

# Designed to have an impact: feedback revisited

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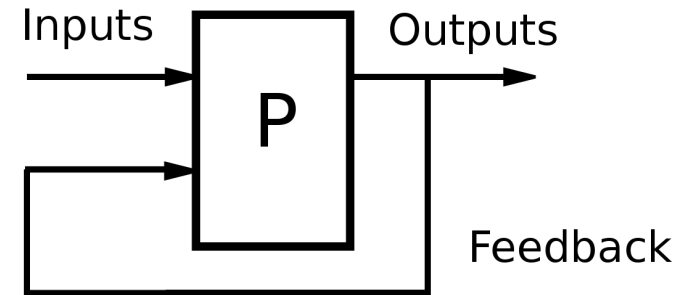
# Overview

*Where were we five years ago?*

- A. The feedback revolution
- B. Understanding feedback usefully

*Where are we now?*

- C. Engaging learners in feedback processes
- D. Designing feedback that works
- E. Developing feedback literacy



There has been a shift in what we think of as effective feedback



# 'Feedback' in everyday discourse

- Adjunct to 'marking'
- Undertaken by teachers on learners
- Hope that it might be taken up
- But, no direct response is required or expected



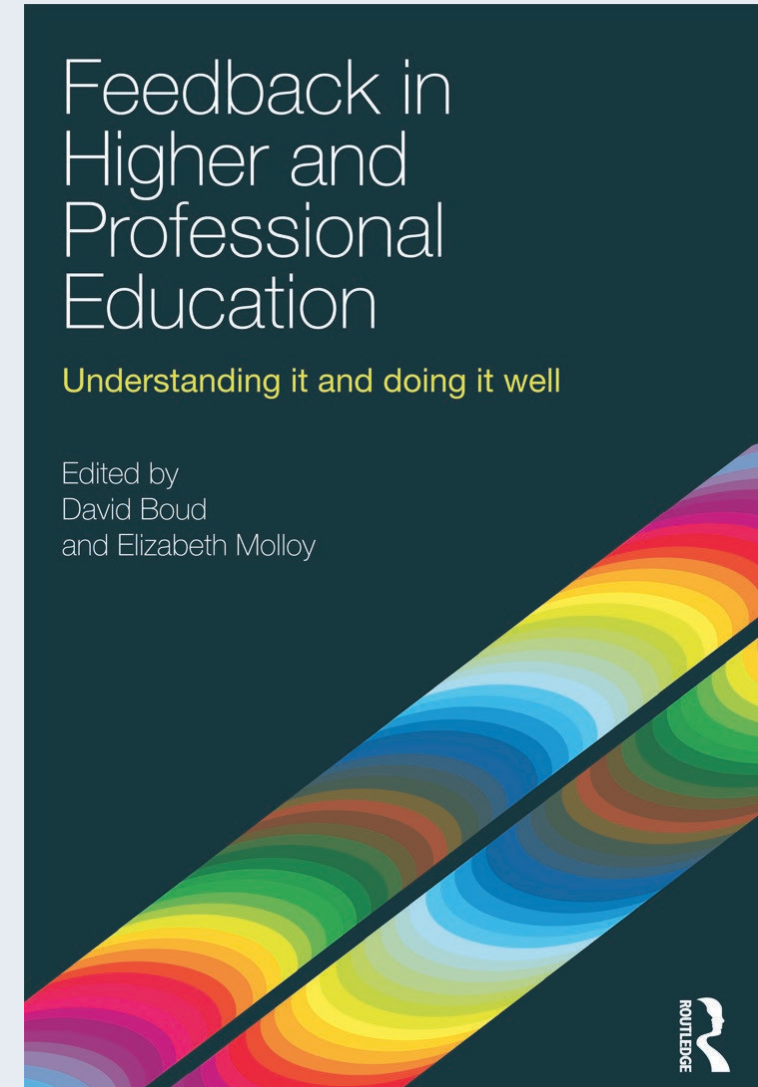


# This is *not* feedback

“I left feedback on their assignments, which they never collected”

# A. The feedback revolution

- A major conceptual shift in the past decade mainly led by scholars in Australia, Hong Kong and the UK.
- From a *teacher-centric* to a *learning-centric* perspective
- Unless inputs (from others) lead to worthwhile effects on learning, feedback has not occurred, it is merely ‘hopefully useful information’.



