

Feedback: Managing Scale & Expectations



Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee

August, 2017

Providing Effective Feedback + Engaging Students Forum Edition

April, 2018.

1. Context

The Feedback Working Group¹ was formed with the objective of addressing queries posed by student representatives on the TALQAC committee. Some of the issues raised included:

- How can students access feedback from exams?
- Why does feedback seem inconsistent across subjects?
- How is consistent feedback maintained within large subjects?

In discussion with the Feedback Working Group (and at TALQAC meetings) these questions were expanded to include:

- How can feedback be managed well in large subjects?
- What types of feedback work best?
- How can we ensure that students access and integrate feedback provided?

The Feedback Working Group was established with the specific objective of gaining insight into the issues and concerns surrounding feedback from the perspectives of students and academics. In order to do this the group aimed to articulate and address the gap in how students and academics understand and work with feedback. The recognition of this gap in providing and receiving feedback, understanding its various forms as well as acting on the information offered to students has motivated this TALQAC Working Group.

As a result of the Working Group's on-going discussions, some of these objectives have been scaled back because of lack of capacity. One of the early objectives of the group had been to develop a Feedback Website. However, there is no infrastructure available that would support the development of a website that would collect best practice and unfortunately there is no capacity to keep it updated and vibrant. Further, the Working Group is aware of a great deal of work having been undertaken with respect to these issues.² Therefore, the scope of the project was redefined to focus on end of semester assessment in particular – a notable gap in our feedback mechanisms. That said, some of the ensuing discussion also embraces issues associated with the provision of valuable, meaningful, constructive feedback during the semester (on formally assessed tasks or those that are not formally graded and are entirely aimed at skills acquisition and improvement). The Working Group explored the potential for learning technologies to help develop innovative and effective means of producing feedback on assessment tasks.

1. Feedback: Varying Perspectives and a Model

In their article 'The Power of Feedback', John Hattie and Helen Timperley understand instruction and feedback as two aspects on a continuum. The process begins when students respond to initial instruction and the cycle evolves iteratively (2007 82). The authors point out that students might deliberately seek explicit feedback from teachers, parents, peers and other students, but they can also be attentive to feedback that seems less overt (2007, 82). Hattie and Timperley offer three key questions for providing effective feedback.

¹ Members of TALQAC's Feedback Working Group include: Dr Wendy Haslem – Co-chair (Faculty of Arts), Tom Crowley - Co-chair, UMSU,) Caley McPherson – Co-chair, UMSU Representative (Education), Dr Chi Baik, (Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education), Dr Stephen Best (Chemistry), Professor Sunita Jogarajan (Melbourne Law School), Professor Ian Malkin (Melbourne Law School), Dr Chantal Morton (Melbourne Law School), Associate Professor Clare Newton (Architecture, Building and Planning).

² See, for example, previous work undertaken by TALQAC (October 2014) and, in particular, the work of the MCSHE. [<http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/resources/teaching-and-learning/assessment/good-feedback-practices>]

The questions are:

1. Where am I going? (What are the goals?) *feed up*
2. How am I going? (What progress is being made towards the goals?) *feed back*
3. Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?) *feed forward* (2007, 86, 88).

