PRACTICE PAPER

Good, bad and insufficient: Students' expectations, perceptions and uses of feedback

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Abstract

Recent National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSSS) results have highlighted students' concerns with the quality of feedback they receive on assessments. Even though the scores were rated as satisfactory, there is clearly room for improvement. This paper presents and discusses the findings of an exploratory study of tourism management students' views on assessment and feedback practices. Through a qualitative research design, students were asked to comment on their expectations, perceptions and uses of feedback as part of their learning in higher education. The findings corroborate previous results but also provide further useful insight into students' experiences of and recommendations for good practice in this area.

Keywords: National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSSS); feedback; assessment

Introduction

There is a problem with the feedback students receive for their assessed work. In the United Kingdom's 2007 National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSSS) only 62% of students across all subject areas ranked assessment and feedback as satisfactory (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2007). More specifically, the lowest ranking item for the subject area of Tourism, Transport and Travel was assessment and feedback, scoring 3.5 out of 5 compared to an overall satisfaction level of 3.86. Although 64% of students in this subject area reported that they were satisfied with their feedback, there is clearly room for improvement.

Comment in response to these figures, which were replicated in other subject areas, included the suggestion that students may not be aware of what constitutes feedback at university in contrast to the feedback they receive at school (Lipsett, 2007). It seems then that either universities are failing to provide adequate feedback to students or students are failing to register the feedback they receive. In order to improve both the student learning experience

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and NSSS scores, there is a need to develop a greater understanding of students' expectations of feedback, their perceptions of what feedback is and how they use the feedback they receive.

Students need individual or small group feedback on their work in order to be able to learn how to improve (Race, 1999). Yet, globally, higher education has increasingly moved towards larger classes with fewer, if any, tutorials and seminars. This means that there is a lower staff to student ratio and a reduction in staff-student contact time, and assessing large classes means that limited feedback can be provided on coursework, with some institutions providing no feedback on exams (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002; Tarras, 2002). It is notable that this situation is not specific to the subject areas of hospitality, leisure, sport or tourism, with Gibbs and Simpson (2004) commenting that the "resource constraints in traditional universities have led to a reduction in the frequency of assignments, in the quantity and quality of feedback and in the timeliness of this feedback" (p. 6). Post-1992 universities, where tourism programmes are frequently located, have also seen an increase in student numbers (Price, 2005). The repercussions are increased when the greater diversity of students' backgrounds is also considered, necessitating improved guidance for students on how to achieve the required level of performance (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). In addition, the modularisation of university programmes, with the use of short, fat modules, means that there are fewer opportunities for students to reflect on the feedback they have received and use this in successive assessments within the same modules (Huxham, 2007). The problem can be particularly pertinent for Masters students who have only one year in which to achieve the required learning outcomes.

It is the authors' experience, both in the UK and overseas, that students studying programmes within hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism frequently attend classes with varying student numbers. Some of these, particularly subject-specialist classes, can be relatively small. However, the need for economies of scale can see students attending classes of 400 students or more for generic subjects, such as Research Methods. As a result, there is often considerable variation in the level of formal feedback they receive on the different forms of assessment they complete across modules.

With a more diverse student body (in terms of age, socio-economic grouping and larger numbers of international students), increased student fees and a reduction in individual contact time between academic staff and students, it is not surprising that students have rated the feedback they receive of a lower standard than other aspects of their studies. It is not sufficient, however, to simply acknowledge that this is a characteristic of 21st century education, as feedback plays a vital part in enabling students to learn. The NSSS results are also used by students to choose their study programme and by other bodies, such as national media, to draw up university league tables. Both pedagogically and economically, this is a problem that requires attention.

This paper presents the findings of an exploratory qualitative research study examining tourism management students' expectations, perceptions and uses of feedback. The existing research on the role of feedback in student learning is reviewed; differences between tutors' and students' perceptions of feedback are considered; fieldwork, including the methods used in this study, is presented; and finally, the findings are discussed within the context of the literature and resource constraints and the opportunities facing universities in the 21st century. Recommendations for good feedback practice are then offered.

