

# Rethinking and Redesigning Feedback

DAI HOUNSELL



[www.enhancingfeedback.ed.ac.uk](http://www.enhancingfeedback.ed.ac.uk)



# WHY FEEDBACK MATTERS

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



# WHY FEEDBACK MATTERS

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***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

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- **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**



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# THE TROUBLE WITH FEEDBACK





# National Student Survey



Ipsos MORI



## 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

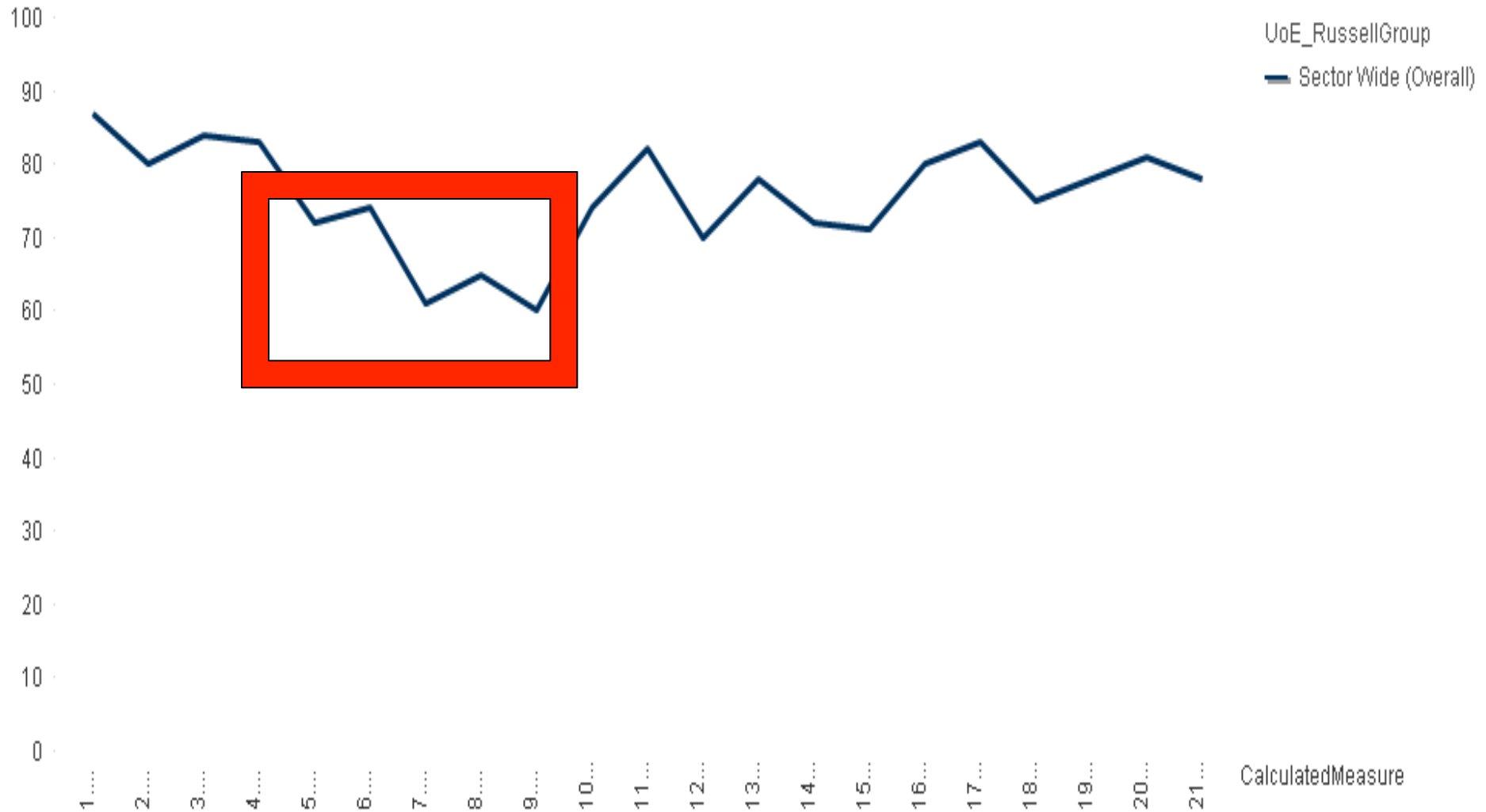
9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand

