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Feedforward: turning feedback around

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UNIVERSITY OF
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School of Psychology, Social Work and Human Sciences

Connected.

Feedforward

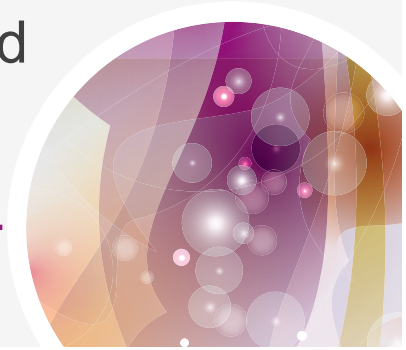
Turning feedback around

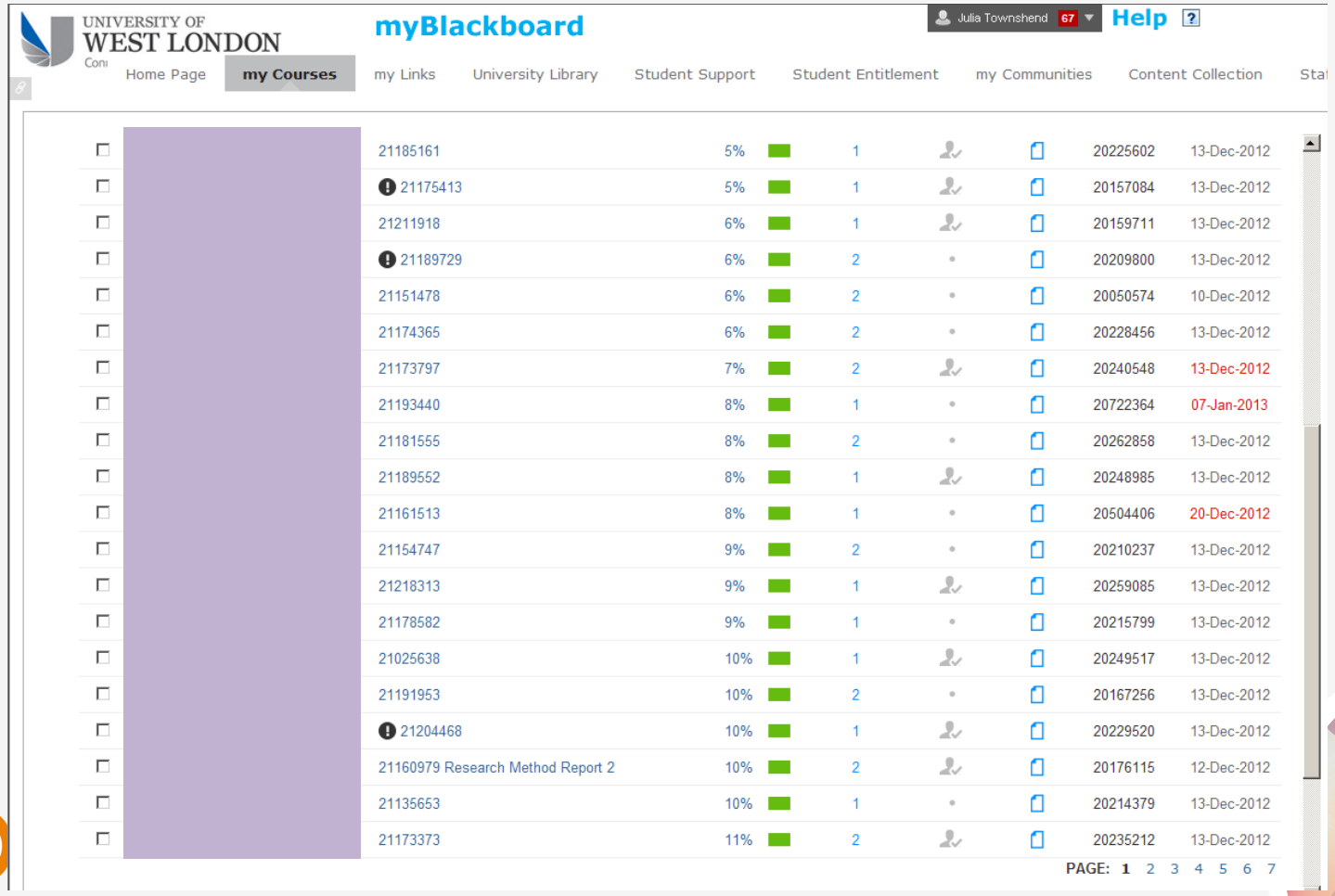
Julia Townshend, Tony Northeast, Marcia Worrell
- and all the FFWD seminar leaders.