The role of feedback in student learning

The importance of feedback in the student learning experience is well established (Biggs, 2003; Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997; O'Donovan, Price, & Rust, 2004; Race, 1999). Students need sufficient feedback on their work in order to understand how they can improve, and feedback is an important aspect in encouraging a deep approach to learning (Biggs, 2003). In a similar vein, Ramsden (2003) emphasised the value of qualitative commentary on an assignment rather than viewing assessment merely as "an imposition to

be negotiated in order to earn a grade" (p. 180), which he warned is a recipe for a surface approach to learning.

But what constitutes good feedback? Gibbs (1999) argued that the frequency, timing and method of giving feedback are more important than the quality of the feedback in helping students learn. After reviewing the literature on quality written feedback, Brown and Glover (2006) devised a model for analysing the feedback provided on science students' essays at the Open University. Their recommendations can serve as useful principles: feedback needs to feed forward, encouraging further learning; there need to be clear assessment criteria, shared by both students and tutors; and feedback needs to help students note gaps between their performance and the desired standard. To this list, Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2003) added that feedback should be motivational for students and the process of providing feedback should enable tutors to develop their teaching further. However, despite such theoretical prescriptions, many students seem to find the feedback they receive unsatisfactory. This could be attributed to poor practice by lecturers but also to a mismatch between lecturers' and students' perceptions of feedback – an issue that this study seeks to address.

Research examining students' perceptions of feedback is limited (Poulos & Mahoney, 2007). The Student Enhanced Learning through Effective Feedback (SENLEF) study funded by the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) showed that students clearly linked feedback with assessment (HEA, 2004). Students at Sheffield Hallam University reported that written feedback was the most useful form of feedback they received, not least because it helped them understand the grade their work had achieved (Brown & Glover, 2006). This was also noted in the SENLEF research, where students reported that feedback justified their grade. Students at the Open University indicated that written feedback should be encouraging, showing students where they went wrong and how they could improve (Brown & Glover, 2006). Individualised written feedback was particularly valued, although students in the SENLEF study reported various preferences for feedback, including a five-minute meeting with their tutor, receiving feedback by email and having the grade broken down into its components. A further study across two different universities found students reporting that it was only fair for them to receive a reasonable amount of written feedback after the effort they had committed to their assessments (Higgins et al., 2002).

Several researchers argue that, in order to encourage students to engage with the feedback they receive, a comments only approach to feedback needs to be used, without a grade (e.g. Butler, 1988; Tarras, 2002). Butler reported that giving feedback on assignments by providing comments only is the most effective way of providing feedback, as it focuses students on the task rather than on their self-esteem. However, providing ungraded comments may not be enough to encourage students to take notice. Students also need opportunities to make use of feedback (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003), for example through redrafting work. Allowing time for students to follow up the comments they receive should form part of the learning process. Moreover, the teachers who used the comments approach to feedback noted that it took more time than grading, a potential problem for larger classes. The authors added that these comments should tell students what they did well and what they needed to do to improve their work (Black et al., 2003), providing the motivational element which Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2003) argued forms an important part of feedback practice.

Differing perceptions of feedback

Responses to the NSSS survey in the UK national press (Lipsett, 2007) highlighted how students' and academics' perceptions of what feedback is may differ significantly and that this could be a contributory factor to students' dissatisfaction. One study noted substantial differences between students' and tutors' perceptions of feedback, and recommended assessment dialogues between tutors and students to reduce these disparities (Carless, 2006). Students responding to the SENLEF study reported that a key problem with feedback was that students were expected to interpret it themselves without the tutor's help. These differing perceptions between students and tutors can be unpicked by examining Tarras'

(2002) three conditions for effective feedback: (a) students need to understand the standards required, (b) they need to compare their work with these standards, and (c) finally they need to take action to close the gap.

Previous studies have found that the understanding of assessment criteria varies significantly not only between students and tutors but also between different tutors (O'Donovan et al., 2004). Higgins et al. (2002) found that students may not understand the formative feedback they receive as they may not understand the academic assumptions that underpin the assessment process. In contrast, tutors may find it difficult to articulate why a piece of work is qualitatively good or poor (Higgins et al., 2002), which results in the students receiving vague or too general written comments. O'Donovan, Price, and Rust, through several years of research (e.g. Price, O'Donovan, Rust, 2007), highlighted this lack of consensus as a clear problem that needs addressing.