## B. Understanding feedback usefully

# Need for a new definition of feedback

“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*.”





# Shifting the discourse of feedback

- Not an input, but a process
- Not controlled by others' needs, but by learners' needs
- Not about past work, but what can be done in the future
- Judged primarily on student actions, not teacher actions
- Teachers have a vital role as designers and facilitators of feedback processes

# Disentangling feedback from grading

- Not all student tasks should be marked
  - at least in a way that leads to a permanent record on students' files or generates a GPA
- Feedback can occur with assessed or non-assessed work
  - They are not synonymous nor need to occur together
- Not all assessed work needs to be linked to a feedback process
  - eg. end of course products
- Feedback is needed when students can do something about the information they receive, not when they can't

# An important distinction

## *Mark justification*

- Judgements and comments about what students have completed
- Essentially backward-looking

## *Feedback information*

- Comments about what students can do to improve their work
- Essentially forward-looking

## The need to disentangle assessment and feedback in higher education

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### ABSTRACT

In contemporary higher education systems, the processes of assessment and feedback are often seen as coexisting activities. As a result, they have become entangled in both policy and practice, resulting in a conceptual and practical blurring of their unique purposes. In this paper, we present a critical examination of the issues created by the entanglement of assessment and feedback, arguing that it is important to ensure that the legitimate purposes of both feedback and assessment are not compromised by inappropriate conflation of the two. We situate our argument in the shifting conceptual landscape of feedback, where there is an increasing emphasis on students being active players in feedback loops, working with and applying information from others to future tasks, rather than regarding feedback as a mechanism of transmission of information by teachers. We surface and critically discuss the problems created by the entanglement of assessment and feedback: overemphasis on grades; comments justifying grades rather than providing feedback too late to be useful; feedback subordinated to assessment in course design; overemphasis on documentation leading to downgrading of feedback created by requirements for evidence. We then propose a series of strategies for the reorientation of feedback, through models that give priority to learning cycles. We conclude by offering practical suggestions for practice that seek to engage with the distinct purposes of assessment and feedback, and to disentangle assessment and feedback.

### KEYWORDS

Assessment; feedback; summative; formative; students

# Is this distinction needed for all assessment events?

- No, marks are not needed for events that are only assessment for learning
- However, students appreciate knowledge of how they are tracking towards meeting outcomes on which they will be judged. Indicative marks may be used so long as they track performance against learning outcomes.
- Marks can never substitute for actionable feedback information

# What does the activity of feedback do?

- It bridges the gap between teaching and learning, *ensuring the curriculum is adjusted* to the needs and learning of students
- It cannot be enacted without the engagement of participants—students and teachers.
- It only makes sense, and it is necessarily stimulated by what students *actually do*.

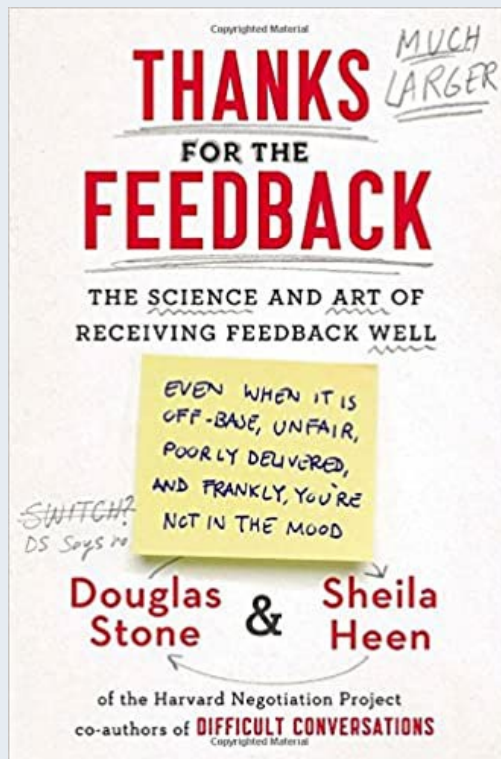
*Questions and discussion*

## C. Engaging learners in feedback processes

- Feedback should not start with the receipt of unsolicited comments
- Students as initiators, not teachers
- Students start and complete acts of feedback

