Evaluating and evolving a modules formative assessment and feedback strategy

Dan Butcher
School of Health and Social Care

Brookes Learning and Teaching Conference 2011
Engaging learning through graduate attributes: staff and student perspectives
• Feedback: all that effort, but what is the effect?

• Is it worth it?

• ‘...the learner is in the best position to judge the effectiveness of feedback, but may not always recognise the benefits it provides.’
  
  Price et al (2010 p277)

• Goes on to say measuring effectiveness is ‘difficult and perhaps impossible’
So...

Is formative assessment

a ‘golden opportunity’

or

a ‘lead balloon’?
U40135 Experiences of Health and Illness: Adult Nursing Practice II

- Compulsory for Adult Nursing pre-registration students
- 2nd year
- Practice related
- 100% coursework
- Assessed presentation in front of approx 12 fellow students and assessor
Assessed Presentation

- Assessing knowledge and higher level academic skills
- Acknowledge individual skills and preferences
- Address transferable skills matched to developing and future professional role
- Fits into a programme assessment strategy

- In the present
  - Addresses the SESE (2010 – 2015) graduate attributes
  - Critical self awareness and personal literacy
‘It was scary but I’m glad I’ve done it!’
Formative assessment strategy

- Week 3 - Paired 10 minute presentation with feedback
- Weeks 4 to 7 – Impromptu support – Students in clinical practice
- Week 8 – Submit presentation plan
- Week 9 – Written feedback on plan returned
- Week 10 – Optional one-to-one tutorials

• Summative presentation Week 12
Plan template and example on VLE

Example Presentation Plan

(The titles are different so focus on the way the plan has been used to structure the presentation)

Student Name: Mary Seacole

Date: 26th January 2011

Presentation Title: What are my chances of recovery?

(Assume patient (Wendy) has just been given diagnosis of breast cancer)

Aims:

1. To identify Wendy’s understanding of her present situation to enable you to give appropriate information and support

2. To clarify Wendy’s understanding of her diagnosis and proposed treatment

3. To consider theories of loss and transition, stress and coping

4. To discuss any interventions that may be appropriate for Wendy

Learning Outcomes to be Addressed (taken from module handbook)

1. Demonstrate an holistic approach to assessment and the total management of cancer
2. Debate the supportive role of the nurse in relation to treatments therapies used within cancer treatment
3. Examine national policies relating to cancer and palliative care
4. Demonstrate developing self-awareness related to mortality and working with people who are dying, those with cancer and those experiencing trauma
5. Inform and develop practice through the use of reflection and the best available evidence

TIMINGS RESOURCES CONTENTS

3 minutes PowerPoint presentation slide 1 & 2

Objective no. 1

Outline Wendy’s case to date and her history. Give detailed information here about her history, family, social circumstances and support networks.
Addressing the Brookes Assessment Compact

- Process viewed as ‘golden opportunity’ by module team

- For what?
  - Explore topic and develop understanding
  - Relate to clinical practice and contextualise
  - Pass on tips and other practicalities
  - Enhance performance and therefore grades

- Prime purpose of formative feedback
  - To enable students to become effective self-assessors

(Sadler 1989)
• Tutor intentions of feedback may not be accurately perceived by learners
  Orsmond & Merry (2011)

• Roles attributed to feedback
  • Correction
  • Reinforcement
  • Forensic diagnosis
  • Bench-marking
  • Longitudinal development

• Students lack understanding to interpret academic discourse
  Weaver (2006)

• ‘take note of students views on assessment matters’
  Brown (2010)
Developing an insight

The FAST Project

Welcome to the FAST 'legacy' website.

The Formative Assessment in Science Teaching (FAST) project was a three year project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England that aimed to examine how students' formative assessment experiences affected their learning. It was a collaborative partnership between The Open University and Sheffield Hallam University. This project was part of Phase 4 Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL).

