



Enhancing student feedback engagement: Implementing and evaluating three inclusive teaching strategies

Dr Chris Little, Manchester Metropolitan University

Dr Carmel Thomason, Manchester Metropolitan University

ABSTRACT

This paper documents the implementation of, and student feedback regarding, three teaching strategies to improve student feedback engagement employed over the past two academic years. First, cohort summaries of performance and feedforward in the form of prerecorded videos were released at the beginning of modules to new cohorts and repeatedly reshared, to improve students' understanding of the assignment. Second, an assignment front sheet was introduced to encourage a more active and reflective approach to assignments and an increased sense of dialogue with staff. The front sheet offers a diagnostic element before engaging learners with dialogic questions about their experiences of creating the piece of work. Finally, summative assessment feedback was delivered in audio form with the aim of encouraging better engagement and to create a more personalised culture. These strategies have been employed in four modules across two academic years, offering students feedback in inclusive ways to encourage a more active learning and student engagement with summative and formative feedback. Student survey and focus group data are presented and discussed, sharing experiences of the above measures and revealing a broadly positive student experience. Cohort summary videos were found to sharpen student focus. Assignment front sheets were used as checklists or maps of the assessments but also used to annotate or justify risk-taking or creativity. Finally, students reported that they largely enjoyed audio feedback, that it gave a more 'human' form of feedback, but that for some, particularly students with learning disabilities and differences, it could be challenging. The paper will discuss the above findings and provide lessons learnt and recommendations for other practitioners considering implementing similar strategies in their practice.

Keywords: assessment, feedback, inclusive assessment, personalisation

Introduction

Recent research revealed that the majority of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) communicate a feedback model which is primarily teacher-focused, placing emphasis on mechanisms and structures of providing feedback to students rather than feedback being learning-focused or developmental (Winstone, 2022). Winstone's study of 134 universities education strategy documents and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions showed that 78% of institutions focused on this teacher and transmission focused model of feedback provision. Contemporary research also shows a growing need for practitioners, and the wider communication mechanisms of universities, to ensure that feedback is not only learning-focused but also future orientated, offering instead a form of feedforward that enables students to apply feedback to future assessment and contexts (Dawson et al., 2019; Pitt & Quinlan, 2022; Sadler et al., 2022).

This case study will explore the experiences of students when introduced to three strategies designed to make feedback more inclusive and engaging: whole group summary feedback delivered via short videos; a

diagnostic and dialogic front sheet aimed at encouraging reflection and dialogue with students ahead of summative marking and feedback; and finally, delivery of summative feedback via audio.

Literature review

Sadler et al.'s (2022 p.309) comprehensive systematic review of feedforward practices explored five feedforward strategies being implemented by HE practitioners. These were: alignment and timing practices, often providing pre-emptive information applicable to upcoming assessments; markers providing comments on summative assessments aimed towards future assessments; practices relating to encouraging active use of feedback information; inclusion of self-review activities for students; and a general rethinking of teaching practices in relation to feedback information given to and obtained from students. The above would broadly be in line with Winstone's (2022) categorisation of developmental feedback practices, highlighted in her review of feedback cultures across UK HE. The project detailed in this paper seeks to enact a culture of dialogue and feedforward through its three strategies.

Multimedia feedback can be a part of this effort. Where, in our case, technical limits on Turnitin mean that video/screencast feedback is challenging and limited to three-minute audio, for example, colleagues can seek formative ways around this, such as cohort summary videos. In the scope of this study, a cohort feedback video is defined as a short video created by teaching staff following marking periods that is shared with students from the very beginning of a module, summarising areas of success and for development from the previous academic year's cohort – these videos should then be used throughout the module length to support assignment creation. While published research on this practice is extremely scarce, as noted above, providing students with pre-emptive information and reflecting this in teaching practice is cited as a staple of feedforward practices (Sadler et al., 2022). As will be discussed below, audio and video feedback practices are also found to be effective in creating engagement with feedback information and practices.

