Feedback must have an impact on learning

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Overview

- What are we preparing students for?
  - How do we know if we are doing well?
- Shifting feedback to a learner-centred perspective
- Different generations of feedback thinking
- Case studies of effective feedback
- The notion of feedback literacy

Challenging old ideas about feedback

The project: "Feedback for Learning: Closing the Assessment Loop"

Asks

"What works, when, and why?"
and
"What is enabling excellent feedback?"

Large-scale, mixed-methods study

- Informed by literature and expertise from team, evaluator and reference group
- Producing workshop materials, cases of effective feedback and a framework

feedbackforlearning.org

This is not feedback

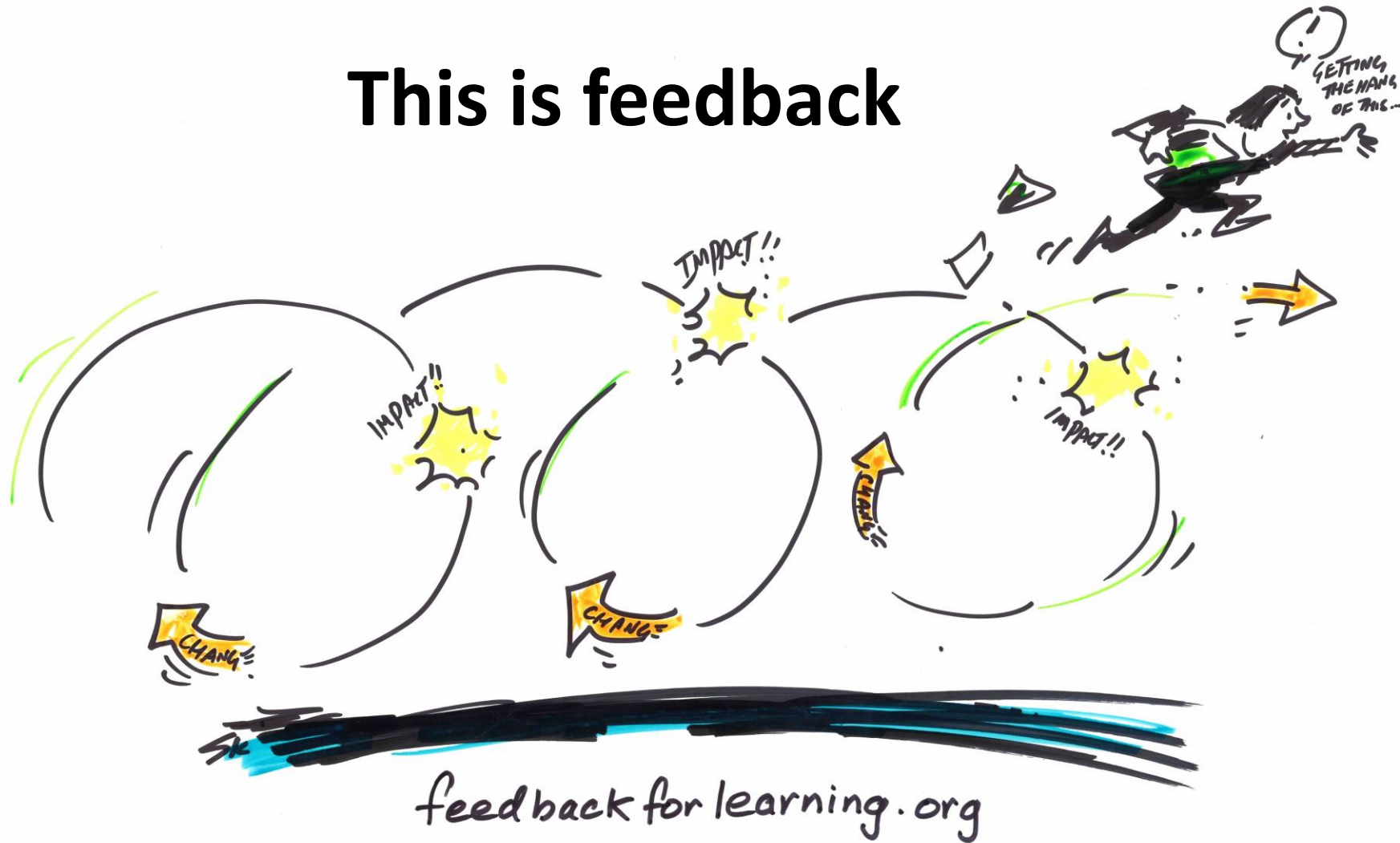"I left feedback on their final essays, which they never collected"

Feedback definition

"Feedback is a **process**

in which **learners make sense of information**

about their **performance**

and **use** it

to **enhance** the quality of their **work** or **learning strategies**."

