Rethinking and Redesigning Feedback

DAI HOUNSELL

interacting with students · refining traditional feedback · plugging gaps in feedback · feedback-rich assignments · new ways of giving feedback · reshaping curricula and assessment · briefing and training of students · involving students in feedback · How can FEEDBACK be improved?

www.enhancingfeedback.ed.ac.uk

***Learning without feedback
is 'blind archery'***

WHY FEEDBACK MATTERS

Learning without feedback
is 'blind archery'

Feedback is indispensable to high-quality learning, teaching and assessment,

At its most effective, it can enable all students to achieve their best

Introduction and Overview

- ***Preamble*** *~ across-the-disciplines focus*

- **The trouble with feedback**

- **Rethinking feedback**

- **Pathways to enhancing feedback**

  - ➢ *higher-impact comments*

  - ➢ *better student engagement*

  - ➢ *fuller use of comments*

  - ➢ *feedback-rich course design*

THE TROUBLE WITH FEEDBACK

National Student Survey

Assessment and feedback

5. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance ☐ ☐

6. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair ☐ ☐

7. Feedback on my work has been prompt ☐ ☐

8. I have received detailed comments on my work ☐ ☐

9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand ☐ ☐

NSS 2010 Results – All Universities
assessment & feedback — **% agree**
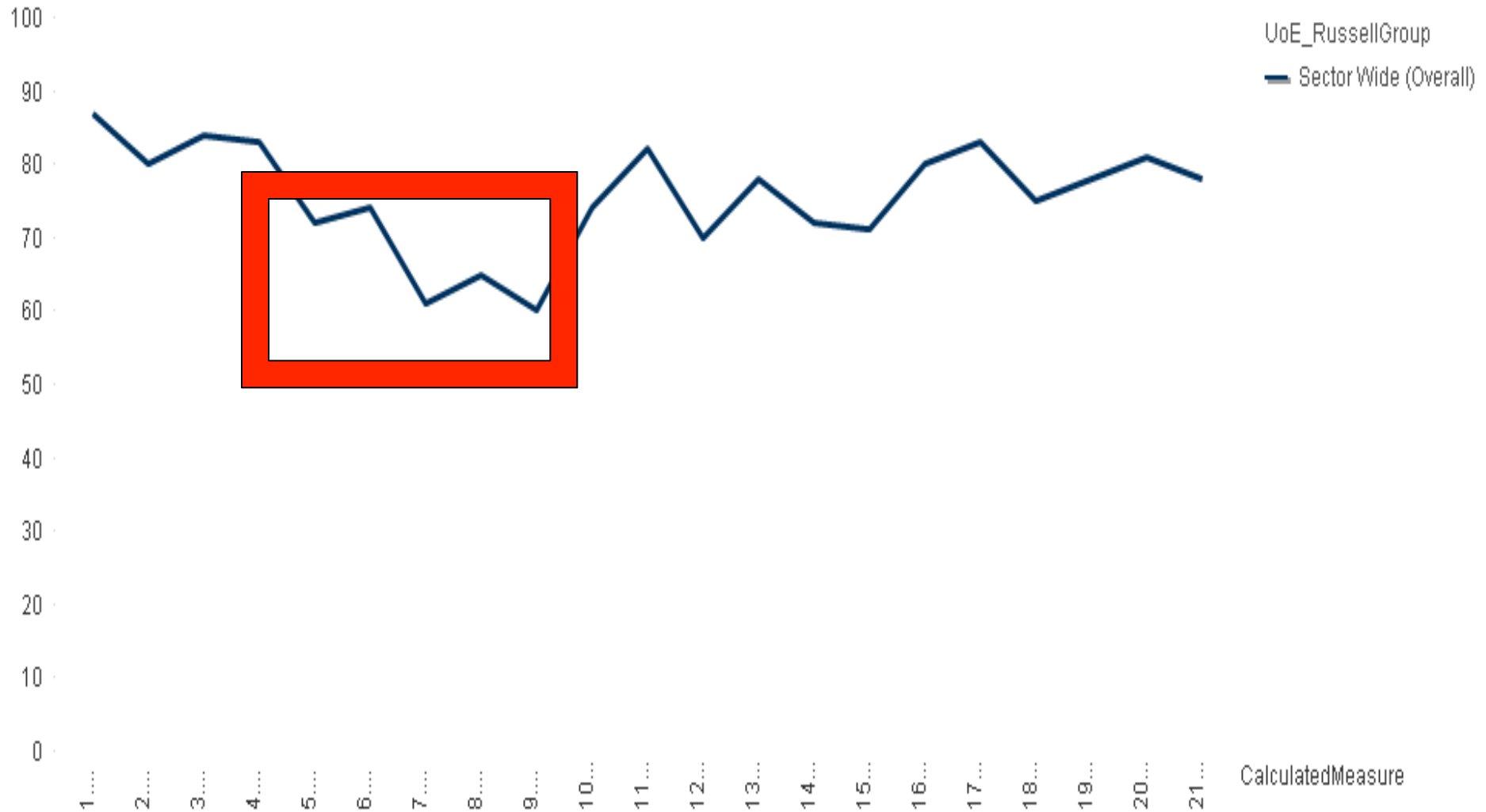
NSS 2010 Results – All Universities
assessment & feedback — **% agree**
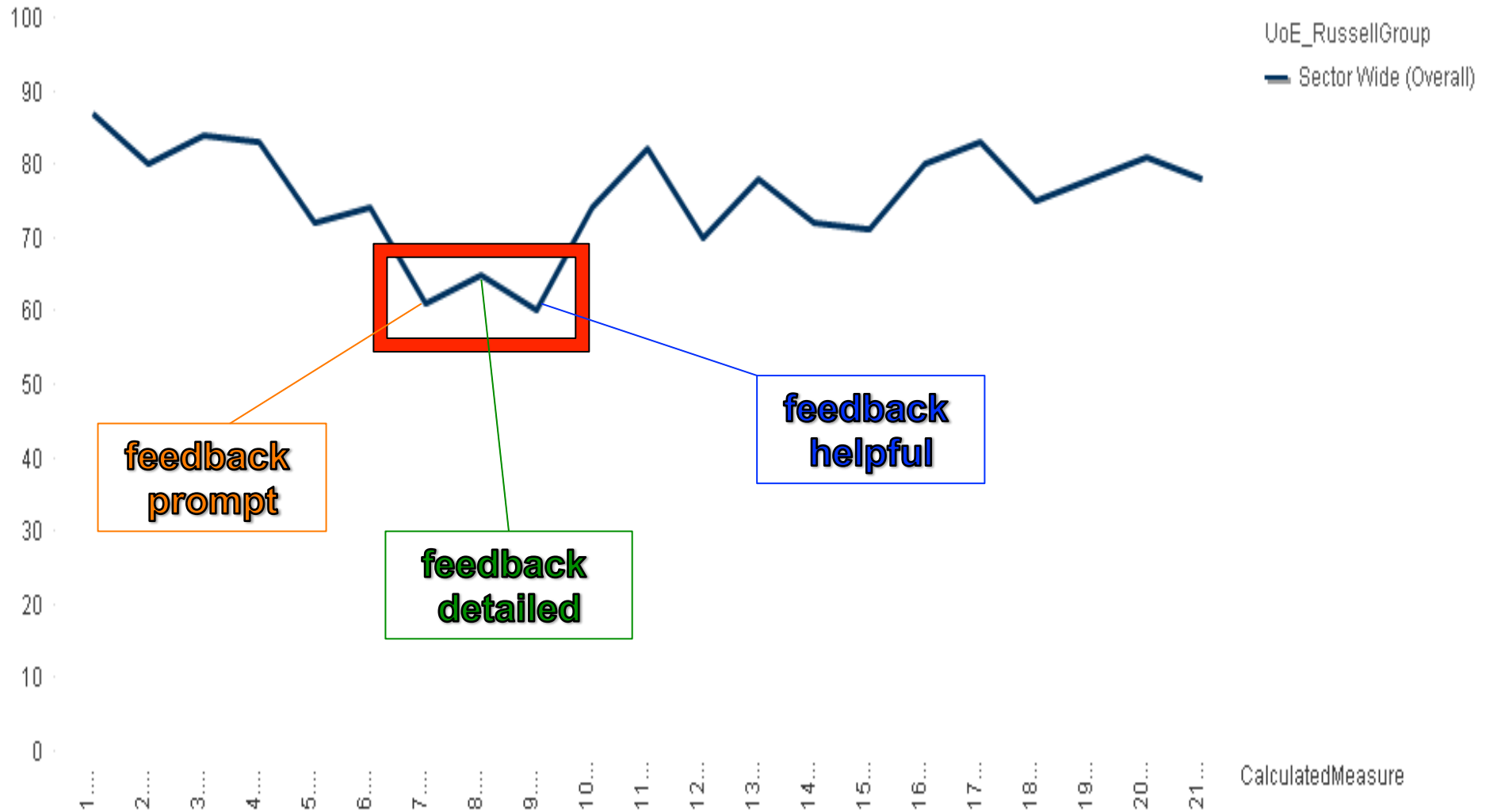
The evidence spans subjects, institutions, national systems of higher education

- *further evidence from the UK*

  e.g. QAA *Learning from Subject Review* (2006); Crook et al. (2006); Maclellan, (2001); Hounsell (2003); Hounsell et al. (2005); Price et al. (2010); Beaumont et al. (2011)

- *evidence from Australia and Hong Kong*

  e.g. Krause et al. (2005) and Orrell (2006); Carless (2006, 2010)

