Evidence based Practice Seminar Series 2010: Assessment and Feedback

Submission Date

Please submit the completed briefing paper to clare.gash@heacademy.ac.uk within two months of delivering the seminar.

Aims & Outputs

Please consider the following when completing your briefing paper:

The aims of the Briefing Paper are to:

- Summarise the key issues presented at the seminar, including the implications of research/evaluation evidence for practice.
- Stimulate discussion, share practice and support the sector’s access to relevant research/evaluation evidence.

The briefing paper is designed to accommodate the following types of seminar:

- Those describing findings from research or evaluation projects (either completed or in-progress) and their implications for practice;
- Those describing the application of research and/or evaluation evidence to practice.

The Briefing Paper Template on pages 2-4 outlines the basic requirements for the briefing paper and is meant to assist host institutions in summarising the seminar outcomes and also enable a consistent approach across the seminar series.

If you wish to provide any suggestions for how the template might be improved please email clare.gash@heacademy.ac.uk

Please note the briefing paper will be disseminated through the Academy’s EvidenceNet service. For further details on this service please visit the below web link: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/evidencenet
1. Background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar Title:</th>
<th>Enhancing Feedback and Feed Forward in the Digital Age</th>
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<tr>
<td>Institution(s):</td>
<td>University of Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s):</td>
<td>Dr Anne Crook &amp; Dr Julian Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Email(s): | a.c.crook@reading.ac.uk  
|           | j.r.park@reading.ac.uk |

2. Abstract: Please provide a brief abstract of the seminar delivered (maximum 200 words).

This one-day interactive event was designed to explore a range of tools and methods for giving rapid and timely feedback in ways which stimulate and support students' learning in the 'digital age'. The objectives for the day were for participants to: i) have opportunities to explore exemplars of innovative practice; ii) consider the pros and cons of using technology to enhance the timeliness and effectiveness of feed-forward and feedback provision and iii) discuss how technology may be used to support strategic priorities, such as enhancing innovation in teaching and learning. The seminar commenced with an exploration of “how good is my feedback now?” by considering the relationship between student learning and staff efficiency. This was followed by a discussion of ‘typical’ staff and student quotes about feedback, leading into a ‘round-robin’ activity where participants had the opportunity to explore different ways in which colleagues at Reading, Manchester Metropolitan and Staffordshire Universities are using technology to support feedback provision. These discussions then provided the basis for addressing a number of case studies designed to identify whether or not technology could enhance the feedback experience for staff and students. The day ended with an open panel discussion to explore “Where next?” in terms of using technology to support and enhance feedback and feed-forward provision.

3. Rationale: Please provide the background context, such as the research/evidence-informed practice context, which provided the impetus for the seminar.

The importance of assessment and feedback to the learning process is well known (Sadler, 1983; Biggs, 2003a,b; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Juwah et al., 2004). High quality and timely feedback can engage and motivate students and help them improve performance in subsequent assignments (‘feed forward’). However, providing this type of feedback and maximising student engagement with it can be a real challenge. For staff, providing feedback can sometimes be very time consuming, repetitive and inefficient. From the student perspective, feedback may be provided in a manner which is deemed to be too late to useful, sometimes unhelpful and inconsistent (Glover & Brown, 2006). Moreover, the National Student Surveys have provided a public forum for students’ concerns about feedback and these data have consistently scored the ‘assessment and feedback’ category below all other categories since the surveys were first launched in 2005 (HEFCE National Student Survey). It is therefore timely to consider the different ways in which the feedback experience may be
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enhanced for both staff and students, including a consideration of the roles technology may play.

4. Generation of Evidence: Please describe how the reported research/evaluation findings were generated e.g. methods used

The background information and data for the event were collated from a range of sources, including feedback-related projects and research at the University of Reading (for example, see http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinfeedback), the JISC-funded ASSET project (http://www.reading.ac.uk/asset), the National Student Survey (http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/) and a range of pedagogic literature, including extracts from Professor Phil Race’s work on assessment and feedback (http://philrace.co.uk/).

5. Related key terms and concepts: Please list up to 5 key words which closely describe the topic of the seminar. These will facilitate the search functionality used by the Academy’s EvidenceNet services.

Feedback
Feed-forward
Learning
Assessment
Technology-assisted learning

6. Existing Evidence: Please provide details of research/evaluation evidence drawn on and reported in the seminar

A range of different technologies for supporting feedback provision were discussed at the seminar, including the use of audio/video media, personal response systems and ‘screen capture’ software. Further details are now available online at http://www.reading.ac.uk/asset and http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/cdotl/Teachingandlearningevents/MovingForwardThroughFeedback/cdotl-MovingForwardThroughFeedback.aspx
7. Research findings/New Evidence: Please describe any new findings or evidence reported in the seminar.

Research evidence (published and unpublished) relating to the use of technology to support feedback provision was discussed at the event. For example, research findings from work within the University of Reading regarding the use of Personal Response Systems, which is available at: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/cdotl/Teachingandlearningevents/MovingForwardThroughFeedback/cdotl-MovingForwardThroughFeedback.aspx

An evidence-based web resource to support staff in enhancing their feedback provision (developed at the University of Reading) was also discussed and is freely available at: http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinfeedback

Preliminary data from the JISC-funded ASSET project, which is investigating the use of video media to enhance the feedback experience for staff and students, was discussed and is available at: http://www.reading.ac.uk/asset/ASSET@Reading/asset-evaluation.aspx

Qualitative and quantitative pedagogic data analysis is currently underway as part of the ASSET project and will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals in due course.

8. Outcomes of research/evaluation evidence and the implications for policy and practice:

Please identify any application or outcomes of research/evaluation evidence and detail the implications for policy and practice for different stakeholder groups such as: academics, learning technology practitioners, professional developers, senior managers, policy makers, students, sector organisations, employers and professional bodies.

The range of technologies explored at the seminar have been evaluated using a variety of mechanisms, included simple usage data related to website statistics (i.e. relating to the Engage in Feedback website) through to more comprehensive interviews, focus groups and questionnaires (for instance related to the ASSET project at Reading, and podcast explorations at Staffordshire University). In relation to policy and practice early indications from these evaluations suggests that technology can have a positive impact in relation to delivering clear and accessible feedback (and feed-forward) to students. It also appears that the use of technology can enhance student engagement with feedback, an element which is often seen as a major concern of staff.
11. **Emerging themes:** Please detail the discussion topics or themes that were raised by delegates during the course of the seminar - suggesting areas that would merit further investigation.

The day culminated in a final panel discussion, which addressed the following themes raised by delegates:

- How to engage colleagues with feedback and feed-forward?
- How to help students understand what we mean by “feedback”?
- How to help students adjust to the differences in feedback provision at university in comparison with their pre-university experiences?
- What evidence is there that innovative uses of technology are actually effective in enhancing feedback and feed-forward?

The last point was deemed to be particularly pertinent and highlights a need for more in-depth analysis of the pedagogic value of some technologies in relation to both feedback provision and student engagement with different forms of feedback.

12. **Any other comments:** Please use this box to include any additional details.

As with many such events the workshop provided an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues from across the UK. It also provided the opportunity to explore potential research collaborations and ideas for future events.

13. **Bibliography/references (preferably annotated):** Please list any references mentioned in or associated with the seminar topic. Where possible, please annotate the list to enable readers to identify the most relevant materials.

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ASSET: Moving Forward Through Feedback [http://www.reading.ac.uk/asset](http://www.reading.ac.uk/asset)
Engage in Feedback [http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinfeedback](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinfeedback)