

A feedforward approach to teaching, learning and assessment in an undergraduate sports science module

Noon, M. & Eyre, E.

Author post-print (accepted) deposited by Coventry University's Repository

Original citation & hyperlink:

Noon, M & Eyre, E 2020, 'A feedforward approach to teaching, learning and assessment in an undergraduate sports science module', *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, vol. 27, 100257.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2020.100257>

DOI 10.1016/j.jhlste.2020.100257

ISSN 1473-8376

Publisher: Elsevier

NOTICE: this is the author's version of a work that was accepted for publication in *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*. Changes resulting from the publishing process, such as peer review, editing, corrections, structural formatting, and other quality control mechanisms may not be reflected in this document. Changes may have been made to this work since it was submitted for publication. A definitive version was subsequently published in *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 27, (2020)

DOI: 10.1016/j.jhlste.2020.100257

© 2020, Elsevier. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Copyright © and Moral Rights are retained by the author(s) and/ or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This item cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

This document is the author's post-print version, incorporating any revisions agreed during the peer-review process. Some differences between the published version and this version may remain and you are advised to consult the published version if you wish to cite from it.

Abstract

Embedding a formative element into assessment strategies may improve assessment literacy, feedback literacy and aid the transition to university for students with differing entry routes, facilitating improved student learning. A feedforward assessment design was implemented within a level four, first semester, module on a BSc Sport and Exercise Science degree. A mixed method design using a questionnaire and focus groups revealed both BTEC and A level students had positive perceptions of the feedforward assessment on improving academic study skills, setting expectations and easing the transition to university. Prior experiences (assessment type, independence, educator support and feedback preference) differed between BTEC and A Level students which seem influence their perceptions of the assessment. Based on the findings of this study, a feedforward approach to assessment seems to assist in supporting students in the transition to university.

Key Words: Formative assessment, feedback, University transition,

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a shift in the focus to a student-centred approach to teaching and learning, based on 'the student experience'. In this time period, the National Student Survey (NSS) data has indicated that students in the U.K. were least satisfied with 'assessment and feedback' in comparison with other aspects of the University experience (Price et al., 2011). In recent years, there is little evidence to suggest that this trend has abated, with 27% of students not satisfied with 'assessment and feedback' in 2018 and 2019 (National Students Survey, 2019). Hence, there seems to be a disconnect between students and educators expectations

of assessment and feedback (Mulliner and Tucker 2017), which may be attributed to several factors determining assessment and feedback literacy (Carless and Boud, 2018).

The factors determining assessment and feedback literacy may include a lack of appreciation for the purpose of feedback (O'Donovan 2017; Tai et al., 2017), challenges in managing affect (Esterhazy and Damsa, 2017), feedback preferences (Mulliner and Tucker 2017) and prior experiences, which in part may be influenced by traditional academic (A level) or non-traditional vocational (BTEC) entry route (Poulos and Mahony, 2008). In Sport and Exercise Sciences, given students study either a traditional academic or vocational pathway, issues are apparent in the transition to university where students are taught together in the same environment and assessed in a non-differentiated way. The use of formative feedforward assessments, in which students submit an assessment, receive feedback and act upon it (Carless and Boud, 2018) may address these aforementioned issues. The process of engaging with the feedback and dialogue with educators aims to develop self-efficacy and students study and evaluative skills which are important to maximising subsequent learning (Tai et al., 2017). However, in practice a limited number of assessments currently apply a feedforward concept (Mulliner and Tucker 2017).

Given students differing prior experiences and entry route, the disconnect between students and educators in assessment and feedback literacy and the potential of formative assessment to engage students, enhance learning and ease the transition to university, this mixed methods case study set out to explore student perceptions of

a formative feedforward approach to assessment in a level four, first year, first semester module on a BSc Sports and Exercise Science degree.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Assessment literacy

Assessment literacy is an important aspect of the learning process. This ability to understand the requirements, the expected standard and the purpose of assessment, in addition to the ability to appraise their own work to develop self-regulated learners is key to facilitating progressive on-going student learning (Smith et al., 2013). Yet, students, in particular, first year students, may lack assessment literacy, failing to understand what the assessment requires of them and the expected standard (Francis, 2008). Consequently, the feedback process is a critical to allow students to improve their work and scaffold their continual learning (Carless and Boud, 2018). However, it seems limited opportunities of this exist in the current university curriculum (Dawson et al., 2019)

