Imperial College London

Educational Development Unit
School of Professional Development

Introduction to...
Assessing and Giving Feedback

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Aims

To provide some practical strategies for incorporating formative assessment into teaching and learning and to raise awareness of a range of feedback approaches.

What are your experiences of assessing and providing feedback to students?

What would you like to gain from today's workshop?

Intended Learning Outcomes

- Identify the main types of assessment and explain their purposes
- Compare and contrast a range of different feedback and assessment methods
- Build up a repertoire of assessment and feedback strategies to use within your own teaching
- Identify the challenges that different assessment and feedback methods present and consider ways of overcoming these challenges
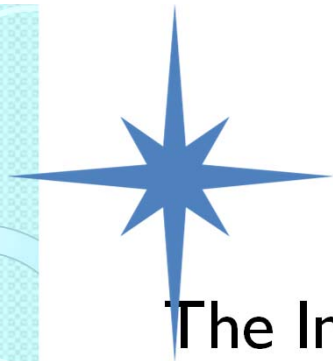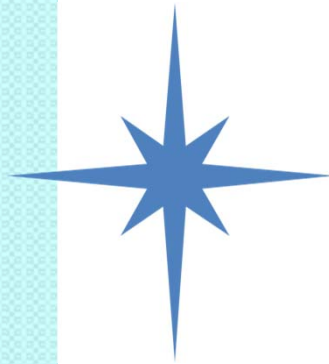
The STAR Framework

The Imperial College Supporting Teaching Accreditation and Recognition (STAR) Framework is designed to enable all those who teach and support student learning at Imperial College to:

- recognise and develop their skills;

- receive the appropriate reward and professional recognition for their teaching;

- demonstrate a commitment to their ongoing professional development.

There are both flexible and taught pathways to accreditation depending on your experience and job role both of which lead to formal accreditation by the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

The Higher Education Academy

The STAR website

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/star-framework

If you would like to learn more about this you might like to attend 'Introduction to the STAR Framework' workshop

Activity: Why assess? What are we trying to achieve?

- In groups identify as many purposes of assessment in HE as you can.

- Categorise them as assessment for learning (formative) and assessment of learning (summative) or both.

Types of assessment

- **Summative assessment (of learning)**

Measurement of individual performance against a pre-determined standard, typically at an end point of a course. Normally has a final mark/grade and where a pass is required for progression e.g. end of module exam, practical or coursework assignment.

- **Formative assessment (for learning)**

Methods used to provide feedback to learners and teachers on strengths and weaknesses of student performance while there is still time to take action for improvement e.g. ongoing teacher and/or peer review of understanding and application followed by feedback.

Purposes of assessment in HE

1. Capturing student time and attention
2. Generating appropriate student learning activity
3. Providing timely feedback which student use
4. Helping students to internalise the discipline's standards and notions of quality

5. Marking: generating grades which distinguish between students or which enable pass/fail decisions
6. Quality assurance - providing to external bodies evidence of standards

(Gibbs, 1999)

What is feedback?

"Information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning"

Shute (2008)

Formative assessment as a vehicle for feedback

Formative Assessment

Important Questions

- **Why** I am assessing?

- **What** am I assessing?

- **How** am I assessing it?

- **When** should I assess?

Features of good assessment

- Valid: measures what it is supposed to measure (at the appropriate level, in the appropriate domains. Also see constructive alignment below).

- Fair: is non-discriminatory and matches expectations.

- Transparent: processes and documentation, including assessment briefing and marking criteria, are clear.

- Reliable: assessment is accurate, consistent and repeatable.

- Feasible: assessment is practicable in terms of time, resources and student numbers.

- Educational impact: assessment results in learning what is important.

Constructive alignment

Learning & Teaching Activities → *Designed to meet* → Intended Learning Outcomes ← *Designed to assess* ← Assessment Methods

When? – What opportunities do we have for providing formative assessment and feedback?

