

## **Just another student survey? – Point-of-contact survey feedback enhances the student experience and lets researchers gather data**

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*When student surveys are conducted within university environments, one outcome of feedback to the researcher is that it provides insight into the potential ways that curriculum can be modified and how content can be better delivered. However, the benefit to the current students undertaking the survey is not always evident. By modifying Biggs' revised two-factor study process questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F), we have provided students with immediate point-of-contact feedback that encourages students to consider their own cognitive processes. The main purpose of the modified tool is to provide immediate benefit to the student, whilst retaining the functionality of the survey for the researcher. Two versions of the survey were presented to students, a feedback version and non-feedback version, with results indicating that the participants of the feedback version had a significantly higher opinion that the survey helped them to be a better learner. In general, the importance students place on feedback, regardless of the version of the survey completed, was evident in the study. The point-of-contact survey model implemented in this study has successfully allowed a tool*

*that was once exclusively researcher focused to be oriented towards current students, introducing an additional layer of feedback, which directly benefits the current student, whilst retaining its usefulness as a diagnostic research tool.*

**Keywords:** Feedback, survey feedback, student feedback, point-of-contact feedback, immediate feedback, R-SPQ-2F.

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## **Introduction**

Survey questionnaires are an established and effective means to access evidence that can be used to assess and improve the quality of teaching (Richardson, 2005:387). However, this has tended to be a one-way process, in which student respondents provide information with little, if any, immediate return. Survey questionnaires using computers, however, have the potential to enhance the positive effect they can have on the respondent; they have long done this. This is largely because they can use automated processes that easily and quickly skip blocks of questions based on the respondent's answers. This effectively tailors the survey to the respondent, thus both enhancing the survey relevance to the individual respondent, and reducing perceived redundancy or irrelevance within the survey. Such an approach allows a directness of interaction between the respondent and the survey, and therefore allows a depth of feedback to be provided through extensive branching of questions (Doherty & Thomas, 1988:11).

Research regarding effective student feedback indicates that feedback clearly aids students to become more competent and confident and build self-assessment skills that allow for students to self-correct weaknesses in their work (Bird & Yucel, 2014:508). In contrast, James, Krause, and Jennings (2010:61), in a study of first-year students at Australian tertiary institutions, found that only one-third of first-year students in Australia believe that the feedback about their performance was helpful.

Regardless of the purpose of any student survey, providing feedback to participants, apart from being ethical, encourages further participation, as it demonstrates to the student the value of their responses to the research being undertaken (Watson, 2003:145). Additionally,

from a student-centered perspective, the type of feedback received when entering higher education will likely play an important part in influencing their future learning (Eraut, 2006:118). Discussion of feedback in higher education usually focuses on its role in assessment, especially formative assessment. In this regard, it is important to consider if formative assessment practices can enhance student learning through the use of feedback (Hernández, 2012:489). Assessment is more than just about grading and reporting student achievements, but should also be about supporting student learning (Hernández, 2012:490). Therefore, when considering the assessment that students undergo, it is important to consider the way feedback is used in the formative assessment, which primarily deals with providing feedback to either the students or the teaching staff and/or institution (Brookhart, 2008:1), and the context in which the feedback is used. This can include, for example, feedback regarding a student's progress (James et al. 2010:5), feedback to an individual or group, peer feedback, and self-assessment type feedback (Parikh, McReelis, & Hodges, 2001:632). A type of feedback that is relevant to this study is feedback that is given to students immediately. A typical example of this type of feedback is the use of clickers to enhance interaction between students and teachers by providing immediate feedback within the class or lecture (DeBourgh, 2007; Yourstone et al, 2008). Interactive software also provides dynamic point-of-contact feedback: the Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique (IFAT), a commercially available multiple-choice testing platform, for example, provides immediate feedback in an answer-until-correct format; this permits the earning of partial credit when the student's initial response is incorrect and encourages further learning (Dibattista, Mitterer & Gosse, 2004:17).

In this study we have used a widely adopted researcher-focused learning approach survey tool (R-SPQ-2F) (Biggs et al., 2001). This tool has the potential to provide feedback on each psychometric component as immediate point-of-contact feedback. The components in this particular questionnaire consider both cognitive processing strategies and learning orientations (Gibels, et al. 2014:14). Conventionally, the tool provides data and computed index scores for these parameters for the targeted student cohort population; these data outputs form the basis of analysis of student learning patterns and processes (Lake, Boyd & Boyd, 2015). Also, conventionally, respondents may be offered the opportunity

for whole-of-project feedback, often a considerably long time after completing the survey. We have adapted this data-gathering tool to add a further output, point of contact statements for individual respondents as they complete the survey. This allows respondents to self-analyse their individual performance.

