

Exploring learner experiences of, and attitudes to, feedback through ePortfolios



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Project Information

<http://www.qmu.ac.uk/eportfolio/research.htm>

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Overview of the workshop

- The project
 - Background
 - Project aims
 - Research methods
- Activity 1
- Student attitudes to feedback including purpose and role
- Activity 2
- Student attitudes to feedback and ePortfolios



Background

- Students in the health sciences undertake learning activities in clinical environments
- Feedback is critical for supporting knowledge acquisition and skills development
- General student dissatisfaction regarding feedback
- Growth in popularity and application of ePortfolio in the tertiary education sector



Project aims

(Funded by HEA Health Sciences and Practice)

- To discover if, and how, health science learners engage with formative and summative feedback in ePortfolio
- To explore how present experiences compare with past feedback experiences



Project Aims: Continued

- To identify and discuss the benefits and barriers encountered when feedback is received through ePortfolio
- To develop grounded guidelines to support institutional implementation and facilitate student engagement



Research (Feb – July 2009)

Case study	Focus groups
1. BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography forms, blogs, webfolio (PDP) Formative and summative	Group 1 (yr4): 4 females, 1 male, mean age 30.8 Group 2 (yr2): 3 males, mean age 42.6 Group 3 (yr3): 3 females, 1 male, mean age 28.7
2. MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) Webfolio summative	Group 4 (yr2): 4 females, 3 males, mean age: 30.3
3. BSc Nursing Webfolio Summative	Group 5 (yr4): 6 females, mean age 23.8 Group 6 (yr4): 6 females, mean age 22.5



Activity 1

In groups, discuss one of the following from your perspective:

- What is feedback?
- What is the purpose of feedback?
- What are students' perceptions of good and poor feedback.



Student perception of feedback

- Personal, written and/or verbal communication from tutor or specialist expert
- Informs student
 - Are they on the right track?
 - About their strengths and weaknesses
- Focus on error correction
- Expected and deserved



Learner Quotations

“Feedback is when the lecturer is reading over your work and giving you suggestions and comments on how you can improve it, what’s right and what’s wrong.”

“...because otherwise you would just be trouping on without any sort of way to gauge how you were doing, how you were...you could be going completely off in the wrong direction, and you need someone to say *‘hang on a second, go this way or find out what’s right and what’s wrong, what are the things you have done’* and direct you a little I suppose.”



Student perception of the purpose of feedback

- Communication tool:
 - Clarify and confirm level of attainment, grades
 - Springboard for further discussion
 - Motivation
 - Encouraging further progress
 - Enhancement of learning and personal development
 - Enhancement of reflection
- “...really important to have – to go back to...”



Learner Quotations

“Sometimes you can go back and ... like kind of discuss it through with your tutor... I find it quite useful to go back for more feedback on your feedback...”

“...it’s always nice to get some good feedback as it was really a big encouragement for me to carry on.”

“...feedback’s essential if you’re wanting to learn... basically I don’t think you can learn without getting comments back from somebody who was expecting you to have done a certain thing or written about something in particular way...”

“If they didn’t evaluate our work then we will never improve, it's better to enhance it from now than to be in the field and don't know how to do it”

Student perception of what is good and poor feedback

- Verbal v written

“Personally I would need a discussion with someone to kind of to really... for it to play a part in my mind. Normally written feedback just infuriates me... because I'm protective over my work...”

- Language of feedback
- Balance of negative and positive



Other findings

- Lack of student criticism about feedback
- The importance of structured feedback
- Influence of the tutor
- Power relationships between tutor and learner
- Learner engagement with feedback



Example of feedback use in ePortfolio

Introduction	My Research Interests
My Personal Details	
RAP (Level 2)	Improving image contrast in chest radiographs: can scattered photons be more successfully dealt with by using Kumakhov polycapillary lenses to remove scatter compared with traditional anti-scatter grids?
CAL (Level 2)	
My Research Interests	The Lotus Posture: a comparative study of a highly flexible yoga teacher against a chronic rheumatic patient. What can MRI tell us about the structure and function of hip anatomy between these two ends of the flexibility spectrum?
Qualifications	
Radiography CPD Courses	
CV	Why do muscles calcify? Neuroimaging: how does the brain behave when muscles spasm in a chronic rheumatic patient - an investigation using MRI. Neuroimaging: how does the brain behave when a person is having a panic attack - an investigation using MRI. Analysis of x-ray scatter signatures in breast tissue: differentiating between benign and malignant tissue. Can we better detect disease with this technology?