# NSS 2010 Results – All Universities assessment & feedback — % agree

Subject comparison to Russell Group



% Agree for 2010 for All Subjects

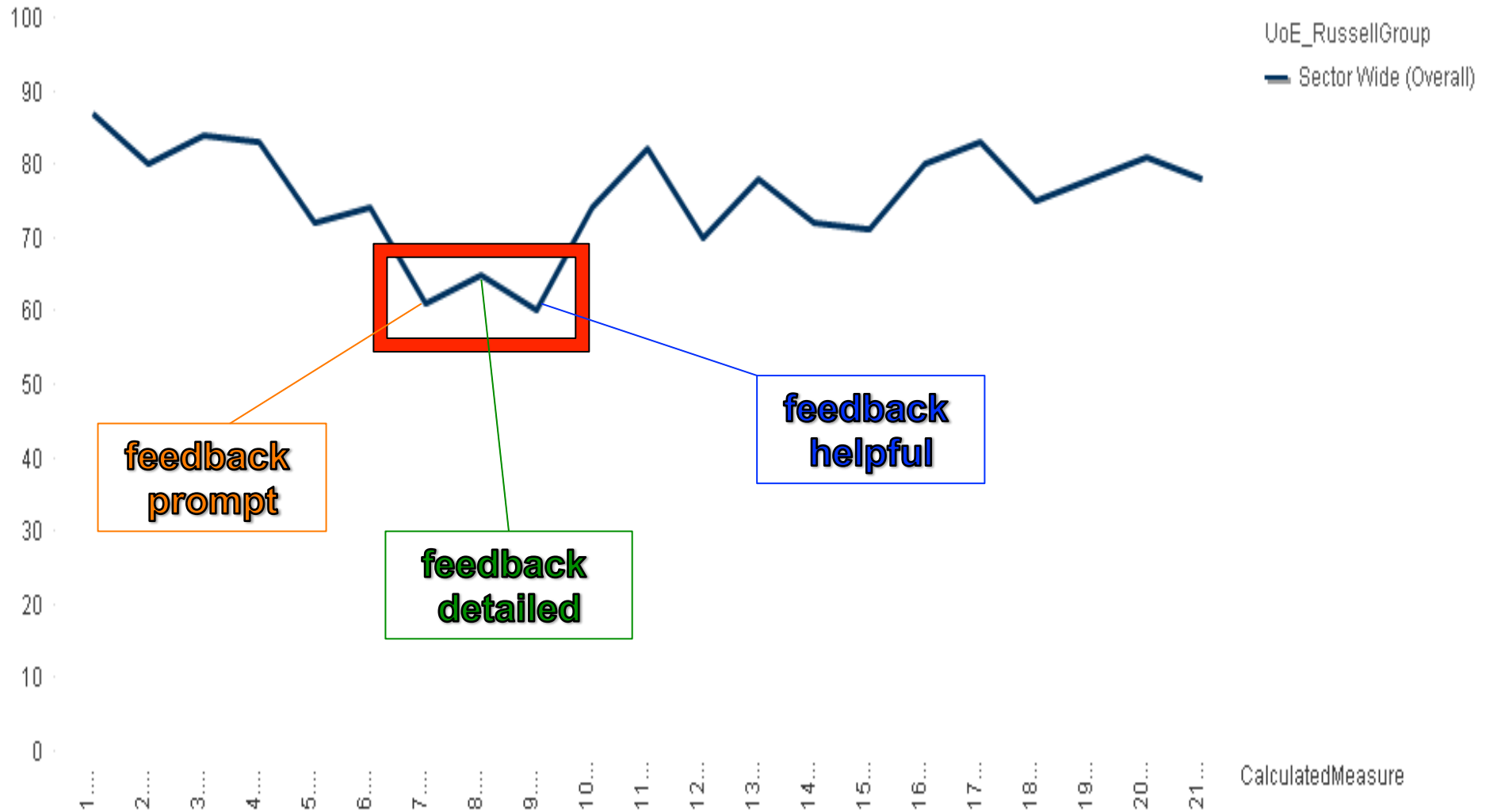


# NSS 2010 Results – All Universities assessment & feedback — % agree

Subject comparison to Russell Group

XL

% Agree for 2010 for All Subjects





# FURTHER EVIDENCE OF STUDENTS' CONCERNS

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## 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)