By modifying the tool to give immediate feedback, the survey allows for immediate student feedback, retaining the essence of the survey for the researcher, while also closing the loop on feedback so that students can benefit immediately from the survey. Closing the loop (Coyle & Powney, 1990; Powney & Hall, 1998; Watson, 2003) is a concept sometimes used in the process of determining the impact of feedback on students' subsequent learning, in a process where the data is collected, analyzed, and then, most importantly, reported to stakeholders, so that changes can be made to course design. Closing the loop in this conventional sense also includes the idea that institutions should seek to implement continuing improvement of the learning environment, linking educational provision with feedback, evaluation and review (Powney & Hall, 1998:3). However, if current students do not benefit from changes to the course at the time of data collection, we would argue that the loop has only been closed in the traditional sense and that the improvements have not necessarily benefited the students giving the feedback. To this point, Powney and Hall (1998:13) noted, "improvements seldom affect the present students and are directed at future cohorts". However, in contrast, Kane, Williams and Cappuccini-Ansfield (2008:138) indicate that the "Students' satisfaction with the action that has been taken by institutions is often reflected in the surveys over time, even if a clear causal relationship cannot always be fully established". In essence, closing the loop as is generally done in current (conventional) approaches, which, as a post hoc action, cannot be easily proven to benefit future students.

It appears straightforward to evolve the process to benefit not only future students but also current students providing the survey data. More specifically, in using such a model, students completing the survey can be encouraged to think about the motives and strategies they use in their approach to learning (Figure 1). In addition, Figure 1 expands this model slightly to consider the possibility of including point-of-contact feedback as in-class content and activity.

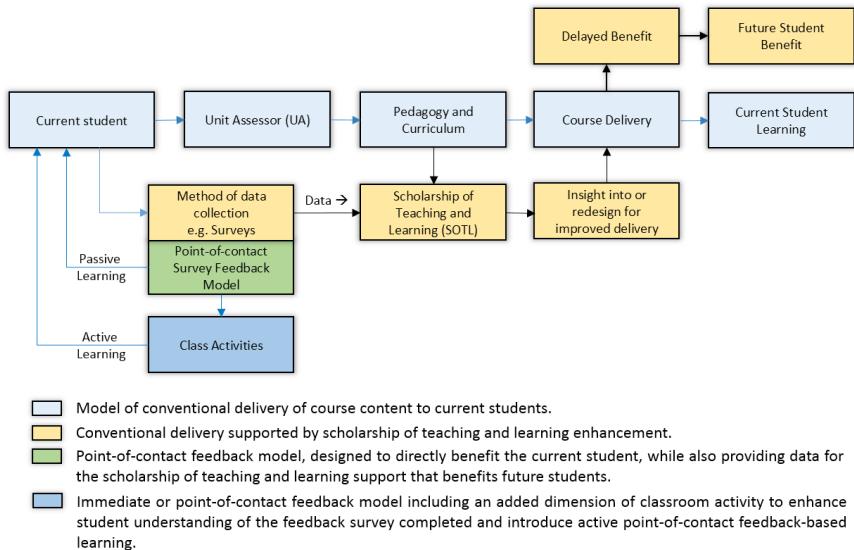
In this study, we examined whether the enhanced survey empowered the students to think more about their own approach to learning, and thus the suitability of using the immediate or point-of-contact feedback model to promote deep approaches to learning of first year students in the Preparing for Success at SCU Program (PSP). Importantly, there does not appear to be any surveys based on the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) that give point-of-contact feedback to students. Given that the SPQ considers the approach a student takes towards their studies (Biggs et al. 2001), and that as, Parikh, McReelis, and Hodges (2001:632) indicate, feedback is considered an essential component of learning, thus combining the conventional survey function and the innovative point-of-contact function appears to be an appropriate and urgent need in promoting metacognition amongst university students.

