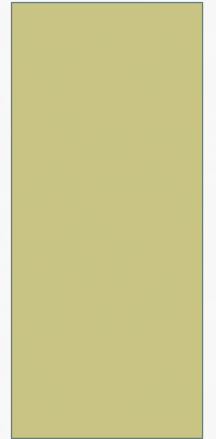


ASSESSMENT, FEEDBACK, FEED FORWARD

PETER D'SENA, HERTFORDSHIRE

VENTRILOQUISED BY MARCUS COLLINS, LBORO
[WITH THANKS TO LEIF JERRAM, MANCHESTER]



Task 1: What is assessment
for?

SOME PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

- Diagnostic
- Formative/instructive
- Monitoring engagement/progress
- Ranking
- Summative

SOME CHALLENGES WITH ASSESSMENT

- The relevance of the task to the particular learning objectives, specific knowledge and to the broader aims of the course;
- Creating a 'test' that is suitable for the 'skills'
- Creating a test which is suitable for all groups and takes account of different learning styles;
- Diversification of tasks;
- What are the implications of the **massification** of education (WP);
- Development and testing of skills (e.g. ICT/presentation, etc.);
- Is marking a necessarily boring, repetitive task?
- Workload (both for academics and students);
- The use of formative as well as summative assessment;

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT: LINKING PARTS OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

1

- Learning Objectives (LOs)
- [consider how students learn these]

2

- Assessment and Criteria for Assessment should be fit for purpose
- [consider how well tasks both support learning and allow both you and them to know that they are an adequate test]

3

- Feedback **and Feed Forward**
- [do your comments relate (a) to the LOs; (b) give them actionable commands, so that they can move forward?]

TASK 2

What types of assessment do you use, or have been subjected to?

Are there any other types you'd like to try out? Why?

ASSESSMENT INCLUDES:

- Multiple choice
- Seen exam
- Unseen exam
- Open book
- In-class
- Essay/report
- Portfolio
- Web page creation
- Film making
- Work-based learning
- Peer assessment
- Self assessment
- Log/journal
- Dissertation
- Presentation
- Performance
- Oral
- Attendance
- Participation (inc. electronic)
- ...

Task 3: What are the pros
and cons of the sample
feedback?

Would you do or say
anything differently?

TASK 3: MARKS ON PAGES – A CRITIQUE

- Look at the pages copied from a student essay.
- Evaluate the annotations on the page.
 1. Is it clear what they mean?
 2. Is it clear what the students should do with them?
 3. Is it clear which are the urgent matters for the learner to deal with and which are trivial?
 4. Is it clear what their relationship is to the written comments students also receive?
 5. Is it clear what their usefulness is to the marker?

If not, why bother? Let it go ...

MARKING: SAVING TIME, IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS –
ALL THE FOLLOWING IN THIS PRESENTATION IS FROM LEIF
JERRAM'S WORK.

- Is marking a chore?
Why is it a chore?
- Are there institutional issues/drivers?
- Do you assume that students are as engaged as we are in the detail?
- Do you have to give detailed feedback?
- Do you put comments on the essay script (dialogic marking?)
- Are on-essay comments harmful?
Can they be interpreted as such?
- Do they understand what you mean (by your comments), e.g. 'refine your argument'.

PROBLEMS WITH EXISTING MARKING TECHNIQUES: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

- **Time consuming.**
- **Institutional focus** – justifying the mark given.
- **Functional confusion** – academics often model feedback as ‘intellectual exchange’ rather than as a recipe for change – which is how many learners see it.
- **Too much detail** – any learner can only realistically improve 3 or so areas of their work.
- **On-Essay comments** – time consuming, neutral at best, harmful at worst – sometimes very harmful.
- **Impenetrable language for students** – ‘tighten your argument’, ‘refine your analysis’, ‘adopt a critical position’, ‘improve your signposting’.

SOLUTION: FEEDFORWARD

- Let it go! Acknowledge you don't have to correct every 'fault', just the most important ones. **SELECT YOUR COMMENTS WISELY.**
- Ban yourself from comments on text – you work quicker and written feedback becomes more effective. **REDUCE YOUR WORKLOAD.**
- Max. 3-4 areas to improve – psychological and practical effect. **BE REALISTIC.**
- Give **ACTIONABLE COMMANDS** – criticisms in form of command for next piece of work – thus it faces 'forward' not 'back'. **BE CLEAR.**
- Externals can understand these just fine. 'Next time, read your work out very slowly to see where it's not making sense' or 'Next time, you will need to make sure you research the topic thoroughly in both the University Library and the journal databases'. These are both easily understandable criticisms of past work to any credible examiners.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD AND BAD PRACTICE.

- On the next few slides, you will see an example of a real 'backward' facing comment: one for each of the usual type of assessment criterion you find in HE.
- Most comments contain impenetrable (to students) observations-cum-criticisms.
- All of the lousy criticisms are made up.
- In each case, the poor comment has been rephrased as an **ACTIONABLE COMMAND** (remember that phrase).

EXAMPLES OF CHANGE: **STRUCTURE** **AND ARGUMENT** – THE OLD DAYS

- ‘The clarity of the argument became obscure in some sections, notably in the middle of the essay, which is a shame because you adopted some lively critical positions towards the end, which only really came to fruition in the conclusion’.
- BECOMES:
- For your next work, make sure that you explain your argument to your reader clearly in each section – on pp. 4-5 it became unclear.

EXAMPLES OF CHANGE: KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- ‘There was a lack of critical reading of the secondary material here which led to a rather narrative structure, particularly when getting bogged down in the details of the more radical aspects of Burke’s parliamentary career’.
- BECOMES:
- Next time, make sure you highlight for the reader the conclusions you wish to draw from each specific case study – you did not do this in the section on Burke’s career.

EXAMPLES OF CHANGE: USE OF SOURCES

- ‘Your analysis of class was hampered by the fact that you did not use Marx directly while using his terminology, and did not explore how Marx’s model of class has been revised in the last thirty years’.
- BECOMES:
- When explaining key concepts in essays, like class, double-check with tutors that you have read the key texts that define them.

EXAMPLES OF CHANGE: **STYLE AND PRESENTATION**

- ‘Generally clear, but some syntactical errors in places and a convoluted, slightly pretentious style when discussing other historians’ positions. Grammatical glitches disrupted the flow – esp. commas. Footnotes largely good, but sometimes anomalies’.
 - BECOMES:
- Read your work out loud slowly to hear when you are not making sense; OR
- Go online and look up what a ‘comma splice’ is and how to fix it; OR
- Double check the rules for footnotes on the student portal and make sure that every footnote is done according to the rules.
 - BUT NOT ALL OF THE ABOVE!

MARKING: GIVING ESSAY FEEDBACK/FEED FORWARD

- Task 6: feed ***forward***

- **Again using the student essay, can you:**
 - (a) decide on what the one piece of praise is most useful in each of the 4 areas of assessment;
 - (b) Decide on what ***one*** area of priority the student should focus on for their ***next*** essay.
 - (c) Give one clear ***actionable command for change***, for each of the four headings for the student to deploy ***in their next essay***.

SOME THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS IN:

- Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, 1998, 2000)
- Self evaluation and reflection (Knowles, 1980, 1989); Moon, 1999, 2006)
- Self assessment (Boud, 1986)
- Formative and summative assessment (Dylan & Wiliam, 1998)
- Using a variety of learning and teaching strategies to take account of different learning styles (Kolb & Fry, 1975, Kolb, 1984)
- Modelling. Rehearsal, practice and student activities (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).