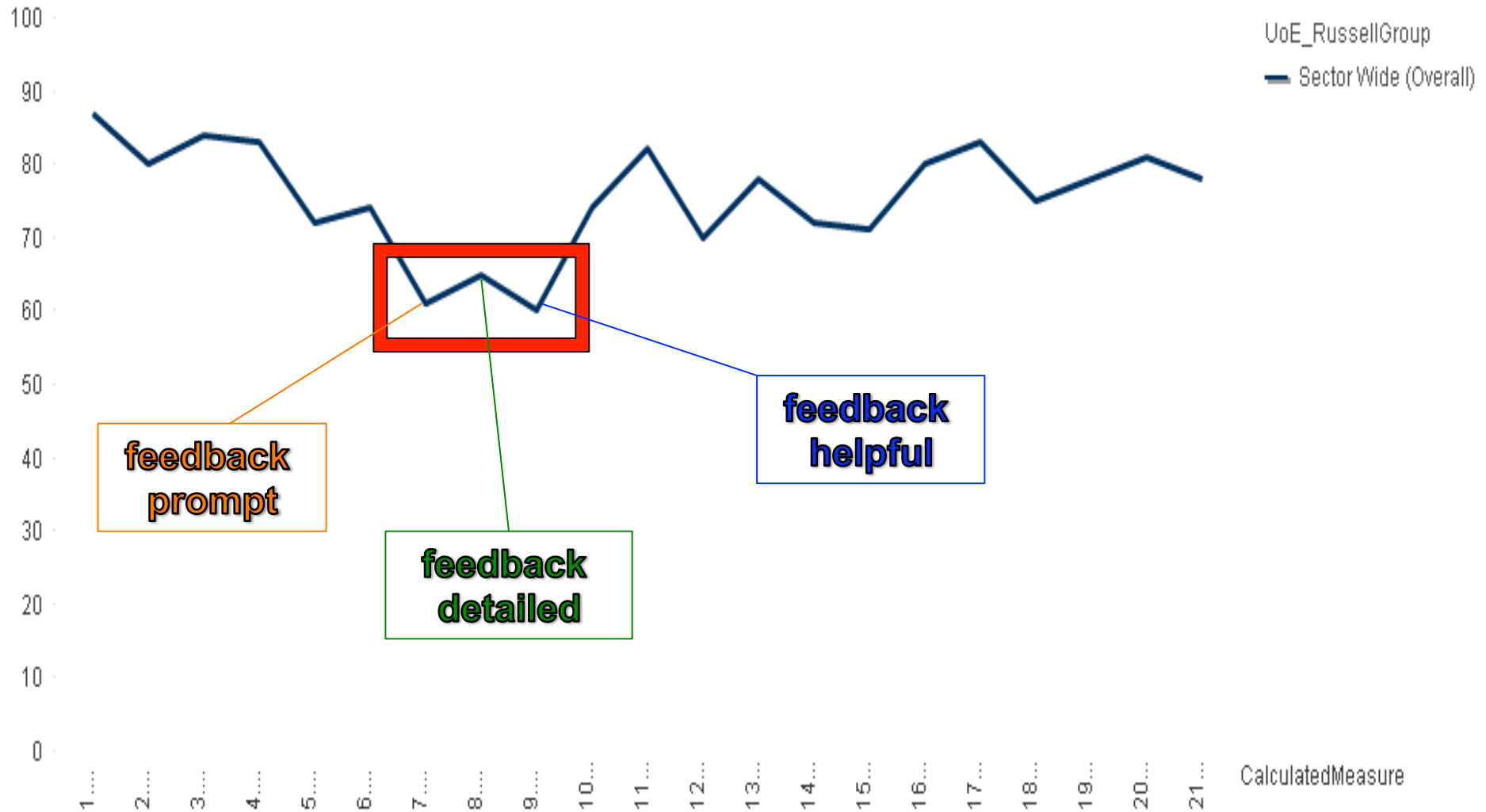


# NSS 2010 Results – All Universities assessment & feedback — % agree

Subject comparison to Russell Group

XL

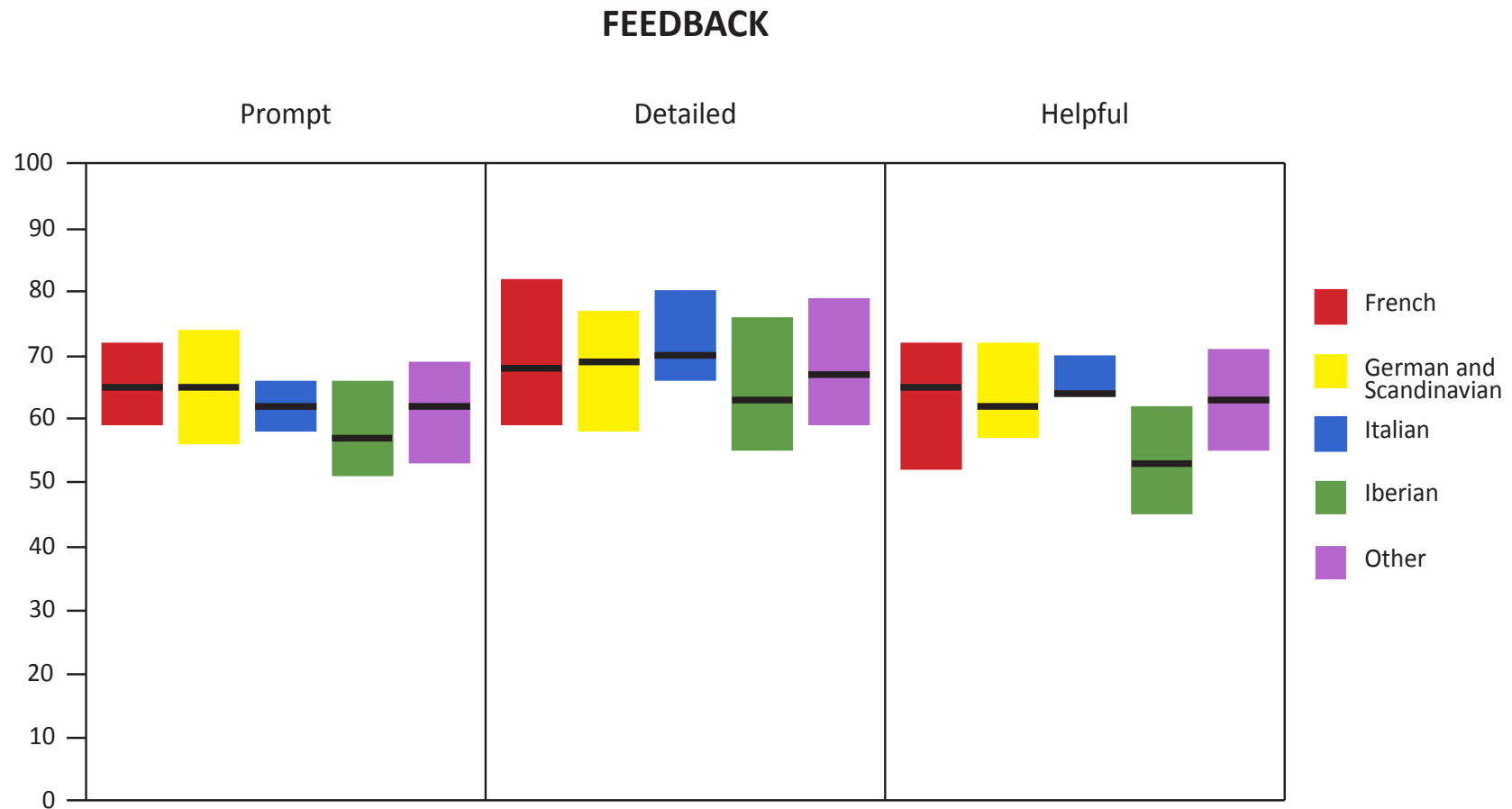
% Agree for 2010 for All Subjects



CalculatedMeasure

# THE TROUBLE WITH FEEDBACK

## Feedback Quartiles By Subject Area – NSS, 2009/10

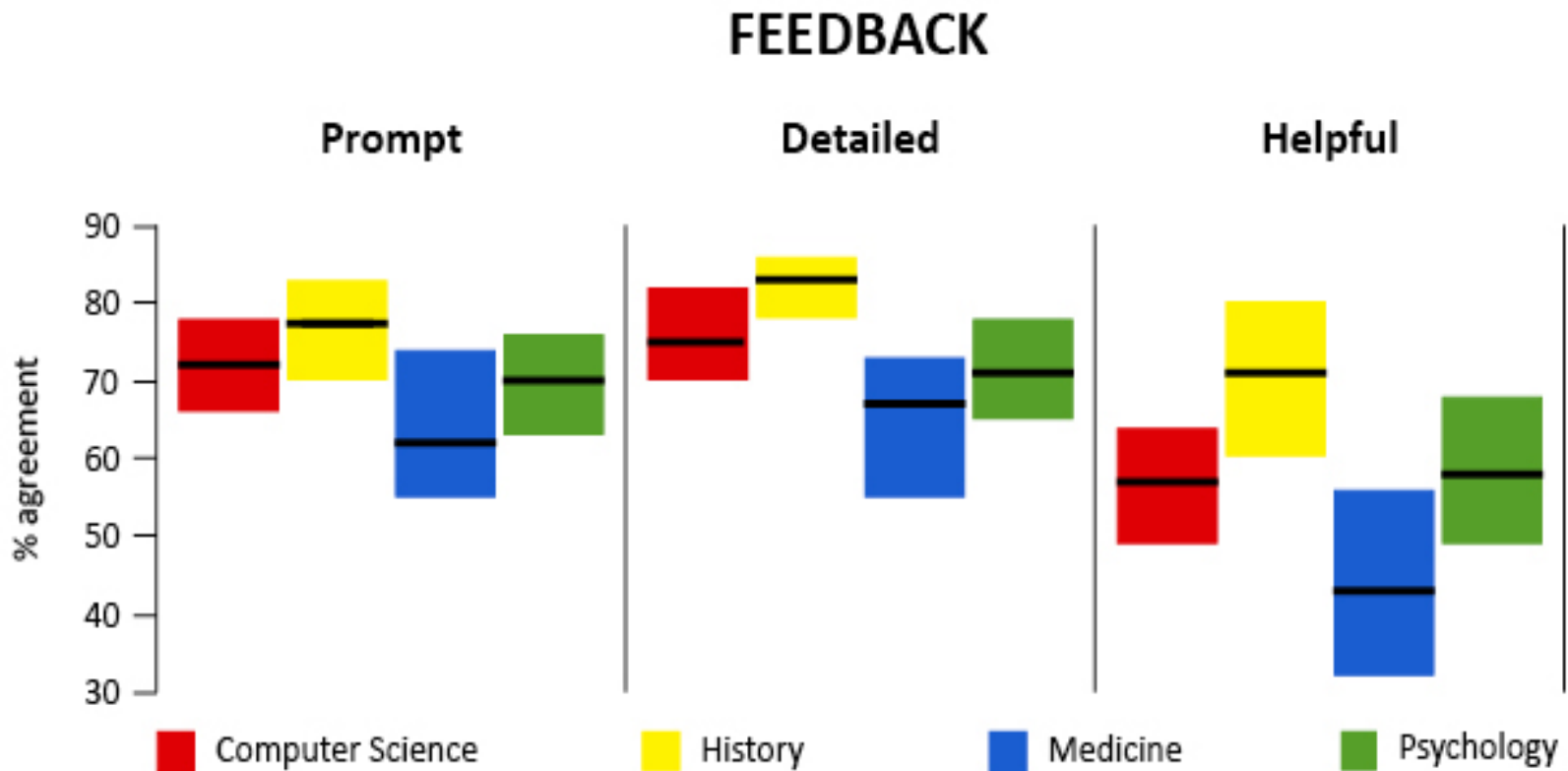


Upper Quartiles, Median and Lower Quartiles for Feedback in Four Contrasting Subject Areas (NSS 2009/2010)