Although student surveys are considered an important element in informing educators (Watson, 2003:147), the effects that poor quality feedback may have on future participation should be carefully considered (Watson, 2003:148). Feedback about academic teaching from students allows academics to act upon the results, with actions potentially communicated back to the students (Tucker, Jones, & Straker, 2008:283). Tucker et al. (2008:283) point out that students who are given feedback, particularly from surveys designed to evaluate teaching, however, have often already completed the unit of study and have no mechanism for determining if the information provided has influenced change, either for themselves, or future cohorts of students. Tucker et al. (2008:283) point out that the lack of a mechanism can lead to further issues due to the lack of closure of the feedback loop, potentially creating a student attitude of not taking feedback mechanisms seriously. This, therefore, could have extended impact on future surveys, either through a withdrawal of student participation, or a high number of non-serious attempts, which may or may not be identifiable within a dataset.

The current study provided students with feedback specifically regarding their approach to learning, in a form to facilitate learning that is transferrable to other situations (Hattie & Timperley, 2007:104). This allows for a tool to (i) be student focused, (ii) retain its usefulness as a research tool, and (iii) encourage participation in other student surveys. In addition, the survey and the feedback provided makes use

of what Brookhart (2008:2) describes as a double-barreled approach, which addresses both cognitive and motivational factors by providing the student with information what they need to (i) better understand the stage in the learning process they are at, and (ii) do to improve their learning. This should give students greater control over their own learning.

**Figure 1:** Point-of-contact feedback model designed to directly benefit the current student, while also providing data for the scholarship of teaching and learning to benefit future students. Both current and future student may benefit from this model with potential immediate benefit to current student and enhanced student experience.



## Context

The Preparing for Success at SCU Program (PSP) is an award winning enabling program for students at a small regional university in Northern New South Wales, Australia (Hellmundt, McGuire & Kayess, 2014). The program provides a pathway into university for those who want to pursue tertiary study but who do not have the qualifications for entry.

The Preparing for Success program comprises three compulsory core units, along with a selection of either an arts or science elective. Students learn how to manage their time, write an academic essay and report, master basic numeracy skills, as well as develop key learning strategies for tertiary study. A key aim of the program is to build students' confidence and self-esteem by first identifying, and then capitalizing on, their strengths to actively engage them to become independent, self-directed and self-aware learners. The curriculum and pedagogy are specifically designed to enhance student awareness of their preferred learning styles and particular strategies for successful tertiary study. A core objective of the course is to develop student confidence, skills and engagement in tertiary education. This paper reports on a novel use of student surveys to support this objective.

## Methods

The study was conducted with students enrolled in one of the compulsory core units (subjects), within the Preparing for Success (PSP) course, namely, Managing your Study (EDU10445) in Weeks 5 to 7 of the 12 week teaching session. Three hundred and eight students completed the unit in over two study sessions.

The Managing your Study unit was considered ideal for this study, as the second assessment, due in Week 6, focused on learning strategies. This assignment asked students to reflect on two strategies they had discovered in their study that had helped them become more effective learners. Tutors at each location and mode of delivery (the unit is delivered face-to-face and online) were asked to promote the survey twice in class, and the unit assessor (lecturer) posted an announcement twice on the online learning site, encouraging students to complete the survey.

Students in each teaching session were randomly presented either a point-of-contact feedback version of the survey, or a non-feedback version. Students included in each group were randomly but evenly, presented either version via the Qualtrics online survey tool. Two groups of students from each of the two teaching sessions (sessions 2 and 3) completed the survey.

The survey was based on Biggs' R-SPQ-2F questionnaire (Biggs et al.,

2001). The questionnaire comprised 20 questions designed to measure two main scales of deep and surface approach, and subscales of motives and strategies (Table 1) to learning. The content and intent of the questions formed the basis of feedback text, so that feedback could be reported back to the participant throughout the survey. The logic of the feedback was based on student responses to the Likert scale for each question. As an example (Textbox 1), in question 1 of the survey, if a student selects A or B (frequently true or almost always true of me) of the Likert scale then the output response to that answer was displayed to the student after answering that question. If the student selects D or E (never or only rarely true of me) or C (True about half the time) on the Likert scale, then different output responses to the answer were displayed. The same logic is followed for all the questions in the feedback version of the paper. The details of each response were based on information published in the scholarly literature, although only a non-referenced version was displayed to students.

