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# Improving Student Outcomes through Dialogic Feed-Forward Assessment

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# Feedback Context

- Feedback should help students to:
  - Understand current performance
  - Understand how to close the 'performance gap' in future assignments
  - Have the confidence and belief they have control over their success
  - Maintain motivation throughout their degree

(Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

- But ... low satisfaction scores for assessment and feedback in national student surveys

# Feedback Intervention

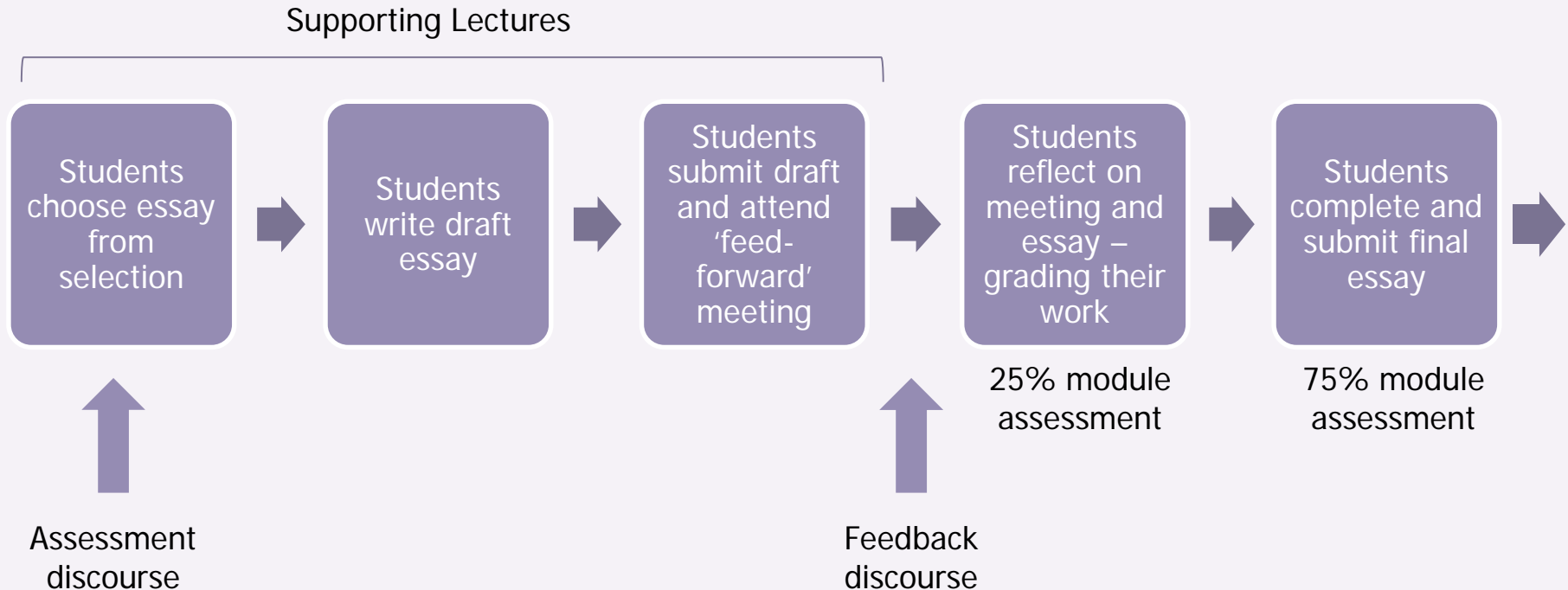
- We implemented an assessment approach on a 2<sup>nd</sup> year physical geography module to optimally support students use of feedback
- Based on premise that feedback should occupy a central position within a **dialogic** approach to learning and teaching (Alexander, 2004; Sutton, 2009) and be **future-oriented** (Sadler, 2010; Beaumont *et al.*, 2011)



# Research Aims

1. Explore **student perceptions** of the dialogic feed-forward approach and whether it asserted a **positive influence on their learning experience**
2. Identify if and how the **task-specific behavior** of students was altered by the assessment approach
3. Identify the extent to which students believed their **self-efficacy** and **self-regulation** skills were improved
4. Examine whether the assessment approach **enhanced student performance** and whether it could potentially raise **NSS scores** related to feedback

