

Feedback: An Agenda for Change

Effective feedback has great potential to enhance learning within the assessment process. Yet many current practices across the sector do not fulfill this potential, and the shortcomings in feedback are evident in student dissatisfaction with existing approaches.

In June 2009 ASKe (Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) brought together a group of leading researchers and experts in the field to discuss these issues. Named the 'Osney Grange Group' (OGG), they propose that current feedback practices in Higher Education are often not fit for purpose being largely founded on myths, misconceptions and mistaken assumptions that undermine student learning. Furthermore, current practice is over-reliant on written, unidirectional, tutor-delivered feedback. Consequently, there is a need for HE stakeholders to fundamentally re-think the role and purpose of feedback.

The Osney Grange Group proposes the following agenda for change:

1. It needs to be acknowledged that high level and complex learning is best developed when feedback is seen as a relational process that takes place over time, is dialogic, and is integral to learning and teaching.
2. There needs to be recognition that valuable and effective feedback can come from varied sources, but if students do not learn to evaluate their own work they will remain completely dependent upon others. The abilities to self and peer-review are essential graduate attributes.
3. To facilitate and reinforce these changes there must be a fundamental review of policy and practice to move the focus to feedback as a process rather than a product. Catalysts for change would include revision of resourcing models, quality assurance processes and course structures, together with development of staff and student pedagogic literacies.
4. Widespread reconceptualisation of the role and purpose of feedback is only possible when stakeholders at all levels in Higher Education take responsibility for bringing about integrated change. In support of this reconceptualisation, use must be made of robust, research-informed guiding principles, and supporting materials¹.
5. The Agenda for Change calls on stakeholders to take steps towards bringing about necessary changes in policy and practice.

The Agenda complements and is supplementary to the Manifesto produced in November 2007². The OGG will be actively campaigning to bring about the changes set out in the Agenda through promoting a series of activities, materials and processes.³

¹ For example, see the work of David Nicol and the REAP Project <http://www.reap.ac.uk/>

² Available at http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/documents/ASKe_Manifesto.pdf

³ For information, please see <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/>