**Table 1:** *The psychometric properties being measured for each question relating to deep or surface approach and their subscales.*

Deep Approach (DA)	Surface approach (SA)	Deep Motive (DM)	Deep Strategy (DS)	Surface motive (SM)	Surface strategy (SS)
Questions 1 + 2 + 5 + 6 + 9 + 10 + 13 + 14 + 17 + 18	Questions 3 + 4 + 7 + 8 + 11 + 12 + 15 + 16 + 19 + 20	1 + 5 + 9 + 13 + 17	2 + 6 + 10 + 14 + 18	3 + 7 + 11 + 15 + 19	4 + 8 + 12 + 16 + 20

**Textbox 1:** Example of actual output responses for Question 1.

### **Feedback for Q. 1**

**Literature sources use to inform feedback:** Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Matlay, Hytti, Stenholm, Heinonen, & Seikkula-Leino, 2010

**Question:** I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction.

**Text for each feedback:**

**Student response = frequently true or almost always true of me:** Your answer indicates that you may not be as deeply motivated as you could be when it comes to study. Research that focuses on motivation and its relationship to achievement indicates that motivational differences between students has long-term learning implications, and is often a good predictor of learning outcomes and competencies.

**Student response = never or only rarely true of me:** Your answer indicates that you are likely to be deeply motivated when it comes to study. This is a trait that is often associated with improved academic performance. Research that focuses on motivation and its relationship to achievement indicates that motivational differences between students has long-term learning implications, and is often a good predictor of learning outcomes and competencies.

**Student response = true about half the time:** Your answer indicates that at times you may not be as deeply motivated as you could be when it comes to study. Research that focuses on motivation and its relationship to achievement indicates that motivational differences between students has long-term learning implications, and is often a good predictor of learning outcomes and competencies.

The standard questions in Biggs et al.'s (2001) questionnaire were supplemented by basic demographic questions asking about gender and age and questions to test whether feedback had an impact on student perceptions of the survey utility. The latter questions were:

1. Do you think that this survey will help you to be a better learner?
2. If all surveys you participated in at university provided feedback at the end of a survey, would you be more likely to complete them?
3. Have you ever been disappointed after submitting a survey that there was little or no feedback?
4. Do you think that your knowledge about how you learn at university has been enhanced by completing this survey?
5. Please tell us your thoughts about how this learning survey could be improved?

The survey conducted in session 3, involved an additional activity in class where the students were introduced to the survey in week 3 and asked to complete an activity in week 4. The activity involved students getting into groups of 4-6, making sure at least half the group received feedback from the survey, followed by a discussion of the questions such as, for example, what did you think about the survey? Did you find it beneficial? Why/why not? On this occasion no specific data was collected, apart from the observations of the unit assessor.

## **Results**

A total of 125 surveys were fully completed, with 114 used in the analysis. This adjustment occurred to account for participants that undertook the survey more than once, and therefore only had their first attempt included in the survey analysis. The ratio of males (20.2%) to females (79.8%) was typical of this university, with recent studies such as Markopoulos, Chaseling, Petta, Lake, and Boyd (2015) citing a high ratio of predominately female students (80%) at the same university. The median age of the student participants was 30.5 years.

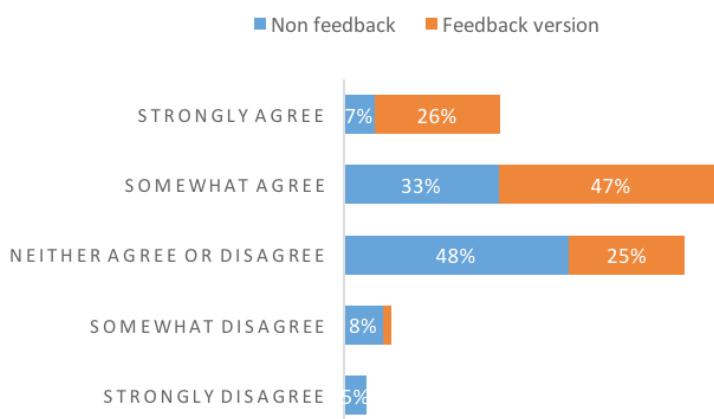
Prior to combining the two results of the two sessions, the difference between the two cohorts was assessed based on the scale SPQ scores. The results of the independent samples t-test indicated that the difference was not significant between the session 2 and session 3

groups for either a deep approach to learning  $t(112) = -0.985$ ,  $p = 0.33$ , two-tailed,  $d = 0.19$ , or surface approach to learning  $t(112) = 1.43$ ,  $p = 0.16$ , two-tailed,  $d = 0.23$ . For the remaining analysis, therefore, these two sets of data were combined.