# Module Assessment Structure





# Data Collection

## Qualitative case study approach

- Individual semi-structured interviews... two consecutive year 2 cohorts at the end of the module (2015/16 and 16/17)... analyzed thematically via grounded theory
- 44 interviews (x30 mins), 61% response rate    male = 45%    female = 55%
- Group semi-structured interviews with year 3 students elucidating post-assignment behaviour
- Essay performance data pre- and post-assignment intervention (inferential stats)
- Answers to NSS feedback questions

# Selected Results

## Enhanced Learning Experience

- Conversation compels students to **engage critically** with their work:

“When I have had drafts handed back to me and it’s just written over, either I don’t understand what they are trying to say, or it’s not clear enough. I can ask you questions if we’re talking to each other about it, it’s easier to see things... It’s definitely better to talk about it” (R7)

“I’ve had it before where you get electronic feedback and you might not be sure what some of the comments mean... being able to discuss it is important. You get that progress and can discuss how you can change it as opposed to just saying this is wrong” (R9)





# Selected Results

## Enhanced Learning Experience

- **Motivational** and **empowering** due to **pertinent application**:

“the bit in between my draft and writing the final piece was the best bit because I knew what I was doing, and could tweak it and I enjoyed that process of making it better. It gave me more confidence in my writing skills” (R7)

“my first draft was quite vague and I didn’t really know what direction I was going with it. Then, after speaking and having the feedback, I spent more time on it because I knew where I needed to go with it” (R8)

# Selected Results

## Task-specific behaviour ... and self-regulation

“it helped me to realise how to critique my own essays because I was able to sit down with you and go through the essay and know exactly why you were commenting on something... it allows me now to see in other essays the same things I’m doing” (R10)

“Now, I feel like I can evaluate at different stages throughout an assessment and therefore make changes. Before I just skimmed over work, handed it in, and got feedback at the end without really thinking about it” (R29)

# Selected Results

## Self-Efficacy

- Students also self-avow to altered year 3 behaviour:

“I felt my critical analysis was improved through the feedback session and this has been helpful writing other essays and exam answers... I was able to achieve higher 2:1s and 1:1s at year 3 because my understanding of critical analysis had improved” (R28)

“Since this module I have made sure that whenever possible I meet with academics and discuss my work. This is something which prior to the Ecology module would scare me as I was embarrassed by the mistakes in my work” (R29)

# Selected Results

## Enhanced Student Performance

Significantly higher marks 2015-17 v 2011-13  
( $p = < 0.0001$ )

Band (%)	2011-2012 (%)	2012-2013 (%)	2015-2016 (%)	2016-2017 (%)
0-39 (inc. NS)	16	5	0	5.5*
40-49	9	14	3*	5.5*
50-59	34	38	28	17
60-69	41	38	58	58
70-100	0	5	11	14
Number (n)	32	37	36	36

Average Ecology mark 4.5% higher than average mark for other second year optional modules  
( $p = 0.01$ )

Dialogic assessment

\* Did not have a meeting

# Selected Results

- All students rated the module as giving them high quality feedback: detailed, conversational, personalized, timely (relevant application), multi-faceted
- Students proactively engage with learning – they have to prepare for the meeting, think about their work, ask and answer questions





- Proactive reciprocity (Winstone, 2017).
- Motivation/self-efficacy (Ritchie, 2016).
- Self-regulation (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Nicol, 2010).
- Emotional risk/resilience (Barnett, 2007).

- Students engage early with task & generate personal understanding via dialogue – take ownership (Carless, 2006).
- Students understand standards as interpreted by tutor (Carless, 2006).
- Students can ‘make good’ – motivated to close performance gap and knowing how to get there (Blair & McGinty, 2013).
- Affective spaces: ‘head on learning’, anxiety but caring and personalized (Yang & Carless, 2013).

Prior experiences of assessment

### Open Boundaries Feedforward

- Raise awareness about skills transferability
- Assessment becomes more than a grade - habits of good learning



*Distribute assignment*

## Dialogic Feedforward Assessment Cycle Process & Principles

### Preparatory Guidance

- Explanation of criteria
- Discussion of task

- Tutor introduces task goals, criteria and standards (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006).



### In-Task Guidance

- Model answers
- Generic Feedback
- Peer assessment
- Self assessment

- Tutor clarifies task goals, criteria and standards (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006).
- Peer discussion of criteria and standards (Liu & Carless, 2006).
- Students judge their own work developing in-task assessment literacy (Price *et al.*, 2010).



*Submit final assignment*

### In-Task Performance Feedforward

- Draft discussion
- Audio feedback
- Exemplar paragraphs
- Criteria/standards related



*Submit draft assignment*

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# Thank you for listening

# Questions?



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