Recent studies have found that the inclusion of feedback coversheets, sometimes referred to as front sheets, can often be helpful in encouraging dialogue with students and feedback literacy (Arts et al., 2021; Bloxham & Campbell, 2010; Harris et al., 2022). Bloxham and Campbell's (2010) study found improvements in the efficacy of feedback processes due to front sheets which allowed markers to give feedback on areas of improvement that students requested in these sheets ahead of submission, effectively framing and guiding the feedback dialogue.

Harris et al.'s (2022) study of 102 undergraduate psychology students focused on a dialogic front sheet which staff and students both commented on, including responses to previous work, the piece of current work in question, and future work. Students responded positively to these front sheets, with 86.9% of respondents showing satisfaction with this approach. However, some respondents here noted the need for consistency from markers in their use of the sheets, the need to explicitly solicit positive feedback and that the sheets can feel like more work on top of an assignment. Similar findings were reported in Arts et al.'s (2021) study – highlighting the potential of front sheets and coversheets to improve feedback practices and student engagement along the way.

Audio feedback is often cited as feeling more personal to students but is not the panacea for all students (Ajawi & Boud, 2018; Gould & Day, 2013, 2025; Knauf, 2016; Turnbull, 2022). Gould and Day's (2025) recent study of student nurses' experiences of multimedia feedback found that students had a clear preference for video and audio-visual feedback, such as screencasts. However, the authors also noted that such

audio-visual approaches require students' use of, and understanding of, non-written feedback to be scaffolded, noting that, for example, students may not naturally think to take notes when receiving audio or video feedback and that future use of non-written feedback was challenging due to its form. However, the above study found that students overwhelmingly reported feeling that audio-visual feedback was more detailed and supportive. There is a balance to be struck here, and implementation of such strategies requires careful socialisation and scaffolding.

While audio feedback is not a magic solution to issues surrounding feedback literacy and student engagement with feedback, Knauf's (2016) study showed how the relational aspect of audio feedback is a significant strength. Furthermore, their work shows that audio feedback can be an integral part of a dialogic culture surrounding feedback. Knauf notes that not all students preferred audio feedback, but many in their study expressed an appreciation of the work that goes into audio feedback and that audio felt like it encouraged more of a response than written feedback had previously. These findings are also echoed in recent research, such as Kirwan et al.'s (2023) study of student nurses and Turnbull's (2022) exploration of audio-visual feedback.

The study below can be located in discussions around sustainable assessment (Ajawi & Boud, 2018; Boud, 2000; Boud & Soler, 2015) and sought to use three strategies to enact a culture of developing self-assessment skills and informed judgement in learners. This paper will now detail the three interventions employed, the research study conducted and its findings, before discussing recommendations for colleagues looking to implement similar strategies.

Our project – three interventions

This project focused upon providing, and researching the experiences of, assessment-literacy focused teaching strategies and student-centred forward-facing feedback strategies, delivered through more inclusive formats than the traditional written feedback often employed by universities. The project aspired to encourage a more active student engagement with summative and formative feedback. A teaching team in Multimedia Journalism in a large university in the North-West of England implemented three teaching strategies, across four Level 5 modules, to improve student feedback engagement.

This study, involving 218 students, was conducted during the academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24 at a large post-92 UK university. Students on four modules at Levels 5 and 6 of an undergraduate Multimedia Journalism programme were invited to take part. The student cohort was 62% female and 38% male, of whom 79% were white and 20% of whom declared a disability. There were two international students in the sample. The modules included were two sets of incrementally developmental modules, offering an opportunity for the project team to track impact with a consistent group of students across an academic year. The modules incorporated core and optional modules with varied assessment types including portfolio submission, essay, and in-class test.

Intervention 1: Cohort feedback videos

The first of these feedback strategies were short video cohort summaries of performance and feedforward. These prerecorded videos were released at the beginning of modules and signposted throughout module teaching and focused on giving a general overview of previous cohort's performance on the summative upcoming assessment (Reimann et al., 2019; Sadler et al., 2022). These videos were recorded screencasts utilising PowerPoint with captured narration. Videos were then shared with students in introductory classes

and uploaded to the virtual learning environment (VLE) where students could watch and rewatch as many times as they wished. The teaching team were encouraged to produce these materials as close to marking the previous assessment as they could so that common feedback themes were fresh in their minds and, frankly, so that this work was not too demanding in an already full workload.