**The following 5 core questions were asked of students:**

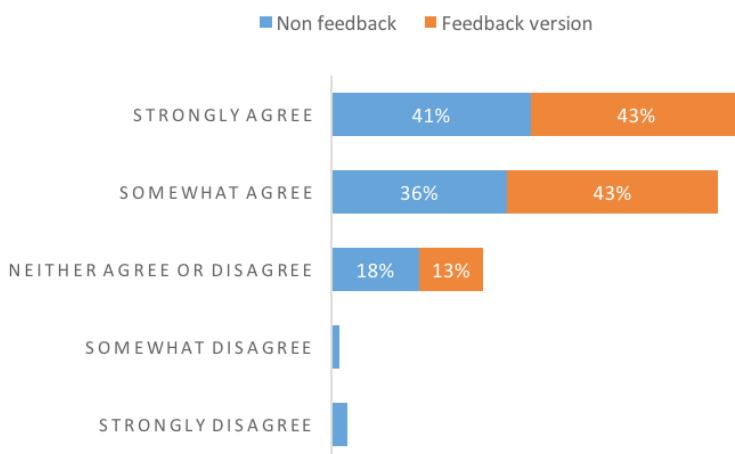
**Question 1: Do you think that this survey could help you to be a better learner?** A Mann-Whitney non-parametric U test indicated that the level of agreement for students completing the Feedback version of the survey (mean rank = 70.38,  $n = 53$ ) was significantly higher than the non-feedback version (mean rank = 46.31,  $n = 61$ ),  $U = 934$ ,  $z = -4.123$  (corrected for ties),  $p = 0.0001$ , two tailed. Thus, we can state that the participants of the feedback version had a significantly higher opinion that the survey helped them to be a better learner, with 73% of participants in the feedback group ( $n = 53$ ) either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the survey could help them to be a better learner. This compared to the non-feedback group ( $n = 61$ ), where only 40% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the survey could help them to be a better learner. In addition, only 2% of students from the feedback group reported any level of disagreement (Figure 1). The size effect can be described as “medium” ( $r = 0.39$ ).

**Figure 1:** Do you think that this survey could help you to be a better learner?



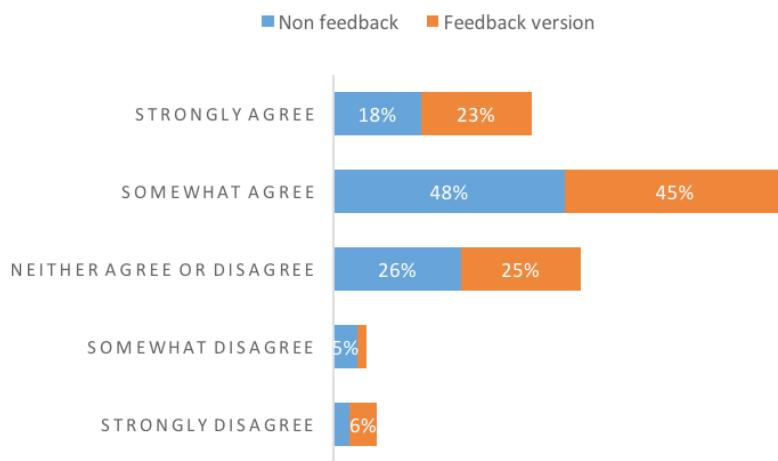
**Question 2: If all surveys you participated in at university provided feedback either throughout or at the end of a survey, would you be more likely to complete them?** A Mann-Whitney non-parametric U test indicated that the level of agreement for students completing the Feedback version of the survey (mean rank = 60.02, n = 53) was not significantly higher than the non-feedback version (mean rank = 55.31, n = 61),  $U = 1483$ ,  $z = -0.818$  (corrected for ties),  $p = 0.41$ , two tailed. Thus, we can state that the participants of the feedback version and non-feedback version are not significantly different in their opinion that feedback had an effect on their completion of surveys. However, although there was no significant difference between groups, 86% of participants in the feedback group either agreed or strongly agreed that they would be more likely to complete surveys if they were provided feedback. This opinion was also prevalent in the non-feedback group, with 77% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would be more likely to complete a survey if feedback was given (Figure 2).

**Figure 2:** *If all surveys you participated in at university provided feedback either throughout or at the end of a survey, would you be more likely to complete them?*



**Question 3: Have you ever been disappointed after submitting a survey that there was little or no feedback?** A Mann-Whitney non-parametric U test indicated that the level of agreement for students completing the non-feedback version of the survey (mean rank = 58.95, n = 61) was not significantly higher than the feedback version (mean rank = 56.24, n = 53)  $U = 1539.5$ ,  $z = -0.468$  (corrected for ties),  $p = 0.64$ , two tailed. Thus, we can state that the participants of the feedback version and non-feedback version are not significantly different in the disappointment they may or may not have experienced if little or no feedback was received. However, 68% of participants in the feedback group and 66% of the non-feedback group either agreed or strongly agreed that they had been disappointed because they had not received feedback (Figure 3).

