**‘Excited’ yet ‘Paralysing’: The highs and lows of the feedback process**

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Feedback is fundamental to student learning, and yet it is consistently identified as the most problematic aspect of the higher education experience, both across and beyond the UK. Research has identified misaligned perceptions of feedback between markers and students, and has tended to focus on espoused rather than actual experiences of the feedback process. Furthermore, research has tended to concentrate either on students’ or markers’ perceptions of feedback, rather than the interaction between them and how they interpret the same piece of feedback. Consequently, research that focuses on the construction of meaning through actual feedback practices between markers and students within their natural pedagogic environment, has been called for. The SEDA Research and Evaluation small grant enabled an exploratory investigation of the feedback process in order to illuminate the lived experiences of feedback from both the marker and students’ perspective. This was achieved by exploring the messages conveyed by markers and received by their students, and how shared meaning can be co-constructed through dialogue using think aloud, interview and joint interview data.

Thematic analysis resulted in two overarching but interrelated themes: 1. Affective Filter; and 2. Expectations. The Affective Filter theme focused on the emotional reactions of both students and markers to the feedback process, and the impact that these emotions have on behaviour. The Expectations theme focused on the struggle that both students and markers have in understanding each other’s expectations and how feedback can both help and hinder this process. Findings indicate that emotive language pervaded the data and that the affective dimension acts as a filter for engagement with the feedback process, and can serve to prevent dialogic feedback due to disengagement from written feedback and student concerns about emotions being a distraction from learning. Engagement in the research, particularly the joint interviews, supported dialogue around the feedback process. This served not only to support the translation of feedback comments and the development of shared understanding between student and marker, but also served to externalise the tacit knowledge underpinning marker experiences of producing feedback, and students experiences of engaging with that feedback. The research process also supported students to revisit and engage with feedback, and to link it back to their work and their future development as learners. As a result, the findings add weight to the call for a shift from a transmission-based view of feedback, towards dialogic feedback, in which the relational and affective dimensions of the relationship are central to the sustainability of the feedback process.