2.2 Feedback

Feedback is the process in which students receive information from a range of sources (self, educators, peers, friends, family) and may use this information to improve their understanding (Carless and Boud 2018). The success of this process is dependent upon the student's awareness, perception, disposition and capacity to understand the information and subsequently utilise this to facilitate learning (Carless and Boud 2018; Dawson et., 2019). The complexity of this process in developing effective student-centred feedback and enhancing feedback literacy is highlighted by multifactorial influences which include but may not be limited to appreciation of feedback, making

judgement, managing affect and taking action (Malloy et al., 2019, O'Donovan 2017, Forsythe and Johnson, 2017; Carless and Boud, 2018).

Students perception and appreciation of the purpose of feedback is important, with feedback often providing a dual purpose in determining student performance and attempting to provide feedback to support student learning (Newton, 2007; Price et al., 2011). This dichotomy in purpose might contribute to the challenges which have been associated with poor assessment literacy and student satisfaction. These challenges include students focusing on the grade not the feedback (Carless, 2006), students expecting the answers, with a focus on the teacher 'telling' the student (O'Donovan, 2017), absolving the student from responsibility and inhibiting the active learning process students require to make judgement, develop self-evaluation skills and critical thinking. However, the lack of assessment literacy cannot be attributed solely to the student. Feedback is a two way process and educators must consider that often students do not understand feedback (Carless, 2006; Mulliner and Tucker, 2017) and receive feedback which fails to specifically identify how to improve (Bailey and Garner, 2010). Such feedback is paramount to allow students to develop an understanding of the quality of their work, enhancing their ability to self-evaluate (Tai et al., 2017). Given these challenges, the feedback process can be an emotive process, manifesting defensive responses, with self-efficacy, motivation and empathy all influencing the impact of the feedback (Pitt et al., 2017). Hence, the difficulty in getting students to accept and take on new perspectives (Forsythe and Johnson 2017) may be determined in part by the quality of the relationship between educator and student (Esterhazy and Damsa, 2017).

2.3 Feedforward assessments

The aforementioned factors, appreciating feedback, making judgement and managing affect, play an important role in determining engagement with the feedback and the subsequent use of feedback to inform future work. However, often module and assessment design fail to scaffold learning, with assessment regarded as the end point of learning which does not promote proactive engagement with feedback and the development of self-evaluation skills (Boud and Molloy, 2012; Orsmond et al., 2013). The proposed benefit of formative and feedforward assessment, in which students receive feedback on an assessment submission and then work with the feedback in a subsequent assessment, is that it facilitates deeper learning (Tan, 2013). The process creates active engagement in the learning process and develops cognitive skills such as self-regulation, goal setting and reflection which facilitates improved attainment and creates independent learners (Clark, 2012). Furthermore, students are more likely to engage in dialogue with their educators, reflect on and assess their performance and actively engage and work with the feedback to improve their work. This may assist in scaffolding the learning process and support a constructivist approach to learning (Boud and Molloy, 2012; Orsmond et al., 2013).

Although the concept of feedforward assessment has been promoted within research in recent years (Boud and Malloy 2012; Carless and Boud, 2018), very few educators seem to focus on students evaluative judgement and self-evaluation skills with a paucity of students highlighting that feedforward assessment is important to effective feedback (Dawson et al., 2019). Formative assessments have shown to improve student performance, motivation, self-efficacy and develop assessment literacy (Cauley and McMillan 2010; Stull et al., 2011), yet educators consider putting such

pedagogical approaches into practice challenging (Norton et al., 2019). The disparity between student and educator expectations is highlighted by Mulliner and Tucker (2017) who reported students perceived feedback negatively, in that the feedback lacked clarity, detail and was less useful than the educators perceived the feedback to be. In addition, students identified a preference for 1-1 verbal feedback whereas educators identified a preference for individual written feedback, highlighting students may expect a more personal relationship, may not understand the feedback and expect further clarity and guidance.

2.4 University transition

The aforementioned differences in expectation may be exacerbated in the transition from school to university (Poulos and Mahony, 2008) by the mismatch between tutors and students' concepts of goals, assessment criteria and standards which may be driven by their lived experiences. In order for students to achieve their learning goals they need to understand them, take ownership of them and assess progress (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Carress and Boud 2018). Students entering higher education have traditionally been viewed as independent learners (Leathwood, 2006). This is synonymous with large student to staff ratio, large tutorial sizes, fewer interactive teaching approaches and educator student interactions (Boud and Molloy, 2012) in comparison to their prior educational experiences. In addition, students' expectations may differ considerably following the transition from school to university based on their own prior experiences (Briggs et al., 2012). These prior experiences could be more diverse amongst student's starting at post 1992 U.K. higher education following the agenda to widen participation in students with non-traditional backgrounds / entry qualifications (Jones and Thomas, 2005).

In the U.K., students transitioning from further education into higher education come from diverse educational experiences. Traditional A level courses are viewed as academic, whereas BTEC courses are designed with a vocational skill-based focus (Gill, 2017). It has been suggested that students from traditional backgrounds have developed a skill set more suited to the academic higher education environment (Hatt and Baxter, 2003). In contrast, sports and exercise students from non-traditional backgrounds transitioning to university have reported anxiety, apprehension and a lack of confidence with academic skills such as writing styles, sourcing information and proof reading (Gill, 2017). Although, in recent years higher education institutions have acknowledged the need to embed more vocational and industry relevant assessments (Flores et al., 2015), developing academic skills remains a critical aspect of student learning. A feedforward process which gives all students the opportunity to engage with and build relationships with their educators may help ease the transition into higher education reducing the students worry and apprehension associated with their uncertainty of the standard of academic skills required in higher education (Gill, 2017; Gill, 2019)

In summary, employing a feedforward approach to teaching and learning, which requires students to engage with the feedback and promotes face to face dialogue between students and educators, may assist in bridging the disconnect between students and educators regarding assessment and feedback literacy (Carless and Boud 2018; Clark, 2012; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). It seems in current practice, very few assessment approaches implemented, apply this feedforward concept, with the focus on a summative assessment (Mulliner and Tucker 2017).

Given the differing entry routes to undergraduate study in Sport and Exercise Sciences and the potential disconnect identified across students and between students and educators with regard to feedback literacy, understanding students' experiences of formative assessment following the transition to university will assist in informing our understanding of the utility of such assessments in practice for both entry routes. Therefore, this study aims to explore student perceptions of a formative feedforward approach to assessment in a level 4, first year, first semester module on a BSc Sports and Exercise Science degree.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Module content and assessment

A feedforward assessment was embedded into a level four 20 credit module on a BSc Sport and Exercise Science degree. The module was entitled 'Exploring Sport and Exercise Science' and was studied in the first semester of their 1st year degree. The module lasted 11 weeks in duration and comprised of 200 learning hours of which 50 were taught through face to face lectures, workshops and tutorials.

The learning objectives of the module were to: (1). Demonstrate an understanding of the key sub-disciplines that comprise the Sport and Exercise Sciences (2). Employ evidence-based reasoning to examine practical and theoretical issues associated with the study of sport and exercise. (3) Develop knowledge and understanding of mono and interdisciplinary approaches within sport and exercise. (4) Demonstrate a theoretically and research-informed perspective upon practical issues experienced

within sport and exercise settings. (5) Develop reflective practice skills related to professional and academic development.

3.2. Development of feedforward assessment (design)

The assessment was designed in four stages identified in Figure. 1.

1. Students selected one of five case studies and produced a 1500 word report which identified the needs of the sport, the strengths and weaknesses of the individual and the importance of interdisciplinary teams to address learning outcomes 1-4.
2. Following the hand in of the assignment each student was given the following feedback:
 - a. One strength and one area for improvement per section (as identified by the areas in step 1) in written form by the personal tutor.
 - b. 3-5 comments in text per section in written form by the personal tutor.
 - c. The opportunity to meet with their personal tutor to discuss the feedback further verbally.
3. Students then resubmitted their 1500 word report with a 500 word reflection on what happened, why and how they had used the feedback to improve their work.
4. Final grade was awarded with feedback (as outlined in step 2) on the case study and reflection.