# THE TROUBLE WITH FEEDBACK

## Feedback Quartiles By Subject Area – NSS, 2009/10



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



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# 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**



# FUNDAMENTALS OF FEEDBACK

## 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





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# PATHWAYS TO ENHANCING FEEDBACK

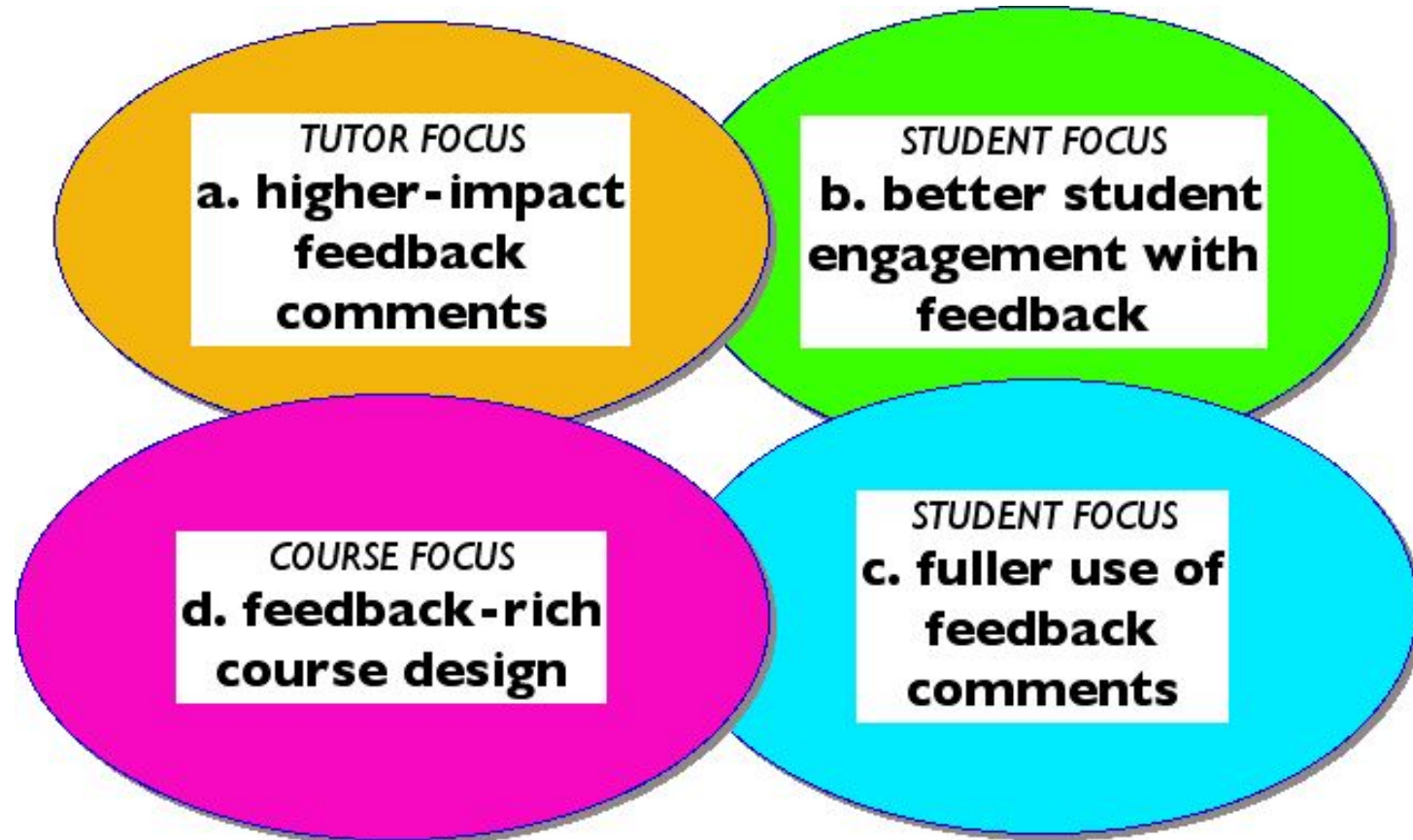




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# Feedback to Make More of a Difference



