)	3.51 (1.28)	3.5 (1.27)
(iii) Tick or rating	3.27 (1.15)	3.45 (1.17)	3.41 (1.66)
(iv) Brief comment throughout	4.06 (0.97)	4.06 (1.05)	4.06 (1.04)
(v) Written summary	4.09 (1.05)	4.05 (1.13)	4.06 (1.12)
(vi) Group verbal	2.79 (1.08)	2.84 (1.21)	2.83 (1.19)
(vii) Personal verbal	3.46 (1.24)	3.75 (1.26)	3.69 (1.26)
	(<i>n</i> = 101)	(<i>n</i> = 465)	(<i>n</i> = 566)

least useful was again consistent across the whole sample with ‘group verbal feedback clearly rated’ (vi) as the least useful. All of the remainders were rated above a neutral three suggesting some value was seen in other forms of feedback; ‘a stated grade’; ‘a numeric mark’; ‘tick or rating against a criteria and personal’, ‘verbal feedback’ with ‘personal verbal feedback’ rated the highest within this group.

Concerning written feedback, a surprisingly large number of students reported difficulty reading written responses from staff. Across the entire sample greater than 50% reported this as a problem at some time in their higher education studies.

Table 2 summarises responses students gave when asked to state a preference for personal or non-personal written feedback. In this particular instance ‘non-personal’ was written feedback that had a focus on links to grades or criteria and ‘personal’ referred to written responses that focused on written suggestions that commented on the specific work presented. Clearly, most students prefer written feedback that provides them with comments rather than just interpretation and explanation of criteria or marking schemes.

Students were asked to comment on each of the above as well as give a specific choice. Although ‘both’ was not included as a choice when students were asked to select an option and provide further comment, many stated that (both) as a preference in their written responses. Typical comments included: ‘Both are valuable, but a critique is needed to back up the grade’; ‘I not only want to know how my mark was derived, I want to know how to improve’; ‘I prefer more personal feedback as this is about my development’; ‘I prefer the objectivity of criterion-based comments, but I need both’; ‘I like to know that the tutor has noted my individual approach to the task’. The message in the written responses was that both were valued, but responses to

Table 2. Students’ response to a preference for non-personal or personal written feedback.

	Undergraduate (BEd) (%)	Graduate (DipEd/ BTch)	Total sample
Prefer non-personal feedback	10	11	11
Prefer more personal feedback	63	55	59
Did not score	27	34	30
	(<i>n</i> = 101)	(<i>n</i> = 465)	(<i>n</i> = 566)

criteria were only valuable when the criteria themselves were clear while more detailed and personal comments were valued when they: (1) clearly identified with the individual and the uniqueness of their work, and (2) provided information to help their understanding and future development. The reason more personal feedback was scored highest of the two options was its perceived ability to help inform future work. Many commented on perceived 'greater relevance to their personal learning' of more personal written comments.

Students were also asked to rate the relative importance of the following:

- (1) feedback on the small details, e.g. spelling, grammar, referencing, etc.;
- (2) feedback on the overall approach taken and general structure of the work; and
- (3) Feedback on the specific ideas and principles explored within the work (see Table 3).

Feedback on more pedantic detail was of considerably less importance to students than either comment on structure and general content or on the key ideas and issues – both of which were considered of high importance right across the sample.

Students were also asked to include in their comment on this section what level of detail within feedback (overall) they found useful. In response to these issues they typically made statements such as:

'If time constraints are an issue I would much prefer comment on the core of the paper rather than the detail'; 'I prefer brief but pointed comments throughout'; 'Some detail, but do not pick apart every tiny thing – more general feedback'; 'Brief notes are fine as long as they are linked to the work and explicit'; 'Enough to make clear the marker's thoughts. I can follow up personally if I need to'; and, the most common comment of all was, 'Focus on the fine detail is not useful, what is needed is an explanation of how to improve' and, linked to this; 'The weaker the piece of work, or lower the mark the more feedback should be provided'. Several commented that if time is an issue they accept lengthy detailed responses may not be possible but felt that any piece of work should warrant at least the equivalent of an extended paragraph in feedback – regardless of the format of that feedback. Some also commented that a summary statement at the end that again highlights the main issue influencing the grade is useful.