Further research has found that while students may prefer a particular type of feedback, this may not be the most effective format for helping them to improve their performance. Huxham (2007) compared the impact of providing standard model answers with personal comments on students' subsequent performance. Not surprisingly, given the literature, students expressed a preference for personal comments. It was model answers, however, which enabled them to perform better, possibly because they addressed the first two of Tarras' (2002) conditions for effective feedback. Providing effective feedback has been found to be most important for first-year university students in helping them understand the standards required (Poulos & Mahoney, 2007). Indeed, misunderstandings about the required performance standards are likely to be even greater for international students unused to the UK university system of assessment and grading (Yorke, Bridges, & Wolfe, 2000).

The literature examined here possibly points to the importance of managing students' expectations of feedback, not least through making it very clear what constitutes feedback. Two methods of reducing the gap between tutors' and students' understanding of assessment criteria have been discussed in the literature: providing formative feedback on unassessed work; and engaging students in the marking process with exemplars, their own or their peers' work (O'Donovan et al., 2004; Tarras, 2002). While these two approaches may assist students in improving their learning and performance, if they are not perceived by students to be formal feedback, they may still result in student dissatisfaction with their learning experience and ultimately in low NSSS scores.

However, the NSSS offers only indicative suggestions of where the limitations in current practice lie and what the expectations of students are. By placing emphasis on the appreciation of student-focused conceptions of learning (Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999), this study addresses the possible gap between students' perceptions of lecturers' practices and provides recommendations for good practice.

At the institution where this research was carried out, the assessment and feedback policy was that assessed work should be returned within three weeks of submission, with the aim of ensuring the timeliness of feedback received by students (Gibbs, 1999). The format and quantity of feedback were, however, at the discretion of the relevant tutors. This led to significant variation in how feedback was given and how much, which was largely dependent on class sizes. Among other insights sought, the researchers specifically wanted to identify whether there were any differences in the perceptions and experiences of students in large and small classes, as this issue had not been explored within the existing literature. In addition, the study tried to elicit whether there were any differences in students' expectations and experiences across different study years, especially for those in their first year at the university at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. This is an issue that adds to the NSSS results, where only final-year undergraduate students participate. A qualitative research design would also allow the study to capture students' views better than the online questionnaire employed by the NSSS. The following section details the research methods adopted in investigating these research questions.

Methods

In order to assess students' perceptions of the feedback they received on their academic performance, a series of individual and focus group interviews were conducted with home and international students studying tourism management programmes at one UK institution. The tourism programmes were taught within a business school and all students studied both in small specialist classes and in larger generic classes (for modules such as research methods). Class sizes varied from fewer than 20 students to more than 400 students. Taught students from a population of 270 undergraduate students and 45 postgraduate students across all years of study were invited by email to participate in focus groups. While the NSSS only includes undergraduate students, taught Masters students were also included in this study because feedback was likely to be at least as important to those on a shorter study programme, many of whom had no previous experience of the British higher education system.

Participants received a £10 book token for the university bookshop to thank them for their time. The use of a small incentive was approved by the school's ethics committee, and indeed the incentive was clearly seen as small by some of the participants who declined to accept it. In total, 2 students (1 undergraduate and 1 Masters) were interviewed individually and ten students took part in three focus groups, with 4 Masters students and 8 undergraduate students across all three levels (first, second and final-year) participating in the project.

Interviews and focus groups were used because quantitative data from the NSSS already exists and we wanted to examine the expectations, understanding and uses of feedback in more depth (Arksey & Knight, 1999; King, 2004). Some students could not attend at the times allocated for the focus groups and were therefore interviewed individually. Given the small sample size, we were keen to involve any interested students in this study. In interviews and focus groups, students were asked the same set of questions about their understanding of feedback, the actual feedback they received, how they used this feedback and what gaps there were within the provision of feedback. Students were asked for examples of both good and poor practice in the feedback they had received. The interviews and focus groups used the same schedule and protocol, and all were conducted by the authors. Although focus groups and individual interviews are different approaches, it is difficult to ascertain whether this had any impact on the findings, as similar themes emerged from both methods. All the interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The data were analysed qualitatively, looking for themes against the research questions outlined above (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Lee, 1999). Data were then grouped within these themes and compared with the literature for context.