Figure 1 near here

3.3. Participants

Following informed consent and institutional ethics, 87 students of the 202 students enrolled on the first year undergraduate sports science degree studying at a post 1992 institute completed a questionnaire following the completion of a first semester module 'Exploring Sport and Exercise Science'. Eleven participated in focus group interviews (Male = 4 , Female = 7), with 6 studying traditional and 5 studying non-traditional backgrounds over two cohorts i.e. academic year 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

3.4. Design

A mixed method design using a parallel approach was employed. A mixed method design is whereby the 'investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches' (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). A parallel approach enables data to be collected separately and findings compared at the interpretation stage (Östlund et al., 2011). The findings were compared using triangulation, with the outcome focused on a complementary approach. Triangulation enables the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, enabling better understanding of the links between theory and empirical findings (Östlund et al., 2011). A detailed overview of the purpose of these approaches, the priority and importance of the findings produced by each method and how that informs the conclusions is provided in Figure 2, as identified in the work of Creswell and Plano Clarke, (2007). Purposive sampling was used to generate a sample that were the most informed to address the research question e.g. those who had been exposed to the assessment and feedback type.

3.5 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to students in semester two, 4-6 weeks following the completion of the module. Students completed the questionnaire, in a lecture theatre, in a paper and pen format. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire alone and did not confer with other students. The questionnaire asked students to rate, on a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, the following six questions to gain students' experiences of the feedforward assessment: 1) Did the feedback improve your understanding of what was required for the assessment? 2) Did the feedback enable you to improve your work? 3) Did you feel the feedforward assessment improved your learning? 4) Did the feedforward assessment helped your transition from school/college? 5) Did you feel the feedforward assessment improved your grade? 6) Did you like this type of assessment? These items were assessed based on factors identified in the literature review associated with feedforward (Orsmond et al. 2013), feedback (Carless and Boud, 2018) and transition to university (Gill, 2019).

3.5.1. Questionnaire analysis

A 2x2 independent Chi Squared analysis was used to compare the frequency of responses (strongly agree or agree, yes = 1 vs. neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, no=2) by entry group (A-level =1 and BTEC students =2) in their level of agreement to each of the 6 questions. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 20.

3.6. Focus group discussion

Semi-structured focus groups discussions were conducted with students of group sizes ranging between 4-8 based on the suggestion by King and Horrocks (2010). A combination of heterogeneous (i.e. prior education experience vocational versus

traditional) and homogenous focus groups (i.e. similar prior education qualifications) were conducted to stimulate interactive discussions based on similarities and differences. This approach was used in that it would provide a more naturalistic data collection method, would allow responders to build upon the responses of other group members and that the free flow of conversation would enable true experiences to be heard (Wilkinson, 2004). All interviews were conducted by the author, in a small meeting room at the university, which is a place of both convenience and familiarity to the students. Three main topics of questioning were employed i.e. prior experiences, university expectations and university experience based on prior literature (Carless and Boud, 2018; Gill, 2019; Orsmond et al. 2013). Questions were open ended and probing questions were employed where appropriate to explore responses in greater depth. Individual views and responses were tested within the focus group to avoid strongly held views by one person carrying a disproportionate weighting. Interviews were digitally recorded using a dictaphone (Olympus VN-750) and took on average 45 minutes.

3.6.1. Analysis of focus group discussion

The interviews were anonymised and transcribed verbatim by the author and verified by the facilitator. Thematic analysis was employed to the transcripts following the guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a widely used mechanism to identify, analyse and explore patterns in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). On completion of quantitative and qualitative data analysis, triangulation was then used to complement study findings as outlined in figure 2.

4.0. Results and Discussion

4.1 All students views of assessment and feedback type and factors influencing them

In addressing proposition 1 (Figure 3), the implementation of the feedforward assessment and feedback type resulted in positive student perceptions (59% to 75% strongly agreeing/agreeing across all six questions, Figure 4). However, a lower percentage of all students strongly agreed/agreed that the assessment / feedback type aided their transition from school/college (59%) and improved their grade (61%). Further qualitative insight (Proposition 2, Figure 3) identified that regardless of prior experiences in assessment style and feedback, students perceived the feedforward assessment positively. Where students have previously been exposed to feedforward, this feedforward assessment type/feedback style facilitates a familiar assessment method they deem supportive to their learning. For students more familiar with summative assessment (i.e. exam based formats), feedforward enhanced their experience, affording them the opportunity to improve their grade by acting upon detailed feedback which does not simply focus on the grade or fixed answers which identify the correct and incorrect responses. This is of interest, as the majority of the literature has focused on the importance of these for non-traditional backgrounds (Gill, 2017; Gill, 2019) but our work identifies that this assessment and feedback type is also beneficial to students from traditional backgrounds, supporting their learning.