Students were also asked; 'At what point do you think commentary detail is so limited that it is of little benefit'? To this again all groups of students answered with a high degree of consistency. They felt that feedback such as one word or short unexplained responses ('good', 'needs more work', etc.) were of no value at all. Many also commented that ticks or crosses without further explanation were useless (but common). This was seen to be particularly irrelevant when such comments were not

Table 3. How important are different aspects of feedback (scale 1–5).

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total sample
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Feedback on detail	2.55 (1.16)	2.64 (1.21)	2.62 (1.21)
Feedback on structure/overall content	4.15 (0.83)	4.10 (1.12)	4.11 (1.12)
Feedback on key ideas explored	4.31 (0.81)	4.41 (1.11)	4.40 (1.11)
	(<i>n</i> = 101)	(<i>n</i> = 465)	(<i>n</i> = 566)

embedded within the work itself but at the end; 'I have no idea which part or parts it refers to'! Some said that other concise remarks are fine as long as they are clearly linked to the work and meaningful; 'It must tell you something constructive'. Students were particularly critical of ticks, crosses and short answers throughout a piece of work when they felt these did not match the final grade or overall comment; 'When you get a mark that is lower than you were aiming for and the only comments are "good"'; 'There must be some commentary to explain the basis of your mark'. Interestingly, some students also commented that there could be too much feedback; 'With copious feedback it is often hard to determine exactly what I need to address', but most thought 'The more detail the better' as long as it was clear and constructive.

Most remaining questions required students to provide written responses rather than scoring on a 1–5 scale, each of these questions is dealt with in turn below:

The balance between supportive and critical feedback comments

In response to this many students commented on the role feedback has in building confidence and encouragement and felt that comments that are all negative would cause them to give up. 'If all comments are negative I would never write a paper again', in fact responses to this question highlighted the fragility of confidence felt by many students when facing assessment: 'Even phrasing is important, such as "you could have tried this" rather than "you did not do this"'; 'When there is too much negative critique I tend to ignore the comments totally as it is just too unpleasant and upsetting'; 'All bad is just too disheartening'; 'Do not critique "emphatically" but "constructively"'. Some students even stated bluntly; 'I need positive reinforcement'. This was perhaps somewhat surprising given that the graduate students at least had completed an undergraduate degree and so must have experienced success in higher education previously. However, confidence was still an issue for them. Although this was a very common theme, 90% of respondents claimed that some balance between positive and negative was what was needed, a few stated that the balance should reflect the overall result, many said 50:50, others preferred to know what they did poorly, or not at all rather than detail on what was right, however, some said they needed the balance to be towards the positives to give them the confidence to tackle the problems. Almost all stated that the overall message should be on how they can improve. There was also considerable agreement that the marker needed; 'To say the good things first'.

Links between marking schemes, grades and comments

In response to this, students had varying views that ranged from 'poor' to 'quite good' or 'effective'; however, no-one rated the linking of the feedback they had experienced as excellent. Those who made a positive statement usually included some form of caveat; 'Ok in terms of detail, but not particularly insightful'; 'Good so far although the marking system is strange and hard to understand'. The most common criticism by far was that comments were too minimal, confusing or did not match criteria provided or grades given; 'Criteria are often poorly explained or confusing'; 'Comments are sometimes ambiguous'; 'Often grades just do not match the comments given' and; 'Not enough comments to justify the grade given'. Between 5 and 10% of students reported that they had received no feedback in the form of detailed written comments at all during their current course. To improve

these elements, the students simply said that criteria need to be unambiguous, that markers need to be familiar with marking schemes and have common, consistent and clear interpretations.

Acceptable turn around time

Most responded with a specific timeframe of two to three weeks with two weeks by far the preferred time. Others said up to four weeks, but only if it is returned before the next assignment is started. Some linked their answer to the previous issue; 'I would be quite happy for it to take a longer time if it meant it was being marked properly'; 'If it is to have a truly formative function we need them back as soon as possible'; 'It is really frustrating to have to start on another assignment when the previous one has not been returned'. However, in response to this issue students demonstrated a clear understanding of the time pressures faced by many lecturers and tutors, especially those dealing with large cohorts and marking loads. 'Assuming a marking load of up to 100 assignments I would say three to four weeks is reasonable, and even then I understand unforeseen circumstances can arise'; 'Two to four weeks, the latter time if it is a lengthy and detailed assignment'.