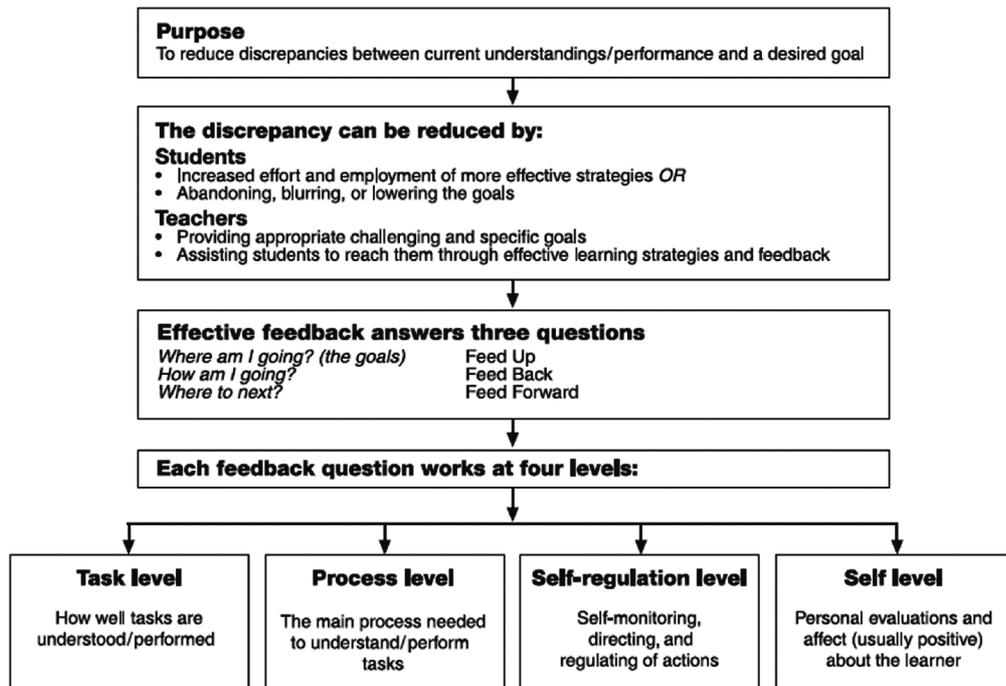


Figure 1: Hattie and Timperley's Model of Feedback to Enhance Learning

Hattie and Timperley show that the 'most effective forms of feedback provide cues or reinforcement to learners; and/or relate to goals' (2007, 84). The least effective forms of feedback included rewards, praise or punishment (2007, 84). The methodology was also important – video, audio, or computer assisted instructional feedback was most effective (2007, 84). Whilst in some disciplines it is common to provide expansive feedback on incorrect responses, this study suggests that feedback is most effective when commenting on tasks that students responded to correctly (2007, 85). Hattie and Timperley's four levels (figure 1) highlight the framing of tasks and development of process, and they reveal the importance of self-regulation and personal evaluation with the objective and subjective closely entwined. We can extend this to identify the role of the teacher in designing assessment in alignment with the learner's receptivity to the task and self-reflection.

In a study of first year students studying Mathematics in three Australian Universities, Deborah King, Birgit Loch and Leanne Rylands identify a worrying disconnection between how students and lecturers perceive feedback (2013). This study reveals that, 'with no guidance students struggled with the definition of feedback and with the description of feedback received' (2013). Looking at the perspective of academics providing feedback, King, Loch and Rylands argue that 'teaching staff see a much broader range of student-staff and student-resource interactions as providing feedback than students' (2013)³. King, Loch and Rylands reveal that not only is feedback perceived differently by students and lecturers, but

³ A similar disconnection has also been observed in the iterative process of providing feedback for students involved in studio practice in Architecture and Design subjects.

that consequently this 'devalues the usefulness of questions about feedback on end-of-semester surveys on the quality of teaching' (2013).

In a recent keynote presentation at the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education's Teaching and Learning Conference (2017), John Hattie presented current research into what works best in teaching and learning in higher education with a specific focus on the provision of feedback. His presentation identified varying views from both students and teachers on feedback. He found that students perceive feedback as offering direction, providing another way of doing a task next time, giving an idea of areas of improvement and what to work on next, with one respondent revealing how feedback can be received personally: 'It is just for me, about what I now need to do now'. Teachers' responses include: comments, clarification, criticism, confirmation, content development, constructive reflection and correction.

1.1 How do academics understand feedback?

Academics are guided by principles that require the provision of balanced, effective and timely feedback, closely aligned with assessment criteria (See Coursework Assessment Policy (MPF1199)). Subject coordinators develop assessment tasks to align with the subject's Learning Outcomes as well as that of the Major and the Degree. The feedback loop provides information and advice for students to support their knowledge of a discipline and to help students acquire and develop the skills that they need to excel in their degrees. Feedback takes diverse forms – it can be verbal and offered in class or in consultation, it is often written as commentary, provided as a measurement on a rubric and it may well be given by peers as well as teaching staff. Feedback is a key aspect of subject revision and renewal. Some of the issues that academics encounter with feedback include: feedback that is provided, but not received, feedback that is not read or acted upon, balancing the desire to present effective, constructive feedback with the ways that it is undervalued within workload models – and issues of scale.

The Coursework Assessment Design and Methods Procedure requires that students be provided both formative and summative feedback on their academic performance. It suggests that 'Wherever possible, comments should further indicate how a student can improve their performance, and ideally indicate what should be done specifically to achieve outstanding results'. Specific guidelines relate to the provision of feedback on examinations. The policy stipulates that students may request access to examination scripts by contacting the subject coordinator before the end of the second week of the following study period.

The Coursework Assessment Policy suggests that assessment be designed to support learning objectives, activities and outcomes that are specified for a subject level. The principle states that 'Assessment and grading in core and compulsory subjects will also be aligned to course learning outcomes, the graduate attributes and the generic skills they encompass'. To achieve this, assessment criteria needs to be published and assessment tasks designed to allow for an accurate measurement of a student's ability to display the development of knowledge and skills. The policy states that 'Assessment will be balanced to provide diagnostic, timely and meaningful formative feedback, as well as summative judgments about academic performance'.

2.2 How do students understand feedback?⁴

To understand how feedback is perceived by students, for the purposes of this project, the UMSU Education Office developed a survey. To expand this perspective further, relevant results were collected from University surveys. One of the aims was to identify and learn from the subjects that have consistently received high ratings in response to SES question 7: **‘Focussing on my own learning in this subject, I received valuable feedback on my progress’**. This allowed for the collection and distribution of information about approaches to designing feedback from a range of perspectives and best practice models.

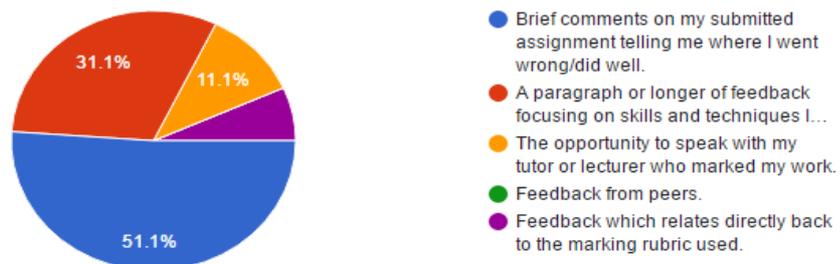
These results align with what Hattie identified in his presentation. Students understand feedback to be constructive criticism and direction from an expert who has read and digested their work. From the perspective of the Education Office and the results of a survey conducted on assessment feedback specifically (see pie charts below)⁵, UMSU found that students value targeted feedback, followed by a focus on skills and techniques. In their view, feedback given during the semester should focus on comprehension of the coursework and any misconceptions, while end-of-semester feedback should be looking at areas for long-term improvement and meta-learning.