This website supersedes the previous website (www.open.ac.uk/science/fdtl). This FAST legacy website hosts all the outputs from the project including reports, papers, case studies, tools and other resources. The materials and resources are free for practitioners to use and adapt for their own use or as part of staff development activities; we just request that you acknowledge the FAST project as source.

The website is divided into 6 main sections:

- **The FAST Project** section provides information about the project;
- **Commentary articles** section provides an introduction to the major themes that emerged from the FAST project work;
- **Case studies** section provides links to the case studies which were a major outcome of the project;
- **Investigative tools** section provides information and links to the tools generated by the FAST project to help practitioners evaluate and reform their practice;
- **Resources** section provides links to a range of useful resources developed as part of the FAST project or found to be useful by the Team;
- **Contact us** section provides links on up-to-date activities of the Team and how to contact us now that we have moved on from the FAST project.

We would welcome your feedback about the resources on this website; please email FAST-project@open.ac.uk

Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ)

‘Conditions’ for assessment to support student learning

Tasks
- capture sufficient student time and effort
- distribute student effort evenly across time and topics
- engage students in productive learning activity

Assessment communicates clear and high expectations to students

Feedback
- is sufficient, frequent and adequately detailed
- is provided quickly enough to be useful
- focuses on learning rather than marks
- is linked to the purpose of the assignment and to criteria
- is understandable by students
- is received by students and attended to
- is acted upon to improve work or learning

Gibbs and Simpson (2003)
Some numbers

- 183 students across 8 seminar groups and 2 campuses
  - 124 (67.8%) submitted a plan
  - 59 (32.2%) did not – ‘Is it a lead balloon?’

- Multi-section evaluation to capture various actions

- 89 (48.6%) evaluation responses across all groups
  - 70 who had submitted a plan
  - 19 who had not
Global student perspectives

- Study effort is linked to achievement
- The assessment is seen as challenging
- Assessment and course *both* contribute to learning
- Quantity and timing of feedback was appropriate for the vast majority who responded
### Key results - plan submitted (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S. Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>S. Agree</th>
<th>DNC</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read the feedback carefully and tried to understand what it was saying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the feedback to go over what I had planned</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The majority of students ‘engage’ with the feedback

• Recognise the dialogic nature

• Work to apply it directly to their coursework

• View it as feeding forward (future performance)
### Key results - plan submitted (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S. Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>S. Agree</th>
<th>DNC</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once I had read the feedback I had an idea of the grade I might get</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t understand some of the feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Not able or willing to self assess
  - Yet to develop the skills or confidence

- Not familiar with the grading criteria

- Novel assessment makes transfer of insight difficult

- Overestimate effect of style and presentation
  - Based on evaluation comments
### Selected reasons given for non submission of plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressures of being in practice</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressures of daily life/ illness</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended to but missed the deadline</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t feel I would get any benefit</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It wasn’t marked so isn’t relevant</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just another piece of work I can do without</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never feel good about the feedback I get</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The plan and feedback won’t make a difference</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never get any constructive feedback</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t understand the feedback I get</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t tell me what mark I could expect</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 options presented
Limitations

• Responses from less than half the cohort

• Responses reflect more than just a module perspective

• Novel assessment method may have influenced responses

• No comparators with previous years
Evolution

- Introduce a video based assessment criteria exercise (after Rust et al 2003)
- ‘Marketing’ the plan exercise
- Encourage student self assessment of plan (after Orsmond & Merry 2011)
- Close consideration of timings and timetabling (after Price et al 2010)
- Create a video commentary for the VLE site (after Hendry et al 2011)
- Dialogue with learners about these developments (after Brown 2011)

A Golden Opportunity
References


Orsmond P & Merry S (2011) Feedback alignment: effective and ineffective links between tutors’ and students’ understanding of coursework feedback. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education. 36(2), 125-36


Sadler RD (1989) Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. Instructional Science. 18, 119-44