

Emotional Intelligence Meets Artificial Intelligence:

Exploring the Use of AI as Emotional Mediator



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1

What is the place of emotions in feedback?

2

What is the role of AI in helping develop Emotional Intelligence?



1

What is the place of emotions in feedback?

You're going to look at 2 examples of feedback. Consider:

What might the emotional reaction of the feedback receiver be?

What emotions do you think were involved for the feedback giver? How appropriate is it to express them?

Feedback on students' work

I was pleased to see that you tried really hard to include relevant materials and you have attempted to choose relevant methods. I commend you for choosing the right computational procedures – that was the important and difficult part of the task and you did a good job here but I'm a bit disappointed with your description of your procedures which slightly lacked some important level of detail. You provided a drawing of the apparatus but it wasn't as clear as it could have been. Overall, it was a good attempt and you have good foundations here, you just need to fine tune the detail. Well done for completing this part.

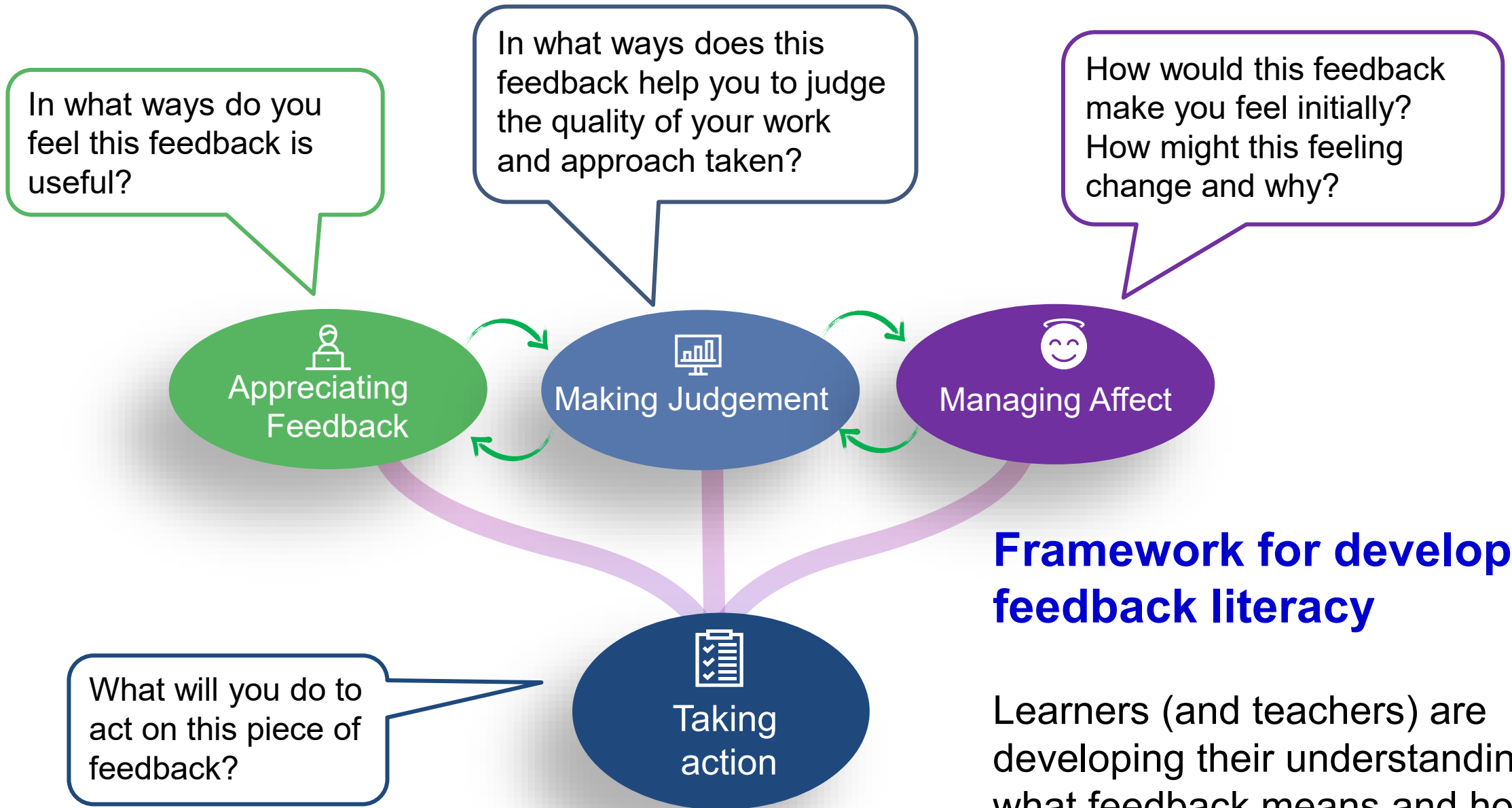
Grade: 55%

Module evaluation feedback

I find it frustrating to be required to attend hours of training to learn nothing more than I was already able to access. If you do not have anything meaningful than please stop wasting our precious time with time filling. We are very busy people. There are way too many group discussions. I don't see the point and don't have time to be listening to other people's ideas that are completely unrelated to my work. I need to focus on my own. My general opinion is that these types of training and workshops are a waste of everyone's time.

