“Offering Sound Advice: Exploring the Provision and Delivery of Audio Feedback to Students”

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Project Overview

Four members of staff within the School of Biomedical Sciences at Ulster were provided with MP3 voice recorders, headsets and microphones and / or desk based microphones to record audio feedback on student work. Software such as Audacity and Camtasia were evaluated for capturing the audio on PC as were the Wimba voice authoring tools in Blackboard Learn. Modes of delivery of audio files such as by email, delivery via the VLE and podcasting were also explored. Student and staff perceptions of the feedback are provided below as four short case studies.

Case Study 1:
Module: BMS105 Introductory Chemistry
Level: Year one, semester one
The Practice: Students were provided verbal feedback in class on practical work undertaken as part of the module and laboratory workbooks were annotated with brief feedback. An MP3 file of generic feedback was provided to students, summarising the practical and issues encountered. This was emailed to the students and also provided as a podcast using FeedBurner.

Evaluation: 86% of students surveyed (n=43) said they listened to MP3 files sent by email. 50% of students listened to the podcast files but only 2 students said they actually subscribed to the podcast using iTunes. Some claimed they did not know how to subscribe to podcasts; some said they did not use iTunes or a compatible device.

Case Study 2:
Module: NUT507 Human Nutrition Research Project – Poster Presentations
Level: Final Year, semester two
The Practice: Staff who were assessing students were encouraged to provide verbal feedback. Any additional written comments they provided were then relayed to the student as a short audio file recorded using a hand held MP3 voice recorder by the module co-ordinator and then emailed individually to the students. The marks were released 48 hours later.

Evaluation: Positive comments were received from the students group such as: “audio feedback was more personal, you could hear your voice and tones and it was a much nicer way to get your feedback” “thanks for getting me my feedback so quickly - it meant a lot that you took the time to provide this”

Case Study 3:
Module: BMS804 Ethics and Research Governance
Level: MSc, semester two
The Practice: The module is designed such that the first assignment is a short piece of work, from which the students get rapid feedback in time to improve for a more substantive piece of work that they submit for their second assignment. Audio feedback was generated using a headset and Camtasia software.

Evaluation: Students felt that the feedback was more personal, more so than reviewing written comments on their piece of work that they submit for their second assignment.

Case Study 4:
Module: PHA717 Analysis of Medicines and Medicinal Natural Products
Level: MSc, semester two
The Practice: Staff who were assessing students were encouraged to provide verbal feedback. Any additional written comments they provided were then relayed to the student as a short audio file recorded using a hand held MP3 voice recorder by the module co-ordinator and then emailed individually to the students. The marks were released 48 hours later.

Evaluation: Positive comments were received from the students group such as: “audio feedback was more personal, you could hear your voice and tones and it was a much nicer way to get your feedback” “thanks for getting me my feedback so quickly - it meant a lot that you took the time to provide this”

How helpful did you find the audio feedback (in terms of Ulster Principles of Assessment & Feedback)?

- Improved interaction and dialogue with tutor and classmates
- Encouraged positive motivational feedback
- Provided an opportunity to act on feedback
- Improved time and effort on task
- Contributed to overall performance

Rating: 1 - 10

Resources

Staff have also used the Wimba Voice tools in Blackboard Learn and many have concluded that this is a very straightforward way to get started with audio feedback. All that is required is an inexpensive headset consisting of headphones and a microphone. The Wimba voice tools take care of the recording aspect and delivering the feedback to the student. A further 8 staff members in the School plan to use audio feedback in the future.