

Flipping Feedback with a Multi-Stage Assignment

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Class Size
73 Students

Discipline
Politics, Social Science

Feedback Approaches
Feedforward using multi-modal strategies; Multi-stage assignment, online written feedback, and video feedback

Technologies
Moodle Assignment, Moodle Feedback Files (moodle.org), Camtasia (techsmith.com)

Challenge & Aim

The case study addresses the challenges of how to make feedback an active learning tool in 1st year social science and how to actively engage first year students with feedback early in learning formation.

This case study aimed to flip feedback so that it becomes embedded within the assignment process rather than being provided at the end of the assignment, so that the feedback becomes feedforward to support student learning.

The case study approach involved introducing a three-stage assignment, in conjunction with student feedforward reflections. Individual online written feedback was provided at each stage. In addition, a class video feedback was provided for Stages 1 and 2.

Evidence from the Literature

Feedforward and multi-stage strategies underlined by digital modes of feedback delivery were utilised to foreground students as active participants within the module in order to develop a sense of belonging in first year which stimulated student interest while developing abilities (Bird and Yucel 2015, Carless 2006 cited in Y1Feedback 2016).

The literature suggests that traditional feedback as one-way information transmission from teacher to student on a finished product of work often occurs too late for useful application (Beaumont, O'Doherty and Shannon 2011, Vardi 2013, Hounsell 2015 cited in Y1Feedback 2016). The multi-stage approach adopted here encouraged student engagement with feedback by providing opportunities for its use in succeeding interrelated stages of the assignment.

Student engagement with feedback was further promoted through student completion of feedback reflections at each stage. In this way, teacher feedback directly responded to student concerns and student were prompted to indicate how feedback was applied. Moreover, these approaches enabled a dialogical approach to learning in which students can seek clarification

and guidance through specific feedback requests, which concomitantly shapes teaching by identifying possible needs of students and barriers to learning (Goldstein 2007, McArthur et.al 2011, Tang 2013, Wang et.al 2013).

The approach incorporated different modes of feedback used: online written feedback and video feedback to support the development of student digital literacies (Holland 2017, Killen 2015, All Aboard! 2015, NFETL 2015). These modes also provide potential for diminishing student-teacher power relations through written and verbal personalised comments and guidance on stages of the assignment. In this way students, are included as participants within the assessment and feedback literacies of their discipline from an early stage in order to foster self-regulating learners capable of independent critical appraisal of their own work (Zimmerman 2002, Hounsell 2007, Sadler 2010, Carless 2013; 2015, Ajjawi and Boud 2015). As such, sustainable feedback emerges as a core principle of the approaches in which students immediate needs are responded to while simultaneously preparing them for future learning (Carless 2013).

Feedback Approach

Students were asked to undertake a three-stage assignment.

Stage 1 (10% of grade): Students submitted a brief outline of their proposed assignment structure and six sources accurately referenced together with a feedforward reflection (template provided), which asked them to detail what aspects of the assignment

submission would they most like feedback on. On this submission, each student received individual feedback in the form of annotated written comments and a grade and response to their questions within the feedforward reflection, which were delivered via Moodle. The feedback was returned in advance of their next submission so they had time to apply the feedback.

Feedback Approach

Stage 2 (30% of grade): Students submit a penultimate draft of the assignment and a feedforward reflection, which asked them to detail how they applied the stage 1 feedback and also to identify aspects of their stage 2 submission they would most like feedback on. On this submission, each student received individualized annotated written feedback and grade on their submission in advance of the stage 3 submission. In addition, a 15-minute class feedback video was provided.

Stage 3 (10% of grade): Students submitted a final draft of the assignment and a feedforward reflection. On this submission, students received brief comments and grade in advance of their module exam.

Outcomes

Students completed an in-class feedback experience questionnaire in the last week of the semester.

Student Response

MULTI-STAGE ASSIGNMENT

Student feedback was positive about the flipping feedback approach, and there were strong signs of student engagement with the topic. While the format was new to students, there was little resistance from students in engaging with the approach. Several students reflected they had never completed an outline for an assignment before so found this stage really useful.

"I found feedback vital as it put me on the right path, otherwise I would have failed."

"It allowed for mistakes to be made which could then be rectified in the next stage of the assignment."

Class Video Feedback

Students responded very positively to the class video feedback.

"I found the group video useful because even if some of the feedback did not apply to me it was still good to take note of it for future essays."

"The most useful feedback from stage 2 was the video feedback. As with the previous stage, I had the video open while I was writing the essay... It was good to know that I was on the correct track as I was very unsure during the stage two draft."

Feedforward Reflections

Aside from some minor teething problems associated with forgetting to copy and paste feedforward reflection template into submissions, students engaged well with this element of the approach.

"It encouraged me to more critical of my own work and to identify areas I felt I need to improve."

"I found getting back comments on what I did well and what I need to improve useful as it pointed me in the direction needed for a good essay."

Grading

The final stage of the assignment – a redraft based on stage 2 feedback was worth 10% of module grade. Some students argued it should be more worth more, this may have been particularly the view of students who had to do a considerable amount of redrafting.

Staff Reflections

Overall, the approach worked well and we would use a multi-stage assignment approach again and video class feedback again.

The feedforward reflections gave us a greater understanding of student feedback needs and we were able to address these in class, or by providing additional supports such as an extra tutorial for citation and referencing.

As the multi-stage assignment needed to start early in the semester, we may not have spent sufficient time explaining the actual task/essay and approach, but this can be overcome in next application.

The multi-stage assignment approach did require more student and staff time. Staff time on assessment and feedback was approximately 1 hour per student, double the normal assessment time for the module. The opportunity cost of this time needs to be factored in into the evaluation.

Each student received personalised online written feedback. In addition, students were encouraged to attend office hours. However, no students availed of this facility, unlike previous years. This was an unanticipated negative side-effect of the multi-stage approach as a 1-1 discussion may have been more enriching for some students.

Recommendations

- Recalibrate as a two-stage assignment. Use a two-stage (e.g Full draft outline & final draft) as this may be more realistic and sustainable for staff and students.

- Use feedforward reflections: Embedding these into the multi-stage process helped engage students in a feedforward dialogue.
- Allow time for setup: The set up time is important and should include time for detailed approach and assignment guidance for students.
- Get help with the technology. The technologies worked well but support and backup is needed, especially given the quick pace and feedback turnaround of the multi-stage approach.
- Factor in more correction and feedback time. The correction time is significant, with up to one hour per student in this pilot. This is likely unsustainable but the approach could be used for smaller selected groups.
- Consider the final stage weighting. The final stage should carry more marks than the penultimate stage.
- Explore the integration of self and peer review. Some student responses requested more detailed personalised feedback, which is not realistic but also perhaps creates overdependency on staff feedback instead of critical self-evaluation or peer feedback, which might be usefully combined with tutor or lecturer feedback

References

Y1Feedback (2016). *Technology-Enabled Feedback in the First Year: A Synthesis of the Literature*. Available from y1feedback.ie

Contact



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