'Feedback was very helpful': the benefits of feedback on drafts for students learning.
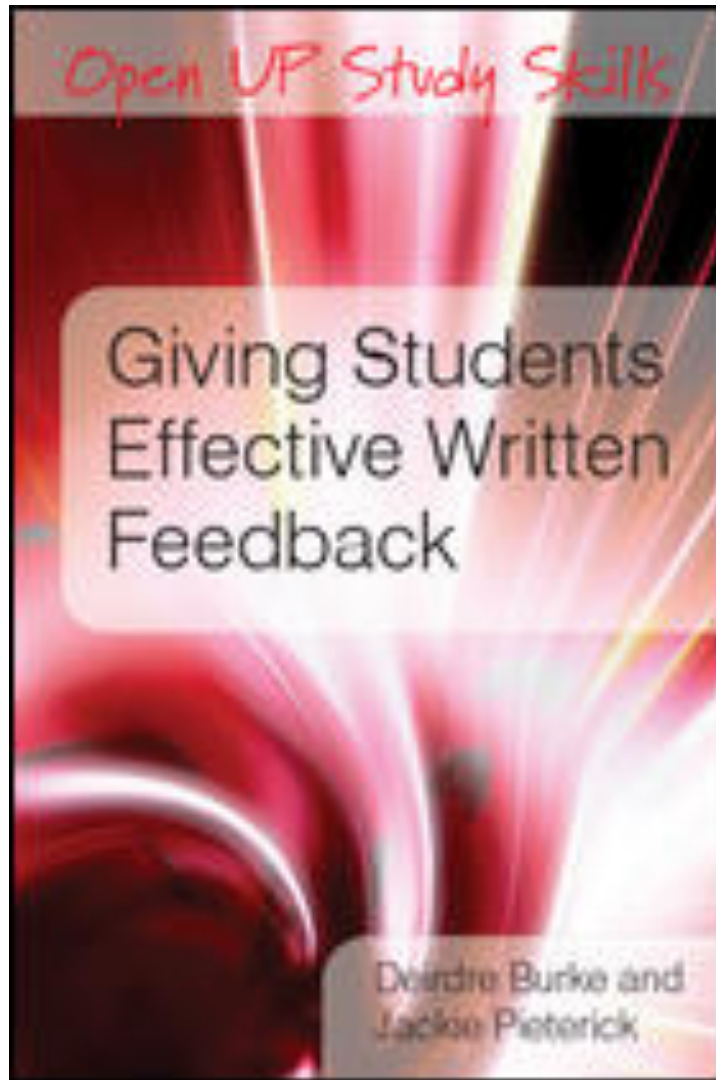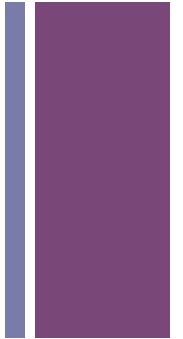
Deirdre Burke, University of Wolverhampton

http://humbox.ac.uk/2333/

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Open UP Study Skills

Giving Students Effective Written Feedback

Deirdre Burke and Jackie Pieterick

- Burke, D. 2010. Part II The reception of feedback by students, in

- *Giving Students Effective Written Feedback*, D. Burke & J. Pieterick, 69- 123. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill & Open University Press.

Links for learning: hyperlinks in feedback

Dr Deirdre Burke

Religious Studies, School of Law, Social Science and Communications, University of Wolverhampton

deirdre.burke@wlv.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

Student use of feedback

Tutor feedback is an essential ingredient for student learning and development, it helps students to see how far they have achieved learning outcomes and notes areas that students need to address. However, students often fail to follow up tutor feedback because they do not know what to do with it. One student commented: 'Now I've got the feedback, what do I do with it?' (Burke, 2009)

Stephani, 1998, found that students want information on how to develop their work. But Weaver, 2006, found that only 4% of students used study skills books for information on developing their skills.

This case study addresses these points by drawing on technology to direct students to electronic sources of information. It shows how including hyperlinks in your feedback make it possible for students to access further information, exemplars and online tutorials on the points raised in feedback.