Students pointed to distance between students and teaching staff as being a major obstacle to communicating sufficient and effective feedback, this obstacle could be removed by “normalising contact between students and staff” and “letting students know it is encouraged for them to reach out to teaching staff”. An optional group feedback session post-exams and more open-door weekly consultation hours were also suggested, along with an overall assessment of work and skills at the completion of the subject. According to the survey some students understand that feedback needs to be targeted and efficient for the teaching staff providing it, and refer to feeling like a ‘burden’ because they believe lecturers are too busy to see students.

Through the Education (Academic) office of the student union, the officers see many students whose experiences support these findings. It is a significant issue when students are seeing the submission, or sitting of their final assessment as being the end of their semester, rather than receiving the results from it and working on comprehending them and improving their work. Education should be an ongoing process throughout a subject, degree, and career; end-of-semester feedback needs to support this.

What do you find to be the most helpful assessment feedback?

45 responses

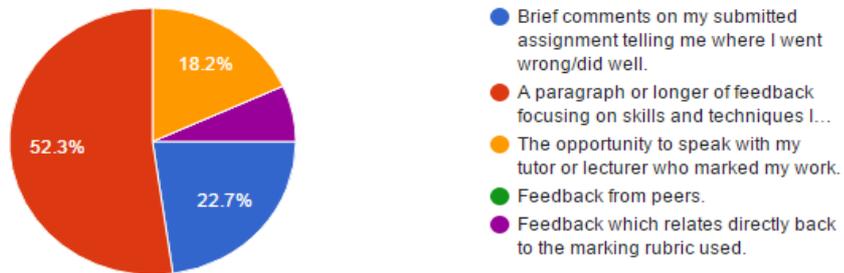


⁴ Note that students’ comments considered feedback in its many guises: for example, during semester as well as after the subject has been completed.

⁵ This survey was released on the 26th of April and closed on the 20th of June. It received 45 responses in this time, and was advertised through the UMSU Education Facebook page.

Which do you find next most constructive?

44 responses



The *Students’ Perception of Feedback Information Pack* developed by the Institutional Planning and Performance Office (2014) for the TALQAC Surveys Working Group suggests that:

‘Students have historically indicated low levels of satisfaction with the feedback they receive on their subjects and course. Items relating to feedback have typically fallen near the bottom in outcomes from the University’s quality assurance surveys’ (2014, 1).

A focus on the number of responses to Assessment below shows that feedback was identified as an area that is in need of improvement.

	Best Aspect	Needs Improvement	Best Aspect Ratio
assessment: expectations	72	1285	0.06
assessment: feedback	91	1658	0.05
assessment: marking	83	832	0.10
assessment: relevance	699	703	0.99
assessment: standards	419	2800	0.15
assessment: unspecified	69	122	0.57
assessment: total	1264	5333	0.24

Melbourne Experience Survey (2010-2013) and Course Experience Questionnaire (2010-2013): Area of student comment, all respondents.

The *Students’ Perception of Feedback Information Pack* suggests that,

Across all of these analyses, outcomes are fairly consistent. Students do not frequently cite feedback or assessment in their comments on the “best aspect of their course” or those in “need of improvement” (less than 10% of comment citations), but when they do, it is usually negative. The number of “needs improvement” comments on assessment ranges from three for every best aspect in the SES analysis to seven for every “best aspect” in the 2012 MES analysis. The poorest outcomes within this broad topic are for feedback where, for example, there were 20 “needs improvement” comments for every “best aspect” in the 2012 MES (2014, 11).

The Information Pack also provides a range of topics previously identified in students’ comments on feedback. These include:

- feedback that was delayed – some noting that sometimes assignments were not returned prior to the sitting of the exam or the submission of the next assignment;
- students who did not receive any feedback on their work and just needing more feedback and ongoing feedback;
- the lack of marking criteria or clear marking criteria;
- assessed work being returned with only a mark and little or no explanation of why that mark was given and the need for better or useful feedback such as more detailed comments;
- work not given early enough in the semester to give them an idea of what was expected in their work;
- Students wanting more assessed work during the semester;
- Other students thought that the high emphasis on end of year exams provided little opportunity for them to receive feedback on their progress.⁶

Some examples of students' previous comments on feedback include:

Feedback and marking

- I think the staff should constantly give feedback to students after exams, i.e. going through exam paper after the result is published.
- More feedback from tutors and lecturers desired.
- The level at which staff gave feedback as to where a student is lacking and where improvement can be made.
- Some of the teaching staff were not very thorough with feedback on written work, not returning written work
- More feedback is needed throughout the semester, not only after major tasks have been completed.
- The staff need to care more about students and give feedback on time. Usually got our assignments back after the exam which made it hard to know how well I was going.
- Feedback on written work was not always satisfactory. Not enough time was spent showing us how essays etc should be approached.
- [Faculty] has no feedback at all - very disappointing. Impossible to know what level you are at. Should have optional quizzes.
- Commentary on work. I wasn't told where I went wrong and how I could have improved.