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Framework for developing feedback literacy

Learners (and teachers) are developing their understanding of what feedback means and how to use it.

Should feedback include an emotional dimension?

Student feedback literacy (Carless and Boud, 2018)

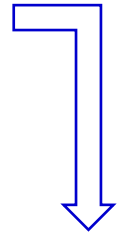
Appreciating feedback
Making judgments
Managing affect



“Feedback literate students:
(1) maintain emotional equilibrium and avoid defensiveness when receiving critical feedback;
(2) (2) are proactive in eliciting suggestions from peers or teachers and continuing dialogue with them as needed;
(3) develop habits of striving for continuous improvement on the basis of internal and external feedback” (p.1319)

Teacher feedback literacy (Carless and Winstone, 2020)

Designing for uptake
Relational sensitivities
Managing practicalities



“(1) Show supportiveness, approachability and sensitivity in how feedback is shared; .
(2) Envisage feedback processes as partnerships between teachers and students; .
(3) Deploy technology to strengthen the relational aspects of feedback communication”
(p.155)

What is emotional intelligence?

“a subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and use this information to guide thinking and action” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189).

RULER - Five skills of emotional intelligence

Prof Marc Brackett, Centre for Emotional Intelligence, Yale

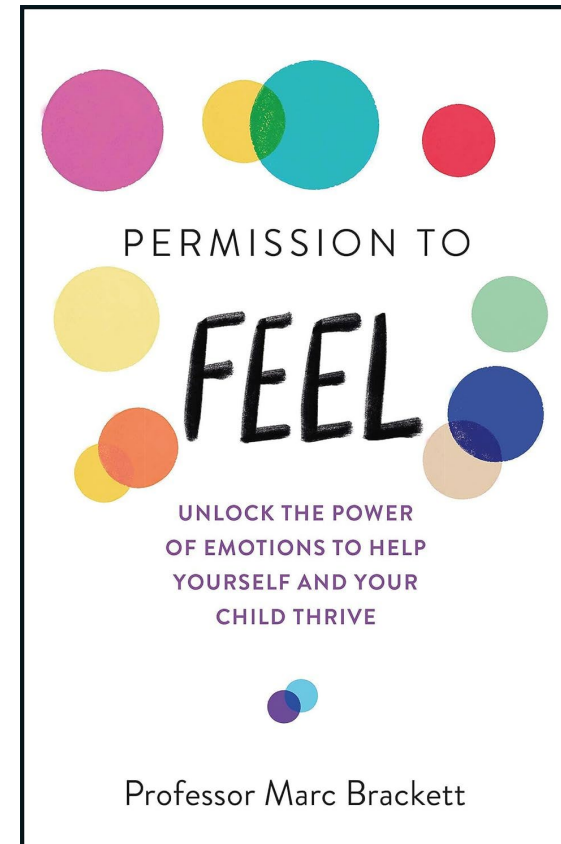
Recognising the occurrence of an emotion

Understanding the causes and consequences of an emotion

Labelling – with accurate and nuanced vocabulary

Expressing – knowing how and when to display our emotions

Regulating – using strategies to monitor and modify emotional reactions to reach goals



Why is emotional intelligence important in giving and receiving feedback?