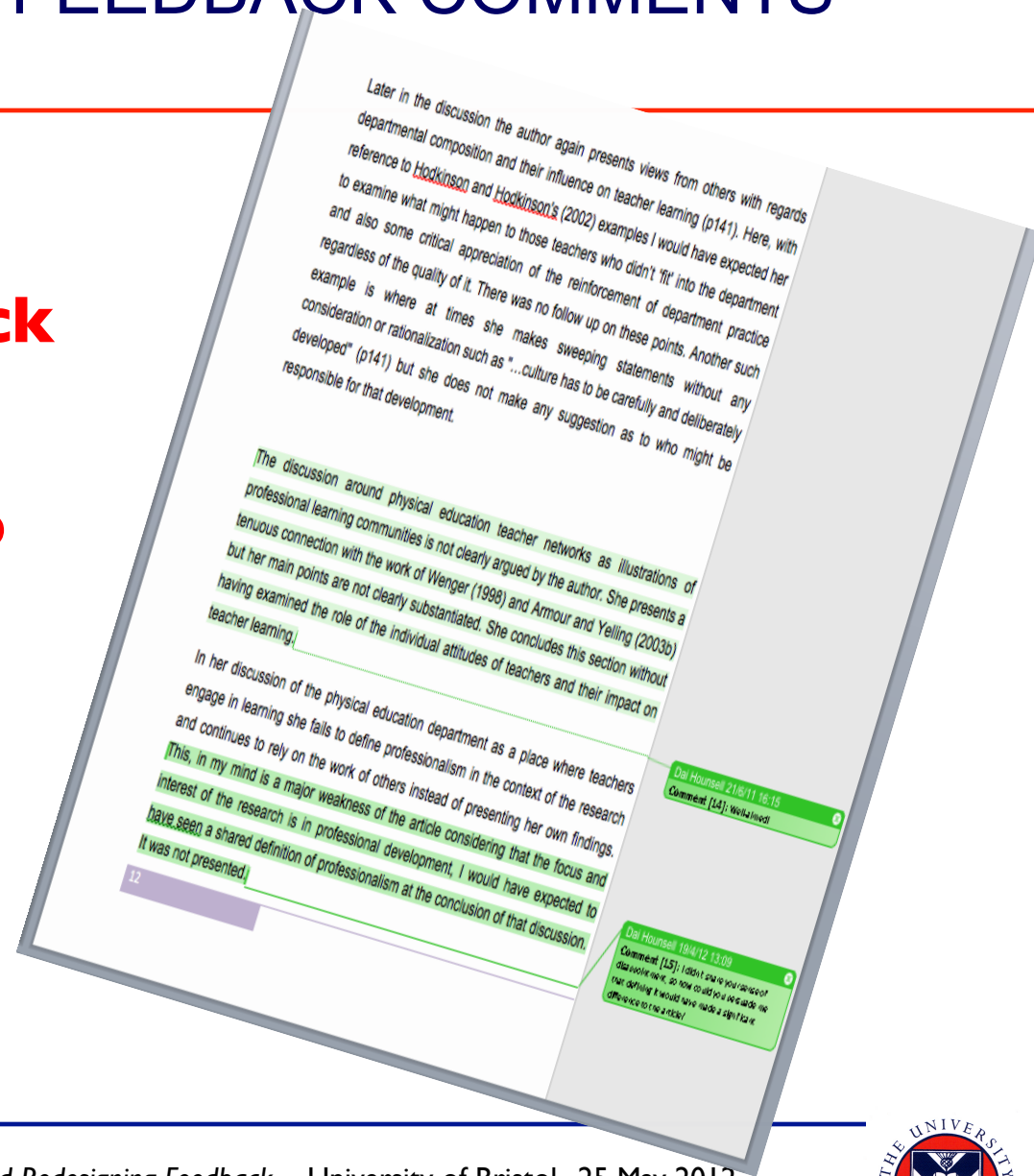
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# Higher- Impact Feedback Comments



# HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

- **aligning feedback to criteria**
- **audio and video feedback**
- **anticipatory feedback**



# HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

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- 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**





# HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

## aligning feedback to criteria

Education 1  
**ASSIGNMENT MARKING AND FEEDBACK PRO FORMA**

**RELEVANCE**  
How well does the essay respond to the question set, and consider the main implications which it raises?

**A QUESTIONING APPROACH**  
To what extent does the essay adopt a questioning approach, e.g. by identifying problems, weighing the strength of different arguments and ideas?

**USE OF EVIDENCE**  
To what extent does the essay support the points it makes with evidence, drawing on beyond the core course materials?

**COHERENCE**  
How well does the essay hang together as a coherent whole, with essay material well following a clear structure?

**OVERALL MARK**

**PRESENTATION**  
Below I've indicated any aspects of the presentation of your assignment which will call for future assignments, if you are to meet the standards expected of written work in the course.

Clarity of English  
Grammar  
Labelling of  
(Other):

Overall length  
Punctuation  
Spelling/spell-checking  
Referencing of sources  
(Other):

The University of Edinburgh

7029 Placement Search and Preparation – Feedback Sheet

**ASSIGNMENT 1**

Student Name: ..... Student Number: .....