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This is feedback

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Feedback underpins most of the most powerful influences on learning

The Black Box of Tertiary Assessment: An Impending Revolution

John Hattie
Visible Learning Labs, University of Auckland

Abstract

There has been a formative assessment revolution that has swept our compulsory schooling, and is about to descend on higher education. It has the potential to make major changes as to how assessment is undertaken, with more emphasis on "feedback from assessment" or "assessment for learning" (alongside the traditional "assessment of learning"), using assessment to improve and change what and how we teach. Students familiar with the power of this assessment model in high school (especially since the introduction of NCEA) will expect and demand different forms of feedback from assessment from their lecturers. At the same time, more international comparisons of universities will place pressure on universities to enhance their teaching and quality of assessment. This chapter reviews the multiple outcomes of higher education, the importance of alignment of curricula and assessment, outlines these newer models of assessment, reviews 'What works best' relating to teaching and learning in tertiary settings, and outlines the effects of newer assessment models for selecting higher education students.

(Hattie, 2009)

The problem with feedback

- Learners complain that they do not get enough of it

- Both parties describe it as confronting

- Both parties agree that it is very important

- Educators resent that although they put considerable time into generating feedback, learners take little notice of it

- Educators typically think their feedback information is more useful than their learners think it is

- Feedback is typically 'telling' and diagnostic in flavour, often lacking strategies for improvement, and often lacking opportunities for further task attempts

Ende 1995, Hattie 2009, Boud and Molloy 2013, Johnson & Molloy 2017

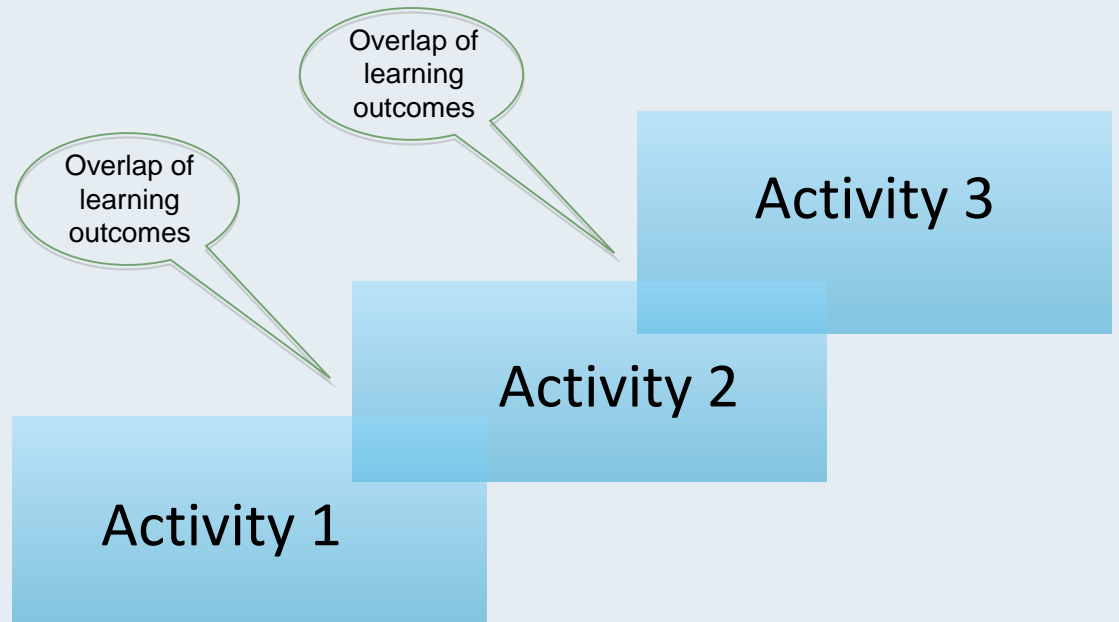# Evolution of feedback designs: Mark 0

- Hopefully useful information
- Given/done to receivers
  - "The lecturer gave feedback to the student"
- On completion of their work