Funded by a feedback research award from INSTIL 2013-2014

Rationale

- Feedback on summative work comes too late
- Feedback lacks specificity to future assessment tasks
- Feedback must be timely for it to be effective
- Students fail to engage with assessment criteria, and often do not read feedback

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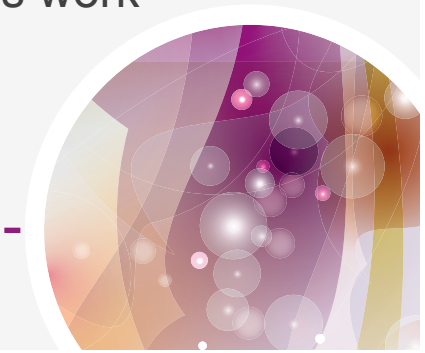
Aims

- The project aimed to implement a way of encouraging students to engage with assessment criteria by providing students with input on assessed work at the point that it is most useful (via feedforward).

  - help students to engage with and understand the assessment criteria
  - encourage them to recognise quality in their own and other's work
  - act on that knowledge to improve their performance
  - use TEL in a way that will enrich the experience

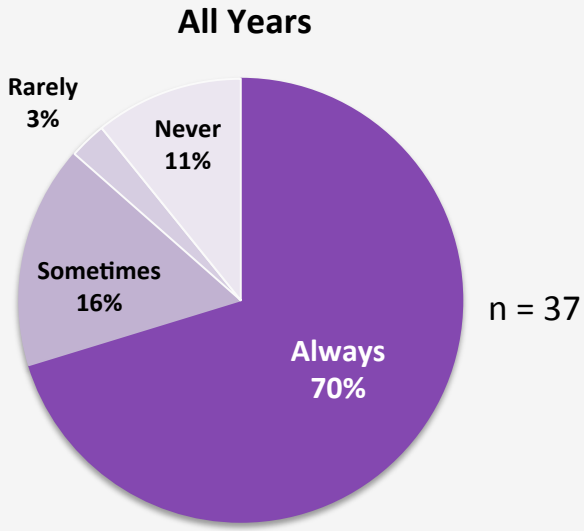


Methods

- ***1. Initial Survey*.**
  - Presented on Qualtrics to all psychology students in order to gain a measure of how often feedback is read, and opinions about the usefulness of current feedback methods.
- ***2. Pre-assignment*.**
  - Feedforward seminars delivered using Poll Everywhere.
- ***3. Post-assignment*.**
  - Comparisons based on the number of students who accessed their feedback compared with the previous year.
  - Assignment structure; comparison between seminar attendees and non-attendees.
  - Focus groups for students and staff.

Survey Results

How often do you access your feedback?



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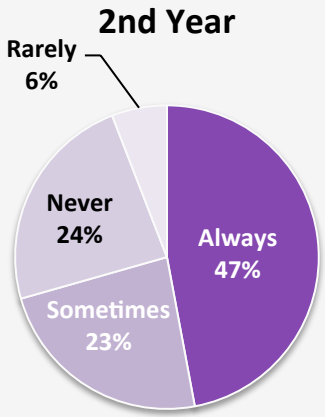

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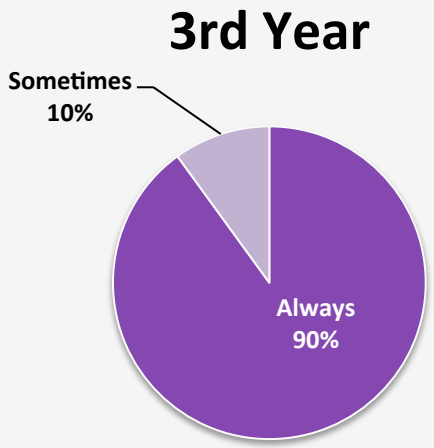

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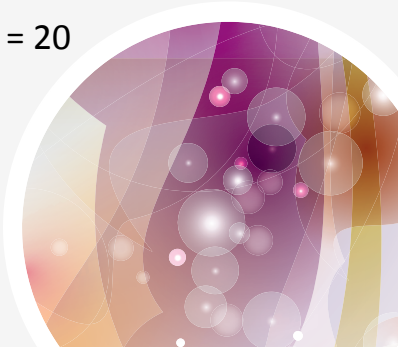
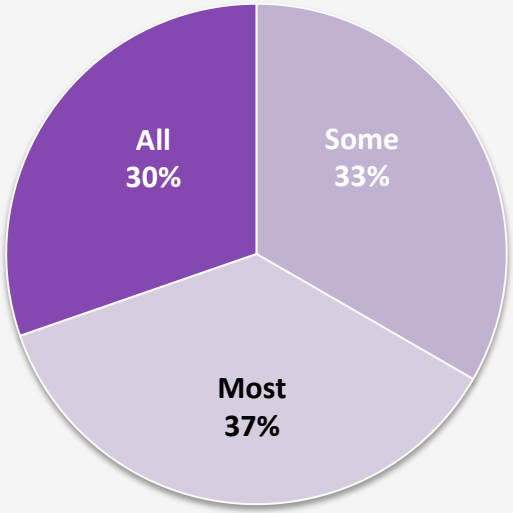


Survey Results

Did you find the feedback you received useful?