CRITERION	A	B+	B	C	Refer / Fail
<b>1 Presentation of assignment</b>	Shows a polished and imaginative approach to the topic	Carefully and logically organised	Shows organisation and coherence	Shows some attempt to organise in a logical manner	Disorganised / Incoherent
<b>7 Attention to purpose</b>	Has addressed the purpose of the assignment comprehensively and imaginatively	Has addressed the purpose of the assignment coherently and with some attempt to demonstrate imagination	Has addressed the main purpose of the assignment	Some of the work focused on the aims and themes of the assignment	Fails to address the task set
<b>27 Self-criticism (include reflection on practice)</b>	Is confident in application of own criteria of judgement and in challenge of received opinion in action and can reflect on own judgement	Is able to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses, can challenge received opinion and begins to develop own criteria and judgement	Is largely dependent on criteria set by others but begins to recognize own strengths and weaknesses	Dependent on criteria set by others, Begins to recognize own strengths and weaknesses	Fails to meaningfully undertake the process of self-criticism
<b>28 Independence / Autonomy (include planning and managing learning)</b>	Can manage own learning using full range of resources for discipline, can seek and make use of feedback	Identifies strengths of own activities to improve performance, is autonomous in taking forward study tasks	Can work independently within a relevant ethos and can access and use a range of learning resources	Can undertake clearly directed work independently within a relevant ethos and, with some guidance, use the standard learning resources	Unable to work independently, needing significant guidance on methods and resources

(Please tick boxes)  
Comment: .....  
Marker: .....  
From: Rust, C., Price, and O'Donnell, B. (2002) 'Improving Students' Learning by Developing Their Understanding of Assessment Criteria and Tenets of Learning'.

**LABORATORY REPORT ATTACHMENT SHEET**

Name: ..... Date In: ..... Date Back: .....  
Student's specific requests for feedback: .....  
Marker's general view of the work: .....  
Rating Scale: Excellent, Good enough, Not good enough yet

**MECHANICS**  
Grammatical sentences  
Correct spelling throughout  
Effective use of figures and tables  
Correct use of units and quantities

From: Forster, F., Hounsell, D., Thompson, S. (1995) *Tutoring and Demonstrating: A Handbook*. TLA / UCCSDA, p. 47

**ASSIGNMENT ATTACHMENTS: AN EXAMPLE**

Energy and Life Systems

Assignment grade: .....

Itemised Rating Scale (ticked when applicable)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Essay has little relevance
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Superficial treatment of topic
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Much evidence inaccurate or questionable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Essay rambles and lacks continuity
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Little evidence of originality
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Climaxly written
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unnecessarily repetitive
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unidy and difficult to read
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over / under length
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inadequate acknowledgement of sources
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incorrect referencing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Several ungrammatical sentences
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Much incorrect spelling
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Figures and tables add little to argument
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some units incorrect

Explanations and Comments

Tutor: .....

From: Forster, F., Hounsell, D., Thompson, S. (1995) *Tutoring and Demonstrating: A Handbook*. TLA / UCCSDA, p. 47



# HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

## **audio and video feedback**

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***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)*

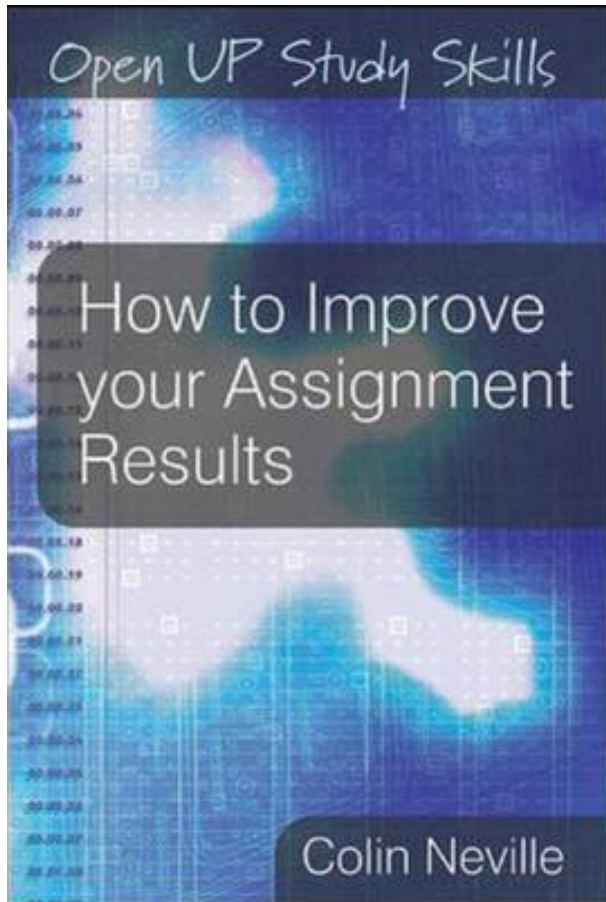
"Many students stressed that while they were 'always trying to achieve a higher standard', they rarely knew 'how to set about it'. And this was primarily due to 'not knowing what is meant' when tutors use terms such as 'structure', 'analysis' and 'original thought' in criticism of a history essay; not 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



### CONTENTS

- 1 The shock of poor results
- 2 Interpreting your assignment results
- 3 'You have not answered or addressed the question'
- 4 'Your work is more descriptive than critical'
- 5 'Your assignment was poorly structured'
- 6 'You did not tell me anything new'
- 7 'Your reading for this assignment is limited'
- 8 'You need to improve your referencing'
- 9 'Your English is weak: it was difficult to follow your arguments'



# HIGHER-IMPACT FEEDBACK COMMENTS

## **anticipatory feedback**

*e.g.*

- **pre-prepared feedback on common areas of uncertainty and difficulty**
- **guidance screencasts**
- **proleptic commentary on past exam questions and papers**



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# 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)*



# BETTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH FEEDBACK

- Exemplars
- Peer and self-generated feedback
- Elective feedback

Influential Person in World War 2. Jimmy McPerson  
Jimmy McPerson isn't a well sung hero. He isn't in any history books, not many people have even heard of him. Some might argue he was never even a documented citizen. But what can't be argued, is the contributions he brought to this great nation during its most troubled time: World War 2. And it can also be said, without a doubt, that he definitely existed.

Young Jimmy knew from the beginning that he was destined for greatness. Born to a young African slave couple, Jimmy grew up in Harlem, in up-state Chicago. Like all black youth, Jimmy joined a gang, in order to get his "props." He and the rest of his unnamed gang in Harlem ran the streets with an iron fist. Times were good. Or were they? Times were indeed good. Until the Japanese performed a sneak attack on young Jimmy's town, killing his parents instantly. Jimmy swore revenge on all the Japanese, and promised to avenge the death of his parents, who were on the verge of curing cancer. Jimmy couldn't join the army, because Martin Luther King Jr. wasn't born yet and blacks couldn't join the military. So Jimmy had to form a plan. A deadly plan. For revenge.