- Large group settings
- Tutorials
- Lab/practicals
- Virtual/Online learning environments
- Presentations
- Journal clubs
- Draft assignments
- Clinical settings

How? - Formative assessment and feedback methods

- What methods do you use in your teaching to formatively assess and give feedback to your students?

See your *A Practical Guide to Giving Effective Feedback* booklet for more ideas.

Using Mentimeter to assess and give feedback

- Log onto www.mentimeter.com and enter your question in order to pose it to others.

- Select your question from your *Dashboard* and *Present* it.

- Respondents can use any smart phone, tablet or computer to log onto www.govote.at and enter the code given to them by you.

- You can all instantly see collated responses.

What makes feedback effective?

"Good feedback should help clarify the expected standard and provide opportunities to close the gap between actual and desired performance.

Identification of the performance gap is possible only if standard performance is known, actual performance is observed, and its significance is recognised."

Tokode and Dennick (2013, p90)

What's the standard?

- **Norm-referenced assessment**

Judges learner performance in comparison with the norm established by their peers.

- **Criterion-referenced assessment**

  Judges learner performance by comparison with an agreed set of pre-determined criteria. The implication is that good students, good teaching and good learning ultimately determines achievement.

So, what is the expected standard? – Some useful concepts

Assessment criteria: *aspects* of assessment or exam which assessor will take into account when making judgement e.g. quality of argument, accuracy, use of evidence.

Grade descriptors: statements of *standards* to be reached across a range of generic criteria in order to achieve different grades (increasingly developed at institutional level).

Marking scheme (aka rubric) for an assignment or exam combines the assessment criteria for the task with the appropriate standards (for example, from a set of grade descriptors) and provides detail about how performance in each criteria will be graded" (Bloxham & Boyd 2007: 87-88).

Giving effective feedback

- Watch the video and in groups discuss:

    ◦ What is effective about this feedback technique?

    ◦ How could the feedback technique be improved?