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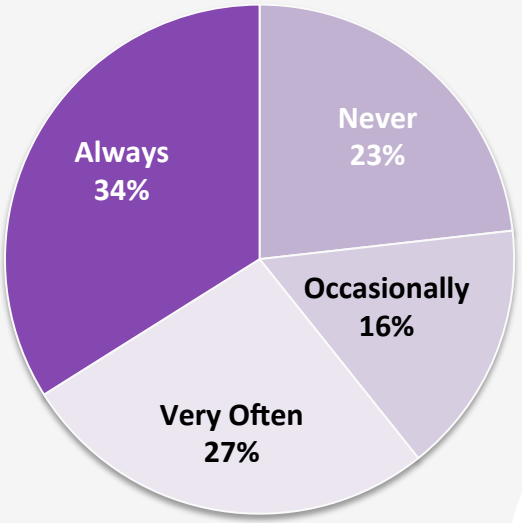
Have you ever used feedback from a previous assignment to try and improve your next assignment(s)?



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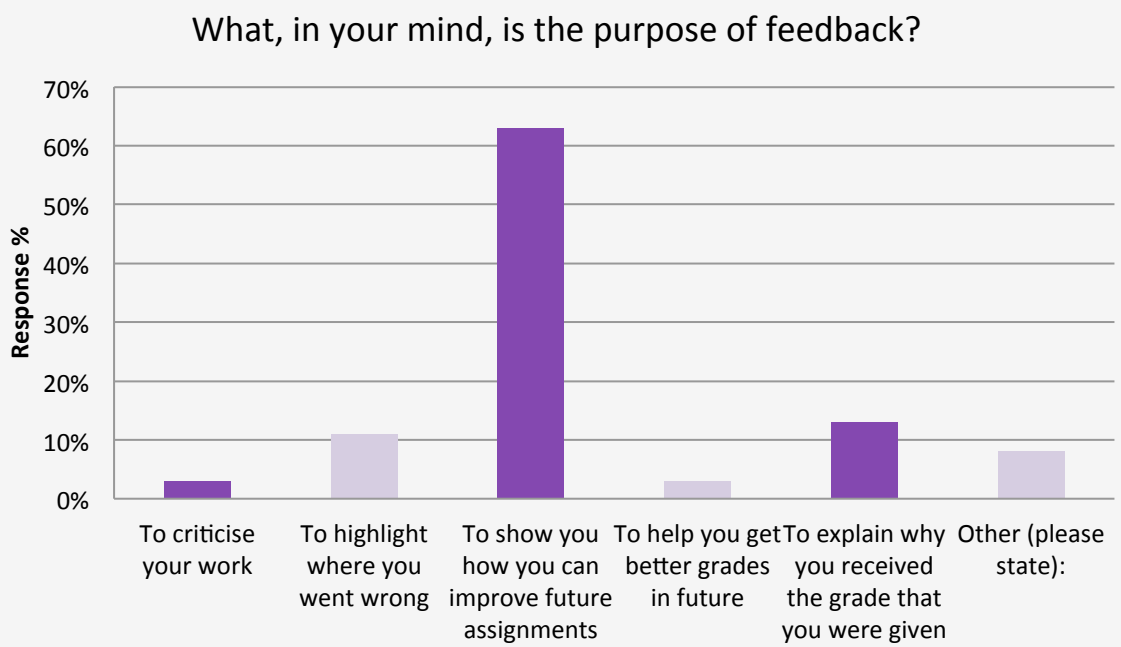
Survey Results



FFWD Seminars

- Delivered pre-assignment.
- The assessment criteria for the assignment was examined in detail using Poll Everywhere to measure understanding.
- A range of exemplars of previously submitted assignments presented.
- Students graded the work based on the extent to which the criteria were met.
- Students submitted live, anonymous feedback using Poll Everywhere which formed the basis for discussion between the students and tutors.