NSS 2010 Results – All Universities
assessment & feedback — **% agree**
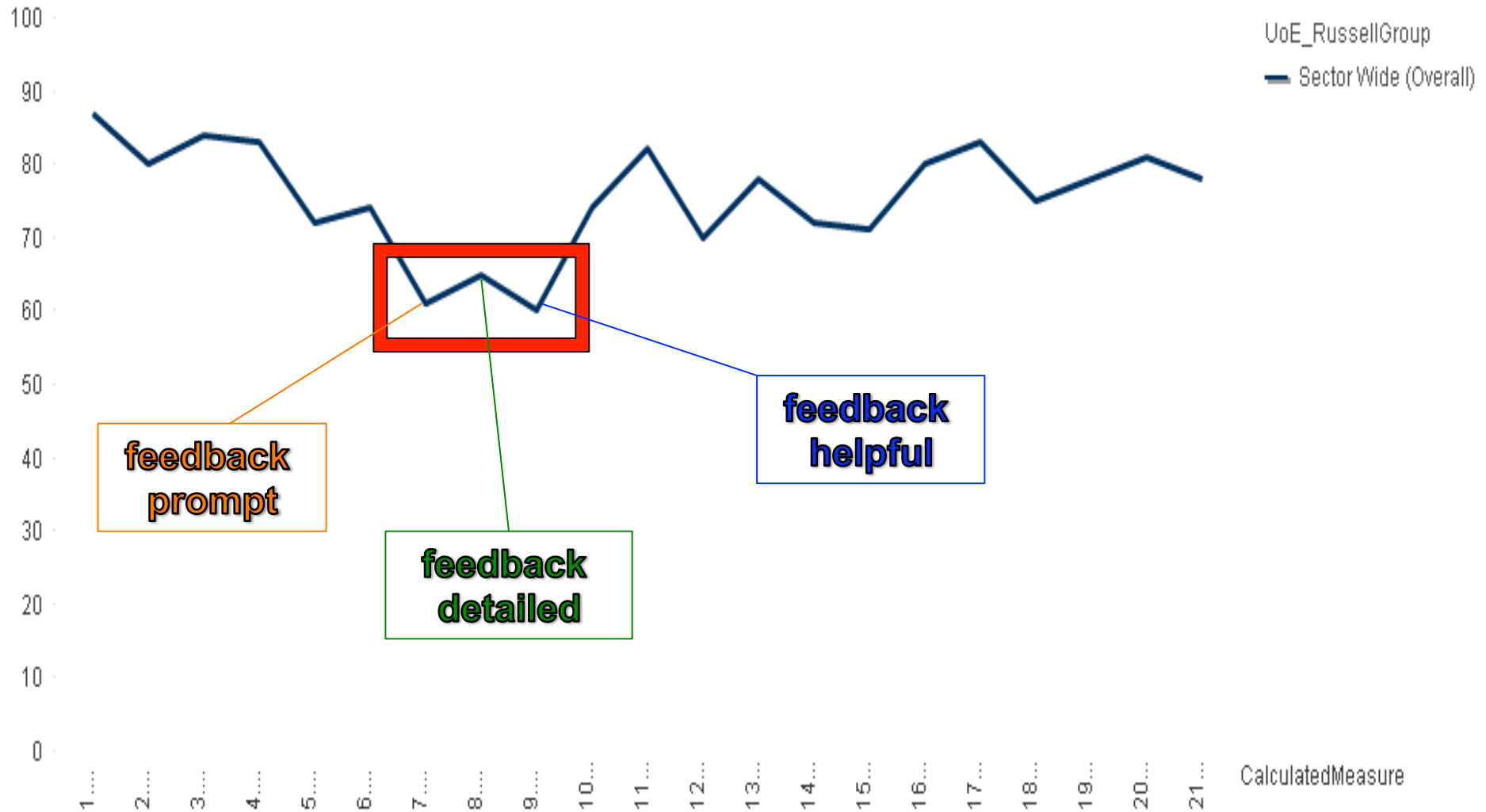
Feedback Quartiles By Subject Area – NSS, 2009/10
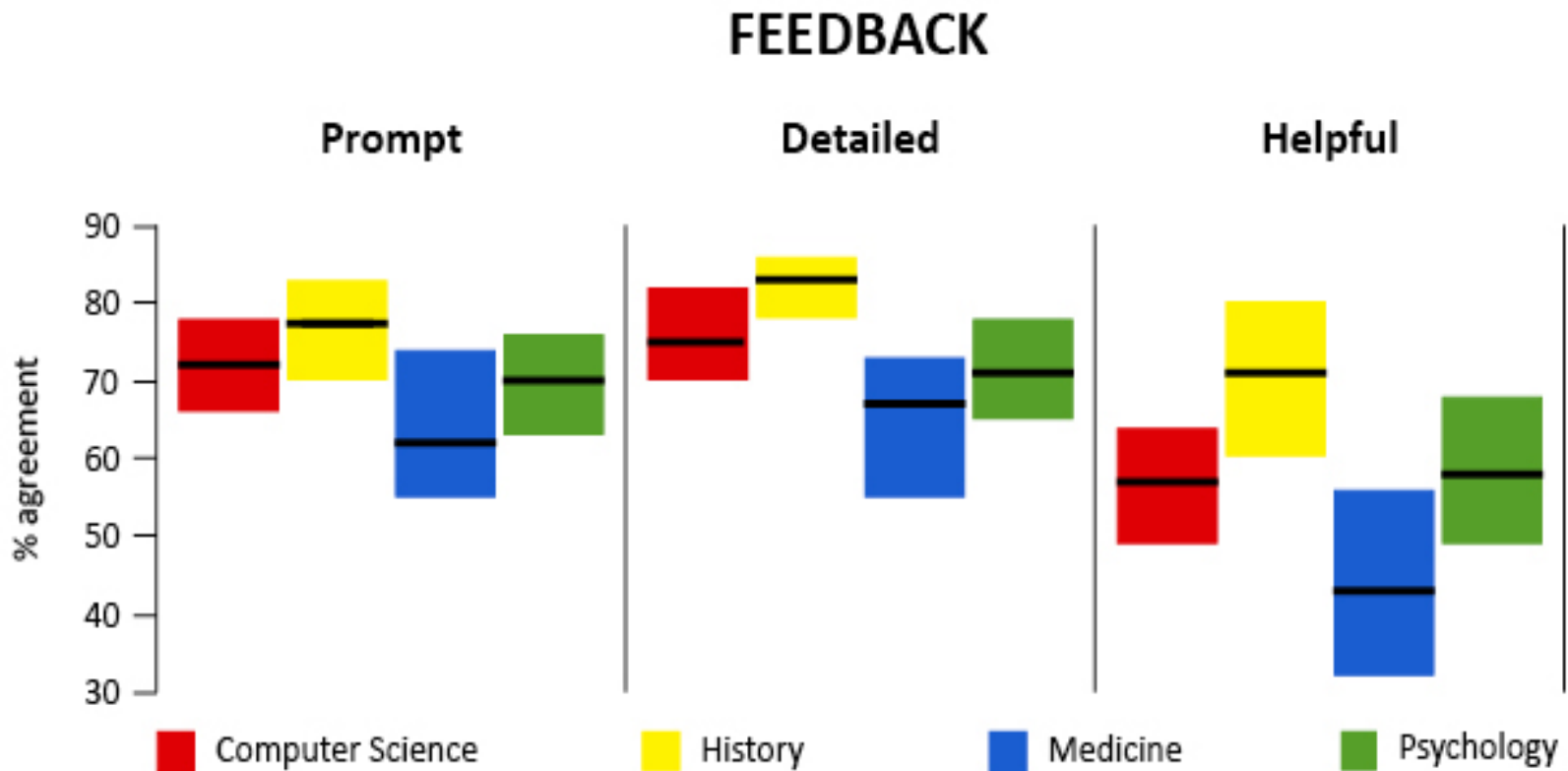
FEEDBACK