Intervention 2: Feedback front sheet

The second teaching initiative was to introduce an assignment front sheet that encourages a more active and reflective approach to assignments and an increased sense of dialogue with staff (Arts et al., 2021; Bloxham & Campbell, 2010; Harris et al., 2022). Designed and finished during the summer periods, the first half of these front sheets would typically contain a grid and a series of tick box questions that remind students of the more essential elements and provide guidance on topics like structure. Here, the focus was on ensuring students had checked that they had, for example, followed university referencing standards, self-assessed their work against the learning outcomes and criteria and proofread their work. They also reminded students of formatting requirements too. An illustrative example of this is provided below:

Table 1 Example front sheet

Structure of your work	Yes	No
Have you included an introduction?		
Does your introduction clearly outline the main points you write about in your work?		
Have you defined key terms and concepts (if necessary)?		
Have you supported your main points with evidence from the literature?		
Does each paragraph introduce and develop one point?		
Have you included a conclusion that draws together the main (points) from your work?		
Does your conclusion reflect what you set out in your introduction?		
Have you included a reference list produced using university Harvard guidance?		
Have you proofread for spelling (do not rely on spell checker)?		
Have you paraphrased (written in your own words) rather than used direct quotes?		
If you have used a direct quote, have you used quotation marks and page numbers?		
Are all your references in alphabetical order?		
Have you checked your work against the marking criteria?		
And, finally...		
Have you proofread your work again one last time?		

The second half of the front sheet was designed to provide students with a space for reflection and to begin a dialogue with their marker, noting areas the student would like feedback on and areas they enjoyed or found challenging. Here, if students noted specific areas they would like feedback on, markers would respond to this in their audio feedback, enacting a dialogue around assessment and feedback with learners. This second half comprised 4-6 reflective prompts, with questions similar to those below:

- Which aspect of the assignment do you feel you did best at? Please briefly explain why.
- Which aspect of the assignment do you feel was particularly difficult for you? Please briefly explain why.
- Are there areas you would like your marker to specifically comment or give feedback on? If so, please explain.
- How have you addressed feedback given on earlier pieces of coursework? Do you have specific examples of this in this assessment?

It is important to note that across the four modules involved in this trial, the specific questions in both halves of the front sheet varied and deviated depending upon the module content and assessment methods in each module; the above are illustrative examples.

Intervention 3: Audio feedback provision

Finally, summative assessment feedback was delivered in audio form rather than written form to encourage better engagement and create a more personalised culture (Dawson et al., 2019; Knauf, 2016; Turnbull, 2022). This university utilises Turnitin, and the team opted to use the audio feedback features within Turnitin. This provides the option to record three minutes of audio per submission. Due to the limitations of the institutional software, these audio recordings were not editable and needed to be completed in one take. Additionally, the Turnitin audio feedback option does not currently provide audio transcription which poses a challenge to the accessibility of audio feedback. The team explored using other means to record audio files and manually attaching these to each student's assessment, but it was agreed that this introduced more possibility for human error and additional complications for students in terms of needing to then access the files separately from Turnitin. Markers could also provide annotations on submitted work in the form of in-text comments, but the substantive feedback element was to be provided via this audio feedback mechanism. Unless a documented personal learning plan, taking into account individual disabilities and differences, was provided to advise an alternative approach, audio feedback was the only element of the three strategies that was not optional and was applied by all lecturers.

Staff on these modules introduced the three interlinked feedback strategies outlined above, aimed at supporting students with summative assessments and encouraging them to actively engage with their feedback with personalised and feedforward elements. The combined strategies aimed to develop student understanding of how the theory and practice learned in an individual module connects to the wider degree programme and underpins a deeper understanding of the subject (Hounsell et al., 2008).

Methodology

This study utilised a mixed-methods approach, employing anonymised surveys and student focus groups. Surveys allowed the project team to gather large amounts of data, quickly and easily, affording the project some generalisability, while the use of focus groups allowed us to explore the findings from the survey in more depth, gaining richer insight into student experience. The project expected to gain an insight into students' reported levels of engagement and satisfaction with the three interventions proposed, highlighting any impact upon engagement with assessment tasks and feedback.