FFWD Seminars – student comments

Tell me one key thing that you have learnt here today:

Respond at **PollEv.com/tonyuwl** Text **54288** and your message to **020 3322 5822**

"How to up my level of writing from the examples shown! Better than any feedback!"
8 months ago

"The difference between Mental health and mental illness"
8 months ago

"How to write a good essay"
8 months ago

"What not to write in my essays"
8 months ago

"Answer the question! Don't include anything unnecessary"
8 months ago

"How to actually structure my answer"
8 months ago

"In intro ...say what the essay will about instead of random description"
8 months ago

"I have seen the differences between different style writings and what marks they will be worth"
8 months ago

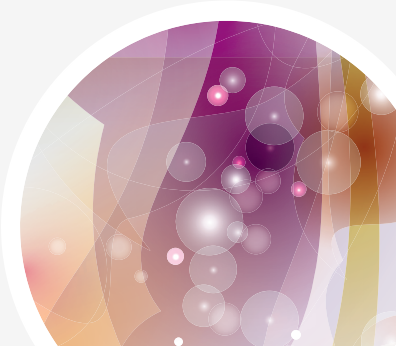
"Always reference and provide evidence for a good grade"
8 months ago

"Keep the language very simple"
8 months ago

Results - Accessing Feedback

- Percentage of students who did not access their feedback compared with previous year –

	2013-14	2015-16
Psychology of Mental Health (L6)	20%	11.6%
Further Research Methods (L5)	27.4%	26.1%
Research Methods (L4)	38.2%	3.6%
Academic Writing (FY)	20%	29.2%
Mean (all years)	26.4%	17.6%



Results - Assessment Performance

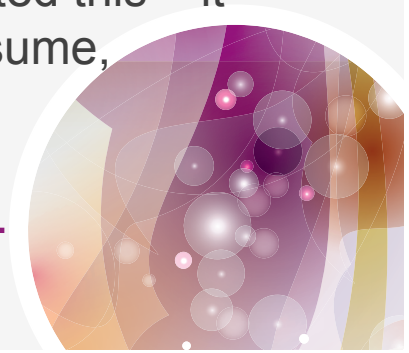
- Psychology of Mental Health (L6), 2000 word essay.
- Four aspects of the marker feedback for the essay were blind-rated by the research team on a scale from 1 – 10; the ‘introduction’, ‘structure’, ‘clarity of argument and critical analysis’, and ‘conclusion’.
- Using a repeated measures ANOVA, scores were compared for the above 4 factors between those who attended the seminar (23) and those that didn’t (15). $F(1,36) = 4.08$, $p = 0.051$
- Actual grades between groups were not different.

Focus Groups

Reducing fear of the assignment

- “I think it was just being able to read another assignment and just be like …. It gave me more confidence, because if I haven’t seen something and I don’t quite know what the lecturer’s looking for” (student)

- “one of them just drew in so many different ideas and constructed this – it was like an 88% or something. It was ridiculous. Because I assume, hopefully, were freed by the fear of the assignment” (tutor)

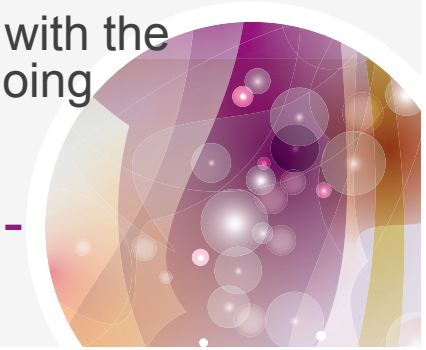


Focus Groups

Understanding the marking criteria

- “it was like because we broke it down section by section it was these are the principles, this is what an intro needs to include, this is what the main body needs to include, this is what the conclusion needs to include and these are the bits that I probably haven’t incorporated before into an essay and therefore now I know to put them in and I think that’s what made my marks go up.” (student)

- “and it’s the first thing that they really cotton to the connection with the really detailed marking criteria that we give them for that. So going through that step-by-step. It made a big difference.” (tutor)



Focus Groups

Making the expectations explicit.

- “I think feed-forward could be used a lot in Year 1, you know, where you’re learning how to write your essays, where you’re learning to write your reports, ….. This is your beginning stage, you’re learning how to do this and I think feed-forward can really help with that ... it was pretty much the lecturer just saying, “Ok, well this is how you kind of do it”, rather than a very concrete, “This is how you do it”. (student)
- “some of the students said that when they got their feedback, they felt that this was information that had been withheld from them. But they wanted it before they did the assignment. They felt that the feedback they were getting after was stuff that wasn’t given to them. I’m sure it was. But doing the feed-forward way, is a very explicit way of showing exactly what they were supposed to do and exactly what we expect.” (tutor)

Conclusions and Reflections

- Students understand the purpose of feedback but don't always use it to improve their next assignment.
- There was increase in accessing assignment feedback on some modules.
- There was an increase in performance on the structure of the essay on the level 6 module for those who attended the seminar.
- Students and tutors were very positive about the feedforward seminars and the aims of the project in general and would like to continue using it.
- On reflection ... better methods of handling the data need to be worked out in advance!
- Thanks ....