Upper Quartiles, Median and Lower Quartiles for Feedback in Four Contrasting Subject Areas (NSS 2009/2010)

Dai Hounsell   *Rethinking and Redesigning Feedback*   University of Bristol, 25 May 2012

Upper Quartiles, Median and Lower Quartiles for Feedback in Four Contrasting Subject Areas (NSS 2009/2010)

RETHINKING FEEDBACK

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FEEDBACK'?

THE STEREOTYPE

feedback consists of

comments written

by lecturers/tutors

on students' written

work

A RETHINK

it needn't consist of comments

it needn't be written

it needn't be from the lecturer/tutor

it needn't focus on students' written work

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FEEDBACK'?

A RETHINK

it needn't be written

it needn't be from the lecturer/tutor

it needn't consist of comments

it needn't focus on students' written work

A MORE INCLUSIVE VIEW

- **it can be spoken, signalled, emoted, visualised, digitally recorded**

- **it can be self-generated or from peers or others, or ...**

- **... it can come via an activity, or process, or experience**

- **it can focus on a reflection, a response or answer to a question, a note, an idea, a first attempt, work-in-progress**

-

What forms does / can feedback take?

pro forma   written comments   **exemplars**

exams   **guidance**   feedforward   *traditional*

collaboration   *on-display learning*   peer   audio

past questions   **screencast**   whole-class

clickers   in-class assignments   *cumulative*   **editing**

using feedback well   elective   *self*   co-revision

e-feedback   redrafting   reviewing progress

criteria   **dialogue**   *supervision*   interaction

new   briefing   involvement   *faster feedback*

model answers   training   *video*   online

PATHWAYS TO ENHANCING FEEDBACK

www.enhancingfeedback.ed.ac.uk

Feedback to Make More of a Difference

TUTOR FOCUS
a. higher-impact feedback comments

STUDENT FOCUS
b. better student engagement with feedback

COURSE FOCUS
d. feedback-rich course design

STUDENT FOCUS
c. fuller use of feedback comments
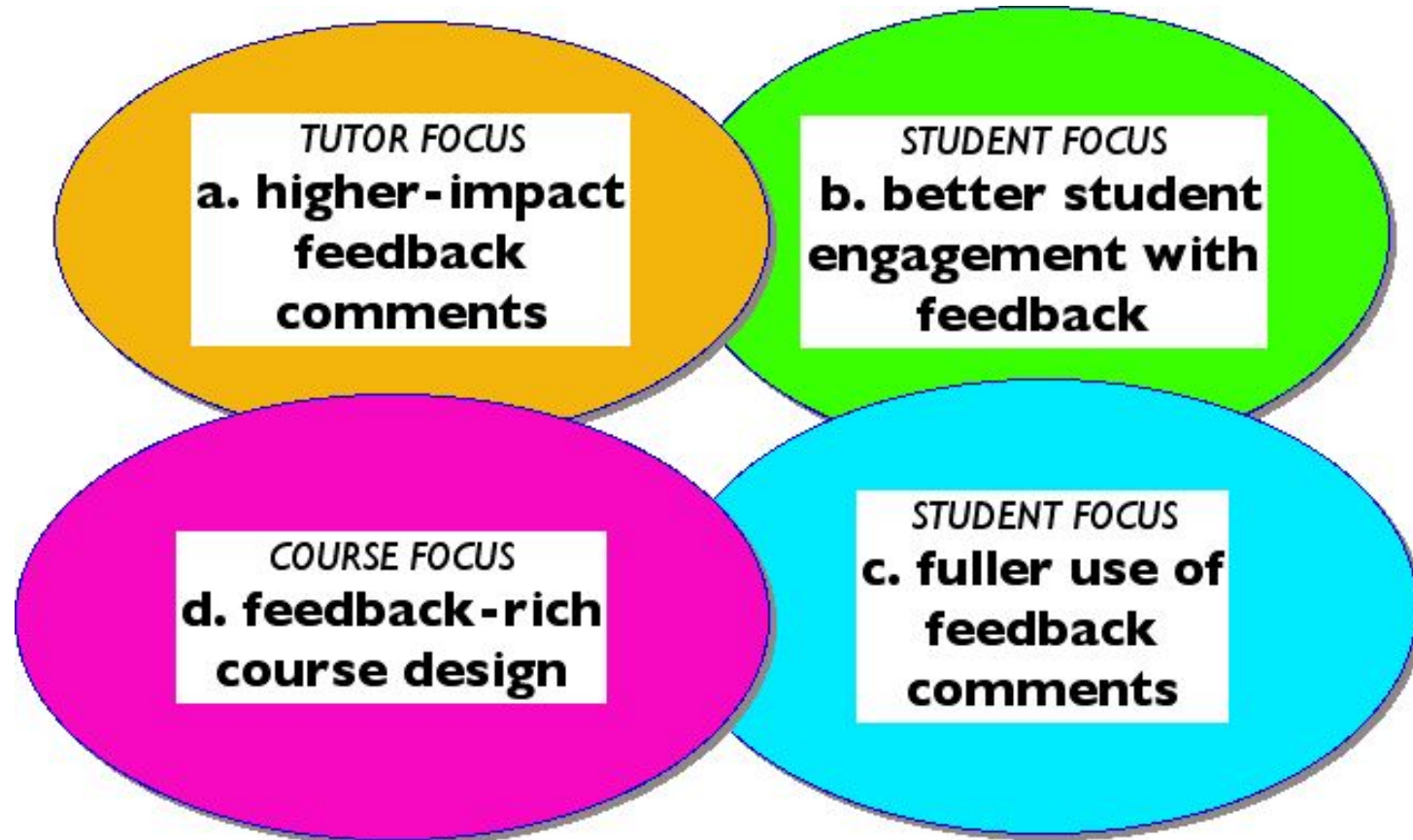
Higher-Impact Feedback Comments

HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

- **aligning feedback to criteria**

- **audio and video feedback**

- **anticipatory feedback**
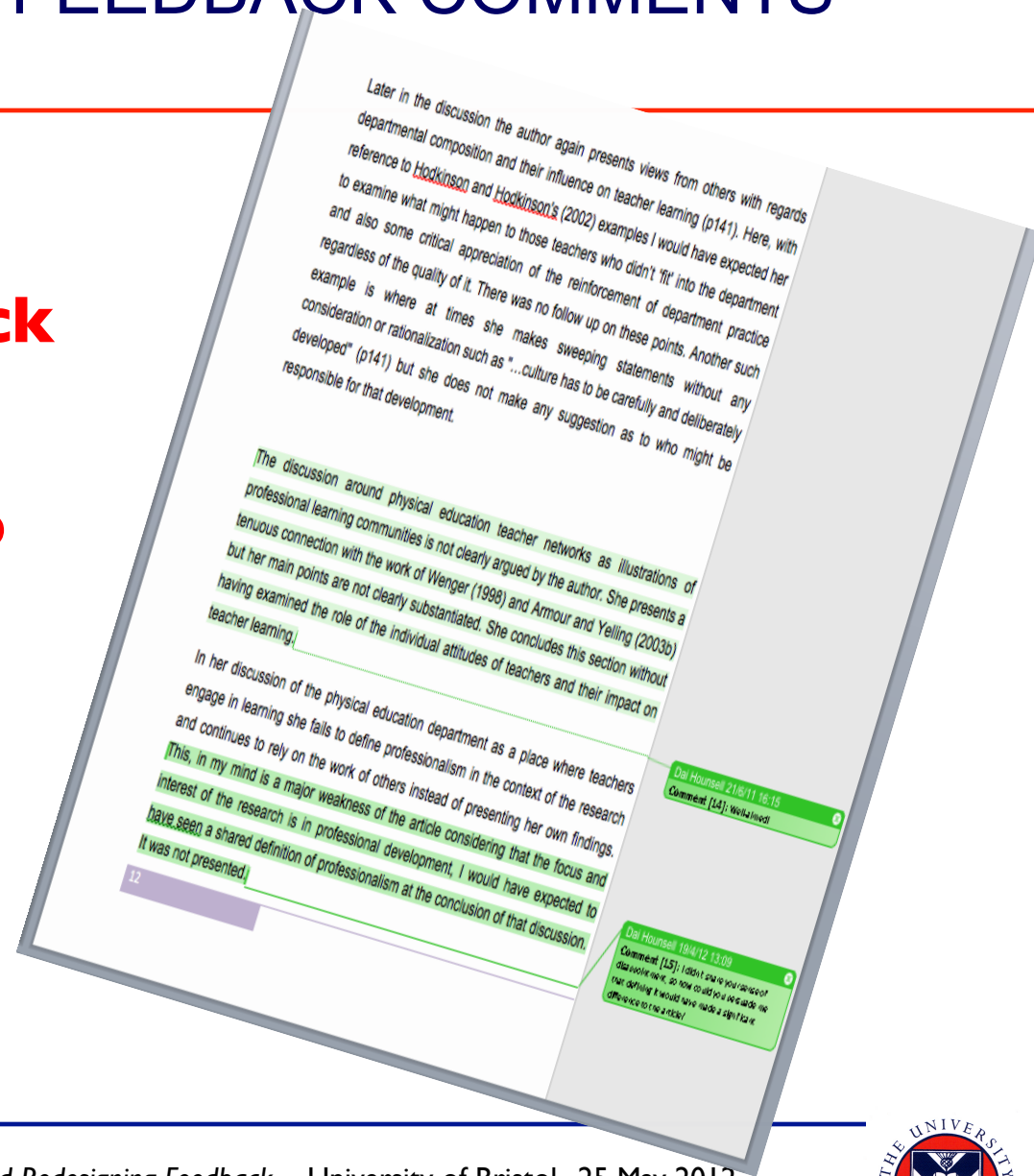
HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