Using a new name, Jimmy sneaked into the Japanese base in Tokyo, and fought off countless samurai and ninjas, until he came face to face with the president of Japan. "President Maximoto! Now you're going to pay!" Jimmy said, but little did he know that right behind him was Hitler! "Now, you must fight us both!" Jimmy fought valiantly, but he was no match for both Hitler and President Japan. With his dying charge, he pushed Hitler out the window, falling with him to his death.

Jimmy McPerson probably saved the world, because he killed Hitler, and sacrificed himself in the process. However, since Jimmy used a fake name to do battle in China, his story was never revealed to the American public. Thus, Jimmy's efforts will go passed by, unnoticed by time and history. And that's why Jimmy McPerson is my hero and the most influential person in World War 2. The End.

*If Jimmy was forgotten by History, how do you know about him?*



# BETTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH 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)





# BETTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH FEEDBACK

## peer and self-generated feedback

# PeerWise

Ask | Share | Learn

## Welcome to PeerWise

PeerWise supports students in the creation, sharing, evaluation and discussion of assessment questions.



### What is PeerWise?

Students use PeerWise to create and to explain their understanding of course related assessment questions, and to answer and discuss questions created by their peers.



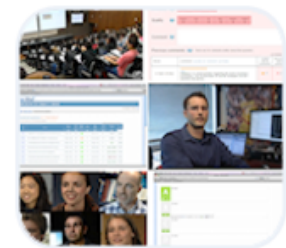
### Any subject

PeerWise is used in a wide range of subjects, including Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Physics, Population Health, Pharmacology, Medicine, and many more...



### Free and easy to use

PeerWise is free and very easy to use. Students are presented with a simple, intuitive interface and instructors can easily view student content and monitor participation.



### Find out more

Want to get started? View student and instructor guides, watch screencasts of PeerWise in action, and hear what students and instructors think in the [Information about PeerWise](#) section.

## Why use PeerWise?

PeerWise is simple to use. A new PeerWise repository, accessible by your students, can be created in less than a minute. PeerWise complements existing teaching materials and course organisation, and can help to establish a learning community in your class incorporating collaborative learning and peer tutoring,

Ask... Challenging students to author their own assessment questions requires



# BETTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH 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 ATTACHMENT**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date in \_\_\_\_\_ Date Back \_\_\_\_\_ Marker \_\_\_\_\_

Student's specific requests for feedback \_\_\_\_\_

Marker's general view of the work \_\_\_\_\_

Rating Scale

	Excellent	Good enough	Not good enough yet
<b>Title and headings</b>			
<b>Summary</b>			
Introduction			
Importance			
Background			
Objective(s)			
Apparatus			
<b>Procedure</b>			
<b>Theory</b>			
<b>Results:</b>			
Presentation			
Accuracy			
<b>Discussion</b>			
<b>Conclusions</b>			
<b>English:</b>			
Sentence construction			
Spelling			
Clarity			
<b>Tables</b>			
<b>Figures</b>			
<b>Overall Assessment</b>			
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>			
1.			
2.			

From: Forster, F., Hounsell, D., Thompson, S. (1995) *Tutoring and Demonstrating: A Handbook*. University of Edinburgh, UK. P. 47



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# Fuller Use of Feedback Comments



# 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

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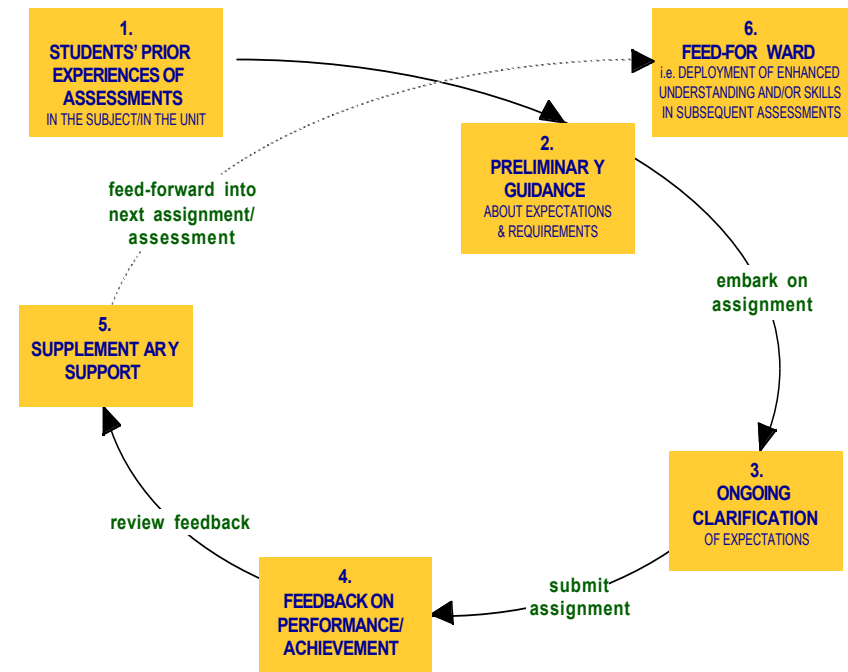
**“When we desire a motion to follow a given pattern, the difference between this pattern and the actually performed motion is used as a new input to cause the part regulated to move in such a way as to bring its motion closer to that given by the pattern.”**

*(Wiener, 1961, p.6)*



# FULLER USE OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

- **Interactive feedback**
- **Feedforward and cumulative assignments**
- **Feedback on feedback**



# FULLER USE OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

## Interactive feedback

- **pre-submission checklists**
- **conditional release of marks**

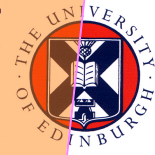
Before you hand in your essay, please give a rating of how confident you are that you have met each of the criteria: (C = Completely confident; P = Partially confident; N = Not at all confident)

	C	P	N
Addressed the question throughout the essay? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organised it clearly with structure appropriate to question? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Put forward a relevant argument of good quality? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Synthesised a range of material into a coherent whole? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shown depth of understanding relating to underlying psychological issues? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluated theoretical concepts and research evidence? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referenced according to psychology requirements? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Checked for spelling and grammar? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written in an appropriate academic style? <i>tutor feedback</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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.