Students had the research project explained to them by module leaders and were given electronic copies of project information sheets two weeks before data collection began. Participation in all aspects of the project exploring student experience, contributing survey and focus group data, was entirely voluntary. Therefore, by participating in the project, students affirmed their interest in participating.

Ethical considerations

As noted above, student participants were informed of the full project verbally by their module leaders and then given two weeks to consider their involvement. During that time, students were able to contact the principal investigators and had the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had. The study was conducted in alignment with British Educational Research Association (2018) guidelines on conducting education research, which were recently republished in 2024. Additionally, the study was given formal ethical approval by the HEI in question.

Anonymous online survey

Microsoft Forms was chosen as our survey instrument due to it being freely available through institutional licences, and due to students being familiar with this platform. Once data collection began, students were emailed the link to the anonymous survey and an electronic copy of the project information sheet (PIS). The survey welcome screen and the PIS detailed the nature of consent being given. Furthermore, the welcome screen also provided an option to give informed consent via a tick box before proceeding to the questions. On contributing their data to the survey, it was anonymised at source, and the project team had no way of identifying individual students. As such, at this stage, removal of submitted data was not an option. The above was approved by the university's ethics board and is in keeping with the Information Commissioner's Office (2012) Code of Practice.

The project team used established measures to discourage non-response including giving clear guidance on how long the survey would be available, email reminders to complete and the survey itself giving an indication of how long the survey would take for students to complete (Fink, 2003; Porter & Whitcomb, 2003). The survey kept to four open questions, designed to be exploratory and provide sufficient freedom for students to respond how they wished. Open-ended questions were chosen here to give space to explore views and attitudes (Hansen & Świdarska, 2024).

The surveys were released across two years, in February each year, to capture thoughts and feelings after students had submitted assignments and received feedback as per the university's semesterly schedule. The project team decided not to reissue the survey over the summer when response rates were likely to be especially low. Across two years, and the two moments when we released the survey, the survey gathered 20 responses. This represents a response rate of just 9%. Naturally, this was disappointing to the project team, and a much higher response rate would have been beneficial to both this study, and the teaching team implementing these innovations.

Focus groups

Focus groups were scheduled in the month following the survey release in March of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years, to follow up on thoughts provided in the survey and, again, while reflections on the assessment process in January remained present. Students were given the voluntary choice of attending focus groups and all who chose to attend were given consent forms prior to beginning the focus

groups. Before and after each focus group, as well as on consent forms and PIS, students were assured of their option to withdraw their data from focus group data by informing the research team of this decision. In the 2022/23 academic year, there were two focus groups and 10 students in total participated in these. In 2023/24, a further two focus groups were held, recruiting 11 more students. This gave a total of 21 student participants in focus groups across the study.

Questions were designed to be open-ended, providing space for responsive prompts during the focus groups. Focus groups were chosen as they can provide spaces for participants to explore, refute or strengthen preliminary data from other tools used in a study, in this case the survey tool (Dil et al., 2024). They can also facilitate open and dynamic conversations around a topic, sometimes uncovering findings that would not be present in individual research tools such as surveys and individual interviews (Stalmeijer et al., 2014). They do, however, require careful facilitation to avoid participants from dominating discussions and are reliant upon the willingness of participants during the focus groups themselves.

Focus groups were conducted by one of the authors here who was a project co-lead but does not have any teaching responsibilities with these students and is unknown to them. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed for accuracy.

Data analysis

Survey findings were analysed by both project leads, independently applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis by undergoing several stages of coding and analysis before discussing findings and arriving at consensus on common thematic groupings. This same process was followed for the focus groups, with both project leads reviewing recordings and transcripts, independently analysing data sets before coming together to discuss and find areas of consensus and commonality.

Findings

Here, we discuss the most recurrent themes relating to each of the three interventions being explored here.