There is a delicate balance to be struck between providing as much support as possible to students who use it constructively, while at the same time not feeling like it is a misguided use of time and effort if it is not accessed and actioned by some students. Feedback given with the return of assessments can certainly be improved but it seems that a particularly pertinent area of focus must be in engaging students better with academic staff, providing more opportunities for students to meet in-person and receive feedback both after final assessment and throughout the semester. This may also help to re-align the understanding of what 'feedback' entails for students and staff as it makes it easier for students to seek clarification if they don't understand the feedback and recommendations provided. Even the best feedback is meaningless if students don't understand how to integrate it to improve their skills and knowledge.

⁶ This is of particular concern to the Working Group.

3. What are some of the new approaches and best practice models for providing feedback that have been or are currently in use?

Whilst these examples include during and final assessment task feedback, some examples of interim assessment tasks and responses can be adapted for the purposes of providing feedback at the end of semester.

3.1 Providing Feedback During and After Intensive Subjects

Legal Method and Reasoning is a compulsory two-week foundational taught intensively in the JD in February by 12 teachers, to groups of 25-30 students. Students are given their first assignment on the third day of class and are given advice and guidance on answering it in Friday's class. They submit it on Monday. It is graded on a pass/resubmit basis and returned on Thursday or Friday of the second week. Students' second assignment is submitted on the Monday following the end of classes, with students having had a chance to digest the individual feedback they received on the first assignment and the feedback provided in class, in general terms. Semester one begins the following Monday. Students have an opportunity to see improvement in their work within the two-week subject, by taking on the feedback provided with respect to Assignment One when completing Assignment Two. Lecturers also can see the improvement in each student's work, in a short period of time.

The written feedback is given in accordance with an answer guide, which is completed using ticks, circles and comments. Many lecturers also write a number of individualised comments on the actual assignments (and some do so electronically) as well as the feedback forms, using interactive comments - in conversation with the paper. Despite being a very rapid assessment regime, the feedback provided is useful, informative and formative. It is timely, personalised and focussed on improvement – skills development. The fact that formal grades are not awarded in the subject is a major advantage as this regime relieves lecturers and students of the pressures associated with formal grading, especially at the start of a new degree or program. Students can resubmit either or both assignment to pass the subject.

Thanks to Professor Ian Malkin (Melbourne Law School).

3.2 Feedback on Exams: Elements of Self Evaluation on Final Assessment Tasks

Torts is a first year MLS subject with approximately 300 students enrolled. Classes are divided into 5 or 6 groups of 50 or 60. Students take an exam at the end of semester and feedback has been delivered in various ways over the years. All students can read over their scripts and make appointments to review them with their lecturers. Many lecturers provide students with individualised feedback sheets, where brief comments are made with respect to their scripts on a guide that has a suggested 'answer' and also show students excellent answers (having received those students' permission to use their work). For many years, several Torts lecturers have also run a post-exam feedback regime where feedback is provided in person, in writing and by comparison to previous papers. Approaches to providing feedback in this subject include:

- Running a series of silent, self-evaluation sessions at lunchtime, in the semester following that in which students studied Torts. At these sessions students can read their exams alongside examples of several particularly good papers (sometimes annotated, sometimes not). Consent will have been given to use students' work in this way. Students are also provided with inserts – feedback sheets / answers that have ticks, circles and brief comments on them that act as individualised feedback. Comments are jotted all over the guides, as the lecturer is reading the scripts – often circling key words, using 'exc' or 'missed issue' or 'scatter-gun' as abbreviations for their thoughts on the answer. At the lunchtime sessions, students return the very

good answers and their scripts but they can keep their inserts. At the sessions, they can't talk: they're meant to be silent self-evaluations sessions. The lecturer won't answer questions – but is happy to do so afterwards, at individualised appointments.

- Students can also come to see lecturers at any time to discuss their work.

When **Torts** has run exam feedback sessions, it has explained what students can expect from those sessions:

Exam Feedback Sessions

Torts is holding feedback sessions with respect to the 2012 exam on the following dates... If you come to one of these sessions, you will have the opportunity to read:

- (i) your exam script;*
- (ii) two good student answers;*
- (iii) the marking guide used by your lecturer.*

Please bring your student card with you if you wish to read your script.

Please note that teachers used individual feedback forms / marking guides. These documents include ticks made with respect to your script (sometimes with brief comments (occasionally)).

Note that the feedback forms record 'raw marks', ie before moderation. Therefore, they are not necessarily the final marks awarded.

You can gain useful feedback by reading (i) your script (ii) a copy of the marking guide (which you can take with you) and (iii) the good student answers.

Please note:

- *you are not required to attend a session;*
- *your exam script and the student answers must be left in the lecture theatre;*
- *lecturers will not discuss the exam or your answers with you at these sessions. You can make an appointment to do so.*

Thanks to Professor Ian Malkin (Melbourne Law School).