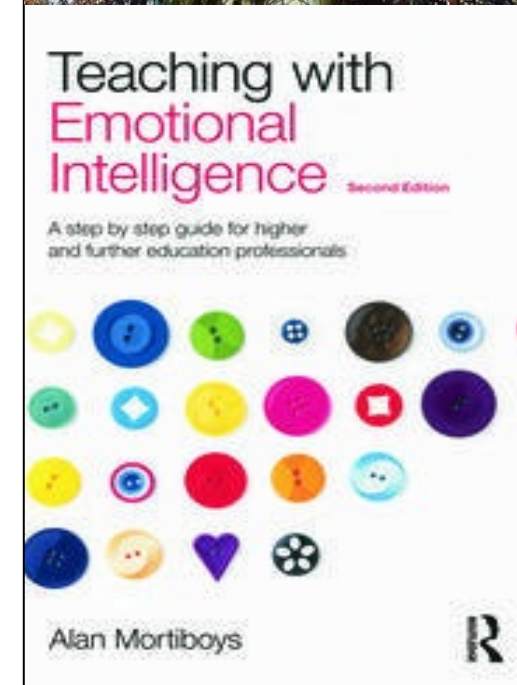
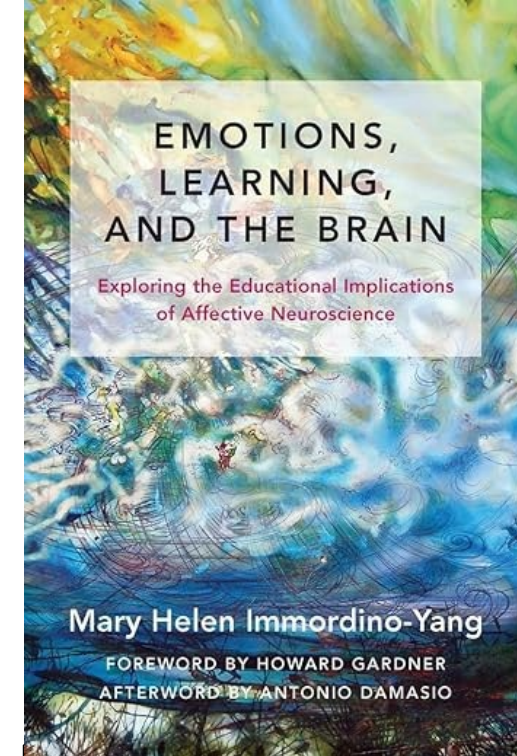
Emotion undergirds cognitive processes involved in producing and using feedback, including intellectually engaging, synthesising, empathising, and decision-making (see Immordino-Yang, 2016).

Emotions associated with feedback are a valuable source of information about the extent to which educators and learners are achieving their educational goals (van Kleef & Cote, 2022; [Ippolito, 2025](#)).

Emotional intelligence is a key component in university teaching, and can and should be developed (Mortiboys, 2012)

Our graduates should have well-developed [affective attributes](#): ability to approach challenges with curiosity, flexibility, become independent learners with high self-efficacy and emotional resilience.

Students can develop their emotional intelligence through the process of learning, including engaging with feedback ([Mura & Ippolito, 2025](#)).



Contradictions and tensions around emotion in feedback

Valence-incongruence links and competence beliefs:

When a teacher expresses **annoyance or frustration** at a student's 'failure', the student may interpret this as the teacher believing they have the competency and should apply more effort (**favourable competence beliefs**), whereas **teacher sympathy** conveys the teacher's belief that the student is not capable of succeeding (**unfavourable competence beliefs**) (Frenzel, Daniels, & Burić, 2021).

“**People are emotional pragmatists** who pursue feelings not because they are pleasant but because they are useful in a given context” (Zaki, 2020, p521).

“Usually, it's not that bad. I just deal with it by converting it into an action statement. 'What can I do from here onwards?' So, it should be fine” (FG2, Shana) ([Hui, Ippolito & Charalambous, 2025](#))

“So, if you give me some kind of negative feedback, I know you care about my essay or the work that I have done. So, I will correct them instead of just sinking into a bad emotion. (FG2, Ya) (ibid)

Compassionate feedback: “Demonstrate that you care about the student's learning. Connect with your own feelings when you are writing the feedback and be aware of how they affect our approach – analyse feedback after you write it.” ([Troisi, 2024](#))

Different perspectives on the place of emotions in feedback

Applying a cultural lens

- Emotions are culturally situated (Mesquita, 2016; Shweder et al., 2008)
- How we communicate is culturally influenced (Wierzbicka, 1991; Kramsch, 1998; Zinken, 2016)
- (in)appropriateness of displaying emotions in communicative acts is also culturally influenced (Menzheritskaya and Hansen, 2019)
- This is evident also in feedback (Menzheritskaya and Hansen, 2019)





2

What is the role of AI in helping develop Emotional Intelligence?