Regardless of the students' entry route, the development of study skills needed for university was an area by which the assessment enabled improvement. All students identified common skills at university level that they needed to improve on e.g. scientific writing, paraphrasing, plagiarism and referencing.

A student stated:

“it really helped me a lot to understand my mistakes and what I need to do because I didn't know academic writing and everything that I had some things wrong in my mind about the plagiarism and everything My problem mostly on the on the first assessment... paraphrasing was my problem’

A student stated:

‘the feedback helped me improve my grade because I could see what I was missing and the style of the writing as well .. I think I was writing more in layman's terms rather than like scientific style writing and so that really actually helped and stuff you know with like formatting the graphs and the lay out of the work as well because I was doing a few bits wrong ... but I know how to do that now’

Both A level and BTEC students identified that the feedforward assessment outlined the standard required at university, thus setting expectations and easing the transition to university study, which was something the students had been apprehensive about.

A student stated:

“having a module like 106 eased us all into it’ and ‘it takes so much pressure off you knowing that they have read it and it is at a standard where it is ok, so it is kind of like you can make the changes, rectify referencing and send it off whereas the first one we were just blind into it, we had no idea what the level of standard of work that we would have been expected of, was required’

Our current findings, in that students feel apprehensive with regard to their academic study skills and are uncertain of the expected academic standard following the transition to university are supportive of prior findings (Gill, 2017). Anxiety, attention, time management, selecting main ideas, assessment strategies have been identified as key areas which students performing poorly may struggle with (Proctor et al., 2006; Gill, 2019). Our work identifies that the development of study skills is a need for students but that an assessment designed in such a way helps to develop these skills and is linked to improved perceptions of achievement. This further supports the concept that first year students lack assessment literacy, failing to understand what is expected of them (Francis, 2008). Our work highlights that a feedforward approach may alleviate these concerns by improving the understanding of assessment literacy and developing study skills through feedback, thus helping bridge the gap between the standard and academic skills required at university in comparison to school and college. The impact of this on retention is an area worth further consideration.

4.2 A level versus BTEC student views of assessment type and feedback and factors influencing them.

When the findings are considered by prior entry route (i.e. A level or BTEC students), Chi square analysis revealed no significant interaction between frequency of responses between entry routes ($t=0.33-0.98$, $P=0.32-0.57$, Figure 5 and Figure 6). However, in comparison to A level students, a lower proportion of BTEC students strongly agree/agree that the feedforward assessment helped their transition from school/college and that they felt it improved their grade. For A level students in comparison to BTEC students, a lower proportion strongly agreed/agreed that they liked the assessment, and that it enabled them to improve their work.

Qualitative findings identify that experiences and perceptions of assessment type and feedback are different based on expectations and prior experiences that may be determined by entry route (Figure 3). In explaining the above results, differences in entry route experiences exist in prior assessment type employed (e.g. coursework-based assessments that could be improved upon and presentations) and teacher support by entry route to higher education. For BTEC students, a common theme emerged as prior experience of feedforward assessment and having unlimited teacher support. This may have contributed to their positive views towards the assessment but also their lower rating of the assessment helping their transition from school/college and lower feeling that it improved their grade. In comparison to their experiences at university, BTEC students now viewed the support they had prior to be spoon fed, answer driven, unlimited, and delivered in many mediums (i.e. verbal and written) and detail specific. One BTEC student shared

'it would be really good feedback and really detailed from my teachers but it would be like you have done this wrong so here is the answer to make it right. It was never you go away and find so and so and do this. It was kind of really spoon fed'

Another BTEC student remarked

'you could ask as many questions as you can... you get feedback, you work on it and then you have further questions and then you go back and ask again'.