3.3 Pre-Exam Feedback

Principles of Construction Law is an intensive Melbourne Law Masters subject. It is taught over 5 consecutive days to a diverse range of students (up to 30 in the class) including project managers, contract administrators, quantity surveyors and engineers from around the world. The assessment is a 100% take-home exam (3 days, 5,000 words, downloaded and submitted electronically). The following information and pre-exam feedback is offered to students to provide a foundation for this task:

- Prior to classes and before the subject begins, posting past exams on the Learning Management System along with the following: an answer guide on possible issues to be covered in those past exams, a note making clear what the exam format is and what materials it will cover, annotated, anonymous practice answers from previous years (provided with the past students' permission) which offer an idea of the sorts of detailed feedback provided;
- On day 1, we schedule a session devoted to a discussion of exam techniques, provide information about resources such as LASC Resources and then do a short 'hypothetical' together. Once they have had a go at it that night, students are given a two-page outline of the expected structure and issues the next day;

- On day 3, students do a longer hypothetical as homework, which is then reviewed on day 4;
- On day 5 (final session), doing a plan together for answering the latest exam hypothetical (as well as general advice on academic honesty, technique etc);
- After classes (the exam is typically 4-6 weeks later), offering to review one practice hypothetical and answer from each student where the lecturer tries to replicate the types of feedback he would give on the actual exam, except that the lecturer deliberately refrains from giving an indication of likely marks.

On the exam itself feedback is communicated by way of a standard sheet plus detailed comments on the paper. Each exam takes the lecturer about 90-120 minutes to mark in this way. These are returned to the students via email by the Academic Support Office, which dramatically cuts down the delay between their marks going live on the student portal (a very blunt form of feedback) and their reception of the qualitative, detailed feedback. Of course, the SES doesn't measure the after-class aspects of feedback, but anecdotally students tell the lecturer that this system works well for them in this context.

Legal Academic Skills provides similar practice with writing assignments (essays and memos). When meeting with students who would like to improve their performance in the Law School, Academic Skills Advisors ask students to collect the feedback on previous exams and essays, reflect on it and develop some ideas for how they might respond differently to assessment tasks in the future. Advisors work with students to develop strategies based on that feedback and self-reflection.

Thanks to Mr Matthew Bell and Dr Chantal Morton (Melbourne Law School).

3.4 Managing Exam Feedback in Large Scale Subjects

The first year **Chemistry** subject (CHEM10003) has developed an innovative approach to providing feedback to students that is both detailed and general. Enrolments in this subject can exceed 1000 so the Subject Coordinator has developed both a template that provides a balance of specific and generic information and an initiative designed to offer detailed feedback on student's performance in specific elements of their assessment.

The first template offers formative feedback on the mid-semester test and it contextualises marks and feedback in relation to other assessment tasks, highlighting how feedback is relevant to future tasks. It also encourages students to improve their results by reading the specific feedback, attending the learning centre and participating within an online community of peers. Importantly, it offers the student hope and uses a nurturing, friendly tone, denoting genuine interest in the student's development and success.

Dear ****,

Based on the result you obtained in the first mid-semester test (50 %) I make the following general comments. While I recognise that a single resultant grade can be a poor indicator of your individual progress, it is important to note that there is a reasonable correlation between the MST grades and the final exam grade (at least for CHEM10003 in S1 this year). There is good reason to take note of this result.

While you have made it through to a pass you are in a grey zone with a grade well under the average for the class as a whole (69 average for all students attempting the test). It is not panic stations yet - but it is a good time to assess your approach to the subject and work out if you need to focus more seriously on your studies over the last 7 weeks of semester. Check

carefully the test now that is available in feedback mode and identify the conceptual problems that have impacted on your grade and go along to the learning centre and sort these issues out before the end of semester. It is a good time to look at the ExamWiki and contribute some answers, this may lead to an interesting engagement with other students doing the subject and be a source of explanations that make more sense to you. Remember that the MST is worth 2% of your final mark so you can still aim to get 99%.
Finally, make sure that you are aware of the administrative procedures associated with special consideration, exam times and special exam times.
I hope that your studies proceed smoothly through to the end of the year.

Feedback on Feedback:

Emails sent to the Director of First Year Chemistry indicates the success of this approach. Here is an example of one of these emails:

Dear Stephen,
Thank you so much for taking the time to provide feed-back on the MST. I agree that I could use more practice and that my result would have-and has-arisen as a possible red flag. I will take your advice and will assume more thorough revision techniques.
Please do not feel obliged to respond to this email, I just thought I'd take the chance to complement the consideration given as I appreciate it.
Thanks for your time and have a lovely rest of semester.
Cheers, *****

Further development of the feedback template allows staff to identify the position of a student's relative performance across various areas of assessment (in continuous assessment, in practical tasks and end of semester exams) and measures performance in answering different styles of questions, including multiple choice and longer written responses from the Organic – Physical – Inorganic disciplines. The template offers information about the student's general trend in grades. This insight helps students identify areas of concern and stronger and weaker performance; this encourages further attention in preparation for exams in the future. This initiative inspired other teachers to provide more detailed and formative feedback.