1. Individual Feedback on Test
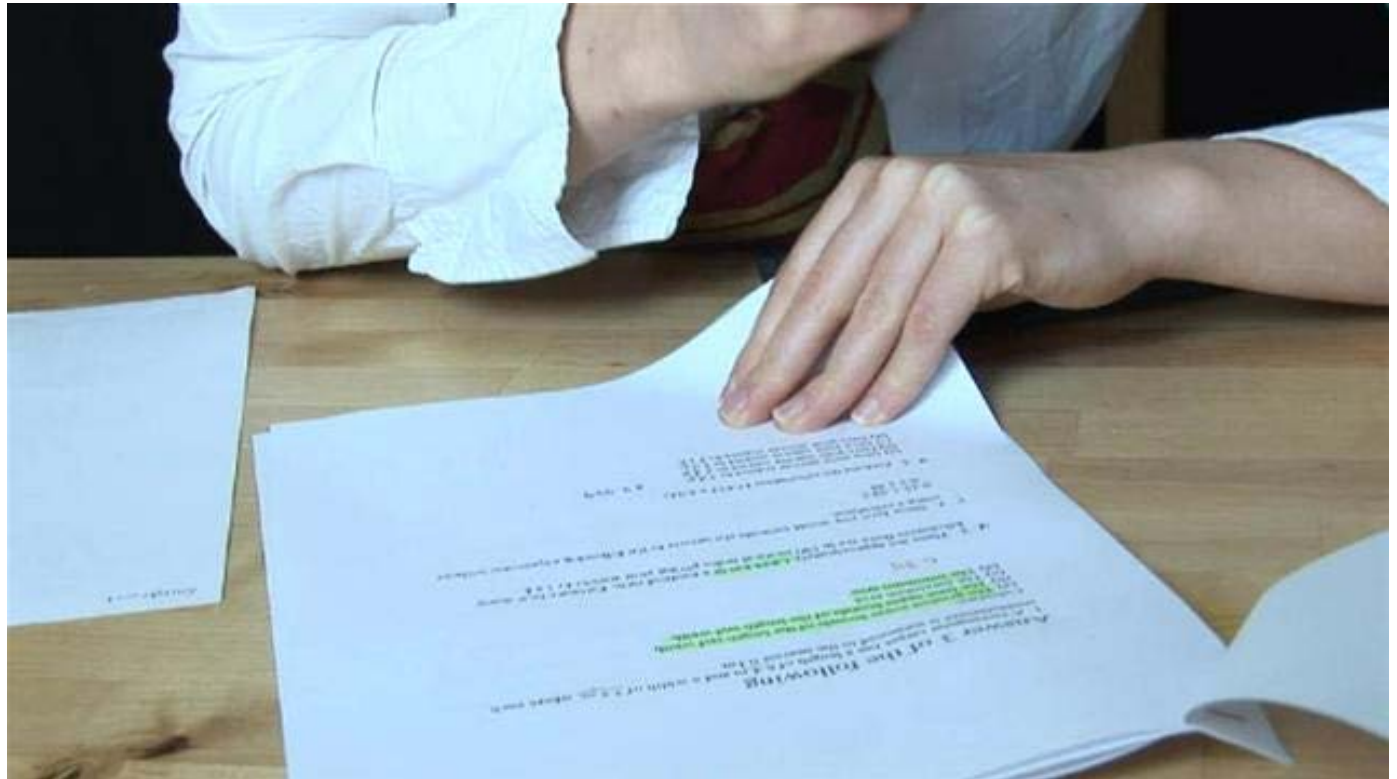
CLICK IMAGE TO WATCH YOUTUBE VIDEO

Giving effective feedback

- Watch the video and in groups discuss:

  ◦ What is effective about this feedback technique?

  ◦ How could the feedback technique be improved?

- Imagine you are giving feedback
What will you focus on and how w
structure it?

See your *A Practical Guide to Giving Effective Feedback* booklet for more ideas.

The research suggests that feedback comments should be (Nicol, 2010):

- *"Understandable*: expressed in a language that students will understand.

- *Selective*: commenting in reasonable detail on two or three things that the student can do something about.

- *Specific*: pointing to instances in the student's submission where the feedback applies.

- *Timely*: provided in time to improve the next assignment.

- *Contextualised*: framed with reference to the learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria.

The research suggests that feedback comments should be (Nicol, 2010):

- ***Non‑judgemental***: descriptive rather than evaluative, focused on learning goals not just performance goals.

- ***Balanced***: pointing out the positive as well as areas in need of improvement.

- ***Forward looking***: suggesting how students might improve subsequent assignments.

- ***Transferable***: focused on processes, skills and self-regulatory processes not just on knowledge content.

- ***Personal***: referring to what is already known about the student and her or his previous work".

What do students think makes feedback useful, or not?

Feedback considered by students to be unhelpful for learning included feedback comments which:

- were too vague and lacking in detail
- lacked suggestions for improvement
- focused only on negative aspects and areas of weakness
- were not associated with the assessment criteria (Weaver, 2006)

Timing : "The timing of feedback didn't allow the students to understand the issues raised in order to implement them before of the next piece of work" (NSS, 2012, Imperial student).