In contrast, A level students prior experiences of assessment type and teacher support were exam based assessments with feedback based on the grade or whether the answers were right or wrong. Thus, feedback was summative (delivered as an end

grade) or solution focused (providing direction to find the answer). Teacher support was thus rarely mentioned for A level students and when it was, the support was based on the teacher developing independent skills to enable the students to find the answer for themselves. An A-Level student shared

'They either said that was wrong and left it or they said this that was wrong and they gave you every single step to correct it'

These different prior experiences of support and feedback potentially explain why higher proportions of A level students felt the feedforward assessment improved their understanding of what was required, improved their learning grade and helped their transition to university. Consequently, the BTEC students may not have viewed the assessment as favourably given their experiences of unlimited support, unlimited assessment attempts and dependency on answer driven feedback. In contrast, A level students had already developed independent academic skills and thus viewed the detailed feedback and the opportunity to action this as favourable.

Further related to dependency and interdependency was prior experiences of assessment by entry route linked to the number of attempts students were afforded with input from the teacher. For A level students, practice exams were given beforehand which were marked by the students themselves or assessed. However, the exam attempt was final and there was no chance for the grade to be changed. For BTEC students, they had multiple chances to improve their grade based on the specific feedback.

BTEC students reported

'i was a bit reliant on the help' and 'i think maybe I should have done more independent learning before I came to uni.like what you guys the assessments was good.....that sort of style were you get feedback on your work go away and improve'

A level student stated

'helped us figure it out for ourselves, what was wrong and how to figure it out rather than just being told this is how you fix it, it was this is how you could maybe fix it, so just building step on, allowing us to reflect on our own work rather than just being told yes or no' .

Hence, discrepancies in how students of different entry routes perceive the assessment and feedback type may be further explained by A level students expectations of greater independence. This was not a view held by BTEC students.

An A level student stated

'just general reputation like in feedback terms I thought it would be a lot less. Like thought it was very very independent...'

However, the expectations of university requiring more independence was not a theme for BTEC students who believed the experience would be the same as college. A BTEC Student stated

'... even though it was told to me that it is independent, I still thought maybe it would be the same as college but it wasn't to be fair'

When undertaking BTEC assessments, students are allowed to draft, redraft and keep redrafting assignments, receiving feedback on strengths, weakness and what needs

to be done to get the grade (Torrance, 2007). They can also retake modular tests to improve grades (Torrance, 2007). While the feedforward assessment facilitated the opportunity to act upon the feedback, it was a single opportunity without unlimited and answer driven teacher support. Given the prior themes related to dependency, the opportunity to keep editing the assessment based on unlimited answer focused feedback, provided by the educator, may explain lower ratings of how the feedforward assessment helped their transition to university and influenced their grade for BTEC students. However, prior work has identified the importance of self-regulated learning skills (Carless and Boud, 2018), the need for independence and taking an active part in learning for attainment (Smith et al., 2013). Therefore, the current pathway may need to be reviewed to support learners develop such independent skills.

Differing perceptions were also found by entry route in mode of feedback. BTEC students wanted additional feedback with their written feedback i.e. to verbally discuss it with the tutor. A level students only needed this if they did not understand the feedback. This appeared to be related to prior experiences.

A BTEC student stated

'it was more useful that we could actually go and see someone and talk through your feedback. Especially your first assignment, just getting a load of words on Turnitin doesn't have the same effect'

An A Level student stated

'If I disagreed with the point in feedback I would go and talk to someone about it. But if I read something and yeah I can see what they are saying, if they have said this is wrong or you need a reference after this and I look at it and think yeah I would expect a reference to be after that then I wouldn't go and question it'

BTEC students wanted their feedback to include strengths whereas A level only identified that they need to know what's right or wrong.

A BTEC student stated:

'I like how you write things how I had done well but then also things that needed improvement rather than just saying oh this is wrong this is wrong, this is wrong It kind of drops your confidence if you see that'

These findings are in line with prior work that has shown that students who do not have academic background need more contact time with educators to improve their academic skills and facilitate learning (Kerridge and Matthews, 1998). This may be linked to prior experiences and support as outlined above

5.0 Limitations

A limitation to the present study was the potential bias in participant recruitment for the focus groups. It is challenging to get students less invested in their learning to participate in sharing their perceptions and experiences (Dawson et al. 2019), hence the findings of the study may not reflect the diversity of students' views. Secondly, we did not explore the role of gender which may be important given the higher ratio of males to females that undertake Sports Science degrees and the influence of gender on study skills and learning strategies (Fazal et al., 2012).