# Train students in eliciting feedback information

Feedback seeking behaviour is well established in the business literature



ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION  
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1733491>

 **Routledge**  
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## What can higher education learn from feedback seeking behaviour in organisations? Implications for feedback literacy

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### ABSTRACT

While there is now extensive research on informal feedback seeking behaviour by employees in organisations, this literature has received limited attention in higher education. This paper addresses the gap between the two fields of feedback literacy and feedback seeking behaviour. Key organisational feedback seeking behaviour concepts including employee intentions in seeking feedback, the practice of weighing costs and benefits before seeking feedback, the qualities sought in potential feedback providers, feedback seeker characteristics that influence feedback seeking behaviour, and a range of feedback seeking methods and outcomes are outlined and their potential implications for feedback literacy are considered. The paper draws on feedback seeking behaviour literature to propose a research agenda for establishing a stronger and more nuanced understanding of feedback literacy in higher education.

### KEYWORDS

Feedback seeking behaviour; feedback literacy; eliciting feedback



# Eliciting information

- Students start by communicating the kinds of information they would find useful on their work
- This places students in the role of active learners
- Teachers (and others) respond to this request regardless of whatever else they may wish to communicate to students

# The feedback contract

- Feedback only works through trust and mutual understanding
- Providing unsolicited feedback information is commonplace in education but can be offensive elsewhere
- What is the warrant for providing information to another person?
- What kind of permission is needed for what purposes?
- Knowing the goals/expectations of the recipient is a necessary feature

# Is this enough to improve feedback?

While it is the overall feedback process that makes a difference, the information we communicate to learners is still very important.

However,

- Some kinds of comments lead to negative outcomes
- Many feedback processes do not lead to improved learning



## D. Designing feedback that works

Feedback processes are the single most powerful influence on learning.

They enable courses to be tailored to the needs of each student.

Feedback processes are not an afterthought.

Conscious design of location, types of input and subsequent activities

Feedback inputs need to occur when they are most likely to have the greatest effect.

For example, during a learning sequence, not at the end of a course



# Designing opportunities for feedback

- *Start* with the student
- Provide opportunities for *action*
- Build *early* feedback opportunities
- Construct *feedback-rich environments*
- Facilitate *co-construction of understanding* between learners and others
- Encourage *multi-source feedback*
- Explicitly prepare learners to acknowledge and *work with affect* in feedback

Henderson, M., Molloy, E. ,Ajjawi, R.,and Boud, D.,(2019)..



## The Impact of Feedback in Higher Education

Improving Assessment Outcomes for Learners

Edited by Michael Henderson · Roba Ajjawi  
David Boud · Elizabeth Molloy

palgrave  
macmillan

# Designing feedback processes

- Don't leave thinking about feedback until after other decisions are made
- At which points is a feedback intervention most important?
- How many cycles of feedback, for which purposes, can realistically be included in the course unit?
  - Using inputs from teachers
  - Using peers
  - Using non-humans
- Which subsequent tasks, within the same semester, enable students take action so that the benefits of feedback are realised
- Ensure feedback inputs aid learners' future actions
- How will we recognise that feedback has worked?

# Key questions for excellent feedback practice

## *Design:*

- are tasks positioned within the course to enable feedback to occur and for students to improve their work?
- Are tasks (and what precedes them) designed to stimulate worthwhile learning?

## *Inputs to students:*

- Are comments to students designed to lead to specific improvements in their work/learning strategies?

## *Responses of students:*

- Are they expected from the start of the course/task to be active players?
- Are they necessarily expected to respond to and act on inputs from others to produce improved work?

## *Feedback to teachers*

- Are you monitoring students' work with a view to adjusting the course to create bigger positive effects on their learning?

# Scaffold students into useful practices

- Facilitate students using useful processes
  - comparing different examples of work and eliciting what makes work good
  - comparing their own work with examples/exemplars to identify needed development
- Documenting actions
  - after comparisons record differences/actions needed
  - make needed changes explicit

*See the work of David Nicol on inner feedback, eg.*

Nicol, D. & Kushwah, L. (08 Oct 2023): Shifting feedback agency to students by having them write their own feedback comments, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2023.2265080



# Ten feedback strategies to make a difference

1. Build in a following task where students can utilise feedback information from the first task
2. Have students identify and state what kind of comments they would like on their work
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 on them
8. Focus on comments for improvement rather than corrections
9. Focus on 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](https://feedbackforlearning.org)*

*Questions and discussion*

## E. Building feedback literacy

Do we know what students need to understand and be able to do for feedback?