2. Group Feedback on Test
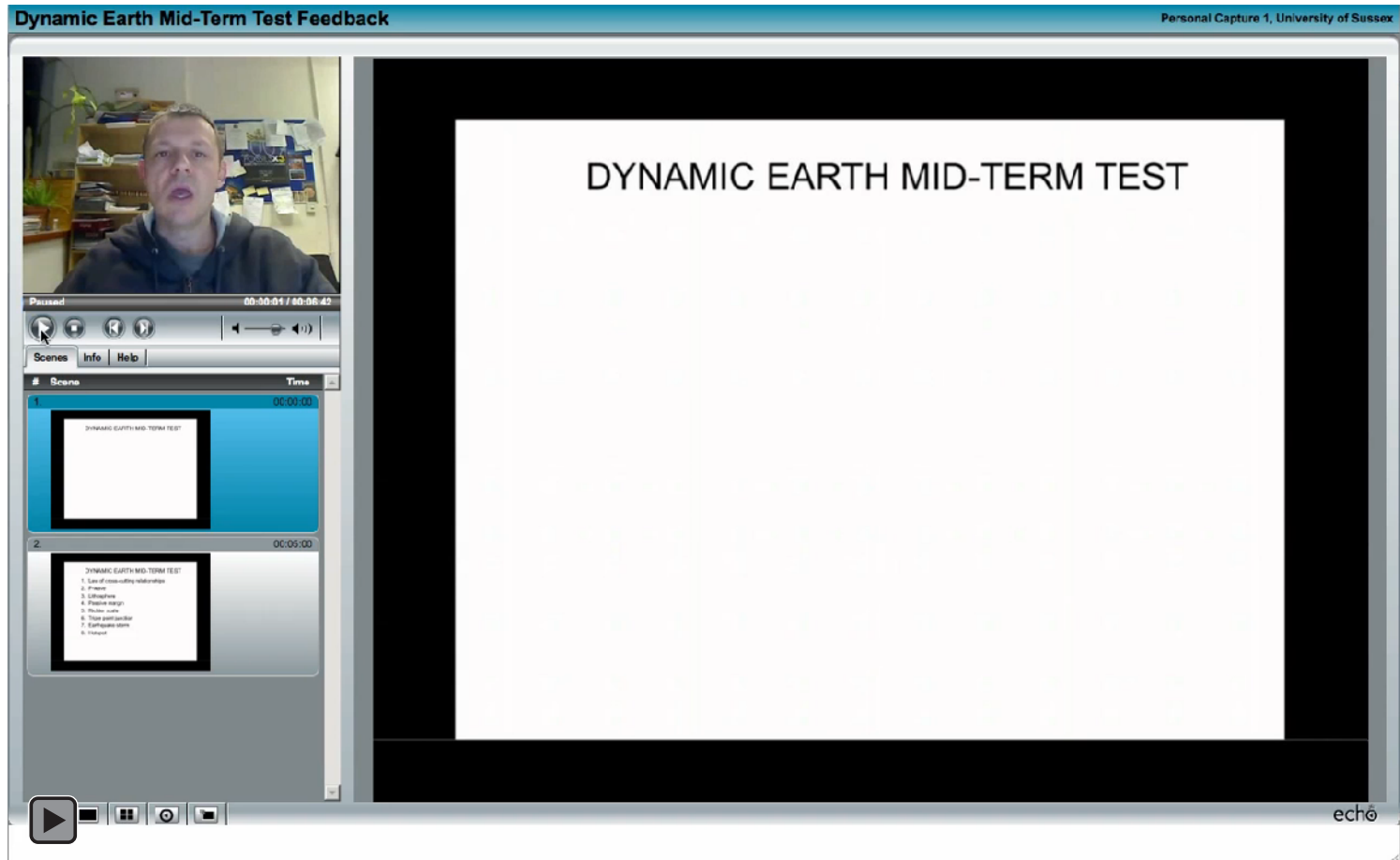
HOVER OVER IMAGE AND CLICK PLAY TO WATCH VIDEO CLIP

Developing practical strategies

- Review the workshop booklet and examples on your table.

- Identify three things you plan to do to improve the formative assessment and feedback that your students receive.

- You could use the 'Review of Formative Assessment Strategies' chart on page 15-16 to organise your thoughts.

Practical Strategies

- What are they useful for assessing?
- How can they be implemented?
- When might they be useful?
- In what ways do they need to be adapted?
- What are their strengths?
- What are their weaknesses?

What use do students make of feedback?

- In groups discuss your experiences of whether students engage with formative assessment and feedback. What might be the reasons that they don't?

- Feedback 3 reasons.

Effect of feedback – Teacher perspective (Price *et al.*,2010)

- Lack of agreement on expectations around feedback.

- Mismatch in staff and student expectations of what feedback is for and what it can achieve.

- Being uncertain whether their students knew what to do with feedback.