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the case study identified both BTEC and A level students generally perceived the feedforward assessment positively. Some differences in feedback

preferences were observed in BTEC and A level students which seem to be linked to prior experiences. Based on the findings of this study, a feedforward approach to assessment seems to assist in supporting students in developing study skills and easing the transition to university regardless of entry route.

Funding: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- Bailey, R., & Garner, M. (2010). Is the feedback in higher education assessment worth the paper it is written on? Teachers' reflections on their practices. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(2), 187-198. doi:10.1080/13562511003620019
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 7-74. doi:10.1080/0969595980050102
- Boud, D., & Molloy, E. (2012). Rethinking models of feedback for learning: The challenge of design. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38, 1-15. doi:10.1080/02602938.2012.691462
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101, DOI: [10.1191/1478088706qp063oa](https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa)
- Briggs, A. R. J., Clark, J., & Hall, I. (2012). Building bridges: understanding student transition to university. *Quality in Higher Education*, 18(1), 3-21. doi:10.1080/13538322.2011.614468
- Carless, D. (2006). Differing Perceptions in the Feedback Process. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31, 219-233. doi:10.1080/03075070600572132
- Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315-1325, DOI: [10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354)
- Cauley, K.M., & McMillan, J.H. (2010). Formative Assessment Techniques to Support Student Motivation and Achievement. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 83(1), 1-6, DOI: [10.1080/00098650903267784](https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650903267784)
- Clark, I. (2012). Formative Assessment: Assessment Is for Self-regulated Learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, 24. doi:10.1007/s10648-011-9191-6
- Creswell, J. W., & Tashakkori, A. (2007). Developing publishable mixed methods manuscripts. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1, 107-111.
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano-Clark, V.L. (2007). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. 3rd edition. Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Dawson, P., Henderson, M., Mahoney, P., Phillips, M., Ryan, T., Boud, D., & Molloy, E. (2019). What makes for effective feedback: staff and student perspectives

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 44(1), 25-36, DOI:
10.1080/02602938.2018.1467877

- Erzberger, C., & Kelle, U. (2003). Making inferences in mixed methods: The rules of integration. In: Tashakkori, A., Teddlie, C. (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioural Research*. Sage, ThousandOaks, pp. 457–488.
- Esterhazy, R., and Damsa, C. (2017). Unpacking the Feedback Process: An Analysis of Undergraduate Students' Interactional Meaning-Making of Feedback Comments. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44 (2), 260–274, doi:10.1080/03075079.2017.1359249.
- Fazal, S., Hussain, S., & Majoka, M.I. (2012). The role of study skills in academic achievement of students: A closer focus on gender. *Pakistani Journal of Psychological research*, 27(1), 37-51.
- Flores, M. A., Veiga-Simão, A. M., Barros, A., & Pereira, D., (2015). Perceptions of effectiveness, fairness and feedback of assessment methods: A study in higher education. *Studies in higher education*, 40(9), 1523-1534.
- Forsythe, A., & Johnson, S. (2017). Thanks, but no-thanks for the feedback, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(6), 850-859, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2016.1202190.
- Francis, R. A. (2008). An investigation into the receptivity of undergraduate students to assessment empowerment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(5), 547-557.
- Gill, A. (2017). The transitional experiences of sport and exercise students from further to higher education. *Innovative Practice in Higher Education*, 3(1), 22-47.
- Gill, A. (2019). Student Transition into Higher Education: Exploring BTEC Sport and Exercise Students Forthcoming Transition to Higher Education Taught within a Further Education Setting. *Innovative Practice in Higher Education*, 3(3), 90-112.
- Gill, A., (2017). The transitional experiences of sport and exercise students from further to higher education. *Innovative Practice in Higher Education*, 3(1), 2247.
- Hatt, S., & Baxter, A., (2003). From FE to HE: Studies in transition: A comparison of students entering higher education with academic and vocational qualifications. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 5(2), 18-29.
- Jones, R., & Thomas, L. (2005). The 2003 UK Government Higher Education White Paper: a critical assessment of its implications for the access and widening participation agenda. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(5), 615-630. doi:10.1080/02680930500222477
- Kerridge, J.R., & Brian P. Mathews (1998) Student Rating of Courses in HE: further challenges and opportunities, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 23:1, 71-82, DOI: 10.1080/0260293980230106
- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. Sage, London.
- Leathwood, C. (2006). Gender, equity and the discourse of the independent learner in higher education. *Higher Education*, 52, 611-633. doi:10.1007/s10734-005-2414-3