Do they know?



# Feedback literacy

If students are to play a significant role in feedback processes, they need highly developed feedback literacy

“The understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies”

Carless and Boud (2018)

# 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*

# Improving feedback comments won't improve student feedback literacy






# Learner feedback literacy competencies

## Approach

- Secondary analysis of a large student survey (n=4514) and focus groups to explore student responses to feedback practices
- Looked for expressions/indicators of feedback
- Iterative development of framework items checking against student views

Molloy, Boud and Henderson (2020)

## Developing a learning-centred framework for feedback literacy

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### ABSTRACT

There is an increasing focus on notions of feedback in which students are positioned as active players rather than recipients of information. These discussions have been either conceptual in character or have an empirical focus on designs to support learners in feedback processes. There has been little emphasis on learners' perspectives on, and experiences of, the role they play in such processes and what they need in order to benefit from feedback. This study therefore seeks to identify the characteristics of feedback literacy – that is, how students understand and can utilise feedback for their own learning – by analysing students' views of feedback processes drawing on a substantial data set derived from a study of feedback in two large universities. The analysis revealed seven groupings of learner feedback literacy, including understanding feedback purposes and roles, seeking information, making judgements about work quality, working with emotions, and processing and using information for the benefit of their future work (31 categories in total). By identifying these *realised* components of feedback literacy, in the form of illustrative examples, the emergent set of competencies can enable investigations of the development of feedback literacy and improve feedback designs in courses through alignment to these standards.

### KEYWORDS

Feedback; learner feedback literacy

# The Learner Feedback Literacy Framework

A learner exhibiting well developed feedback literacy:

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



# Ways of using the framework




- Build in the development of feedback literacy to all first-year activities
- Position students as active eliciting learners throughout all pedagogic activities
- Identify why some students don't seem to benefit from feedback comments
- Further research is underway to develop an instrument to enable:
  - tracking of feedback literacy to be tracked over time
  - evaluation of tasks designed to build feedback capabilities

# Mechanisms for embedding feedback literacy

- *Eliciting*
- *Processing*
- *Enacting*



## Eliciting, processing and enacting feedback: mechanisms for embedding student feedback literacy within the curriculum

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### ABSTRACT

Recent feedback literature suggests that the development of student feedback literacy has potential to address problems in current feedback practice. Students' feedback literacy involves developing the capacity to make the most of feedback opportunities by active involvement in feedback processes. How the development of student feedback literacy can be embedded within the undergraduate curriculum has not yet been discussed in any depth. This conceptual paper fills that gap by elaborating three key mechanisms for embedding feedback literacy within the curriculum: eliciting, processing and enacting. These are illustrated through enhanced variations of four existing practices: feedback requests, self-assessment, peer review, and curated e-portfolios. The discussion summarizes the key implications for practice and identifies the need for further empirical work investigating how students elicit, process and enact feedback in situ, and longitudinal research exploring the impact of curriculum design on the development of student feedback literacy.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 February 2020  
Accepted 8 April 2020

### KEYWORDS

Feedback; feedback literacy; curriculum; course design

# Why a feedback literacy behaviour scale?







If we want to develop students' ability to benefit from feedback processes, we need to be able to determine how successful we have been

- What do students do in relation to feedback?
- Are interventions successful in promoting feedback literacy?
- Do students develop it without interventions?

Access it at:

<https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/cradle/2023/08/09/read-our-latest-publication-the-feedback-literacy-behaviour-scale/>

## Measuring what learners do in feedback: the feedback literacy behaviour scale

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### ABSTRACT

Feedback can be powerful, but its effects are dependent on what students do. There has been intensive research in recent years under the banner of 'feedback literacy' to understand how to help students make the most of feedback. Although there are instruments to measure feedback literacy, they largely measure perceptions and orientations rather than what learners actually do. This paper documents the development and validation of the Feedback Literacy Behaviour Scale (FLBS), which is a self-report instrument intended to measure students' feedback behaviours. A framework for feedback literacy was constructed with five factors: Seek Feedback information (SF), Make Sense of information (MS), Use Feedback information (UF), Provide Feedback information (PF), and Manage Affect (MA). An initial set of 45 questions were reviewed in an iterative process by feedback experts, resulting in 39 questions that were trialled with 350 student participants from four countries. Our final survey of 24 questions was generally supported by confirmatory factor and Rasch analyses, and has acceptable test-retest reliability. The FLBS provides a more robust way for educators and researchers to capture behavioural indicators of feedback literacy and the impact of interventions to improve it.