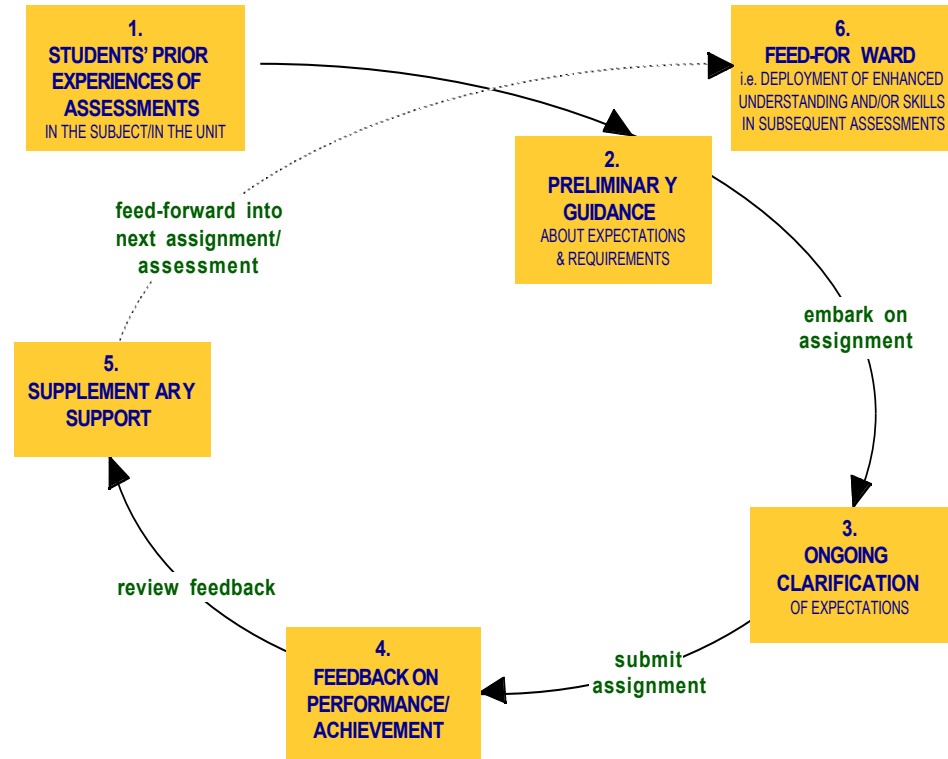
From: Norton, L., Clifford, R., Hopkins, L., Toner, I. and Norton, J.C.W. (2002) Helping psychology students write better essays. *Psychology Learning and Teaching* 2(2) pp. 75-84

Figure 1: The Essay Feedback Checklist (EFC)



# FULLER USE OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

## Feedforward and cumulative assignments

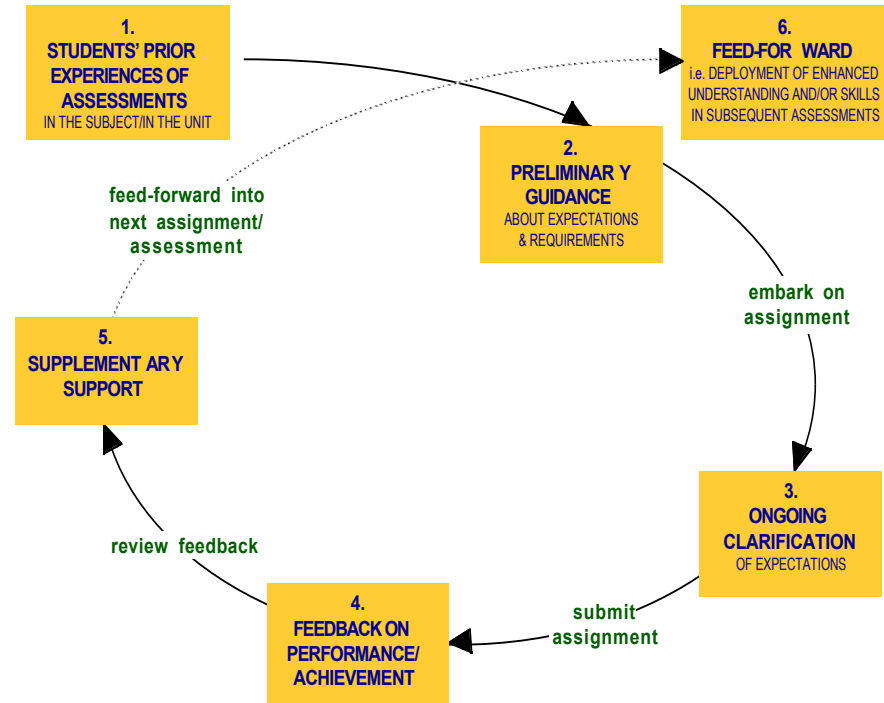




# FULLER USE OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

## Feedback as a loop or an ongoing cycle

- Interactive feedback
- Feedforward and cumulative assignments
- Feedback on feedback



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# Feedback-Rich Course Design



## **Complementary ways of boosting feedback**

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- **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



## FEEDBACK-RICH COURSE DESIGN

### **Where and when can feedback be given ?**

<b>formally</b>		<b>informally</b>	
<b>in timetabled classes / online</b>		<b>outwith timetabled classes / offline</b>	
<b>intrinsic</b>		<b>extrinsic</b>	
<b>prior to a task or activity</b>	<b>during a task or activity</b>	<b>after a task or activity</b>	



# What forms does 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**  
anticipatory feedback *elective* *self* co-revision  
e-feedback **redrafting** reviewing progress  
criteria **dialogue** *supervision* interaction  
*briefing* student involvement *faster feedback*  
**model answers** training *video* online