How can we use AI to engage with feedback in more emotionally intelligent ways?

How can AI enhance what we understand as an emotional human?

Use the feedback examples discussed previously and explore how your chosen AI can support a more emotionally intelligent feedback engagement. Think of it from the point of view of a feedback giver and receiver.

Feedback on students' work

I was pleased to see that you tried really hard to include relevant materials and you have attempted to choose relevant methods. I commend you for choosing the right computational procedures – that was the important and difficult part of the task and you did a good job here but I'm a bit disappointed with your description of your procedures which slightly lacked some important level of detail. You provided a drawing of the apparatus but it wasn't as clear as it could have been. Overall, it was a good attempt and you have good foundations here, you just need to fine tune the detail. Well done for completing this part.

Grade: 60%

Module evaluation feedback

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Use the feedback examples discussed previously and explore how AI can support a more emotionally intelligent feedback engagement. Think of it from the point of view of a feedback giver and receiver.

How AI can assist in developing EI for better feedback interactions

Assisting in the crafting of feedback message

Trigger for reflection

Aid for comprehension

Pazio Rossiter and Bale (in press)



How AI can assist in developing EI for better feedback interactions

Assisting in the crafting of feedback message

AI output

I have found parts of the training frustrating, particularly where the content has covered material that I was already able to access independently. It would be helpful if sessions focused more on adding new or deeper insights, so that the time spent feels more valuable.

Given the significant time commitment required, this can be challenging alongside existing workloads. More concise sessions, or greater flexibility in how the material is accessed, would make it easier to engage meaningfully.

I have also found the number of group discussions difficult to engage with. While I understand their intention, they have not always felt directly relevant to my own work. It might be beneficial to include more opportunities for individual application or more targeted discussions that align with participants' specific contexts.

This version keeps your concerns clear and honest, but frames them in a way that:

- focuses on **improvement rather than frustration**
- gives **specific, actionable suggestions**
- is much more likely to be taken seriously and lead to change

Prompt: Please redraft this feedback message to ensure that it is constructive and respectful and not emotionally loaded. I want it to convey the negative points I articulated but do so in a way that feedback is more likely to be taken onboard.

Other uses:

- Redrafting the message
- Removing unproductive emotions from the message
- Simulating difficult conversations

How AI can assist in developing EI for better feedback interactions

Trigger for reflection

AI output

How the recipient is likely to feel

- **Defensive:** Phrases like “wasting our precious time” and “waste of everyone’s time” can feel accusatory and dismissive of their effort.
- **Dismissed or undervalued:** It suggests the entire module lacks worth, which can feel like their work—and professional judgment—has no value.
- **Frustrated:** The lack of specific examples makes it hard to act on, which can be irritating for someone who *wants* to improve.
- **Potentially discouraged:** Repeated exposure to feedback framed like this can reduce motivation to innovate or engage.

Likely impact on their actions

- They may **focus on tone rather than content**, thinking “this is unfair” rather than “what can I fix?”
- There’s a risk they **dismiss the feedback entirely**, especially if similar comments are more constructive.
- At best, they might make **minimal or generic changes**, because it’s unclear what specifically isn’t working.
- It could also reinforce a **defensive teaching stance** (“students just don’t value this”), rather than prompting reflection.

What’s getting lost

There *are* valid points in what you’re saying:

- Perceived lack of added value
- Too much time commitment
- Group work not feeling relevant

But they’re buried under language that makes it harder for the recipient to hear them.

Prompt: I am filling in an evaluation form for a module that I am a studying on. There is a lot that needs to be improved. Please give me some indication of how a person receiving this feedback might feel and what impact it might have on them and their actions.

