

<b>Case study title</b>	Innovation and Student Feedback
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### Project Name

Using innovative technology to improve the feedback experience for students.

### Background

University of Westminster relies heavily on the use of Blackboard for its student support. The experiment and research has been based around using screen recorder software to provide students feedback. The reaction has been very positive from the educational community and the THES recently published an article on this work (8th December 2007)

### Aims & Objectives

The driver for change was the need to improve the learner's experience with regards to tutor's feedback of work. Research at the University had shown that students often misconceive feedback. The project author was looking for a more dynamic way of providing feedback that would improve the learner's interest and interaction with the feedback as well making it more inclusive in terms of learning styles. He was looking for ways of integrating feedback into the learning process rather than it being just summative.

### The Challenge

#### Technology

The technology is easy to use. The screen capture software simply captures the screen of your computer. It is rather like putting a video camera onto your screen. As long as you have a microphone it will also record your voice. Using the screen capture software is just a matter of a few clicks on a programme.

#### Scenario 1

Students send in their essays on English for Academic Purposes course. The tutor opens their essays in Word, turns on the screen recorder software and begins to correct their work. From that moment on everything said and anything done on the screen is being recorded. So if a mistake is highlighted, a spelling is underlined, a comment is made or a question is asked about the essay, everything is captured. Once finished, the "live" recording is saved as a video in Windows Media File and then sent to the student. The student is able to watch and listen to a live recording of their tutor commenting and correcting their work. They can play them back as many times as they like. Alternatively, the feedback can be loaded onto the VLE and the student can access it from there.

The method used on the EAP course was simply to mark where mistakes were made, explain what type of mistake was made and the possible cause of the

mistake but not actually correct the mistake. This forced the students to listen and watch the video and then redraft their essays and re-submit.

This work has since been extended to other courses. The “live video feedback” has been included in courses for ICT, Multimedia and project management and now other teachers are beginning to work with the technology on a whole variety of courses.

### **Scenario 2**

I began to realise that using the screen recorder software had many more applications. For example after marking the students work in the traditional way on an ICT course, I open up a word file, turn on the screen recorder software and begin to give some general classroom feedback. Remember anything I write in the word file or anything I say is being recorded. So I can highlight the key points that were missed out in their essays, talk about organisational layout and point out general things that the students need to consider in the future. I then save the video and then either load it up onto blackboard or send copies of the video to the students. I found this to be very useful as it freed up valuable lecture time as I no longer need to go over coursework in the lectures.

### **Key Outcomes**

This work is still in a very early stage. Here are a couple of key pointers

- 1) Video feedback is very quick. It more or less takes the same time as it does to mark a piece of work in the traditional way since all you are actually doing is marking the work and recording yourself doing it.
- 2) The students love it. They have commented on the fact the feedback suits a variety of learning styles, it is especially good for students who are using English as a second language. They find it easy to follow and understand
- 3) I am able to provide much more information. A typical video contains equivalent to about half a page of detailed feedback. This seems to lead to fewer questions from the students about what the feedback means.
- 4) Students have become much more enthusiastic about the feedback process. Especially the idea that it is now part of the process and that the students will re-submit their work once they have watched the videos I send them. We are now looking at ways of integrating the videos into different stages of the writing process, for example getting the students to submit an essay plan and then sending them video feedback on their plans. Several students have commented that they watch the feedback videos several times whereas with the written feedback they hardly take any notice of it.
- 5) The classroom feedback videos have proved to be especially popular. This frees up valuable classroom time and means that students can play the video back as many times as they like and listening to me talking and writing about the general performance of the class and what to consider in future essays. This has linked well with Blackboard since I can load the classroom feedback videos onto Blackboard and the students can access them from there.
- 6) This research is on-going and much more quantitative and qualitative information will be available in the future.
- 7) Questionnaires have shown that students are making good use of the feedback. Some of the students on an EAP course have even commented that the videos are “good listening material”.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

I am planning to continue to the research and move away from looking at the student experience and move towards looking at impact of this type of feedback on learning. For example, could we show that this form of feedback is more memorable? i.e. that students retain and use the information in future work. (Research into dual coding theory would suggest that this is the case). What type of feedback should we provide? For example, is it better to give feedback that points out problems and things to think about but doesn't explicitly give answers or solutions? This may be more memorable as students have to consider the mistakes and how to rectify them. It would also force the students to make use of the videos as they would become an integral part of the writing process.

## Additional information:

You can download trial versions of screen recorder software from various companies. Matchware has an excellent product that is very easy to see. Click on the free trial version

<http://www.matchware.com/en/products/screncorder/default.htm>

If you want something more sophisticated then try Camtasia which also offer a free trial version. Their product offers additional functionality like text captions etc.

<http://www.techsmith.com/download/trials.asp>

To see other ways that the software is being used then look at this series of "learning videos" for Blackboard which have been made in Camtasia.

<http://www6.miami.edu/bb/demos/instructors.html>

There are also Open Source screen recorder software available, including Wink, which can be downloaded here: <http://www.debugmode.com/wink/>