This poster demonstrates a way of building information and contacts into feedback, by providing hyperlinks that take students directly to relevant sources to address learning needs. All students need to do is click the mouse to access material which will help them develop their subject learning or study skills.
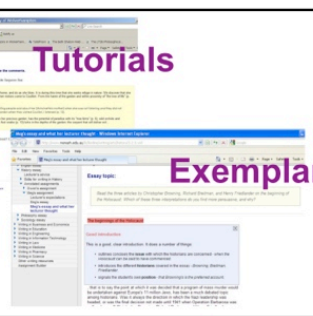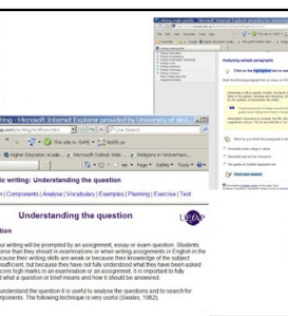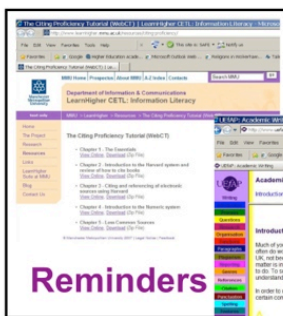
Categories of hyperlinks

Student learning needs may vary, but the following categories cover the main areas:

* **reminders** of aspects of subject content
* **reminders** of aspects of grammar

* **tutorials** to help students develop required skills

* **exemplars** to display good practice

Tutor support information
Select link, copy and paste into feedback

	Information	Tutorials/ Activities	Exemplars
Academic Writing	Check out this guidance on the Features of academic writing: http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm	Try this tutorial on academic writing: http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/arts/sociology/2.3.xml Try this tutorial on Avoiding 'I': http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/arts/sociology/2.3.1.xml	Look at how this essays uses precise and accurate language: http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/arts/sociology/3.1.3.xml
Introductions	Check out this webfolio on writing introductions: http://eportfolio.wlv.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=111252&type=webfolio	Try this tutorial on Writing introductions: http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/arts/philosophy/2.3.xml	Explore how Meg introduces her essay and her tutor's comments: http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/arts/history/3.2.3.xml
Referencing	Check out this guidance on use of Harvard: http://learnhigher.ac.uk/Students/Referencing.html	Try these Exercises: on using Harvard http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm Try this tutorial on using Harvard http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/general/essay/analysing-citations/index.xml LearnHigher CETL: The Citing Proficiency Tutorial: http://www.learnhigher.mmu.ac.uk/resources/citing-proficiency	Example of essay with Harvard citations: http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/general/essay/analysing-citations/2.xml

Tutorials

Exemplars

Reminders

Effective feedback

Our text explores both sides of the feedback debate: Jackie Pieterick explores the provision of feedback by tutors to help improve practice in this area.
Deirdre Burke considers the reception of feedback by students offering strategies to help students get more from feedback.

Burke, D. & Pieterick, J. (2010) *Giving Students Effective Written Feedback*. Maidenhead: Open University Press/ McGraw-Hill Education.

Giving Students Effective Written Feedback
Open UP Study Skills
Deirdre Burke and Jackie Pieterick

Benefits

• This focus on what Hyatt termed the 'pedagogic role' of written feedback, can 'facilitate learning' by making it easy for students to follow up feedback advice, as well as playing 'an induction role into the academic discourse community' (Hyatt 2005: 351) through the provision of exemplars.

• This process can help to make transparent the 'academic conventions' that tutors may take for granted, and such exemplars allow students 'adequate participation' (Lillis and Turner 2001: 66).

• The use of subject specific examples helped students 'see' how skills requirements for planning, structuring and referencing looked within their own discipline.
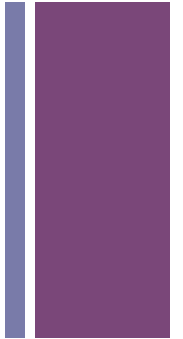
Challenges

• One of the main problems about hyperlinks is that the content of external sites may change and not remain relevant to the intended purpose.

• Provision of internal sites can be technically challenging, although the ability to develop materials that you put online reduces the reliance on others.