(Boud & Molloy, 2013)

Evolution of feedback designs: Mark 1

- Hopefully useful information
- Given/done to receivers
- Sequenced to require improvement
- Given in time to allow for improved work

Overlap of learning outcomes

Overlap of learning outcomes

Activity 3

Activity 2

Activity 1

Evolution of feedback designs: Mark 2

- Feedback Mark 1 (ie. noticing student actions) plus:
  - Dialogic
  - Participatory and agentic
  - Peers, self, experts
  - Focus on change
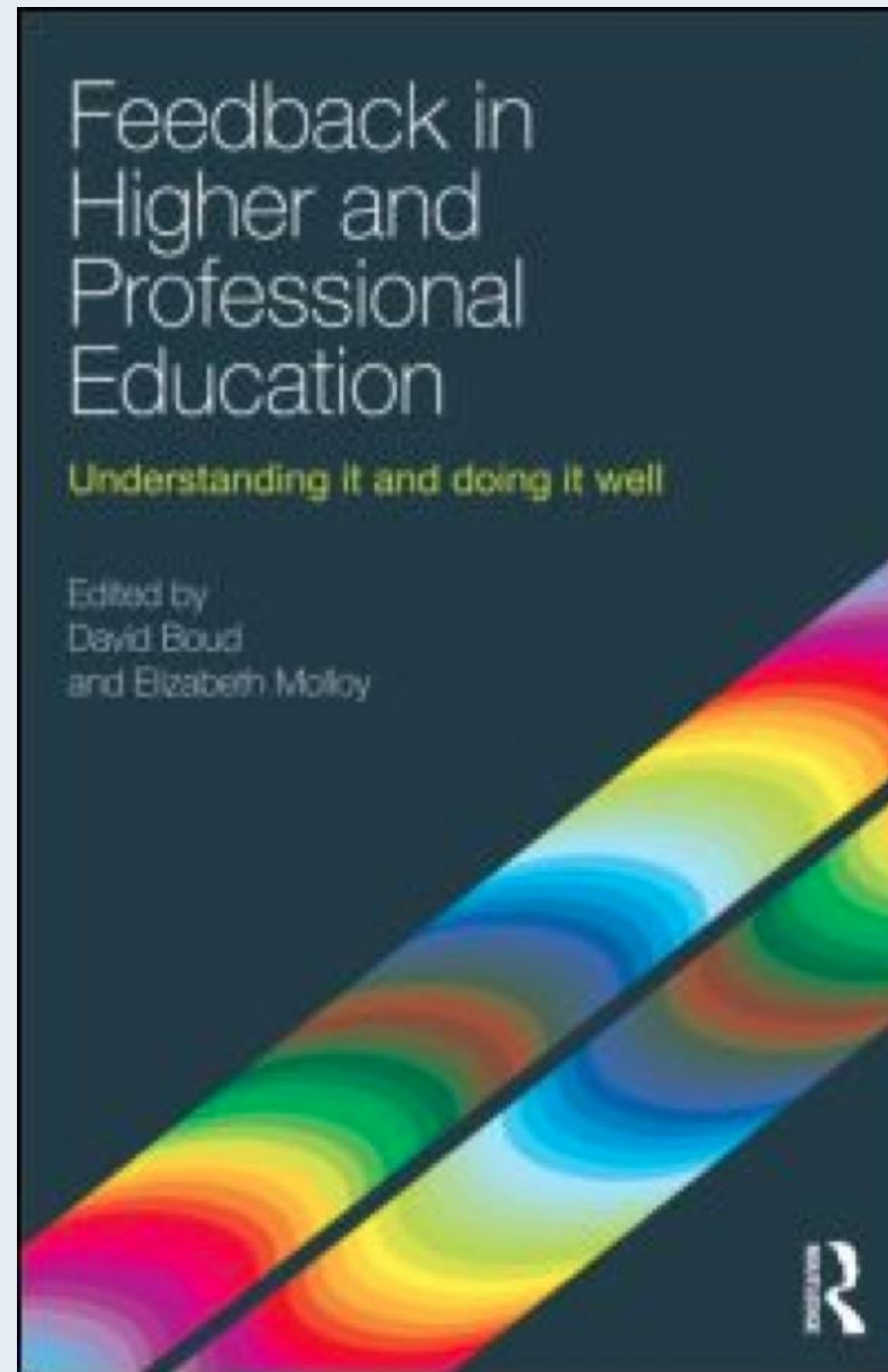 - Development of evaluative judgement
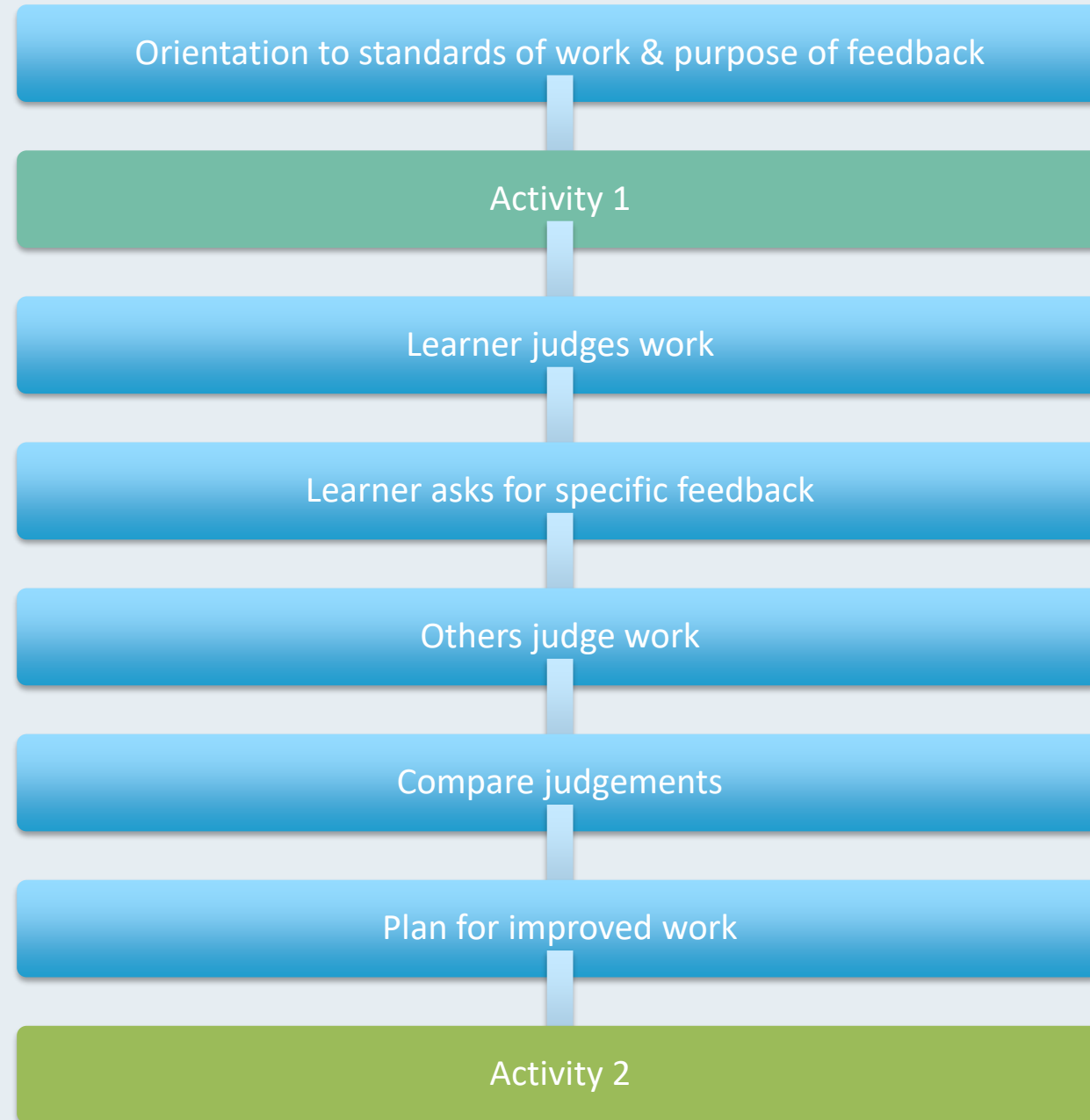
David Boud and Elizabeth Molloy (Eds)(2013)

Feedback in Higher and Professional Education: Understanding and Doing it Well.