3.5 Chemistry Exam Feedback Example: Summative Feedback Loops

Dear ...
Together with TALQAC (Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee) we are running a study to evaluate the benefit to students from more detailed feedback on your performance in different elements of the exam. At this time we focus on your relative performance in the different elements of the assessment (continuous assessment, practical and the end of semester exam) together with your relative performance in answering different styles of questions, this includes multiple choice and written answer, or from the Organic – Physical – Inorganic disciplines.

The object of this initiative is to give feedback on your completion of the different components of assessment. It is the general trend in grades that should be of most concern to you. This email is intended to help you identify your areas of stronger and weaker performance and should be used to inform your preparation for the semester 2 exam.

Components of assessment

3 hour Exam overall	<score_overall>%
Section A (multiple choice)	<score_MC part>%
Section B (written answer)	<score_WA part>%
Practical	<score_Prac part>%
Continuous assessment (MST)	<score_CA part>%

Subdiscipline grades for the 3 hour final exam

Organic - section A = <score_OA part>%, section B = <score_OB part>%

Physical - section A = <score_PA part>%, section B = <score_PB part>%

Inorganic - section A = <score_IA part>%, section B = <score_IB part>%

ILT questions (section A, 3 MC questions) = %

We hope you have an enjoyable semester.

From the first-year teaching team in Chemistry

Thank you to Dr Stephen Best and the First Year Teaching Team – Chemistry.

3.6 Progress Testing Across Subjects in the Melbourne Medical School

As medical educators, we strive to provide our students with learning experiences that foster development of knowledge skills and attributes required for practice in their profession. We measure the developing capabilities of our learners through various types of assessments (written, oral and simulated) implemented across these sites and settings, so that we can gauge their readiness to move to the next stage of training and to ultimately take on the responsibility of caring for patients. Our students' experiences of these assessments, and the feedback they receive, is an important source of information about their developing strengths and weaknesses, and can support self-regulation of their learning. However, while feedback is critically important and is highly valued by students, providing them with regular, consistent and meaningful feedback on assessment is challenging. Our initial work in this area, which has informed much of our subsequent innovation, was situated within a formative assessment context using progress testing. Progress testing is a form of longitudinal assessment that involves students sitting regular graduation level tests throughout their course in order to track their knowledge acquisition and retention over time. Providing timely and meaningful feedback for progress tests is central to their effectiveness. Our detailed personalized feedback reports are intended to provide students with a clear and detailed sense of their performance and the growth over time in their knowledge relative to themselves and their peers, and are distributed within a week of each test. Our practice of tagging each test item for multiple domains allows us to provide students with a useful breakdown of their performance in relation to core knowledge domains. Our implementations of item-level feedback are specifically designed to highlight the key learning issues and to motivate students through targeted guidance for learning, while our analysis and inclusion of the students' self-reported certainty estimates provides students with clear evidence of potential knowledge misconceptions and helps them to identify critical knowledge gaps. Finally, standardising the progress tests at a graduation level of difficulty, while challenging for earlier year students, serves to motivate and engage students as they work towards their ultimate goal of becoming a doctor.

Thank you to Dr Anna Ryan and Dr Terry Judd (The Melbourne Medical School).

3.7 Global Feedback After the Final Exam

Administrative Law provides feedback that allows students to understand their own results and performance in comparison with the current class as well as previous classes. The feedback sheet details common errors, weaknesses as well as areas where students excelled⁷.

Administrative Law 2016 Exam - General Feedback

The median results in this year's exam were slightly lower than last year's but almost identical to those of 2014 and higher than those of 2013. This is largely due to fewer students achieving a H1 than in previous years; and having slightly more students in the H3/Pass range. The highest mark overall (88%) was shared by two students. Around 1.6% of students received 85% or higher.

Part A - Question 1

Most students approached the issues of jurisdiction and standing well. Very few students spent unnecessary time on irrelevant issues such as justiciability or jurisdictional points. Most students identified all of the available avenues of judicial review open to Frank; and most students were able to provide reasoned advice regarding which jurisdiction/s were the most appropriate. Similarly, most students were able to demonstrate a good to very good knowledge of appropriate remedies although fewer students were also able to identify the formal requirements for each remedy. The consequences of breach were generally dealt with well.

The most common errors/ weaknesses in Question 1 were as follows:

*Statutory interpretation in general. As discussed below, despite an emphasis being placed on the importance of statutory interpretation by your lecturers in class, the engagement with the *APA* by students both in terms of identifying the power and in making out the grounds of judicial review was disappointing. Similarly, a failure to carefully construe ss.48 and 50 also led a small number of students to spend time arguing a jurisdictional point that did not exist.

*Failure to identify the power exercised by the Minister's delegate. A large number of students identified s.11 of the *APA* as a power. Section 11 sets out circumstances when the Minister must not issue an Australian travel document to a child; but it is section 7 that empowers the Minister to issue passports. Section 7 also creates the entitlement to an Australian travel document.

3.8 Mid-Semester Feedback

Administrative Law also offers students more personalised, collective feedback at the mid semester mark on a written assignment. This feedback is designed to support the development of knowledge and skills, but it is also written to help improve participation in class. Below are some points that represent the personalised and transparent approach to providing feedback as well as a discussion of how communication could be improved within classes.