We acknowledge that our sample size was small. There could be a number of reasons for this low response rate:

1. Students may genuinely not be concerned or interested in this topic.
2. They may require a greater incentive to give up their time to take part in research.
3. Despite adhering to the university ethics policy and the assurance that responses would have no impact on their grades, the use of face-to-face interviews may have been too daunting for students.
4. It may be that, although students were concerned about the feedback they received, they did not perceive any immediate link between their responses and an improvement in feedback for them.

Study findings

Students' expectations and understanding of feedback

We first wanted to examine what students perceived as feedback because it has been suggested that an apparent gap between students' and tutors' understanding of feedback lies at the heart of the NSSS scores (Lipsett, 2007). Our responses showed that, like the

respondents to the SENLEF study (HEA, 2004), students considered feedback to mean written feedback provided on assessed work:

> I associate feedback strictly with assignments. (Masters student)

Probes to elicit whether students considered comments given on, for example, performance in class exercises as feedback revealed that this was not viewed as providing accurate criticism of their performance:

> When you receive feedback in class I'm always in two minds as to if I have hit a real point or have I grasped the concept properly or is the lecturer perhaps not wanting to embarrass me in front of everyone else. (Second-year undergraduate student)

In addition, written comment was perceived as the best form of feedback as students could take it away and refer back to it:

> The best format is written, so you can always go back to it. (Second-year undergraduate student)

Our interviews elicited only one comment on formative feedback, with one student stating:

> I think feedback is useful when you can go and see academic staff before you submit the work to see roughly where you're at. (Final-year undergraduate student)

This indicated that either students were rarely given the opportunity for formative feedback or that they did not see formative comments as feedback. Their understanding of what constituted feedback seemed to be limited and we wondered whether this was a question of semantics with the tutor needing to state explicitly that he or she was providing feedback.

The feedback students received varied considerably across different modules. Notably, they did not receive any feedback on exams, a practice not limited to this institution (Higgins et al., 2002; Tarras, 2002). As such, students found that it was difficult to improve their exam technique. This was of particular concern to final-year students, with one respondent stating:

> Our exams are split between December, and in the summer I think it's really important if you can get feedback for December exams. (Final-year undergraduate student)

Another student noted that, even for the final assessment in a module, students still wanted some comments on their performance:

> With 100% exam modules, when you've got no other chance to get feedback, I do think there should be post-exam feedback. (Final-year undergraduate student)

These comments indicated how students wanted to use feedback to understand their grade and bridge the gap between their performance and their tutor's expectations (Tarras, 2002).

Students commented that feedback was particularly crucial for first-year and final-year undergraduate students:

> I think for third years you need feedback because it's the biggest weighting year, but for first years I do think that they should have feedback on their work purely because third years know that if they really need to they can go to their lecturer and they know how to get there because they've been here three years but first years…they have to develop. (Final-year undergraduate student)

Interestingly, Masters students could be described as both first and final-year students, indicating how important feedback must be for them.

A further question was whether variation in feedback practice between large and small classes was perceived negatively by students. However, the respondents commented that it would be unreasonable to expect feedback to be as detailed in larger classes as in smaller classes:

> You appreciate they've [the tutors] got a lot to mark. (Second-year undergraduate student)

Students' expectations of contemporary university education seem realistic. Postgraduate students, particularly high-fee-paying international students, may have less sympathy for resource limitations:

> In my opinion, when I take a postgraduate course, I think it should be ten people for one supervisor. (Masters student)

Significantly, respondents stated that it was better to have differing feedback practice rather than limited feedback from all classes:

> I'd much rather have inconsistent … very good in some and bad in others rather than bad across the whole range. (Second-year undergraduate student)

Unfortunately, consistently good practice across all classes at this institution has yet to be achieved. The above comments already introduce issues related to the form and function of feedback and the next section elaborates on findings that indicate how students use feedback.