1. they focus on the work or task undertaken, not the student personally

2. they avoid imperatives (!), private symbols (sp) and cryptic comments ("evidence")

3. they link directly to the assignment criteria and/or learning outcomes

4. comments are particularised or illustrated with a specific example

5. suggestions are made about what to improve, and how

6. suggestions focus on two or three key areas for improvement

aligning feedback to criteria

LINK TO
AUDIOFILE

HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

"Tutors fail to acknowledge 'the subtle interplay between what is said and what is taken for granted' (Rommetveit, 1979, p. 96) and so do not seek to close the gap between their own and their students' understanding of expectations."

(Hounsell, 1987, p. 114)

"Many students stressed that while they were 'always trying to achieve a higher standard', they rarely knew 'how to set about it'. And this was primarily due to 'not knowing what is meant' when tutors use terms such as structure', 'analysis' and 'original thought' in criticism of a history essay; not receiving clear, precise and practical advice about how to make improvements; and not having the benefit of tutorials to talk about learning problems and achievements."

(Hyland, 2000, p. 244)

HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS
anticipatory feedback

Open UP Study Skills
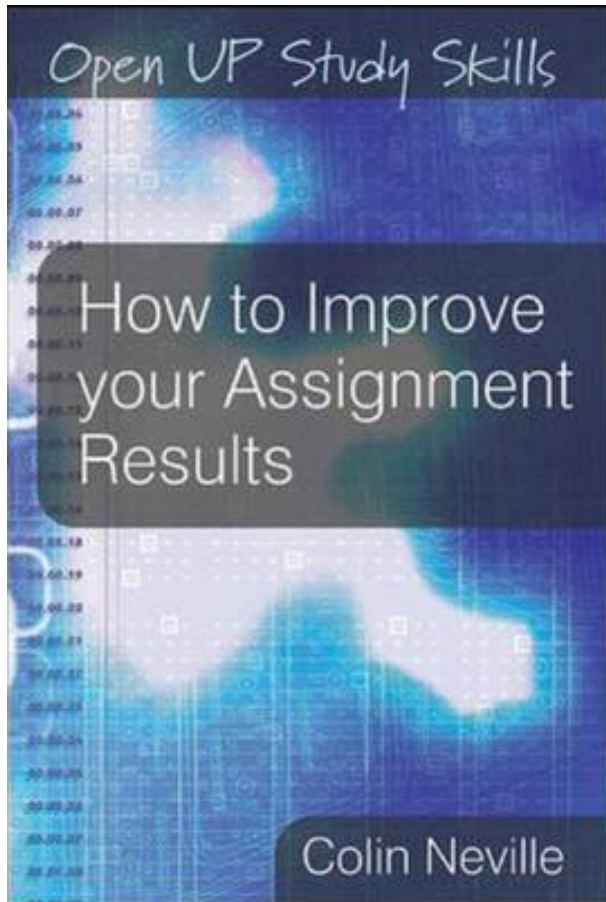
How to Improve your Assignment Results

Colin Neville

CONTENTS

anticipatory feedback

e.g.

- **pre-prepared feedback on common areas of uncertainty and difficulty**

- **guidance screencasts**

- **proleptic commentary on past exam questions and papers**

Better Student Engagement with Feedback

feedback as a monologue

"The many diverse expressions of dissatisfaction with written feedback can be interpreted as symptoms of impoverished and fractured dialogue. Mass higher education is squeezing out dialogue with the result that written feedback, which is essentially a monologue, is now having to carry much of the burden of teacher-student interaction."