London: Routledge

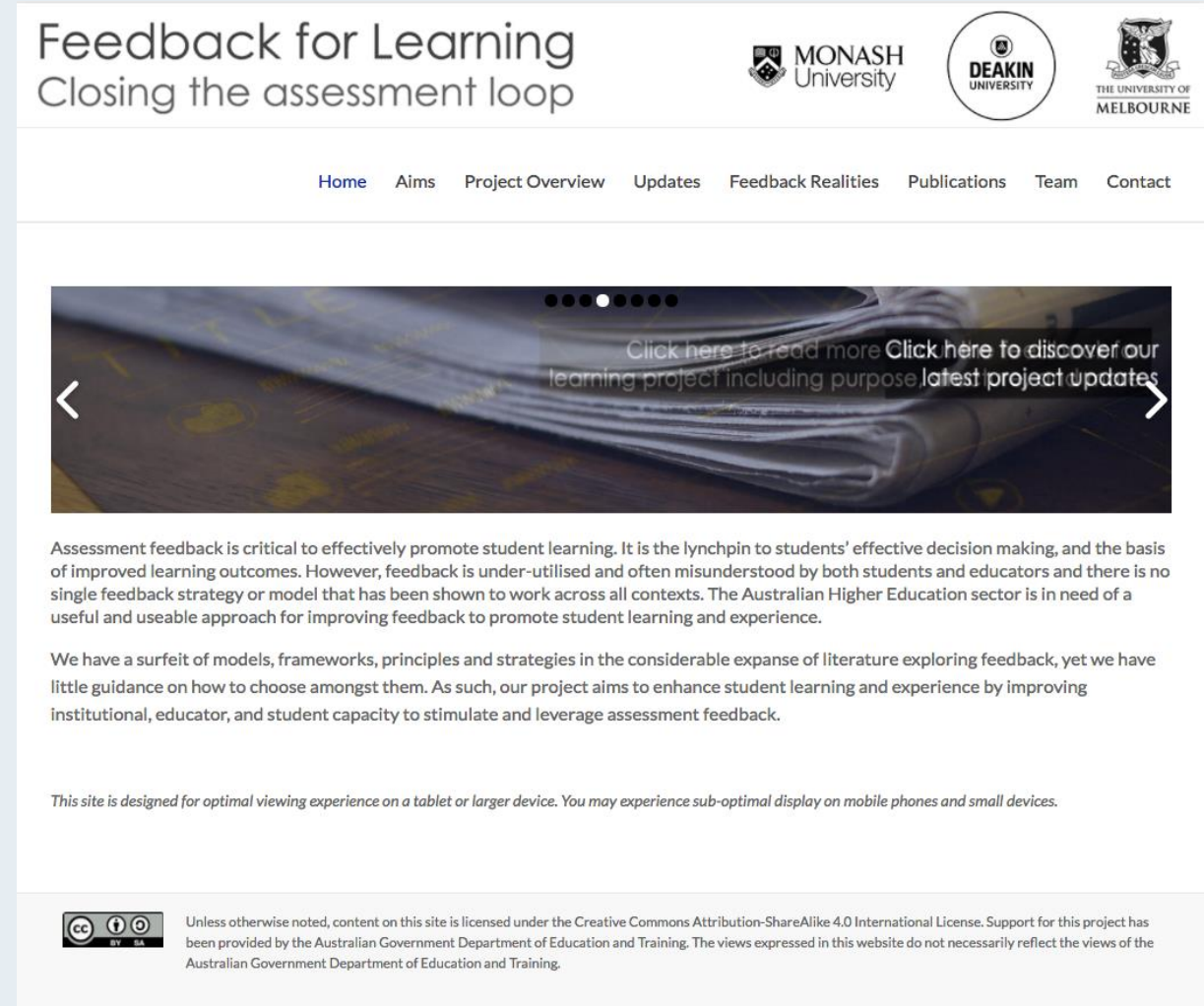# Case studies of effective feedback

- Surveys and focus groups with educators and students identified cases where feedback was working well