Comments about this Webfolio

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Subject: **Re: My Research Interests**

Posted by: [Anonymous](#) on 22 October 2008 09:38

I was really interested in the Kumakhov lens! Do you think there is an application for diagnostic radiography given the typical beam energies that we use? From the little I have read it would appear that they are useful for focussing only at low energies (circa 50keV. I know that your function would be to remove scattered photons, what sorts of energies do you think they might have for a typical chest exposure?

I am sure we could have a lively discussion on the feasibility of some of the others. How would you persuade a patient having a panic attack to remain in the MRI scanner, for example?!



Example of student-tutor feedback dialogue in ePortfolio

Subject: **Re: Week 1 block 1 RIE OPD Rm2** ⚠

Posted by: [redacted] on 06 October 2008 10:51

This is a brief account of the first week back in placement but, although nicely written, it is rather superficial and a little brief! Why were you excited - was it because you had such a long break? Did the fact that you had worked during the summer help your confidence? Why do you think things were not more demanding? Is it because your level of expertise is at the right level or is it because the staff are not testing you? How do you think a less capable student might feel about being loosely supervised? You clearly feel that the week was beneficial but you need to more clearly identify what you learned - in the tutorial for example; did you learn any new techniques or perfect any that you were previously unsure of?

[Edit](#) | [Remove](#)

Subject: **Re: Week 1 block 1 RIE OPD Rm2** ⚠

Posted by: [redacted] on 09 October 2008 16:46

Well done, the changes and additions you have made improve the piece, I now have greater certainty that you are thinking, evaluating and analysing your situation more. One or two typos but generally good presentation - would perhaps look better if you joined up the very small paragraphs a bit - looks a wee bit like a list of sentences!! Sorry, am I being picky?!

[Edit](#) | [Remove](#)

Subject: **Re: Week 1 block 1 RIE OPD Rm2**

Posted by: [redacted] on 11 October 2008 12:35

Hi, thanks for your comments. I have hanged to sentencing and paragraph layout slightly. I think it looks better now, let me know of you want anything else.

Thanks.

[Reply](#)

Subject: **Re: Week 1 block 1 RIE OPD Rm2**

Posted by: [redacted] on 22 October 2008 09:02

I agree that the structure of the piece is much improved. There are still a few 'typos' which detract from the quality of the writing. I could ask how you feel about a situation where the level and quality of interaction with staff depends upon whether they like you or not!

[Edit](#) | [Remove](#)

Subject: **Re: Re: Week 1 block 1 RIE OPD Rm2** 🔔

Posted by: [redacted] on 22 October 2008 14:40

Hi Alison.

I am glad that you care about my quality of work. I would be happy to add a bit about the 'staff'.

I don;t mean to be a complete pain now, but can you point out my typos please- perhaps they are obvious? I have read this a few times, is it grammatical or sentence structure?

Also are you happy with the fluoro reflective report for week 2 and are you able to view my display images with the photos?

I can't and thought I should ask you how it looks and if you would prefer me to write this via word?



Activity 2

- In groups, discuss:
 - The potential advantages and challenges of ePortfolios as a vehicle to increase student engagement with feedback



Learners' perceptions of benefits of ePortfolio and feedback

- Immediate, permanent & accessible
- Single location
- Targeted and focused
- Springboard to further discussion



Learner quotations

“...it's quite nice knowing it's going to be there and it's safe and you can access it whenever.”

“I quite like the fact that if there's one specific issue you can generate a dialogue and I would never have done that with a paper-based feedback.”



Learners' perceptions of barriers to ePortfolio and feedback

- Preferences for face-to-face
- Increased tutor workload
- Technical Issues
 - Firewalls, software glitches
- Another technology to learn
 - Time, skills acquisition



Learner Quotations

“I’d hate to think that ePortfolio would mean that you wouldn’t get any of that type [*referring to face-to-face*] of feedback. I mean I think it’s nice to have it but I’d hate it to overtake, you know just get rid of the verbal feedback or any kind of interaction because that would be wrong.”

“I think the trouble with that is it then puts a large workload on our tutor because she’s having to read every single person’s entries and think about them on these personalised terms and give personalised feedback. But yeah I agree it’s good.”

“I think it’s the definitions of the things as well, I don’t know what a blog is or an asset is in e-portfolio, I know what it is in daily life but what is an asset in e-portfolio, what is a blog in eportfolio.... I think maybe I am just a bit older and I don’t understand the hip language but...”



Future work

- Developing a model based on works of Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick (2006), and Hounsell et al.(2008) which focuses on:
 - Self-regulation
 - Learner's journey
- Using the ePortfolio as a tool to collect, collate, reflect and evaluate feedback over a programme of studies.
- Developing guidelines for tutors from this model



Questions and feedback