The return of assignments

As well as timing issues, students were asked what their preferred ways of having assignments returned were. The options provided were:

- (1) collect from a main/central point;
- (2) collect individually from the tutor outside of class; or
- (3) returned in class.

In Table 4, it can be seen that returning in class is the preferred option of the three given. As with previous rating questions students were also invited to write comments regarding this issue and, although the majority did not provide comments, those that were provided supported this preference. However, about 10% said that mailing out assignments and feedback would be useful if considerable elapsed time before returning was the only other option (e.g. at the end of a semester). Several also stated that they had no strong opinion and that the nature of the feedback and its value was much more important than how it was returned. Electronic means was not given as an option, but several students specifically stated that they did not like work and comments returned electronically (they did not explain why, but this response was

Table 4. How do students prefer assignments and feedback to be returned to them (scale 1–5).

	Undergraduate (BEd)	Graduate (DipEd/ BTch)	Total sample
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Central point	3.06 (1.5)	3.06 (1.4)	3.06 (1.4)
Individually out of class	2.44 (1.3)	2.62 (1.3)	2.59 (1.3)
In class	4.1 (1.2)	3.98 (1.3)	4.00 (1.3)
	(n = 101)	(n = 465)	(n = 566)

consistent with findings elsewhere about online processes generally [Scott 2006]). Five students noted that they found collecting assignments individually from the tutor a very intimidating experience.

Students were asked to add anything else they thought might be of value regarding the aims of this particular piece of research, many (about 30%) did offer further comment. Much of this was to reiterate what they had written elsewhere in their answers, but other issues added included comments specific tutors had made about their feedback process; 'One tutor told us that in the past he realized students often didn't pick up assignments so now the feedback he offered is much less detailed'; 'Some tutors just don't want to comment on work they deem unacceptable, that doesn't help you understand or move forward'. Others commented on a perceived need for greater consistency and feedback across programmes; 'Greater consistency needs to be achieved not just between tutors within a unit, but broad agreement needs to occur across subjects about what constitutes good assessment, interpretation of grades and assessment feedback'.

The most common complaint can be summarised by the following; 'It is hard to judge if the feedback is satisfactory or not, as often the problem is the lack of clarity of criteria or assessment requirements or frameworks. If these were made clearer maybe the feedback would be of more value', or, 'Remind the staff that the criteria and/or assessment rubrics they base their comments and grades on should match what is originally asked for in the assignment instructions'. One student summarised the frustration felt through the plea; 'Please just keep it (*feedback*) clear, consistent, frequent and confidential!'

Finally, when interpreting results within this study, it must also be noted that students were asked to consider the feedback they had received during their current course when providing responses. Although this represents many different units over two to six semesters (dependent upon the cohort), the nature of assessment tasks encountered may not be the same as in some other university courses and contexts. Very little of their assessment experience within the course is exam-based, with much of the focus of assessment asking students to develop and express an informed view or plan to demonstrate how theories, skills and knowledge might influence their own educational practice in particular contexts. This results in personalised responses built around common ideas and content. Huxham, after completing research on assessment feedback, asserted that '... students are not always in the best position to judge what is educationally preferable' and that his research results, '... present something of a conflict between student preferences and educational outcomes' (2007, 609–10). This is a finding of interest for any researcher considering insights based upon student learning meta-cognition. In the case of the research reported here, one would hope that this meta-cognitive aspect about learning is well developed as they are only months away from graduating as teachers and being placed in a position of greatly influencing the learning of others. The research doesn't answer the obvious question '...does their level of understanding of educational processes generally better equip them to provide meaningful insights about their own learning'? This is clearly a focus for potential future research in this area.

Conclusion

Much of what the students had to say about their experiences with assessment feedback problems agreed with research documented elsewhere. It was also very

consistent across the three programmes suggesting that greater experience within higher education contexts did not help students deal with perceived feedback problems. Views about the general standard of assessment and feedback experienced by the participants varied somewhat, but there was agreement that much scope for improvement existed. However, the key focus of this research was not for students to report upon and critique problems they had experienced, but rather state their feedback preferences based upon the range of experiences they had encountered. In terms of preferred processes and notions of quality there was considerable agreement across the whole sample.