• Dare I say it – we can provide the links but students still need to click on them to access the content!
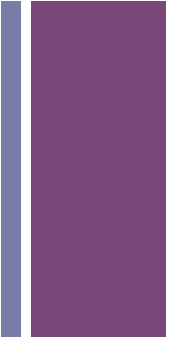
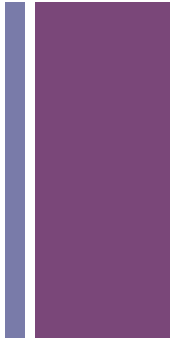Develop your own material (webfolios)

+ Feedback on drafts

- 'Feedback was very helpful, it gave a chance to first year students to adjust and understand what is expected of them.'

- This reflection from a second year student on the feedback received on drafts in the first year of her study sets the scene for this session.

- This approach is an attempt to respond to the gulf between student experiences of tutor feedback in school and the higher education practices they encounter.
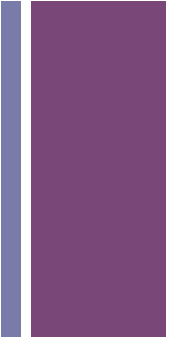
+ Step 1..

Participants working in pairs to identify aspects of feedback they find they need to comment on/ correct in first year student work.

+ Research on the topic

- Torenbeek et al 2011, identified a link between student generic skill development and first year achievement.

- Beaumont et al, 2011 reported that many student experiences in relation to feedback bring dissatisfaction to the surface within three months in higher education.

- These research insights led the team to recommend that 'it is in universities' interests to adapt their assessment practices to support transition more effectively by taking into account students' prior experience' (Beaumont, 2011, 683).

+ Three issues

1. The challenges facing students in understanding feedback practices in Higher education.
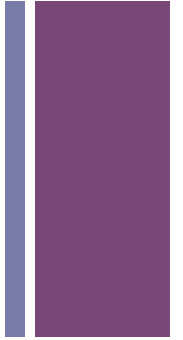
'formative guidance process' v. 'post-submission summative event' (Beaumont et al 2011).

2. Students do not get full benefit from tutor feedback on their work = need to change student attitude to feedback

3. A reconsideration of actual feedback practices in order to make feedback more useful to students.
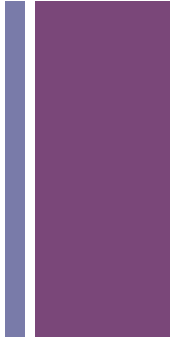
+ Resubmission

- While not all work can be resubmitted,

- Many writers argue that resubmissions should play a more prominent role in learning (Boud 2000).

- Furthermore Gibbs and Simpson, 2003, and Tang and Harrison, 2011, support the sequencing of assignments so that students can use the feedback on the first assignment to inform the next task.
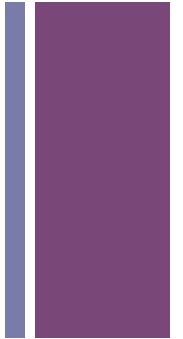
'**motive, opportunity and means**'

- Shute stated that useful feedback depended on 'motive, opportunity and means' (2008, 175).

- These three factors sit at the heart of this development.

Students are given the **motive** by being able to improve their grade,

the **opportunity** through the reiterative cycles,

and the **means** through links to skills development materials.

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Electronic resources

- Central to this approach was the requirement to mark carefully and consistently,

- to highlight aspects to be developed, to provide students with additional guidance in order to develop understandings and/ or skills in order to self correct.

- Three types of material to support learning from feedback;

 - additional information,

- on-line tutorials to practice,

- exemplars to display the aspect of academic writing in a real piece of student work.
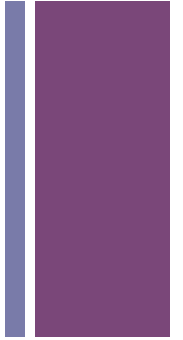
- (see poster on hyperlinks)