Other uses:

- Reflecting on potential impact on actions
- Reflecting on the alternative phrasing and the differences between the two

How AI can assist in developing EI for better feedback interactions

Aid for comprehension

AI output

If you strip away the tone and look at the substance, there are some clear signals in that feedback. The key is to separate emotion (how it was said) from information (what's actually being communicated).

Core messages to take from it

1. Perceived lack of added value

They feel the training is not giving them anything beyond what they could already access independently.

➡ Message: *The content may be too basic, repetitive, or not sufficiently advancing participants' knowledge.*

2. Time feels disproportionate to benefit

There's a strong reaction to the time commitment.

➡ Message: *Participants don't feel the return on time investment is high enough.*

3. Group discussions are not landing well

They specifically call out group work as unhelpful.

➡ Message: *Collaborative elements may feel irrelevant, unfocused, or disconnected from individual roles.*

4. Lack of relevance to individual context

They don't see how others' contributions relate to their own work.

➡ Message: *The training may be too generic and not tailored enough to different disciplines, roles, or needs.*

5. Frustration level is high

The tone ("waste of time") indicates this isn't mild dissatisfaction.

Prompt: I received the following feedback - what are the key messages that I should be taking from it

A useful way to reframe it

Instead of:

|"This person is being overly negative"

A more productive interpretation is:

|"This is what frustration looks like when someone doesn't see value in the design."

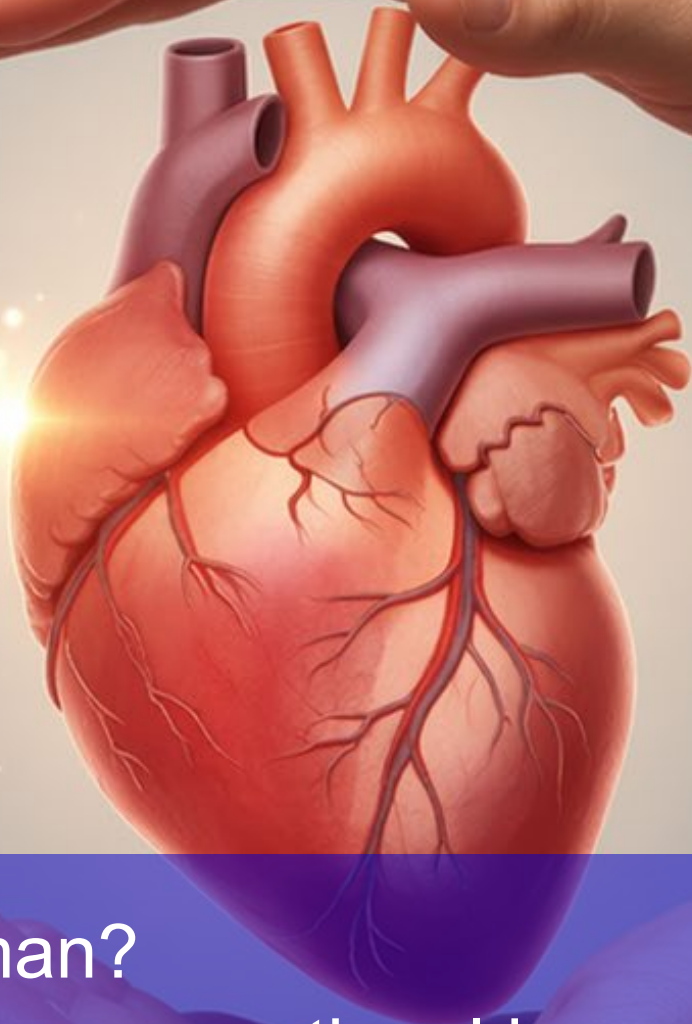
Other uses:

- Stripping the feedback of unproductive emotions to see the message that is hidden by emotional noise
- Helping identify action points
- Facilitate reading between the lines