- Relationships and dialogue being important if feedback is to have an impact.

Effect of feedback – Teacher perspective (Price *et al.*,2010)

- Having "no idea if students understand this [feedback]" (p.282).
- Focussing on the quality and quantity of feedback they gave rather than the impact of the feedback on the learner.
- Inequality of effort as compared to other teachers.
- Time constraints impacting on the effectiveness of feedback they could give.

Reasons why students may not engage with formative assessment & feedback?

- Students aren't aware of what their teachers are trying to achieve through assessment.

  How explicit are we about their purposes and educational value?

- Feels optional - lack of accountability and ownership.

- Too many competing priorities, bunching of assessments.

- No need - they have the mark and they've passed!

Reasons why students may not engage with formative assessment & feedback?

- Feedback requires translation – what does 'this essay is not sufficiently analytical' mean?
- "Students felt that interpretation could only be gained through dialogue or by comparing examples of good work" (Price *et al.*, 2010: 282).
- They don't know what to do with the feedback or there is no opportunity to make direct use of it.
  - "You've moved onto the next bit and think, well, I can't use that" (Price *et al.* , 2010: 282).

Practical recommendations for effective feedback

Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006) synthesised the educational research literature on feedback and derived **seven principles which might strengthen learners' capacity to regulate their own performance** and associated, easy-to-implement feedback strategies.

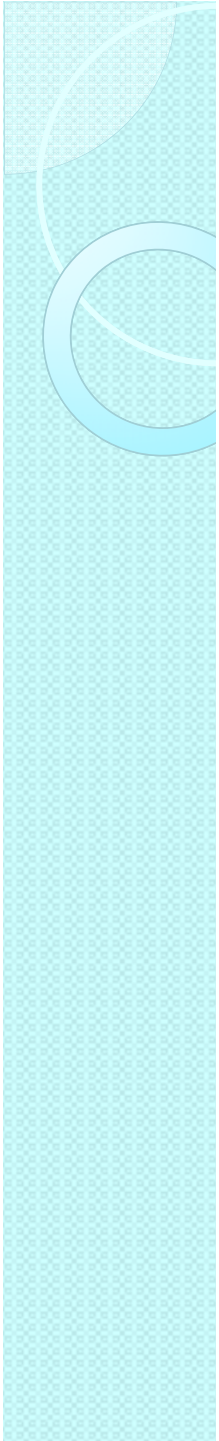Read their suggested strategies and self-assess:

- whether you already do this - if so put a ✓
- whether you would consider doing this - if so put a ?
- whether you don't think this would work for you and your students - if so put a X

Considering self- and peer assessment

Many of Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick's suggestions involve elements of self- or peer assessment, with the aim of developing an individual's capacity to self-regulate.

What are your experiences of self-assessment and peer assessment?

Questions to consider when planning formative assessment and feedback

- Does this need assessing?
- Does this require feedback?
- What are the assessment/feedback goals?
- Who should be assessing? – self, peer, tutor
- In what form should the feedback come? – written, verbal, both, individualised, group feedback
- Is there an opportunity for students to act on that feedback?

Important Questions

- **Why** I am assessing?

- **What** am I assessing?

- **How** am I assessing it?

- **When** should I assess?

Using Mentimeter…

- …Identify one thing you plan to do to improve the formative assessment and feedback that your students receive.

References and Further Reading

- See page 22 of workshop workbook.

Evaluation

- What has been helpful?
- Where do we go from here?

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- MEd SE

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For ease of use they are now divided into five categories:

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- Practical Guide to…
- Focus on…
- Faculty of Medicine
- By-request

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www.imperial.ac.uk/edudev/workshops/intro

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Introduction to Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Medicine

Introduction to Teaching in Clinical Settings

Introduction to Problem Based Learning in the Faculty of Medicine at Imperial

Introduction to Feedback and Formative Assessment

A Practical Guide to Small Group Teaching in the Faculty of Medicine

Focus on Managing Challenging Groups in Problem Based Learning