Student comments and ratings on feedback on drafts

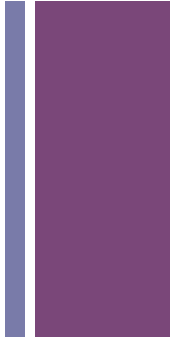|	Range of ratings (1-10)	Mean score
1. helped me sort out minor errors to improve my grade	9-10	9.6
2. It was helpful to do drafts so we learn to act on the feedback	8-10	9.48
3. It was helpful to see examples of student work	7-10	9.45
4. It was helpful to get consistent feedback on grammar and referencing	8-10	9.4
5. It was helpful to get advice in sessions to explain what was required	7-10	9.2
6. It was helpful to do small tasks and work on one point at a time	7-10	8.8
7. It helped to have a hyperlink to advice or practice	7-10	8.56
8. It was useful to have tests on problem areas in class	5-10	7.2

+ Sorting out errors

- Student comments explained their frustration at feeling that their grade could be affected by minor errors that they were capable to correcting if they had the chance to do so.

- Some referred to these as 'silly mistakes,' essentially aspects of grammar or referencing that they were capable of correcting.

- Indeed the opportunity to correct them, not only might improve grades, but it provided the opportunity to learn as 'once these mistakes are corrected you are more likely not to repeat them.'
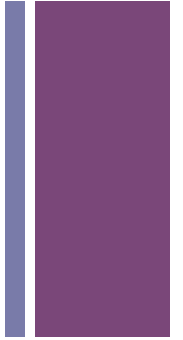
Learning from feedback

- Students noted that this opportunity was beneficial in their first year at university, as it helped them to adjust to university standards.

- Again responses were split between those that rated the opportunity to act on the feedback on drafts as a way of improving their grades, and those who focused on the opportunity to develop their learning.

- Those stressing grade improvement referred to the final submission as 'to the best of their ability,' as it would be a 'shame not to maximize their grade by acting on feedback.'

- Those focusing on learning referred to the opportunity to check, to develop, and improve understandings. One student stated how 'this helps you to learn to spot your own faults and be able to correct them in future work.'
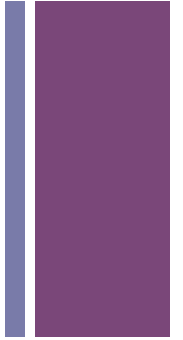
+ Exemplars

- Students found exemplars helped their learning in the following ways.

- Firstly, many students referred to their value in helping them to structure their work, as exemplars 'set a template,' or a 'basic framework,' as they acted as guidelines or models.

- Secondly, students found exemplars useful as they stimulated thought about the task, from 'an insight into other people's work to compare with yours,' as a way of learning the standard required.

- Some students also provided examples of how 'seeing' another piece of work allowed them to be objective: 'I have a tendency to use long quotes and by looking at examples it has given me a better understanding of how to use quotes.'
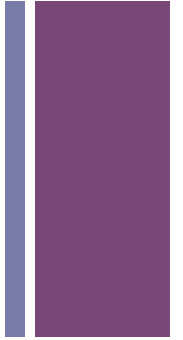
+ Consistency

- Consistency had been built into the process so that students had the opportunity in the four tasks to act on the initial feedback on the first task, try in the second, and reapply in relation to additional feedback try again if they still had problems.

- This brought in multiple opportunities to correct and develop within the parameters set by one tutor. This was important as often students get frustrated when tutors appear to want different things.

- Students noted: 'consistent feedback should lead to consistent referencing and grammar.' Also some students noted that practice was essential 'because the only way to get this stuff right for me is practice and being reminded where I'm going wrong.'
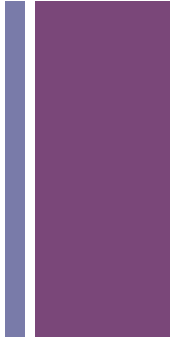
+ Advice in class

- Time was spent in class sessions discussing the general issues arising from feedback provided on each task. This also involved input on aspects of academic writing that the majority of students would benefit from.

- Student comments indicated that they 'appreciated' these opportunities to explore aspects of planning, writing and referencing in order to 'understand what is required.'