- In-depth interviews with multiple teaching staff and students to understand what is working well and why

- Cases are useful exemplars of effective feedback – but also the lessons learnt in enabling feedback

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Case studies of effective feedback

1. Developmental and diverse feedback:
   helping first-year learners to transition into higher education
2. Personalised feedback at scale:
   moderating audio feedback in first-year
3. In-class feedback:
   a flipped teaching model in first-year
4. Authentic feedback through social media in second year
5. Layers and loops:
   scaffolding feedback opportunities in first-year biology
6. Multiple prompt strategies across contexts:
   feedback in classroom, lab and professional practice
7. Investing in educators:
   enhancing feedback practices through the development of strong tutoring teams

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Key points about feedback

- Feedback provides one of few ways in which courses are tailored to the individual needs of students

- Feedback processes need to be carefully designed
  - Giving comments to students is *only one part* of a feedback process
  - Without active involvement from students feedback can't work
  - Unless the loop is completed, feedback has not occurred

- Feedback should be judged in terms of its effect on student learning

Ten feedback strategies to make a difference

1. Build in a following task in which students can apply feedback info from the first
2. Have students identify and state what kind of comments they would like
3. Have students respond to feedback information with a plan for what they are going to do about it
4. Have students judge their work against criteria or a rubric before they hand it in
5. Facilitate peer feedback sessions
6. Distinguish between mark justification and feedback information when making comments
7. Move detailed feedback comments from late in the semester to earlier when students can act of them
8. Focus on comments for improvement rather than corrections
9. Point to models and exemplars of good work
10. Train students to be feedback literate (ie. What feedback is and how they can make it work)

Draw inspiration and find many more strategies from the case studies of excellent practice at
feedbackforlearning.org

The notion of feedback literacy

Feedback literacy:

"the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies".

Key features identified:

- appreciating feedback
- making judgments
- managing affect
- taking action.

Carless and Boud (2018)

Our study

Research question:

How can learners demonstrate feedback literate behaviours or approaches within their courses of study?

Approach

- Secondary analysis of a student survey at two large Australian universities (n=4514), plus focus groups exploring student responses to feedback practices
- Looked for expressions/indicators of feedback literacy in open-ended statements
- Iterative development of framework items checking against student views

The Learner Feedback Literacy Framework

A learner exhibiting well developed feedback literacy:

- *Section 1: Commits to feedback as improvement*
- *Section 2: Appreciates feedback as an active process*
- *Section 3: Elicits information to improve learning*
- *Section 4: Processes feedback information*
- *Section 5: Acknowledges and works with emotions*
- *Section 6. Acknowledges feedback as a reciprocal process*
- *Section 7: Enacts outcomes of processing of feedback information*

Section 1: Commits to feedback as improvement

1. Establishes a disposition to use feedback to continually improve their work

2. Acknowledges that mastery/expertise is not fixed, but can change over time and context

1.1 Establishes a disposition to use feedback to continually improve their work

"So anytime that there is actual feedback, I tend to take it on board. So it is not like - I don't say, "Oh I'm going to change my behaviour because this one comment hit me hard somehow". It is more, 'Okay, so obviously I've got something here that is deficient. I need to remedy that and then I'll do it' "

D_UG_STEM

Section 2: Appreciates feedback as an active process

3. Acknowledges the role of feedback processes in improving work and refining judgements and learning strategies

4. Recognises that effective learners are active in identifying their own learning needs

5. Anticipates their own learning needs and communicates these to appropriate others

6. Understands the role of standards and criteria in judging the work of oneself and others

7. Identifies that they need to complete a feedback loop for information provided by others to be effective

8. Recognises that feedback should build capacity to develop their own evaluative judgment over time and over different learning outcomes

2.7. Identifies that they need to complete a feedback loop for information provided by others to be effective

"I think it's helpful when the first assessment task kind of helps with the second one. Where they're two different formats, you don't really have another chance to improve what you've been given to work on. I had a lab report in our first assignment was to just write the introduction, and submit that. And we got feedback for that. And then the last assignment was to submit the whole lab report. So you actually had the chance to include the feedback and, like, my comments had noted that they could see I had taken the feedback and applied it, which was good to see that that works."

