

2015

'Feed-forward: Exploring the staff and student experience of technology facilitated feedback - can technology support and engage staff and students in dialogic feedback?'

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Teaching Fellowship Award Scheme: Final Report

~~The final report should consist of a two-page summary of the project and its findings (using the fields below as a guide).~~

~~Along with this form, please also send (where relevant):~~

- ~~• Ethical approval forms~~
- ~~• Conference papers and/or articles for publication~~
- ~~• (If your initial TFAS application was 'approved with conditions') Evidence that these conditions have been met (in 'Other')~~

~~Send all forms to: adam.fisher@plymouth.ac.uk~~

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Title of project: *'Feed-forward: Exploring the staff and student experience of technology facilitated feedback - can technology support and engage staff and students in dialogic feedback?'*

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Type of project Action Research

Keywords dialogic feedback; language learning; DLE

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Aims of project: to explore the use of new feedback processes within four module groups in the Plymouth Business School; ~~to~~ to evaluate how two of the institutionally provided learning technologies, Moodle and PebblePad, could support and enhance the online feedback experience for staff/students.

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Background/context to project:

ELC101, ELC201, ELC305 and ELC307 are four English language modules where we seek to develop students' capacity to self-regulate and develop strategies for autonomous learning, in order to further the development of their English language skills. We have noted over the years that students do not seem to engage with feedback as much as we would wish and wanted to see if use of the DLE / Pebblepad would encourage them to adopt a more proactive role in responding to feedback. Both platforms allow students to respond online.

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Methods used:

- We set up activities, assignments and feedback channels in Pebblepad and Moodle for the 4 modules.
- A typology of activities, assignments and feedback types and student responses was drawn up.
- We gathered feedback from students on their perceptions of the feedback they received both via module feedback surveys and in focus groups (2).
- The Research Assistant analysed the data on Pebblepad and Moodle.

eSubmission Feedback (Moodle)

Forum (Moodle)

In ELC307 there was evidence of very positive st-st interaction in Moodle forums, which can be regarded as a response to a different kind of 'feedback' as students respond to comments made by peers. Analysis of this interaction provided a useful indication of student sociability with regard to later group-work, which has developed into a separate project.

Journal (Moodle)

In ELC307 there was an attempt to use the Journal function to provide a private space for students to receive and respond to feedback. Students were invited to post language work for detailed feedback and correction. Technically the tool proved unfit for purpose as students found that they could only post once and subsequent work then corrupted or deleted the previous work. The teacher could not access each student's work separately; all work was presented as a continuous whole and the layout was confusing. The experience was so negative for both lecturer and students that the Journal was soon abandoned. However, students showed that they were motivated to reply to feedback but hindered from doing so by technical impediments.

An assessed language learning portfolio using PebblePad was introduced into the ELC101 module to address a number of key concerns that had been identified in previous years

Positive spinoffs

However, there were some successes related to the project:

- Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with feedback on ELC305 (the largest module involved)
- Positive 'Hawthorne effect' on tutors' provision of and engagement with feedback
- Module lead for ELC305, and lead researcher, became increasingly aware of the need for timely and deft opportunities for feedback to feed-forward into upcoming tasks, and further streamlined the design of tasks to facilitate that.

Poor engagement with peer learning/feedback

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Conclusions and Lessons learned

It seems that the inhibitors on students responding to feedback are not simply practical ones, but that they may be deeply embedded in a certain culture of learning and it will take more than a change of technology to alter them, challenges such as:-

- Students are used to being 'passive' receivers of feedback.
- Students need to understand the value of engaging in dialogic feedback – risk vs reward, marks or no marks?
- Students need to be given 'permission' to feed back.— They may see the tutor as the expert, not to be questioned. Opportunities to respond to feedback need to be made more explicit to students, to ensure that their failure to respond is not due to them simply not realizing they can. (To be done 2015-16 and results monitored.)
- Concerns about permanency of words online
- Lack of confidence in language skills making students reluctant to be more visible online
- Email is seen as the 'norm' in communication for tutors and is difficult to move communication to alternative online methods

As well as cultural issues with learning highlighted above there were certain technological challenges that arose that are being addressed for this year:

- There was ~~No~~ notification of a response to feedback in either of the technologies used
- Students can't edit their forum post, only tutors can change them in our configuration
- ~~The New Virtual Learning Environment system and new processes of feedforward~~
- Familiarity and comfort with social media, doesn't automatically translate to the ability to interact with learning technology

However, having said that, there are some practical aspects that can be addressed, to see if that allows a shift in practices and attitudes.

Feed-forward into tasks needs to be extremely timely. (CEP structure may facilitate this.) The use of structured feedback/feedforward templates for completion by both tutor and student may be of additional help in this area, too.

Strategies for raising awareness of feedback that emerged as a result of reflecting on the project were:

- Ask explicitly what students had amended in response to T feedback on action plans as part of submission (to raise their awareness and make monitoring easier)
- Set a peer review of a suitable piece of work (language learning background for Portfolio brief clarification or report introduction and context for WBL project ELC312 – formerly 307,) and award marks for participation, then intervene at the end of the time period with lecturer feedback.

Commented [EP3]: Sorry might be me, but what is T feedback

A paper: 'Laying the foundations for teamwork in an on-line forum.' by Ricky Lowes & Michelle Virgo, has been submitted to *Language Learning and Technology* and is pending review.

~~Other:~~

- CRA Researching and Evaluating Recording Achievement, *Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio* Plymouth, UK 16th - 17th April 2015 (Emma Purnell and Helen Bowstead)
- SOLSTICE eLearning Conference Edgehill University 4th and 5th June 2015 *Feed-forward: using DLE resources to scaffold guided autonomous learning*. (Ricky Lowes) [Why can't I just email you instead? The challenges of engaging students in online feedback within a Digital Learning Environment](#) ~~xxx~~ (Emma Purnell)
- Languages in the Globalised World, Leeds Beckett university, May 2015. *Engaging multicultural learners using an on-line environment* (Ricky Lowes)
- VC's Teaching and Learning Conference (Plymouth University) June 2015. *Exploring dialogic feedback opportunities in the digital learning environment* (Ricky Lowes, Emma Purnell and Helen Bowstead).

Commented [RL4]: Emma what was your talk called?