(Nicol, 2010)

- **Exemplars**

- **Peer and self-generated feedback**

- **Elective feedback**

exemplars

"[Students] need to learn to discover what quality looks and feels like, and the aspects – whether large or small – that detract from it. They need to develop a vocabulary for expressing and communicating what they find. Furthermore, they should gradually attune their growing realisations and discourse to the norms of the discipline, field or profession"

(Sadler, 2010)

peer and self-generated feedback

Interactive feedback

- *elective feedback*

- *interactive cover sheets*
  (Bloxham & Campbell, 2010)

KNOWLEDGE
adequate reading - covers the subject with no serious omissions - concentrates on significant and relevant points

A   B   C   D   E

ANALYSIS
answers questions asked directly and fully - grasp of historical issues and of period - understands arguments and interpretations of different historians - able to evaluate evidence and make a reasoned choice between arguments - takes objections and alternative views into account - able to handle concepts and abstract ideas

A   B   C   D   E

STRUCTURE
based on coherent essay plan - right balance of narrative and analysis - arguments in clear order and effectively linked - no irrelevance or repetition - arguments well supported by use of evidence, statistics etc.

A   B   C   D   E

PRESENTATION
clear English style - no major faults of grammar etc. - structure of essay clearly indicated through use of paragraphs - effective introduction and conclusion - accurate use of references and footnotes - use of tables, maps or graphs where relevant - correct length

A   B   C   D   E

Some specific points on presentation which may need attention:
☐ Introduction   ☐ Conclusion   ☐ Use of paragraphs
☐ Grammar and sentence construction   ☐ Punctuation   ☐ Spelling   ☐ Length

GENERAL COMMENTS:

LABORATORY REPORT ATTACHM

Name
Date In
Student's specific requests for feedback   Date Back   Marker

Marker's general view of the work

Rating Scale

	Excellent	Good enough	Not good enough yet
Title and headings			
Summary			
Introduction Importance Background Objective(s) Apparatus			
Procedure			
Theory			
Results: Presentation Accuracy			
Discussion			
Conclusions			
English: Sentence construction Spelling Clarity			
Tables			
Figures			
Overall Assessment			

Areas for Improvement
1.
2.

From: Forster, F., Hounsell, D., Thompson, S. (1995) *Tutoring and Demonstrating: A*
UCoSDA, P. 47

**Fuller Use
of
Feedback
Comments**

Why is feedback often uncollected ?

Does some feedback always come too late ?

What counts as "timely" feedback ?
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO GUIDELINES

"If students are to gain maximum benefit from assessment tasks, they need high quality feedback. Such feedback meets four criteria:

- ✓ students receive the feedback while they still remember well the nature of the task and of their response to it, and early enough to use the feedback effectively to improve their performance on subsequent tasks

- ✓ the feedback provides clear indications of the strengths and weaknesses of the students' work

- ✓ the feedback gives clear guidance on how to perform better on similar future tasks

- ✓ the feedback helps motivate the student to put further effort into learning."

Feedback as a loop or an ongoing cycle

"**When we desire a motion to follow a given pattern, the difference between this pattern and the actually performed motion is used as a new input to cause the part regulated to move in such a way as to bring its motion closer to that given by the pattern.**"

(Wiener, 1961, p.6)

FULLER USE OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

- **Interactive feedback**

- **Feedforward and cumulative assignments**

- **Feedback on feedback**

The diagram shows a cycle of feedback:

- **1. STUDENTS' PRIOR EXPERIENCES OF ASSESSMENTS** IN THE SUBJECT/IN THE UNIT
- **2. PRELIMINAR Y GUIDANCE** ABOUT EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS
- **6. FEED-FOR WARD** i.e. DEPLOYMENT OF ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING AND/OR SKILLS IN SUBSEQUENT ASSESSMENTS
- **3. ONGOING CLARIFICATION** OF EXPECTATIONS
- **4. FEEDBACK ON PERFORMANCE/ ACHIEVEMENT**
- **5. SUPPLEMENT AR Y SUPPORT**

embark on assignment
submit assignment
review feedback
feed-forward into next assignment/ assessment

Interactive feedback

- *pre-submission checklists*

- *conditional release of marks*

Before you hand in your essay, please give a rating of how confident you are that you have met each of the criteria: (C = Completely confident; P = Partially confident; N = Not at all confident)

Addressed the question throughout the essay?
tutor feedback

C P N

Organised it clearly with structure appropriate to question?
tutor feedback

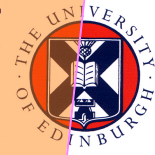Put forward a relevant argument of good quality?
tutor feedback

Synthesised a range of material into a coherent whole?
tutor feedback

Shown depth of understanding relating to underlying psychological issues?
tutor feedback

Evaluated theoretical concepts and research evidence?
tutor feedback

Referenced according to psychology requirements?
tutor feedback

Checked for spelling and grammar?
tutor feedback

Written in an appropriate academic style?
tutor feedback

Figure 1: **The Essay Feedback Checklist (EFC)**

Note: In the EFC used in the research, space was given under each criterion for tutors to write feedback comments. There was also a large box at the end which invited students to ask for any other feedback comments they wanted their tutors to give them.