### KEYWORDS

feedback literacy; feedback; assessment; survey; scale development

# Mapping the Feedback Literacy Behaviour Scale against existing frameworks

<i>Feedback Literacy Behaviour Scale</i>	<i>Element in other frameworks</i>
Seek feedback information (SF)	Appreciating feedback processes (Carless and Boud 2018)
Make sense of information (MS)	Making judgements (Carless and Boud 2018)
Use feedback information (UF)	Taking action (Carless and Boud 2018)
Provide feedback information (PF)	Acknowledges feedback as a reciprocal process (Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2020)
Manage affect (MA)	Managing affect (Carless and Boud 2018)

# Item features

1. Derived from conceptualization of feedback literacy
2. Avoids unqualified use of 'feedback' wherever possible
3. Items operationalized in terms of what learners do
4. Avoids words associated with educational level, or education at all.
5. Items in the *provide feedback information* (PF) category were initially rated by some experts as 'not essential' as it was not part of their conceptualisation of feedback literacy.









## Strategies for developing students' feedback literacy?

Little, T., Dawson, P., Boud, D. and Tai, J. (2024). Can students' feedback literacy be improved? A scoping review of interventions, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 49, 1, 39-52.  
[DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2023.2177613](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2177613)

## Can students' feedback literacy be improved? A scoping review of interventions

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### ABSTRACT

Student feedback literacy has been the subject of much conceptual literature; however, relatively little intervention research has investigated how and if it can be developed. Further, no evaluation of the current empirical literature has been conducted to assess which elements of feedback literacy can be successfully improved in practice, and which elements need further investigation. This paper seeks to explore how different aspects of feedback literacy have been developed in higher education. A scoping review was conducted to address the foci, nature and success of interventions. The review found evidence that educational interventions enhanced feedback literacy in students, such as managing perceptions and attitudes, and having more confidence and agency in the feedback process. While some interventions have an effect on influencing student feedback literacy, both improved study design and intervention design are required to make the most of future feedback literacy interventions.

### KEYWORDS

Feedback literacy; feedback; scoping review; empirical research



## Findings

# Which elements of feedback literacy were targeted?

### Appreciating feedback processes

Student had an improved perception of their future abilities and felt more positive.

### Taking action

Increased level of student confidence, which was linked to the increased probability of future action.

### Making judgements

Development of evaluative judgement

### Managing affect

The emotional impact of feedback was often mentioned by students.



## Implications

### What was missing?

- Many studies were unclear surrounding their conceptualisations of feedback literacy
- As most studies targeted limited aspects of feedback literacy, claims about improving feedback literacy overall are questionable
- Tracking students' actions – most studies looked at perceptions not actions
- Lack of research surrounding the emotional dimension of feedback



# Teachers and course designers also need to be feedback literate

- *At the macro-level* in the design of whole programs
- *At the meso-level* to design course units/subjects
- *At the micro-level* to design appropriate inputs to individual students



## What feedback literate teachers do: an empirically-derived competency framework

David Boud<sup>a,b,c</sup>  and Phillip Dawson<sup>a</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia; <sup>b</sup>University of Technology Sydney, Ultimo, Australia; <sup>c</sup>Middlesex University, London, UK

### ABSTRACT

If feedback is to be conducted effectively, then there needs to be clarity about what is involved and what is necessary for teachers to be able to undertake it well. While much attention has recently been devoted to student feedback literacy, less has been given to what is required of teaching staff in their various roles in feedback processes. This paper seeks to elucidate teacher feedback literacy through an analysis of the accounts of those who do feedback well. An inductive analysis was undertaken of conversations about feedback with 62 university teachers from five Australian universities using a dataset of transcripts of interviews and focus groups from two earlier research studies. Through an iterative process a teacher feedback literacy competency framework was developed which represents the competencies required of university teachers able to design and enact effective feedback processes. The paper discusses the different competencies required of those with different levels of responsibility, from overall course design to commenting on students' work. It concludes by considering implications for the professional development of university teachers in the area of feedback.

