

Forum Insights

SUPPORTING TRANSITION: ENHANCING ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK IN FIRST YEAR USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Project Partners & Team

Y1Feedback is a collaborative project between Maynooth University, Athlone Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, and Dundalk Institute of Technology.

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Project Overview

The Y1feedback project seeks to enhance assessment feedback dialogue in first year undergraduate programmes to support student transition to higher education. The project will develop and pilot technology enhanced feedback approaches, specifically in the areas of feedback, feed-forward and peer-review.

By Assessment Feedback, the project refers to '...all *feedback exchanges* generated within assessment design, occurring within and beyond the immediate learning context, being overt or covert (actively and/or passively sought and/or received), and importantly, drawing from a range of sources' (Evans 2013, p.71). Accordingly, for the purpose of this project a broad conception of the term *Feedback* is adopted to encompass a variety of strategies for feedback mediated by digital technologies.

The focus of our project is based on the fundamental understanding that feedback is arguably one of the important influences on learning, which can support student learning and development and impact on student success and retention. This project also acknowledges the challenges of providing feedback, particularly in large groups, and seeks to leverage the potential of digital technologies to support and develop assessment feedback approaches for first year.

Project Plan

This two-year project (January 2015 – December 2016) consists of three main phases.

- Phase one (Year 1) focuses on establishing the project, the project team, project plan and web presence. The project will review existing assessment feedback practices in first year undergraduate programmes within partner institutions and develop a review of the literature. Building on this work, the project will provide appropriate conceptual framework(s) and develop a suite of technology enhanced feedback approaches.
- Phase two (Year 2) will focus on working with academic departments in piloting and developing case studies of a range of teacher feedback, feed-forward and peer-review approaches and technologies across all partner institutions.
- Phase three (Year 2) will produce a digital feedback guide including case studies from the project and will provide guidance on how to implement the technology enhanced feedback approaches developed. In addition, the project will host a National Symposium on Enhancing Feedback in First Year to share project outcomes with the higher education community.

Project Outcomes

Key Activities and Outcomes to June 2015

Key activities and outcomes of the project from January – June 2015 focussed on project initiation and planning, current practice review planning and implementation, and literature summary planning and development.

Project Setup

Key outcomes included formalising the project, forming the project team agreeing project scope and plan, design and development of a project logo, design and development of and Twitter channel @y1feedback and ongoing development of a project web space.

Current Practice Review Planning and Implementation

A key focus for phase one of the project was to establish a landscape view of current assessment feedback practices in first year undergraduate programmes in our institution and also to get an insight and understanding of student's experience of assessment feedback in first year.

The current practice review required ethical approval at all four partner institutions and involved the design and implementation of two main research instruments; focus group interviews with first year undergraduate student class representative, and an anonymous online survey of lecturers currently teaching on first year undergraduate programmes in partner institutions. The current practice review addressed the following areas:

- How assessment feedback is provided in first year undergraduate programmes
- The timing and frequency of assessment feedback
- The types of assessment feedback provided to students
- The digital technologies utilized in the provision of assessment feedback

- Lecturer views on assessment feedback processes and practices
- Student views on assessment feedback.

Data analysis and write up is in progress and preliminary findings of the current practice review were shared at EdTech2015 and at the Assessment in Higher Education Conference (AHE) 2015.

Literature Summary Planning and Development

In conjunction with the current practice review, the purpose of the literature and technology review is to identify existing feedback best practices in the education sector to inform conceptual framework and approach development. This activity is ongoing and focuses on these key areas;

- Assessment and feedback in Higher Education,
- Models of assessment feedback in Higher Education,
- Assessment feedback practice and approaches in first year, and
- Digital technologies used to support feedback practice.

Project Outcomes to December 2017

As we progress through the phases of the project the following additional outcomes are planned.

Phase 1

- Development of a Current Practice Review baseline report
- Development of a summary of the literature
- Conceptual framework (s) for feedback with a suite of technology enhanced feedback approaches to support first year transition.
- Pilot and case study plans

Phase 2

- Piloting of a range of feedback, feedforward, and peer review approaches across institutions
- Developing case studies of a range of feedback, feedforward, and peer review approaches across institutions

Phase 3

- Production of a Digital Feedback Guide
- Production of case studies of technology enhanced feedback approaches
- Hosting of National Symposium on Enhancing Feedback in First Year Using Digital Technologies

Benefits to Higher Education

The project seeks to address the acknowledged concerns and challenges around feedback in undergraduate higher education, particularly in large group classes. The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2014, found that nationally, 23.3% of first year undergraduate students never, and 44.9% only sometimes, received timely written or oral feedback from teachers on academic performance.

The project will contribute to increased sectoral knowledge and institutional capacity on feedback and technologies to support feedback practices by developing conceptual framework(s) for feedback and a suite of technology enhanced feedback approaches. The project will involve working with academic departments to develop case studies and a Digital Feedback Guide, which will provide guidance on each approach to support

practitioners usage. These will be shared with the wider higher education community through a range of dissemination activities including the y1feedback project web space and planned national symposium.

Benefits to Students

The project directly seeks to respond to the findings from the Irish Survey of Student in 2013 and 2014. Through the development of technology enhanced feedback approaches, the project will contribute to improved feedback processes and feedback quality for students. In addition, the project will develop technology enhanced peer-review approaches to support staff in facilitating increased peer-review opportunities for students, particularly with larger numbers, which will enable opportunities for students to develop skills in constructing feedback and further support their development as independent learners. Students are also active partners in the project. Each partner has worked closely with the Student Union Education Officers to include the student voice in the current practice review. To sustain student involvement, incoming Educations Officer for 2015-16 are being invited to become Student Advisors and provide feedback to the project at key stages.

Complimentary Work in the Area

Ireland

- Assessment for Learning Resources for First Year Undergraduate Mathematics Module funded by the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund 2014

JISC UK

- JISC UK Assessment & Feedback Programme & Final Report: Supporting Assessment and Feedback Practice with Technology: From Tinkering to Transformation
- e-AFFECT: e-Assessment and Feedback for Effective Course Transformation
- InterACT Project – Interactive Assessment and Collaboration Via Technology
- FASTECH Project – Feedback and Assessment for Students with Technology

Scotland

- Re-Engineering Assessment Practices in Scottish Higher Education Project (REAP)

Next Steps

Next steps for project include:

- Publication of the Current Practice Review baseline report
- Completion and publication of the Literature Summary
- Feedback approaches development
- Case study planning and development
- Phase two and phase three implementation

Further Information

For more information about the Y1Feedback project, please visit www.y1feedback.ie or join the conversation on Twitter @y1feedback.