

Title: **How does student attainment influence feedback?**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- 1) categorise different types of feedback comments and their usefulness
- 2) identify how student attainment influences feedback from markers

Session Outline

This session draws on an ongoing project to investigate how student attainment influences feedback on written assignments.

Comments on assignments are feedback only when they contain enough information to alter the gap between actual and desired performance (Ramaprasad, 1983). Whilst it can be argued that stronger students should be encouraged to perform beyond expectations, this definition implies that weaker students will require more or better feedback as they have a larger gap to alter.

Walker (2009) investigated the usefulness of feedback comments offered to students on their written assignments. This project builds on Walker's findings to investigate variation in feedback given to students with different levels of attainment. Using Brown and Glover's (2006) classification of feedback, it might be expected that weaker students will need more "explanation" feedback in order to fill the attainment gap to achieve excellence, whilst "indication" comments may be suitable for stronger students who are able to explore a topic and develop understanding more independently, and possibly beyond the required level of attainment.

This session will consider the feedback given to students achieving different levels of attainment in their undergraduate written assignments. Specifically it will address the question: Do markers offer more explanation comments to weaker students?

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

0 – 10 mins introduction to the session and scene setting

10 – 20 mins delegates will be presented with very short extracts from student assignments and asked to add comments. (Extracts will be selected with a cross disciplinary group in mind) These will be displayed on large posters around the room (or in small groups on different tables) and comments added using post it notes of different colours.

20 – 25 mins plenary session drawing together comments on number and type of comments on each extract.

25 – 33 mins presentation on the findings from the project

33 – 40 mins Reconsideration of the extract comments in light of project findings.

40-45 mins – closing comments and Q&A

References

Brown, E. and Glover, C. (2006) Evaluating written feedback. In *Innovative assessment in Higher Education*, eds. Bryan, C. and Clegg, K. p81-91. Abingdon, Routledge

Ramaprasad, A. (1983) On the definition of feedback. *Behavioural Science* Vol:28, p4 – 13

Walker, M. (2009) An investigation into written comments on assignments: do students find them usable? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* Vol:34 Issue 1, p67 - 78