### KEYWORDS

Feedback literacy; pedagogical processes; inductive analysis; course design; academic development

# Teacher Feedback Literacy (Boud & Dawson, 2021)

## Macro

1. Plans feedback strategically
2. Uses available resources well
3. Creates authentic feedback-rich environments
4. Develops student feedback literacy
5. Develops/coordinates colleagues
6. Manages feedback pressures (for self and others)
7. Improves feedback processes

## Meso

8. Maximises effects of limited opportunities for feedback
9. Organises timing, location, sequencing of feedback events
10. Designs for feedback dialogues and cycles
11. Constructs and implements tasks and accompanying feedback processes
12. Frames feedback information in relation to standards and criteria
13. Manages tensions between feedback and grading
14. Utilises technological aids to feedback as appropriate
15. Designs to intentionally prompt student action
16. Designs feedback processes that involve peers and others

## Micro

17. Identifies and responds to student needs
18. Crafts appropriate inputs to students
19. Differentiates between varying student needs

# Key points about feedback

- The process has a powerful effect on learning
- It is one of very few ways in which courses can be tailored to individual student needs
- Feedback processes need to be carefully designed around students' actions and should expect students to act further
  - Giving comments to students is *only part* of a feedback process
  - Without active involvement from students, inputs can't influence learning
  - Unless the loop is completed by students doing further work, feedback has not occurred
- Feedback processes should always ultimately be judged in terms of effects on student learning

## F. And then along came genAI!

- Students will be using genAI for feedback and other purposes whether we like it or not
- Able students may use it well and understand its limitations, weaker students are at risk of using it badly to their disadvantage
- Learning to prompt and critically review outputs becomes core business in all courses
- Need for a principled approach to assessment and feedback design—what genAI offers is rapidly changing

# Assessment Reform for an Age of Artificial Intelligence

## Guiding principles

- I. Assessment and learning experiences equip students to participate ethically and actively in a society where AI is ubiquitous
- II. Forming trustworthy judgements about student learning in a time of AI requires multiple, inclusive and contextualised approaches to assessment

<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/assessment-reform-age-artificial-intelligence-discussion-paper.pdf>

# Assessment Reform for an Age of Artificial Intelligence

## Propositions

Assessment should emphasise...

1. ... appropriate, authentic engagement with AI
2. ... a systemic approach to program assessment aligned with disciplines/qualifications
3. ... the process of learning
4. ...opportunities for students to work appropriately with each other and AI
5. ... security at meaningful points across a program to inform decisions about progression and completion

<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/assessment-reform-age-artificial-intelligence-discussion-paper.pdf>

# Opportunities and risks in genAI

- Students have access at all times to aid their work
- Used judiciously, genAI can stimulate and help structure students' work
- It provides false as well as useful information
- A critical view of outputs is essential, which students need help to develop
- Inputs to genAI software might subsequently be used by AI companies to mislead others
- AI outputs are not detectable by plagiarism software

# Resources

Useful webpage of Australian accrediting/quality agency (TEQSA) about assessment and AI:

[https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/higher-education-good-practice-hub/artificial-intelligence?utm\\_source=sendgrid.com&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=website](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/higher-education-good-practice-hub/artificial-intelligence?utm_source=sendgrid.com&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=website)

Bearman, M., Ajjawi, R., Boud, D., Tai, J. & Dawson, P. (2023). *CRADLE Suggests... assessment and genAI*. Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. doi:10.6084/m9.figshare.22494178

Check out my colleague Phill Dawson on cheating and threats to integrity in using AI on YouTube