⁷ A number of subjects in MLS follow a version of this model including, for example, **Contracts**, which provides Examiners' Reports. These provide general feedback on the final exam. They provide guidance on what was expected, what was done well and some common errors. These reports are supported by further feedback which is made available to students in each stream at the beginning of the following semester. Thanks to Professor Andrew Robertson (MLS).

You should have received your mark and feedback form now. I saw some really excellent work and I felt that most people made a very good effort. I marked the assignments with a view to seeing what you had learnt and where more learning was required – either in terms of the law or some skill that you need to develop as part of your law degree. I marked the assignments from the perspective that you are just over a third of a way through the degree, keeping in mind the level that your skills should be at this stage in the degree. My aim in giving feedback was to identify where you are not meeting the expected standard and giving feedback about what that standard is that you need to meet. The ‘how to get to that standard’ is something you need to give thought to over the next six weeks leading up to the exam. The starting point is spending some time looking through your assignment, the marking guide and my specific comments and taking stock. What did I write in my answer? What does the marking guide say was required? How does my answer and the marking guide compare? What comments has the teacher made on my assignment?I have also bought a question box along today. Today and on Thursday, I would like you to write down or you can type up and bring along on Thursday any questions you have about the subject. I will then review them and find time to discuss the questions and answers with you. I might schedule an optional lunchtime session in the next few weeks which you could attend. The idea is that I can see where there are common difficulties and address those. Further, you all learn from each other’s questions.

Thank you to Ms Paula O’Brien (MLS).

3.9 Iterative Feedback Processes:

Tutorials and studios provide excellent sites for engaging with students and offering iterative feedback. In the Melbourne School of Design professional practitioners provide both formative and summative feedback in two 'crit' sessions. Typically each student has 15-20 minutes to present their projects to practitioners and to receive their comments.

3.10 Sharing the Responsibility for Providing Feedback with Students:

An exercise in providing continuous ‘Ultra 360 Degree’ Feedback was designed to ask 3rd year students in the final semester of their **Screen and Cultural Studies** degrees to propose their own Research Essay (or Creative Response) and to respond to Peer Review Feedback written by two students in their Mini Wiki Group. The motivation was to offer graduating students an opportunity to research in areas of their passion, with the support of both academics and students in the subject. Students were given the opportunity to lead the development of projects that needed to take into account the voices, ideas and perspectives of small teams. In effect a single proposal has the benefit of receiving three responses. Students were expected to take the feedback on board and to show how it supported the further development of the final projects. The proposals were presented verbally in class in the early weeks of the semester and the written presentation was due in Week 6. Feedback was provided by peers and teaching staff in Week 8. The timeline was designed to ensure that students have enough time to propose, research and develop individual projects in iterations with the final paper submitted by the end of the semester.

Thank you to Dr Gilbert Caluya and Dr Wendy Haslem (Screen and Cultural Studies).

4. How can learning technologies help to develop innovative and effective means of producing feedback on assessment tasks?

4.1 Working with large teaching groups⁸

LMS/Turnitin's Feedback Studio contains tools designed to promote consistency in marking and in the provision of feedback. It supports collaboration amongst staff managing large subjects by offering resources that can be compared and shared.

- **Quick Marks** (a bank of comments that are both generic and bespoke) can be shared amongst the teaching group,
- **Rubrics** help to align grades with assessment criteria,
- Overall **comments** on the paper can be a combination of common points with the addition of specific, personalised feedback. Rubrics can be designed to dedicate multiple rows to specific assessment criteria, with each column describing the level of achievement. Students can see a breakdown of results unpacked across each section, where their own responses were strong and where further work is required.

LMS can also be used to identify students in need and to request support. The Grade Centre's Smart View can be set up to allow students to flag areas of difficulty and to request attention. Many subjects already have journals or blogs integrated into their design. Some blog entries are assessed, others represent a hurdle for participation and some are purely voluntary. There is the potential to enable a 'Red Flag' function allowing students to 'flag' a specific post for special consideration from teaching staff, requesting help or signalling that students are unsure and would like extra feedback on this topic. Academics and/or students can identify specific blog posts or reflective journal entries that would benefit from comments, advice, intervention or feedback. The Grade Centre and the LMS Turnitin page use icons to identify students who have not submitted their work, students who have not attended, students who have not engaged with LMS. LMS can be set up to identify students who might be at risk (having missed deadlines, who are showing low grades, or haven't logged in) as well as students who are progressing well and achieving high results. Teaching staff are able to send emails to individual students or to small groups. Subject coordinators can identify patterns and trends in results and feedback to revise sections of the subject in future years.

Tracking info from LMS Analytics allow subject coordinators to see how many students have accessed presentations, videos, guides designed to support assessment, readings, lecture capture, assessment tasks. Hot spots/heat maps on lecture capture provide insight into how many students listened and watched and whether some stopped part of the way through. This feedback shows academics where their time is best invested during teaching and for the subject in the future. By way of feedback, lecturers can bring their concerns directly to their students in a timely manner (for example that not many students accessed a particular presentation).

