



Keele
University

PROJECT STAF: Technology supporting assessment and feedback

JISC

The successes, strengths and lessons learned during the project

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Successes

- We have promoted an institutional discussion on embedding existing technology into assessment and feedback processes, prompting and supporting many specific cases of adoption in modules and programmes, and setting in train institutional discussions about standardising assessment processes.
- We prompted a review of some assessment regulations that were widely misunderstood.
- We developed a portfolio of three assessment and feedback processes based on sound educational principles, and promoted these across the institution.
- We supported a score of innovative assessment projects across the institution using different methods of providing feedback to students, by supporting enthusiast academics, who are already influencing their colleagues and in some cases publishing the projects nationally.
- A positive cultural shift towards using technology in assessment, in many parts of the university

Strengths

- Our recommended processes will give cost savings for students and academic schools in printing and space, and savings in staff time once new processes are embedded and familiar.
- We increased awareness of potentially useful technology for giving student feedback, especially audio files and Turnitin's Grademark
- Saving staff time through more efficient processes, once up-front training and practice is accomplished
- Business process improvements: Revised assessment 'business processes' will give a more consistent student experience between programmes and modules – for example, most feedback will be delivered through the VLE - reducing institutional risks of unsatisfied students
- Increased resilience of the new assessment processes
- Increased functionality; more options for providing feedback are available, especially audio.
- Improved interoperability between institutional information systems is being planned
- Reduction of redundant data
- Improved performance towards institutional targets, for example, student retention, space usage, and maintenance of quality in the face of worsening staff/student ratios.
- Improvements to institutional governance; some regulations are being improved.

Key lessons learned

- A multilevel approach is essential and it is important to involve the major stakeholders
- Institutional change is slow and variable especially when some working practices have been the same for many years, but nonetheless consulting with academics and administrators and taking their concerns seriously allows us to propose institution-wide change that is acceptable to many.
- Giving technology, with support, to academics to use in assessment is effective and gains goodwill when wider changes are being discussed.
- Flexible Support for academic staff in using technology is important, to guide them through the initial learning curve.

Disadvantages and drawbacks

- The resistance to change in a few academic areas was very strong and not susceptible to the influence of a short project, even with senior management support.
- Recommendations that were acceptable or even already in place in some academic areas were unacceptable in others.
- The use of the VLE to deliver feedback was an advantage to some staff, students and administrators however it was a considered a disadvantage to other academics
- It was surprisingly difficult to give technology to many academics 'without strings'; the major barriers to change and innovation are usually not lack of technology.
- One impediment to the project was having unclear or unusable regulations that weren't followed inconsistently by schools. They clearly needed revision and we had to assume how they would be revised when we were designing new processes. They are only now being revised (by Planning and Academic Management) as the project ends.