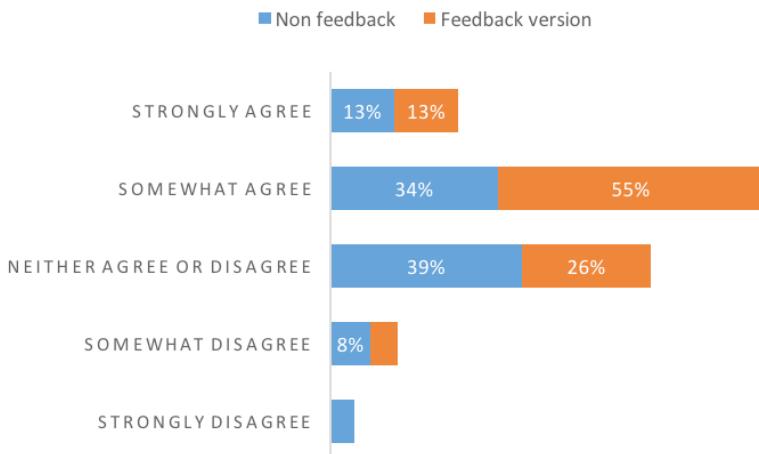
**Figure 3:** *Have you ever been disappointed after submitting a survey that there was little or no feedback?*



**Question 4: Do you think that your knowledge about how you learn at university has been enhanced by completing this survey?** A Mann-Whitney non-parametric U test indicated that the level of agreement for students completing the Feedback version of the survey (mean rank = 63.38, n = 53) was not significantly higher than the

non-feedback version (mean rank = 52.39, n = 61) U = 1305, z = -1.891 (corrected for ties), p = 0.059, two tailed. Thus, we can state that the participants of the feedback version and non-feedback version are not significantly different in their opinion that knowledge about how they learn at university has been enhanced by completing this survey. However, 80% of participants in the feedback group and 63% of the non-feedback group agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge about learning had been enhanced (Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** Do you think that your knowledge about how you learn at university has been enhanced by completing this survey?



**Question 5: “Please tell us your thoughts about how this learning survey could be improved”:** The non-feedback version of the survey had 29 responses to this question compared to the feedback version, which had 15. The most noteworthy comments are coded into three groups related to: the perceived benefit to student learning; the timing of the survey; and the presentation of the feedback, and are shown below (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Summary of student comments on non-feedback and feedback versions of the survey.

NON-FEEDBACK VERSION
<b>Perceived benefit to student learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perhaps if I was able to answer the questions in the survey further into my course, I'd have better judgement. It was interesting though.</li> <li>• I found this survey to be more interesting as the questions were self-reflected.</li> <li>• It made me more aware that I could definitely improve my learning skills but in no part did it inform me on how too?</li> <li>• It is interesting that the majority of teachers ask for feedback constantly and I think you should have a section on asking for feedback. I know I'm at a point now, where I want to interact more with either my lecturer, U.A. or tutor and get answers on areas I went wrong in and how I can rectify the problem and learn from it. For example, when an assignment is returned there would be a wide range of attitudes to feedback.</li> <li>• I feel that this survey could be improved by at the end providing some suggestions based on your answers on how to enhance our study skills, and feedback, again, based on our answers how to improve.</li> <li>• The questions did not make me feel or think any different about the study. I am struggling a little and I think to better understand me as a new student questions around how things could be improved would benefit me vastly with options to choose. I am unaware of any extra support available. Even doing this study part time it seems like a lot to take on and in. I feel a huge expectation to have to study to achieve and I do not find there is much of a balance for my home life as a mum. However I am my biggest obstacle and I am the power of my mind and I am set to achieve!</li> <li>• I think the survey is a sound survey. It asks appropriate questions, it is any to answer and easy to identify to.</li> <li>• The Survey could have been made a little more colorful and exciting.</li> <li>• It was good, I don't think it needed much improving.</li> </ul>
<b>Timing of survey</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I know surveys are supposed to be short but there are a lot more questions on this subject to ask. I feel this survey would be better served if it was distributed a bit later into the PSP course because the student is likely to have a better grasp on their thought of learning.</li> <li>• I feel as it is only week 3 in the PSP we are still learning about our individual ways of learning, approaches to assessments, readings etc. and we have not received feedback on an assessment as yet. In which case the survey may have been better completed later in the program. Also if this survey is specifically for PSP students, as we won't be completing exams it can be hard to gauge how we would prepare for and the content we might expect to need to know for exams. I felt I was guessing responses to the exam related questions.</li> </ul>

- I could only really answer these questions over a period of time after completing the learning survey a few more times. Then I would have better understanding of the survey and if it works see my answers changed over time.