Australian Government  
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

## Assessment reform for the age of artificial intelligence

November 2023





*Questions and discussion*

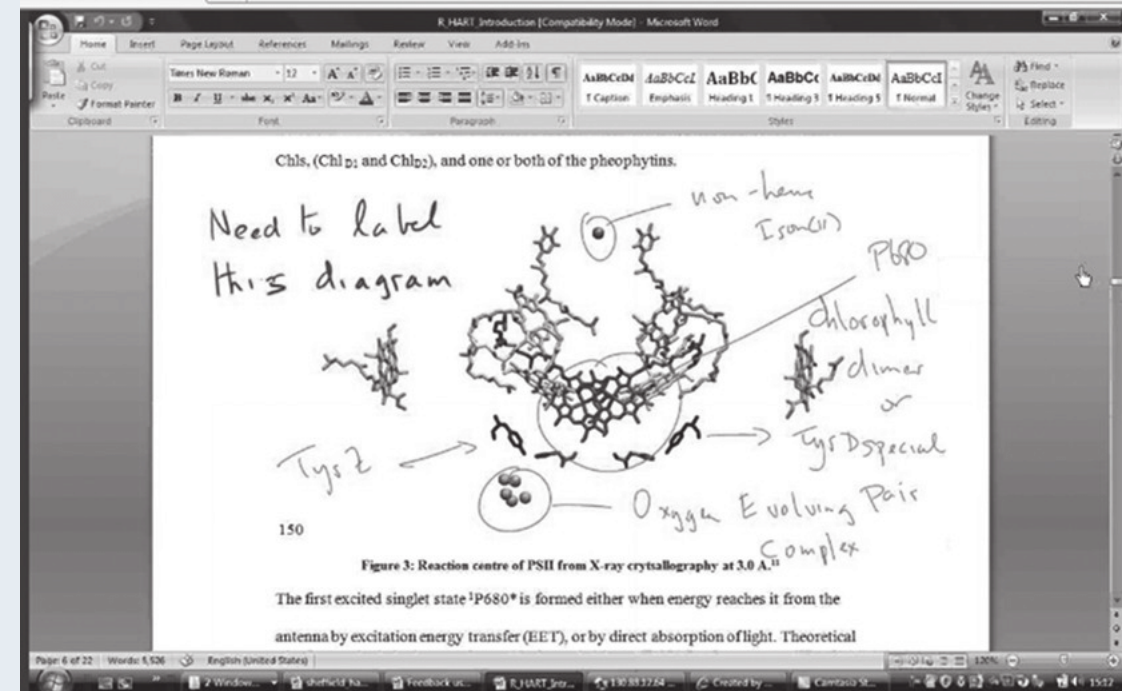
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# Alternative feedback input modes

There are many modes for feedback comments with various pros and cons:

- Group comments
  - Students don't see these as feedback
  - Not oriented to individual student needs
- Face-to-face by appointment
  - No time to do this for everyone
  - The wrong students benefit when it is offered
- Video (or audio) file of comments
  - More personal and nuanced than written
  - Saves time
- Screencast plus audio comments file
  - Needed for technical/visual assignments



# Is this enough to improve feedback?

While it is the overall feedback process that makes a difference,  
the information we communicate to learners is still very important.

There is evidence that some kinds of comments lead to negative outcomes.

*What constitutes effective comments on students' work?*

# Hattie's model for feedback comments

- Comments can be directed at four different levels of operation of the student. Feedback will be ineffective if directed at an inappropriate level.
- The responses of students and their efficacy are dependent on the focus and type of comments they get.
- If the focus is inappropriate to their needs, feedback may be ineffective, because the student is unable to transform information into action where it is needed most.

Hattie and Timperley 2008; Hattie and Gan, 2011

# Levels of operation at which feedback comments are pitched:

- Task focused
- Process focused
- Self-regulation focused
- Person focused

# Levels of operation at which feedback comments are pitched:

- Task focused
  - Most common
- Process focused
  - More effective
- Self-regulation focused
  - Most needed
- Person focused
  - Mostly ineffective



# Elements of self regulation focus

- *capacity to create ‘internal’ feedback.*
- *ability to self-assess.*
- *willingness to invest effort into seeking and dealing with feedback information.*
- *degree of confidence or certainty in the correctness of the response.*
- *attributions about success or failure.*
- *level of proficiency at seeking help.*

# Guidance for those offering comments

- Be wary of old nostrums and supposed 'good practice'
- Involve the learner
  - if they are positioned as passive recipients they will act as such
- Think about what you really want to influence
  - It may not be good use of your time to offer simple corrections
- Always do it when students are in a position to act on it
  - Not at the end of a unit!
- Comment as if it were a part of an ongoing dialogue
  - One-off, disconnected input is very unlikely to influence