Cohort summaries of performance and feedback

As noted above, these short, narrated PowerPoint videos summarised key aspects from previous cohorts/modules, highlighting the areas which the previous cohort had succeeded in and common areas for development. While the project team envisioned these videos being resources used multiple times by students as they work through their assessments, the findings from both the surveys and the focus groups showed a more one-off and transactional use of the videos, with students indicating videos were often used once to frame their thoughts and then not revisited:

Useful to pre-emptively assess common issues to try and avoid, nice to see how previous cohort approached the unit [module] and what worked well. (Survey respondent, 2023/24)

I used it for a reference, took a few notes from it. (Focus group respondent, 2023/24)

Students did, however, reflect that the videos gave a clear steer on how to begin working on the assessment, as noted by one student: "Straight away it made it very obvious what not to do – it's like 'that's not what we're doing'" (Focus group respondent, 2022/23). Here, the cohort feedback videos provided a steer from the outset of producing summative assessments that was often noted to "sharpen focus" and

that they were “informative in helping us to weed stuff out” (Focus group respondent, 2022/23). Some students did also go on to use the videos more substantively, using them whilst drafting their assignments, and enjoying having this insight beyond similar information being delivered in a class:

Usually we would only experience this in a lecture or seminar. Having this on hand whilst doing the assignment elsewhere was incredibly useful. (Survey respondent, 2022/23).

For students who used these videos, the above quotes show that they were useful in helping to focus their efforts during the drafting process of assessment writing.

However, several students, across both years of the study, noted that the videos became lost or, rather, were easy to not find. Here, students noted that, in the content-heavy VLE, finding the videos after they were introduced in the early weeks of the course became difficult: “lots of stuff gets muddled up on Moodle [...] I think they assume we use Moodle more than we do” (Focus group respondent, 2023/24).

Some students also reported that after being introduced to cohort feedback videos, they never used the videos and forgot about them, summarised by the following quote: “I feel as though I wasn't notified enough about these resources therefore, they didn't offer much guidance to me whilst working on my assignment” (Survey respondent, 2023/24). Here, students reflected on the videos being used in early term classes but not actively used by teaching staff from this point forwards.

In summary, the findings presented here show the value of these videos from the earlier quotes, but the need to make frequent use of these videos and whole-cohort briefings more substantively is clear in order to help grow that dialogic, feedback-literate culture being sought.

Diagnostic and dialogic assignment front sheet: Pre-submission forms

As previously detailed, the assignment front sheets were designed to remind students of the essentials of constructing an assignment and to act in a diagnostic capacity – assignment structure, formatting, referencing requirements, proofreading etc. They were also designed to promote a reflection and dialogue with the student around what they wanted to highlight in their work and what feedback they wished for.

In terms of student use of the front sheets, some students used the sheets to help structure their drafting and crafting of assessments, with the assessment checklists and dialogic questions acting as a ‘map’ for producing the assignment. Additionally, several students noted how they had used the front sheet as a dialogic space, to ask for specific feedback or to, in effect, annotate riskier decisions they had perhaps made in their submissions. Contrastingly, some students only used the front-sheets immediately before submitting coursework in a more instrumental fashion. These differing approaches are detailed below.

Using both elements of the front sheet to structure their work and to reflect upon their work ahead of submission provided any students with a ‘map’ to help guide them through the assessment process in a more relaxed, constructive and self-aware manner:

It was like having a tick sheet to cross off everything to do. We called it a pre submission form and I think most people only used it just before submitting but I referred to it the whole way through the assignment and that was helpful. (Survey respondent, 2022/23)

Additionally, many students reported using the dialogic element to request feedback beyond the assessment criteria – on elements such as their journalistic practice in conducting interviews or on transferrable skills demonstrated throughout the work that was then discussed in the assignment:

Front sheets emphasised that university is actually for learning. (Focus group respondent, 2022/23)

I asked for some pointers on how to make my interviews better in the future. (Focus group respondent, 2022/23)

If students went to the effort of providing areas that they would value feedback on, markers used the audio feedback provision to respond to these requests, enacting an asynchronous conversation.