Students' use of feedback

Students use the feedback they receive in two ways. The comments help them to understand the grade they have received, and they also enable students to try to improve their subsequent work (Brown & Glover, 2006). Comments explaining and justifying the grade were important to all students:

> I'm a very stubborn person. I feel that my work is good … if you can justify why my work is not good then I will accept it. (Second-year undergraduate student)

This was particularly important to students who had studied in other university systems:

> Feedback is very important especially in your first assignment… I came from a university where… I was used to getting 85, 90 and then I'm coming here and I get 62 and I was shocked. (Masters student)

This emphasises the importance of making the assessment criteria and grading scheme clear to students (O'Donovan et al., 2004), especially those new to the university (Poulos & Mahoney, 2007). The gap between students' understanding of grades and comments, however, was not just a concern for Masters students:

> Here's one project… this year and I got a feedback form and all the way down it said good, good, good but then my work was 63 and to my mind a 'good' is a first. (Final-year undergraduate)

Students also reported that they wanted to see clear evidence of second marking, even if the second marker agreed with the mark:

> It's alright that the second marker actually writes the same thing as the first marker so it's overlapping. (Final-year undergraduate)

Students are aware of quality assurance procedures and also feel that their work deserves sufficient attention (Higgins et al., 2002).

The importance of feedback in enabling students to improve performance was cited by all the respondents:

> I do not come just to university to sit for exams. I'm coming here to improve myself. (Masters student)

Students also gave specific examples of when they had used feedback and how it had helped them:

> I received feedback… in one case that was an individual assignment and then I tried to apply the feedback I received from one teacher to my next assignment and I think it worked… it [the grade] was better. (Masters student)

This demonstrates Tarras' (2002) third condition for effective feedback: using feedback to reduce the gap between standards and performance. Students wanted to receive both negative and positive comments. As they wanted to use the feedback to improve their performance they welcomed comments indicating where their work could be improved, but they did not want entirely negative comments. Feedback needs to be motivational as well as critical (Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2003):

> Markers should actually have positive and negative feedbacks. (Final-year undergraduate student)

The use of feedback to improve performance raises issues around the timeliness of assessment and feedback. Students commented that their assessments were often grouped together, which meant that they did not have time to use feedback, even if it was detailed and helpful. While this may be a feature of modularisation (Huxham, 2007), it also means that tutors' efforts in providing good feedback are wasted. While students wanted timely feedback, the timeframe they offered was one month:

> It would only be fair that they have at least a month to mark, especially for the classes of 200 or more students. (Final-year undergraduate)

This is in fact longer than the timeframe specified within the study institution's learning and teaching policy and again demonstrates students' realistic expectations. Timely feedback, in particular, meant that students taking a module with more than one form of assessment quite reasonably wanted to receive feedback on the earlier assessment before submitting subsequent assessments:

> You obviously have to let two or three weeks for the lecturers to read everything but you would also like to have the feedback in good time before the exams. (Final-year undergraduate)

This was particularly important for students completing a one-year Masters programme, where they had very little time to meet the performance standards:

> One year is so little time to understand what the teacher expects from you. (Masters student)

This comment indicates the role that feedback plays in establishing the required standard and how the student's performance compares to that standard, the first two conditions of effective feedback according to Tarras (2002).

Good feedback practice

Timeliness is considered to be one dimension of good feedback, as noted in the literature (Gibbs, 1999). Students also want to know the criteria and format for receiving feedback (O'Donovan et al., 2004). Furthermore, students want their feedback to be confidential:

> Personally, I prefer emails because it's more confidential and… after you have read the feedback you can directly reply… and arrange a tutorial. (Masters student)

These responses resonate with those given by students in the SENLEF study (HEA, 2004). Students wanted feedback to be individualised but comparable with comments received on other assessments:

> I think it would be useful if it was standard [criteria] across the whole school so that you got used to it… so you could see the variation between your work. (Final-year undergraduate student)

This is an interesting proposal given the reported disparity in understanding criteria between students and tutors and between different tutors (O'Donovan et al., 2004; Rust, O'Donovan, & Price, 2005).

Students wanted to have the opportunity to ask further questions about both the feedback and their work:

> Sometimes the teachers write comments you don't understand and you're not really sure what he's talking about … you need to have a conversation and ask what is going wrong. (Masters student)

While students reported that written feedback was the most useful format, they also wanted the opportunity to ask their tutor for clarification. Yet this conflicted with their knowledge of the resource limitations within universities:

> I'm not sure how much time individual lecturers have for individual feedback. (Second-year undergraduate student)

Here, however, there was evidence of different expectations according class size:

> Where possible in small modules there should be one-to-one feedback or verbal feedback. (Final-year undergraduate)

Students proposed providing feedback via a workshop or an online discussion, both of which would enable students to ask questions more freely and also maximise the lecturer's time. For example, one student commented:

> It would be good for students to be able to interact with the lecturers after they get the feedback [online] instead of knocking on the door of the lecturers which… for some students we find it's quite impulsive. (Final-year undergraduate student)

These methods could help develop a shared understanding of the assessment criteria and also assist students in closing the gap between these and their performance (Rust et al., 2005; Tarras, 2002).