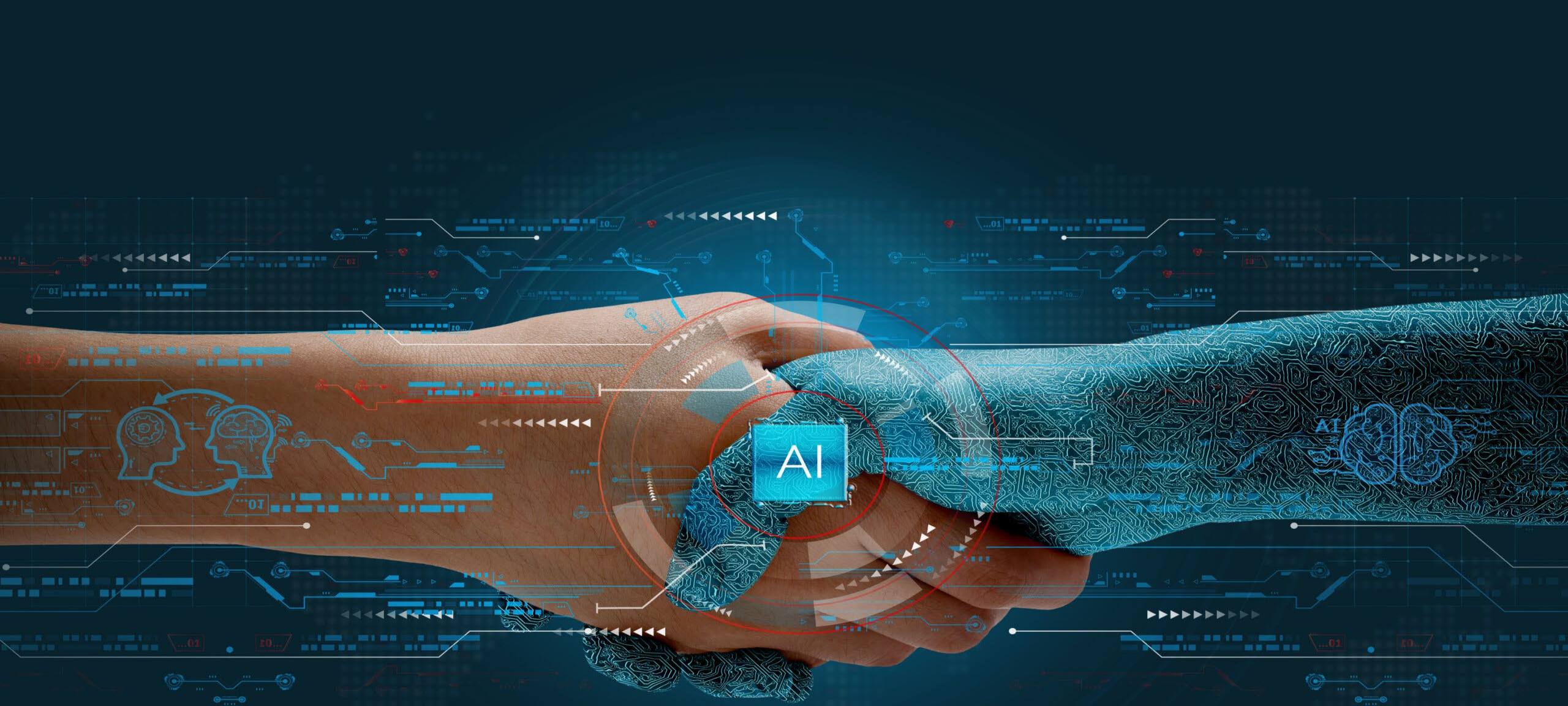




- Human emotional intelligence is complex, subjective, and rooted in lived experience therefore difficult for AI to replicate (Oritsegbemi, 2023)
- EI is inherently human but is learned and can be developed and enhanced (Ubago-Jimenez, 2024)
- it's not about eliminating emotions from feedback, it's about learning to navigate them and being aware of them – **learning how to ride the waves**



Are we asking AI to teach us how to be human?
How can AI enhance what we understand as an emotional human?



GenAI assisted feedback



Special Edition: **Reimagining Higher Education Through Emotion-Informed Feedback: Connecting Cognitive and Emotional Dimensions**

Guest Editors; Dr Kate Ippolito & Dr Monika Pazio Rossiter

Themes could include the following:

- Research and/or evaluation of feedback experiences designed to foster productive emotional responses;
- Research studies focusing on cognitive strategies students and teachers can deploy to regulate emotions associated with feedback, overcoming barriers to engagement and action;
- Research studies looking into and offering new insight into the complexities/experiences of emotional engagement with feedback;
- **Studies and opinion pieces on the implications of GenAI for reimagining feedback and its role in managing affect;**
- Theoretical pieces exploring new ways of conceptualising emotion in feedback.

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