One unexpected outcome of introducing the front sheets was that some students reported using the second part of the sheet to not only have a dialogue with their markers, but to also essentially narrate or annotate elements of their assessment where they may have taken a risk or taken an unexpected approach. Here, the ability to explain these choices to their markers provided a form of reassurance to students that it was ok to take informed risks or be creative in their work, now that they had the space to explain these choices to markers:

I liked the pre submission forms a lot as I did refer back to them before submission which helped ease my mind knowing that I had included everything I was supposed to. These were in detail and like a little check list. The questions at the end as well were nice as I could speak about what I struggled with and gain feedback through the audio on them which has now helped my next assessment. (Survey respondent, 2023/24)

They gave more options to take a risk. (Focus group respondent, 2022/23)

The first part of the front sheet was intended to act as a diagnostic, helping to socialise academic literacy expectations around things like formatting, referencing, and writing structure issues that often hinder attainment. For some students, the front sheet became a checklist, used immediately before submission to help them avoid common mistakes: “I didn't tend to use the pre submission forms throughout the whole unit [module] but I did use it right before I handed the assignment in to check I had included everything” (Survey respondent, 2023/24). While the study had hoped for a more nuanced and involved use of the front sheet, encompassing both diagnostic and reflective/dialogic elements, students simply using the first part as a safeguard against common mistakes still represents a positive use of the tool.

Additionally, as this was an encouraged, but ultimately optional, component to the assignments, not all students completed the front sheets. One student noted that, while they used the first half of the sheet, they did not include it in their final submission as the second half seems like unmarked effort:

The questions take action to actually do, whereas the checklist is more like visual [...] it was nice to have open though. (Focus group respondent, 2023/24).

While we did not track concrete numbers here, all markers fed back that the majority of students had included the front sheets in some form – either just uploading the ‘tick box’ part or engaging more fully with the sheet in earnest. Following this, approximately half of those who attached the front sheets completed the dialogue questions. Here, more work is needed to socialise the benefits of them and to avoid them appearing solely like more work but work that would not be directly marked. Additionally, future research focusing solely on the front sheets themselves will also look at front sheet usage rates in more forensic detail.

The front sheets proved a popular element with students noting generally positive feedback for it – either as a tool used over a longer period of time to guide assessment writing or preface creativity and risk-taking, or as a safety net immediately before submission. However, not all students understood their purpose and

more work needs to be done to socialise and normalise this reflective approach. As one focus group participant noted, when asked the dialogic questions about which elements they wanted feedback on specifically, they quite reasonably put “everything”. As the above shows, the data shows the potential of this intervention to support some students during the assignment writing process, and to provide additional space for tutor-student dialogue and reflection.

Audio feedback

As previously noted, the third intervention involved providing the substantive feedback in the form of a three-minute audio recording. This replaced the established practice in this academic department of providing longer written feedback on summative assignments. The audio feedback could also be supplemented with on-text annotations using features of Turnitin Grademark. While most students who fed back during this project found this to be a positive intervention, there were some contrasting viewpoints, illustrated below.

Moving to audio feedback was found, by most student participants in this study, to be a positive move offering a more personal, more human connection to their lecturers during the assessment process:

Post Covid, I feel like I didn't have a connection with my teachers, this is more personable. (Focus group respondent, 2022/23)

I think I preferred it to written feedback [...] I felt like it was a bit more conversational because you can hear the tone in which they're saying something and sometimes I'd read the written stuff and think that it sounds like really negative [...] when they say it, it doesn't sound like that. (Focus group respondent, 2023/24)

Here, audio feedback was seen to offer a “more intimate [...] more human” (Survey respondent 2023/24) form of feedback and, broadly, was commented upon as being more engaged with. It is also important to note that, while most of the feedback related to this ‘personal angle’ was overwhelmingly positive, for some students, they did not want this and preferred written feedback:

I was anxious to click on it, what do they have to actually say about my work? (Focus group respondent, 2023/24)

It is also worth noting that one student, who has a disability related to audio processing, naturally, found audio feedback challenging. Such considerations must of course be considered when welcoming increasingly diverse student cohorts.

Both the survey and focus groups confirmed fears that students largely did not engage with substantive written feedback, but across two years of focus groups and survey data gathered here, there was lots more enthusiasm for audio feedback compared to written feedback, showing increased engagement:

In terms of the written feedback, I don't even think I read it. In terms of the audio feedback, it was like someone has recorded this for me, it's two minutes long, I may as well listen to it because they are speaking about me [...] if all of them were audio I'd probably have taken in a lot more feedback but that's probably me just not applying myself with the other type of feedback. (Focus group respondent, 2023/24)

This engagement, however, differed when compared to how students historically had used written feedback:

I think it [audio feedback] can be good but having written feedback allows you to dissect it a bit more and re-read rather than listen which I'd say is faster. (Survey respondent, 2023/24).