4.2 Accessing Feedback for PhD Research Students

Research Integrity Online Training (RIOT) Quizzes: This module contains multiple quizzes designed to function as formative assessment tasks for postgraduate students. The module was carefully designed to ensure that answers were pre-written into questions so that students have quick, ongoing formative assessment tasks and feedback cycles. Progressive feedback is built into modules. Students can take the quizzes at multiple times prior to

⁸ See also the Chemistry examples, noted previously.

confirmation. The RIOT module also includes recognition of achievements. The completion of modules is rewarded with automatically generated certificates that display the student's level of achievement in their research field. Progress towards the certificate is staged so that the user can see the stages required for successful completion of the module. The Working Group suggests that whilst RIOT is only available to PhD students, it would be a useful tool for other students. More information about the RIOT Community can be found here: <https://staff.unimelb.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity/research-integrity/research-integrity-training>

4.3 Designing Quizzes to Incorporate Feedback

Quizzes can be designed to incorporate feedback in response to incorrect/correct results. Additional information can be added to direct students to further readings and online resources. This provides students with additional detail about why the answer to the question was correct or incorrect. Test options allow teachers to release information gradually and the adaptive release option can be used to publish details after all students have completed the quiz. Subject coordinators can then provide both general (as well as specific) feedback that identifies strengths and weaknesses of the responses overall. In a broader context these results may prove to be of importance to staff interested in updating and revising subjects. Subjects from previous years are retrievable if coordinators want to return to revisit the essays/grades/feedback provided.

4.4 Numerical Feedback from My Grades

Academics can offer further detail for students in My Grades. The LMS can be set up to reveal both the Class Average and the Median Result for students. This form of feedback helps students to situate themselves within their cohort, at least in terms of grades. Details from My Grades can also be of use for teaching staff to identify where students sit within the broader numerical grade and to indicate what students might need to help improve their scores. These analytics can also help to reveal trends that can be addressed in class, or mentioned in automated messages for students.

4.5 Technology to Facilitate Learning - Interaction in Large Lectures

The University of Melbourne has bought the rights to use the online, live-interaction software *Poll Everywhere*. This will allow curriculum designers to incorporate polls into their classes and present them at intervals during class. Students will be able to participate using an app or by accessing a website. Responses to questions will be shown live (or delayed until the end of the class) as graphic visualisations (graphs, charts or word clouds etc). This will provide opportunities to assess levels of understanding, provide immediate feedback from students about levels of comprehension of specific topics. *Poll Everywhere* also offers a quick interpretation for teaching staff who can gauge engagement with complex material and discuss incorrect as well as correct responses.

Poll Everywhere: <https://www.polleverywhere.com/>

4.6 Using Media in Assessment

Students involved in clinical practice classes have produced videos of their interviews as they generate patients' histories. These videos have been uploaded onto Vimeo, where they are password protected and shared with a more senior student. The senior student and the academic/instructor provide feedback on the recorded interview and history generation.

5. Key recommended strategies

Making time-exhaustive forms of feedback better targeted and more efficient

It can be demoralising to spend time and energy producing high quality personalised feedback, only to find that many students don't take the effort to access it. However, this feedback (personalised, considered, and extensive) is the kind that students consistently tell the Education Office at UMSU they want. Steps must be taken to ensure that motivated students who value this feedback are able to access it.

One suggestion made by a student for post-exam feedback is to provide voluntary group feedback sessions run by teaching staff, which can be booked with a limit of perhaps ten students at a time. This would provide students with the opportunity to hear about cohort-wide trends, and to ask questions. It is unlikely that the whole cohort would opt-in to these sessions.

Another suggestion is to integrate more journals and blogs into subjects. Entries can be voluntary, recorded as participation (a positive move towards ensuring all voices in a tutorial are heard), or as part of a hurdle requirement. Journals require students to stay on top of their coursework, and provide a way for tutors to identify struggling students early. Potentially, journal posts would not need to be marked and only those that are 'red flagged' would be given feedback. The 'red flag' option is another way of encouraging students to reach out to teaching staff, in a way that may feel less serious than arranging a meeting.

Providing greater context to students

Information such as the class average and the median result received for particular assessments are important as they allow students to place themselves within their cohort.

Continuous curriculum improvement

Poll Everywhere provides lecturers and course designers with the opportunity to be flexible (to an extent) and adjust to their cohort's needs. Holding short, even simple multiple choice quizzes during lectures allows teaching staff to keep tabs on where content is understood and where it is not, minimizing wasted time and maximising focus on difficult areas, for better ultimate outcomes.

6. Future Directions

1. A closer alignment between assessment tasks, feedback and learning outcomes;
2. Look for opportunities to present summative feedback as formative across a degree;
3. Provide a way to address the gap between summative feedback and the closing date of the SES;
4. Develop further innovative strategies using both personalised and automated technologies for feedback, with a 50% cap on automated feedback as opposed to personalised feedback.

7. Key Contributors:

We are grateful to the following University of Melbourne staff for their contributions to this project:

- Dr Stephen Best and the First Year Chemistry Teaching Team
- Dr Matthew Bell - Senior Lecturer and Co-Director of Studies, Construction Law Melbourne Law School.
- Ms Paula O'Brien, Senior Lecturer, Melbourne Law School
- Dr Anna Ryan and Dr Terry Judd – Department of Medical Education
- Ms Bronwyn Disseldorp – Learning Environments

8. Further Resources:

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