- Molloy, E., Boud, D., & Henderson, M. (2019): Developing a learning-centred framework for feedback literacy, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2019.1667955.
- Mulliner, E., & Tucker, M. (2017). Feedback on Feedback Practice: Perceptions of Students and Academics. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42 (2), 266–288, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2015.1103365
- Newton, P. E. (2007). Clarifying the purposes of educational assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 14(2), 149-170. doi:10.1080/09695940701478321
- Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199-218. doi:10.1080/03075070600572090
- Norton, L., Floyd, S., & Norton, B. (2019). Lecturers' views of assessment design, marking and feedback in higher education: a case for professionalisation? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44(8), 1209-1221, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2019.1592110.
- O'Donovan, B. (2017). How Student Beliefs about Knowledge and Knowing Influence Their Satisfaction with Assessment and Feedback. *Higher Education*, 74, 617–633.
- Orsmond, P., Maw, S. J., Park, J. R., Gomez, S., & Crook, A. C. (2013). Moving feedback forward: theory to practice. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(2), 240-252. doi:10.1080/02602938.2011.625472
- Östlund, U., Kidd, L., Wengstrom, Y., & Rowa-Dewar, N. (2011). Combining qualitative and quantitative research within mixed method research designs: A methodological review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 48, 369-383.
- Pitt, E., & Norton, L. (2017). 'Now That's the Feedback I Want!' Students' Reactions to Feedback on Graded Work and What They Do with It. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(4), 499–516.
- Poulos, A., & Mahony, M. J. (2008). Effectiveness of feedback: the students' perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(2), 143-154. doi:10.1080/02602930601127869
- Price, M., Carroll, J., O'Donovan, B., & Rust, C. (2011). If I was going there I wouldn't start from here: a critical commentary on current assessment practice. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(4), 479-492. doi:10.1080/02602930903512883
- Proctor, B.E., Prevatt, F.F., Adams, K.S.S., Reaser, A., & Petscher, Y. (2006). Study Skills Profiles of Normal-Achieving and Academically-Struggling College Students. *Journal of College Student Development* 47(1), 37-51. doi:10.1353/csd.2006.0011.
- Saunders, M. (2000). Beginning an Evaluation with RUFDATA: Theorizing a Practical Approach to Evaluation planning, *Evaluation*, 6 (1), 7-10.
- Smith, C. D., Worsfold, K., Davies, L., Fisher, R., & McPhail, R. (2013). Assessment Literacy and Student Learning: The Case for Explicitly Developing Students. *Assessment Literacy*. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(1), 44–60, doi:10.1080/02602938.2011.598636.
- Stull, J.C., Varnum, S.J., Ducette, J., Schiller, J., & Bernecki, M. (2011). The many faces of formative assessment. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 23 (1), 30-39.

- Tai, J., Ajjawi, R., Boud, D., Dawson, P., & Panadero, E. (2017). Developing Evaluative Judgement: Enabling Students to Make Decisions about the Quality of Work. *Higher Education* 76(3), 467–481, doi:10.1007/s10734-017-0220-3.
- Tan, K. (2013). A Framework for Assessment for Learning: Implications for Feedback Practices within and beyond the Gap. *ISRN Education*,. doi:10.1155/2013/640609
- Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J.W. (2007). Editorial, the new era of mixed methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1 (1), 3-7.
- The National Student Survey - NSS, (2018) Office for students. Available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/> (accessed 7 August 2019).
- Torrance, H. (2007) Assessment as learning? How the use of explicit learning objectives, assessment criteria and feedback in post-secondary education and training can come to dominate learning. *Assessment in Education*, 14(3), 281-294, DOI: 10.1080/09695940701591867
- Wilkinson, S. (2004). Focus group research. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method, and practice* (pp. 177–199). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.