Here, the format of audio feedback meant that they could not download it and take it with them for reuse or interact with it how they were used to, without entering the VLE spaces: "it would be helpful if it was transcribed" (Focus group respondent, 2023/24). Additionally, due to the constraints of the VLE and grading platforms, the audio feedback, if recorded within Turnitin/Grademark, is limited to a single non-editable three-minute audio piece, with no capacity to include labelling and navigation tools like chapters.

In summary, students noted that they engaged with the audio feedback and, essentially, took what they needed from it to move forwards. Additionally, hearing the tutor's voice helped students to feel that their feedback was personalised and tailored to them. In summary, despite limitations of institutional platforms, students found audio feedback more engaging, conversational and personal.

Discussion

Many of the above findings are positive, citing practice which provided opportunities for students to engage more critically with their assessments and with their tutors in a more dialogic process. Additionally, even if this deeper engagement was not always present, many students reported engaging with the interventions, and this use of the videos, front sheets or audio feedback is no less valuable.

When reviewing the data gathered across two years of focus groups and surveys, the project team felt that the above findings, across all three interventions, centered upon two key areas requiring further discussion. First, the importance of socialising not only the interventions, but also the intentions behind them, is clear and has implications for teaching practice. Second, the concept of student choice, while not always logistically easy, is important for ensuring such interventions have as much positive impact for learners as possible.

The above findings highlight the importance of socialising academic, assessment and feedback literacies. Sadler et al. (2022) noted the importance of careful and considered placement in the timetable of feedforward practices in contemporary assessment and feedback research, highlighting the need for early implementation of practices to allow sufficient time for students to engage and utilise feedback information. While our results would broadly agree with this, we would encourage an air of caution for colleagues considering putting some interventions too early in the teaching plan. Our findings show that the cohort summary videos were useful but perhaps positioned too early in our teaching to be memorable at the right points.

Gould and Day's (2025) previously discussed study of multimedia feedback showed that students sometimes do not understand how to interact with non-written feedback and that receiving feedback via non-written methods can feel 'too personal': "I can accept criticism better when it's written" (p. 11). This finding was echoed here, highlighting the need for the nuances of delivering audio feedback to be fully understood and socialised for both staff and students. Here, calibrating approaches to audio feedback ahead of marking would help ensure consistency of approach, tone and intent for markers. This approach can, and we argue should, also be shared with learners ahead of summative assessment submission.

This project implemented three different interventions at one time and, as such, careful consideration was given to how the project team would socialise these interventions and how they would use them within taught sessions. Cohort performance video summaries were spoken through during the launch of the assessments at the start of these modules, hosted on the VLE and mentioned in the early weeks of the

module. The assessment front sheet was also introduced at this point and referred to in teaching several times throughout the module delivery. Finally, audio feedback was detailed on the assignment brief and launched at a similar time as the above. Additionally, all students were informed of the project and its aims of encouraging greater student engagement with assessment and feedback information. The project team felt that they had given the interventions sufficient coverage within class teaching time, but the findings show that more could be done to socialise these interventions more across the delivery of modules, considering all three of them were new to the students. Student responses showed us the ways in which students use these resources and, crucially, *when* they use them too. Therefore, future work could look to adapt to this student-led timetable of engagement.

For example, the data above show that perhaps we could build more extensive in-class work around the cohort summary videos in the early weeks of the modules, before introducing the front sheet, at perhaps the midway point, to build on the assessment literacy developed from the work with the cohort summary videos. These two resources in particular – the cohort summary videos and assessment diagnostic and dialogic front sheet – dovetail with Campbell and Duke's (2023) excellent guidance on racially inclusive practice in assessment and guidance (RIPIAG) developed as part of a recent Quality Assurance Agency collaborative enhancement project. Here, Campbell and Duke recommend four interventions, which their research has proven to reduce racialised awarding gaps. Campbell and Duke recommend containing within the assignment brief 'Tips and essential things to include when completing each assignment question' which could be in the form of a link to cohort summary videos. They also recommend a Modified Seminar Workshop that covers essential parts of the assignment, including structuring and formatting considerations and deeper considerations around criticality, use of evidence and other areas. Here, both elements of the assignment front sheet could be used to structure this kind of session. Additionally, Campbell and Duke (2023) also recommend the inclusion of an Active Group Marking Exercise, which again could use aspects of the cohort summary videos and front sheet to facilitate student assessment of exemplar work. This would also represent an opportunity to introduce audio feedback and give an example of previous feedback for students to consider.