#### **Presentation of feedback**

- None

#### **FEEDBACK VERSION**

#### **Perceived benefit to student learning**

- A few more ideas on ways to improve on certain areas where you didn't have the best answer to help you improve on areas that you are lacking in or are less focused in.
- I didn't think it needed to be improved!
- I believe this survey was quite helpful to me personally as it opened my eyes to how I study. Found some key points that helped me to see where I could improve or how I could change my way of thinking. Example I see that it's important to expand my range of study to not only subject related topics but to keep an open mind, and read things beyond what's being asked by an academic. Thank you.
- Maybe it could have asked about different learning strategies students use.
- Sound quiz with a refreshing use of feedback.
- Having an interactive voice reading out the questions to assist in understanding text better

#### **Timing of survey**

- None

#### **Presentation of feedback**

- Feedback at end of survey is preferred.
- Give a general statement at the end of the survey.
- Printout on points to remember and recall because no one has a perfect mind when it comes to memory recall.
- I like the idea of feedback because some valid points were raised. I'd like to keep a copy of them.

Feedback from the unit assessor regarding the in class activity for session 3 was not as successful as expected, with the unit assessor indicating that the activity did not work, because “students who didn’t get feedback were frustrated and couldn’t understand why or the purpose of the activity”. In practice the use of an activity for the survey would have been better implemented in another session when only the feedback version of the survey would be offered, and could have benefited from closer consultation with the research team.

## **Discussion**

An important aspect to consider is whether the feedback version of the survey had an effect on student opinions about their learning when compared to the non-feedback version. Only the first question: Do you think that this survey could help you to be a better learner? revealed significant differences between the two groups. Thus, we determined that the participants of the feedback version had a significantly higher opinion that the survey helped them to be a better learner. For all other questions this was not the case, as no significant differences between the groups were found. This is not surprising given that the other questions are more general in context. However, although not statistically significant, in all other questions the number of students answering positively (who either agree or somewhat agree) was consistently higher for students who completed the feedback version of the survey. This appears to indicate that students who participated in the feedback version of the survey valued the feedback, and that, to a lesser extend students answering the non-feedback version also valued the desire to receive feedback (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Level of agreement for first 4 questions of each group.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q1F</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q2F</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q3F</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Q4F</b>
Strongly agree or Somewhat agree	40%	73%	77%	86%	66%	68%	47%	68%
Neither agree or disagree	48%	25%	18%	13%	26%	25%	39%	26%
Somewhat disagree or strongly disagree	13%	2%	5%	0%	8%	8%	13%	6%

In practice, however, question 1 was the only question where we can say that the influence of the version of survey had a statistically significant effect on student opinion. This finding is particularly interesting, given that when asked whether they (the student) would be more likely to participate if feedback was provided, the results although similar for both groups overwhelmingly indicated that they agree with the feedback group rating agreement in 86% of participants and non-feedback group 77%. This highlights the importance students place on receiving feedback. In essence the results indicate that students do want feedback, and that this opinion will remain strong whether or not feedback is given. This is important, given that it has been previously established that the lack of closure of the feedback in surveys can potentially create a student attitude of not taking feedback mechanisms seriously (Tucker et al. 2008:283). This attitude is considered in our study in terms of student emotions related to disappointment, but more specifically in terms of an attitude of disappointment through not receiving any feedback. When asked if they had ever been disappointed that there was little or no feedback after submitting a survey, surveyed students indicated a feeling of disappointment, with 68% of the feedback group and 66% of the non-feedback group agreeing that they had been disappointed on some level. These results suggest that in terms of student focused surveys, whether feedback is given or not should be carefully considered. However, by providing feedback consistently in surveys where appropriate, we could potentially be encouraging students to participate, thus having extended impact on future surveys, encouraging future participation and increasing student satisfaction; and also supporting student learning.