- Some students referred to the importance of such inputs at the start of their course as 'it is a bit overwhelming… so advice is useful.'
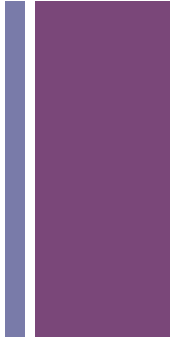
+ Small tasks

- Student responses identified a range of benefits from the breakdown of the assignment into four main tasks, where each task was completed and they received feedback on it before moving onto the next task.

- They also noted that concentrating on one task at a time enabled them to gain a better understanding of each 'small chunk.' For one student it helped as she found it 'very confusing to cover different points, one point at a time is easier and clearer.'

- Finally, several students noted that this breakdown of tasks, interspersed with feedback, made the work less stressful. For first year students in their first year a lot of time can be spent worrying if their work is on target, so to hand work in early in the semester provides them with 'give us help to do all the work. Not all the pressure at once.'
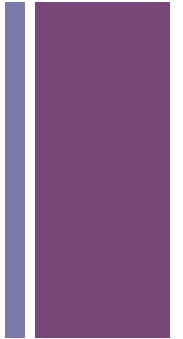
+ Hyperlinks

- Students appreciated the ease of access and the additional information provided. Some students noting that it helped them put right a problem that they had not realized before, 'they help a lot. I followed up the link on writing paragraphs to learn what I was doing wrong and how to improve.' Which was also a recognition that some links address 'personal needs' on topics that students 'found quite difficult and help is needed.'

- Half of the group actually followed up hyperlinks to access such materials, a disappointing figure given that all they had to do was click on the link. However, this fifty percent figure is higher than the figures cited in similar studies, Weaver, 2006, found only 4% of students surveyed consulted study skills books for guidance on issues raised in tutor feedback on their work.

+ Tests

- Short tests were completed in pairs that required them to correct a piece of text by adding apostrophes and capitals. They were then provided with the grammatical rules concerning the use of apostrophes and capital letters, which they were able to use to correct their responses to the test.

- Once these low ratings are taken out it is clear that the majority of students found these short tests on basic aspects of grammar and referencing useful and in some cases fun to do.
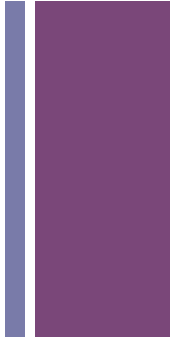
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Step 2 Benefit/ challenges

- **Participants to identify one benefit and one challenge from this feedback strategy.**
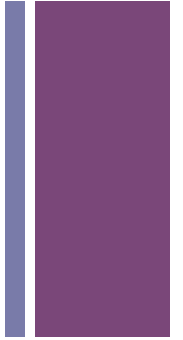
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Step 3 Reflection and discussion

■ **Participants to reflect on these questions and complete post-it notes, before engaging in wider discussion with the wider group.**

1. Impact of receiving feedback on drafts and acting on advice

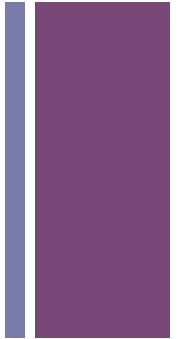2. Debate about higher / lower level academic skills

+ Impact

- participants to consider their own feedback strategy and consider how they induct new learners into higher education assessment.

- to consider how they help students act on tutor feedback on their work

  - do they provide any guidance

  - do they allow students to practice academic skills

  - how do they ensure that students gain consistent feedback on their work?

+ References
http://humbox.ac.uk/2333/

Burke, D. 2011. "Now I've got the feedback, what do I do with it?" Strategies for students to get more out of tutor feedback. *Practice and Evidence of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 6, no. 1: 43-60.

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Burke, D. 2009. Strategies for using feedback that students bring to their degree course: an analysis of first year perceptions at the start of a course in Humanities. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 34, no. 1: 41–50.

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Boud, D. 2000. Sustainable assessment: Rethinking assessment for the learning society. *Studies in Continuing Education* 22, no. 2: 151–67.

Price, M., Handley, K. & Millar, J. 2011. Feedback: focusing attention on engagement, *Studies in Higher Education* 36, no. 8: 879-896.

Shute, V. J. 2008. Focus on Formative Feedback. *Review of Educational Research* 78, no. 1: 153 -189.