This project also sought to offer choice in the feedback available to learners, as well as a choice in what that feedback might also focus on. Furthermore, by positioning the engagement with cohort videos and pre-submission sheets as voluntary initiatives, students could similarly choose to opt-out of engaging with these strategies – they might choose not to watch the feedforward videos or engage with the front sheet. Additionally, as with all feedback provision, students can choose not to listen to the audio feedback, as they may do with written feedback. However, the above findings evidence students making active decisions to engage with these strategies, in various ways, for various reasons.

As noted, not all students were in favour of these changes, particularly around audio feedback. Moving forward, the project team are evolving the approaches detailed here to incorporate student choice in this regard so that there will be, for example, a standard approach of audio feedback, but students can express a choice for purely written feedback through the assignment front sheet should they so wish. Recent research by Brown et al. (2020) and Wanner et al. (2024) has shown how choice can often be overwhelming for students, so any future moves towards further student choice will need to be carefully scaffolded.

Limitations

While the above contributes to sector wide discussions concerning how we engage students as active agents in their feedback and assessment processes, this work does of course have some limitations. It is

limited to one university and one disciplinary area – future work is already underway across the 2024/25 academic year and beyond to expand this project to other disciplinary areas of the university and to research student experiences here too. This work has a relatively small sample size and response rate – despite this however, data saturation was reached, and findings were triangulated between the research team.

Conclusions and recommendations

There are some lessons that the team have learnt across two years of implementing the above that colleagues should be mindful of when embarking on similar projects:

- First, it is important to repeatedly signpost resources like the cohort feedback videos and assignment front sheets throughout module teaching to avoid them becoming used solely as ‘safety nets’ or possibly forgotten about. This use of these resources as a last-minute checking aid is still preferable to no last-minute checks, but to move some students beyond a ‘just enough’ mindset, these tools and strategies can be used more meaningfully in disciplinary teaching to scaffold good assessment practices throughout a module’s teaching. Such interventions can dovetail with other assessment-related strategies such as Campbell and Duke’s (2023) important Racially Inclusive Practice in Assessment and Guidance (RIPIAG).
- We would also recommend that colleagues familiarise themselves with audio feedback mechanisms and engage in calibration to ensure a consistency of approach in audio feedback, as would be recommended with traditional written feedback. Here, calibrating approaches to maximising the potential of the three-minute audio mechanism will undoubtedly lead to better practice for learners.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study has suggested a move beyond blanket policies (all audio feedback, or all written feedback for example) to one which affords students choice in their feedback provision to best reflect their learning preferences. This, of course, must be done in a way which is kind to increasing staff workloads and the time allocated for marking and feedback during assessment periods.

The project team initially moved to audio feedback to ensure consistency across the amount of feedback, with the general feeling that audio feedback would be more inclusive and accessible for those who find academic reading and writing challenging. This study has shown that this is not always the case, and that choice is ultimately the ideal solution. However, in summary, the project team feel that any positive use of these interventions, no matter their levels of engagement or how their use of them may differ from what we had intended, is an active choice and is preferable to not providing students with these options.

Biographies

Dr Chris Little is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Development in Manchester Metropolitan University’s central University Teaching Academy. Chris offers academic development consultancy at Manchester Metropolitan and co-leads the university Advance HE Recognition provision. Email: c.little@mmu.ac.uk

Dr Carmel Thomason is a Senior Lecturer in Multimedia Journalism in Manchester Metropolitan University’s School of English where she co-leads the BA Hons Multimedia Journalism programme. Email: c.thomason@mmu.ac.uk

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