In the introduction, we argued that standard models of conventional delivery of course content, supported by enhancements developed via the scholarship of teaching and learning can be further enhanced by including a point-of-contact feedback model. To a certain extent we can see an indication of the potential benefits from a student-centered perspective. For example, in the fourth question we asked whether the students' knowledge about how you learn at university has been enhanced by completing this survey, with 80% of participants in the feedback group and 63% of the non-feedback group agreeing or strongly agreeing that their knowledge about learning had been enhanced. Although the difference between the two groups was determined not to be statistically significant when considering each group as a whole,

the 17% difference between the two groups may indicate that further research should be considered in order to investigate this question in more depth.

In the non-feedback version of the survey, one student suggested that the survey “questions were self-reflected” perhaps indicating that the content of the questions provided some form of knowledge to the student, regardless of the fact that no feedback was given. At this point it is important to recognize that one of the limitations of this study was the fact that we cannot control all the variables surrounding what the unit assessor is teaching and the effects this might have on the way the students approach the survey. Given the nature of the unit, it is likely that students would have a direct interest in understanding how they study and thus have a more positive response and conceptual understanding, regardless of the survey given. Feedback from students about the non-feedback survey also included statements such as “I feel that this survey could be improved by at the end providing some suggestions based on your answers on how to enhance our study skills, and feedback, again, based on our answers how to improve”. This sort of statement directly supports the conceptual basis for providing feedback.

In the feedback version of the survey, the most common comment was, for example that “Feedback at end of [the] survey is preferred” and that “...a general statement at the end of the survey” would have been more optimal. Furthermore, another student commented that they would like to have been able “to keep a copy of them [the questions and answers]”. One student commented “no one has a perfect mind when it comes to memory recall.” The importance of the point-of-contact model should not miss the importance of more mundane issues such as the ability to view the feedback at the end of the survey as well as throughout. Another student statement which backs up the potential usefulness of point-of-contact surveys was “I believe this survey was quite helpful to me personally as it opened my eyes to how I study. Found some key points that helped me to see where I could improve or how I could change my way of thinking.” Interestingly, the activity introduced in session 3, to help students engage further in the learning process in essence further strengthened the importance of feedback.

By creating a survey with point-of-contact feedback we reduce the

chances of students developing an attitude of not taking feedback mechanisms seriously. This survey, but more specifically any survey that provides immediate feedback could, therefore, potentially impact positively on future surveys, avoiding as Tucker et al. (2008:283) points out, the potential withdrawal of student participation, or the inclusion of non-serious attempts, which may or may not be identifiable within a dataset. Therefore, by providing feedback, we are potentially minimizing the negative effects non-serious attempts could have on the data collected in the conventional model of supported by the scholarship of teaching and learning.

In contrast to a typical survey, where students do not benefit from changes to the course at the time of data collection, the approach taken in this study more adequately closes the feedback loop. The loop we are referring to is slightly different from that suggested by Watson (2003), where there is a focus on ensuring that staff are alerted to student feedback, are able to react promptly, and allow students to feel that their feedback to be heard by those who can implement suggested changes. The premise of the Watson (2003) approach does not imply a specific focus on what the survey can do now for the current student (apart from student satisfaction that they have been heard and that changes have been implemented as a result), as any changes to a course or its delivery will not necessarily benefit the current student undertaking the survey. In our study, we enhance the benefits to the current student by providing an additional feedback loop, using the survey as a tool not only as a data collection and engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning, but also as a tool of student learning enhancement. In this case, closing the loop, applies to the importance of providing immediate feedback to inform the student of learning opportunities, either passively or actively in a point-of-contact fashion. The model supports both the conventional ‘close the loop’ approach typical in the scholarship of teaching and learning process and the point-of-contact feedback model used in this study. In conjunction these could work together to make surveys (when applicable) more effective, by benefiting both in terms of students’ being satisfied that they have been heard and contributed to positively to changes in course design and delivery, as well as the immediate learning benefits they receive. In combination, this could lead to a continued strengthening of the scholarship of teaching and learning, and most importantly an increased participation

by students by actively demonstrating the value of student survey responses in terms of their contribution to the traditional feedback cycle and to their own learning experience gain.

## Conclusion

The point-of-contact survey implemented in this study has allowed a tool that was once researcher focused to be oriented towards current students, whilst retaining its usefulness as a research tool. We determined that the participants of the feedback version had a significantly higher opinion that the survey helped them to be a better learner. Based on previous research and the positive perceptions of students we believe that this model could encourage participation in other surveys at university. In addition the use of the point-of-contact model introduces a further layer of feedback, which directly benefits the current student.

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