From: Norton, L., Clifford, R., Hopkins, L., Toner, I. and Norton, J.C.W. (2002) Helping psychology students write better essays. *Psychology Learning and Teaching* 2(2), pp. 116-126.
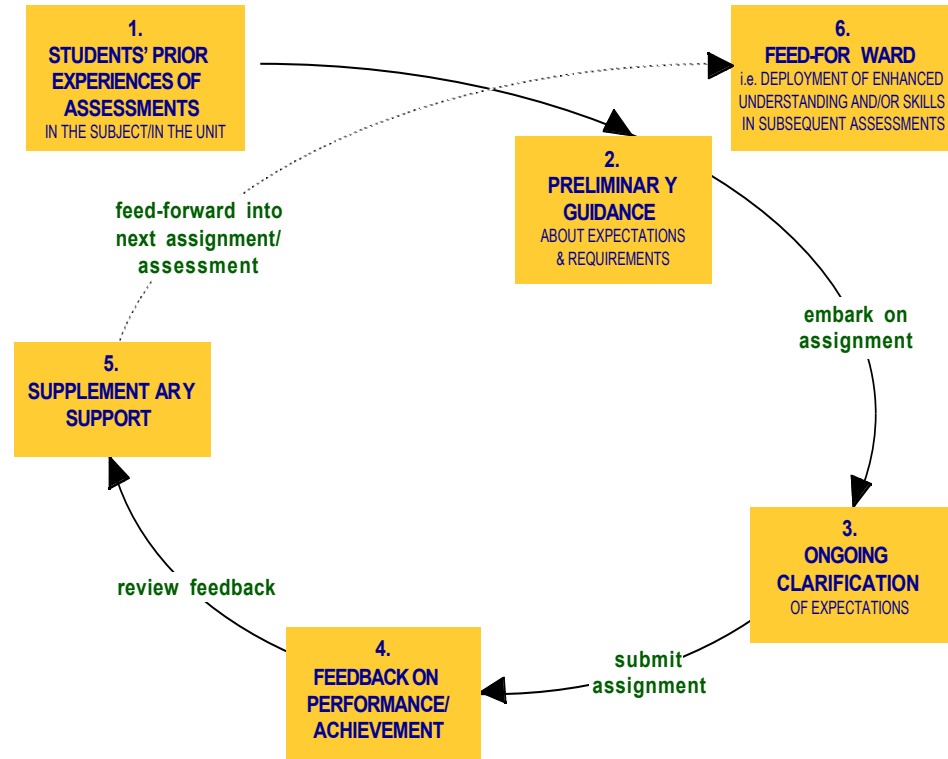
Feedforward and cumulative assignments

Feedback as a loop or an ongoing cycle

- **Interactive feedback**

- **Feedforward and cumulative assignments**

- **Feedback on feedback**

Feedback-Rich Course Design

Complementary ways of boosting feedback

- **Generic and whole-class feedback**

- **On-display learning**

- **Collaborative tasks & activities**

So what is 'feedback', exactly ...?

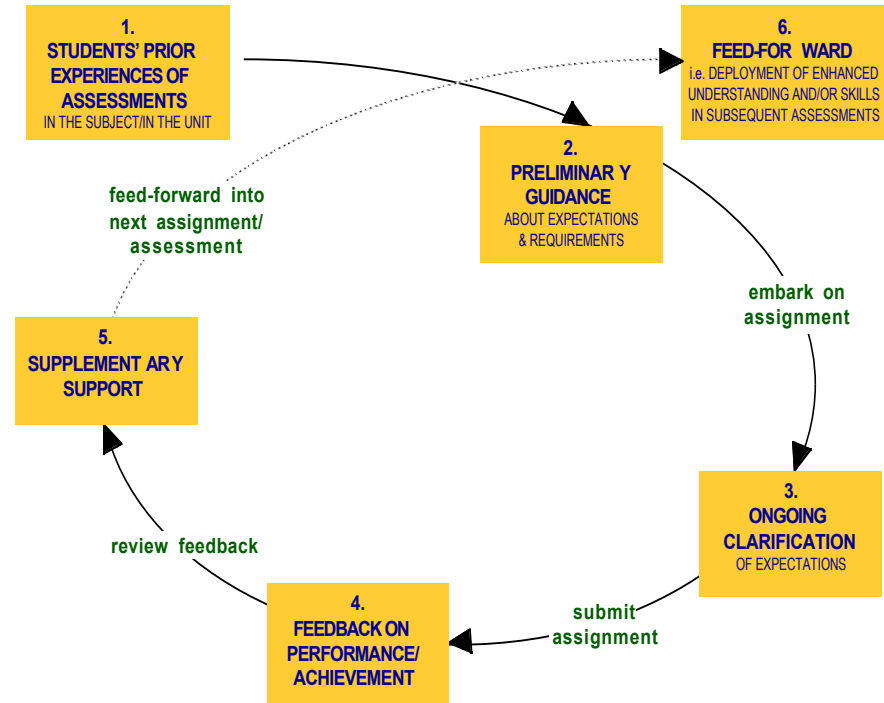- **Feedback comprises information, processes, activities or experiences which aim to encapsulate, enable or boost students' learning**

- **Feedback can focus on:**

attainment   what a student knows, understands or can do at a given point in time

progress   where a student currently stands in relation to a specified goal, target or level

achievement   what a student has achieved as demonstrated in a completed assignment or task

Where and when can feedback be given ?

formally	informally
in timetabled classes / online	**outwith timetabled classes / offline**
intrinsic	extrinsic

prior to a task or activity	*during* a task or activity	*after* a task or activity

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