Specifically, students felt that written feedback that was timely and personalised regarding their specific piece of work was the best feedback option. This feedback needed to be positive, clear and constructive with a focus on acknowledging their successes and guiding them towards future improvement. A large number of students indicated a need for feedback to contain a certain amount of positive comment, simply for confidence and motivation purposes. The most important factor in 'good' feedback was a clear link between assessment tasks and guidelines, assessment frameworks and criteria and the feedback offered.

The students demonstrated an understanding of, and some sympathy with, time and workload issues confronted by academic staff when marking assignments within large cohorts and accepted that very detailed feedback and quick turn around times were not possible if a marker was confronted with a very large marking load. They did comment, however, that although a quick turn around time was more beneficial for their learning, they were happy to wait a little longer for feedback if it meant greater quantity and better quality. Majority agreement was that an acceptable quantity of feedback for a standard assignment might be brief, concise comments throughout and an extended paragraph of overview that highlighted both the positives and negatives within the piece of work at the end. This extended paragraph should identify weaknesses and suggested improvements, but should also highlight positive aspects. Where negatives are detailed the wording needed to be a guide for future action and improvement, not simply a statement of where the work was inadequate.

Students preferred the work to be returned in class as long as:

- (1) not too much time elapses before this could happen;
- (2) it did not consume too much valuable classroom time; and
- (3) provision for individual verbal feedback out of class was possible if requested.

Although online formats were not included specifically in the questions, a number of students mentioned that they didn't like work and comments returned electronically and that they found individual out-of-class return of work (in the lecturers office, for example) intimidating.

Finally, although a small number of the participants did admit that they rarely if ever collected their assignments or looked at the feedback offered, the vast majority considered assessment feedback a valued part of their learning when done effectively. Most admitted they were disappointed and frustrated when feedback was unclear, too brief or unhelpful in terms of their future learning.

Notes on contributor

Peter Ferguson is a senior lecturer in the Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne. His teaching, supervision and research interests include assessment and assessment feedback both within the context of schooling and in higher education, specifically teacher education.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire (to save space not provided in original format)

The following survey is going to be used to gain insight into how assessment feedback and procedures might be improved in our undergraduate and graduate education courses. The aim of the research is to identify how we might best provide meaningful feedback (given constraints of time and workload) based on what you as a student find the most helpful. Try to make judgements and suggestions within the realm of what might be possible to implement in a meaningful way.

- (a) Rate (1 to 5) the following elements of feedback in terms of usefulness to you personally (where 5 = very useful).
 - (i) A stated grade
 - (ii) Numeric mark
 - (ii) Tick or rating against criteria
 - (iv) Brief written comment throughout
 - (v) Written summary/overview
 - (vi) Group verbal feedback
 - (vii) Personal verbal feedback
- (b) Is deciphering lecturer/tutor handwritten comments a problem?
- (c) Do you prefer feedback formats that are non personal (criteria statements/grades, etc.) or formats that are more personally aimed at your specific work (written suggestions, etc.)?
- (d) Are you most interested in summative feedback that explains how your mark was determined or formative feedback that explains what you needed to do to gain a better result?
- (e) Rate (1 to 5) how important feedback on each is for you:
 - (i) Feedback on the detail of the assignment, i.e. spelling, grammar, referencing, etc.
 - (ii) Feedback on the overall structure/content of the assignment and its role in determining your mark.
 - (iii) Feedback on the ideas explored within the assignment.
- (f) What level of detail would you find most beneficial in terms of feedback? At what point do you think commentary detail is so limited that it has little or no benefit?
- (g) Do you prefer feedback on the positives in your paper (what you did well) or the negatives (what you did badly and need to improve) and what would be the best balance between these in your view?
- (h) How would you rate the linking of grades and comments given as feedback in the course overall thus far?
- (i) What do you consider a useful and reasonable turn around time to get assignments marked and returned?
- (j) When assignments are returned which do you prefer (rate 1–5):
 - (i) Collect from a central point/office somewhere.
 - (ii) Collect individually from the tutor outside of class.
 - (iii) Handed out in class.
 - (iv) Other?
- (k) Do you have any other comments to make about assessment feedback that might help us make it more useful in the future?