Finally, respondents commented on how the relationship between the students and staff was important in colouring how students viewed feedback. For example, a second-year undergraduate student commented that knowing the lecturer better helped them interpret the feedback they received:

> Understanding how a lecturer thinks and what angle they're coming from really helps in terms of feedback because then you're knowing what they're trying to express.

Awareness of how the tutor thinks must help students to interpret the tutor's perception of the assessment criteria. Providing good feedback is also evidence of the importance of teaching to the tutor:

> I think also that feedback has something to do with the relationship between the lecturer and the students and how the lecturer is willing to cooperate with the students. (Final-year undergraduate student)

This echoes Poulos and Mahoney's (2007) assertion that students attribute more importance to feedback from credible tutors.

The students in this study had expectations of feedback that were not unreasonable in terms of quantity and timeliness, and showed clear awareness of the constraints faced by academic staff. In common with previous studies (O'Donovan et al., 2004; Rust et al., 2005), there emerges, however, a clear need for managing students' understanding of the assessment framework and criteria, particularly for students new to university. Students' comments also raised questions about the format of feedback, opportunities for using this feedback and the best use of tutors' time in providing useful and usable feedback.

Conclusions and implications for practice

This paper has presented the findings from an exploratory qualitative study examining Tourism Management university students' expectations, perceptions and understanding of feedback. The study was conducted in response to NSSS scores, where undergraduate students in tourism, travel and related subjects ranked assessment and feedback as the least satisfactory component of their studies. The literature highlights the importance of good feedback in enabling student learning at university and defines good feedback as based on clear shared assessment criteria, encouraging further learning, and timeliness in the provision of feedback (Brown & Glover, 2006; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2003).

Focus groups and interviews were conducted with 12 Tourism Management students across all levels of taught programmes from first-year undergraduate through to Masters students. The responses in interviews emphasise the importance of feedback to the students but also highlighted shortcomings with the feedback received. Students were clearly aware of the resource constraints of the contemporary university, and the limited time tutors had for marking and providing feedback. While respondents stated that they would like to receive detailed feedback on each occasion, they appreciated that they were unlikely to receive this from large classes. Students expressed admiration for tutors who had provided them with detailed feedback even within a large class, suggesting that this exceeded their expectations. While students appreciated that the amount of feedback they would receive across different modules might vary depending on the class size, they expressed a preference for consistency in standards and assessment criteria. Research shows, however, that this is extremely difficult to achieve (O'Donovan et al., 2004; Rust et al., 2005). There is a possible discrepancy here, however: when discussing consistency in feedback and methods, students refer to a uniformly high level of quality, whereas university mechanisms are frequently centred on establishing minimum standards.

While the small sample size means the findings presented here are only indicative, comparison with the limited literature on students' perceptions of feedback shows similarities with other studies. This study expands this literature base by comparing students' expectations in different class sizes and highlighting the importance to students of confidentiality when receiving grades and feedback.

Based on a comparison between the literature and the findings, the following recommendations are offered for improving the feedback students receive and students' perceptions of this feedback, while maximising tutor time.

1. While research has highlighted the difficulties in developing a shared understanding of assessment criteria, tutors need to clearly articulate the assessment framework and mechanisms for feedback at the start of each programme or module.
2. Students want to receive feedback in sufficient time to be able to use it on other assessments; assessments need to be scheduled to enable this.

3. For larger classes, up to a month is an acceptable timeframe within which to provide feedback.
4. Students want the feedback to be confidential, to include both positive and critical comments, and to have the opportunity to ask further questions.
5. A feedback session could be scheduled into the timetable, enabling students to have the time to ask for further clarification. This may help to enable them to build their understanding of the assessment criteria and would be of particular value to students in their first year at university.
6. Finally, the disparity between exams and other forms of assessment needs to be addressed. Students want to receive feedback on exam performance for the same reasons as other assessments: to help them understand the grade and to improve their performance. Surely this is what good feedback should be about.

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