D_UG&PG_Health

Section 3: Elicits information to improve learning

9. Realises that feedback requires active elicitation and does not wait for others to provide unsolicited information

10. Uses a wide repertoire of strategies to elicit appropriate information from others to assist learning

11. Considers feedback from multiple sources—eg. teachers, peers, practitioners— to provide a different scope and opportunities for learning

12. Recognises that different stakeholders may have different perspectives, experience and levels of investment in the process

13. Engages in dialogue to elicit useful information about standards, criteria and the nature of good work

14. Seeks out exemplars as a way to make sense of standards of work

15. Seeks cues from the environment and the task itself that indicate the appropriateness of work

Section 4: Processes feedback information

16. Identifies and utilizes standards, criteria and exemplars
17. Recognises and interprets language peculiar to education containing important cues about the task or related outcomes
18. Selectively accepts and rejects views of others in coming to their own appraisals 18.
19. Extracts key actionable information from others, which may require prompting for more detail or clarity

4.16. Identifies and utilizes standards, criteria and exemplars

"I was very happy with the unit because we got constant feedback and also sample answers like it contained what the tutors were expecting from us, like kind of an answer they were expecting. So, apart from feedback, I think it's always better to have something in hand to look at to improve on it, but they also help us improve by looking at the sample. "

D_UG_non-STEM

Section 5: Acknowledges and works with emotions

20. Demonstrates volition and sensitivity in approaching others to elicit suggestions and to continue dialogue with them as needed

21. Demonstrates openness to receiving comments from others without displaying defensiveness

22. Builds trust in facilitating honest and meaningful information exchanges with others

23. Recognises that information comes in different modes with different capacities to mobilise emotions, eg. individual and group, written and through various other media, structured and informal

24. Manages the emotional challenges of receiving and sifting information which may be unwelcome or misjudged

25. Considers the influence of high stakes assessment on the way learners might engage in candid dialogue about their own performance

Section 6. Acknowledges feedback as a reciprocal process

26. Recognises that they have roles as both user and provider of information and that skill in one role helps in the other

27. Composes useful information for others about the nature of their work

28. Exhibits cultural sensitivity through not assuming that others are likely to react in the same way as oneself in receiving and responding to information

Section 7: Enacts outcomes of processing of feedback information

29. Responds to feedback information from others through goal-setting and planning how it might be utilized in future work

30. Analyses and records information in appropriate forms for the purposes of acting on it subsequently

31. Monitors their own progress to discern where feedback might be helpful and to influence the setting of new learning goals

Ways of using the framework

- Design elements of feedback literacy into the first year of programs
- Position students as active learners through all pedagogic activities
- Identify why some students don't seem to benefit from feedback comments
- Develop an instrument to enable:
  - the development of feedback literacy to be tracked over time in courses and beyond
  - The evaluation of certain tasks that are designed to build capabilities in feedback

Challenges for feedback literacy development

1. *Seeing feedback as the business of learners (and soon to be, employees)*

2. *Shifting the perspectives of teachers from 'information providers' to facilitators of learner feedback literacy*

3. *Working with, and managing affect, as part of feedback*

4. *Creating pedagogical designs to promote feedback literacy*

Conclusions

- To improve feedback, we need to develop students' skills in understanding and engaging in feedback processes
- If feedback literacy is important, we have to be able to recognise it, operationalise it and work out how to build it
- While students can become more feedback literate, the foundations for it need to be laid from the very beginning of a course.
- It is likely that some aspects of feedback literacy are more difficult to achieve than others- this may impact how activities are designed and sequenced throughout programs

Limitations

- Our survey results have been used to imply what students would think feedback literacy to be. They are not draw from responses about direct questions about this phenomenon.

- The deductive nature of the analysis, being coding against an analytical framework may have meant that we missed other potentially important aspects of feedback literacy that have not yet been conceived by the literature or researchers in our project team.

- Sampling- students may be more vigilant and proactive (and possibly by association be relatively 'feedback literate' students). Therefore the behaviours they describe relating to understanding, soliciting and using feedback information to their advantage may be more sophisticated than the broader population of students in higher education.

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