

Critical success factors in assessment and feedback (AKA what works?)

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Starting thoughts

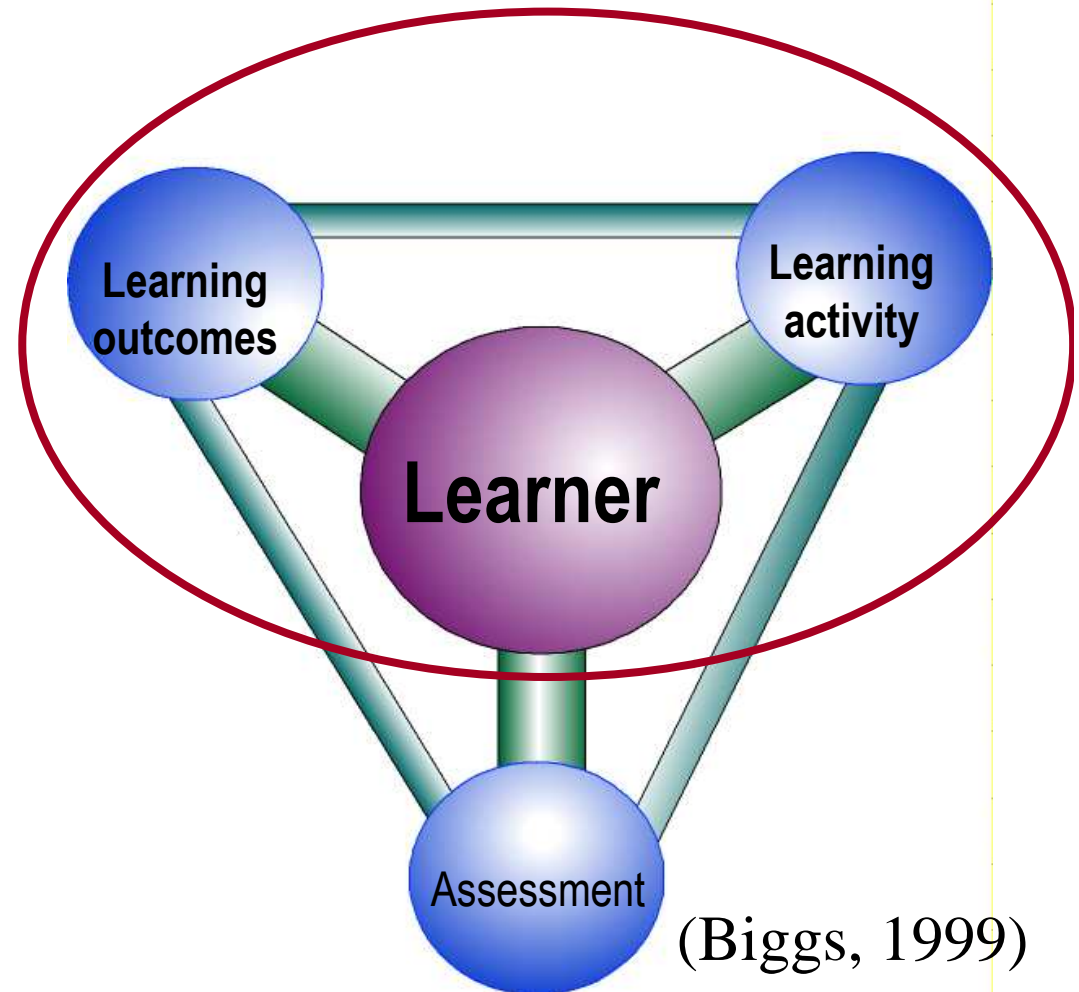
-- Youtube – *The Five Minute University* --

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO8x8eoU3L4&feature=related>
- ❑ What do you want your assessment and feedback processes to achieve?
- ❑ Are you achieving these goals, and if not what are the barriers that are preventing them?

Assessment is central to learning

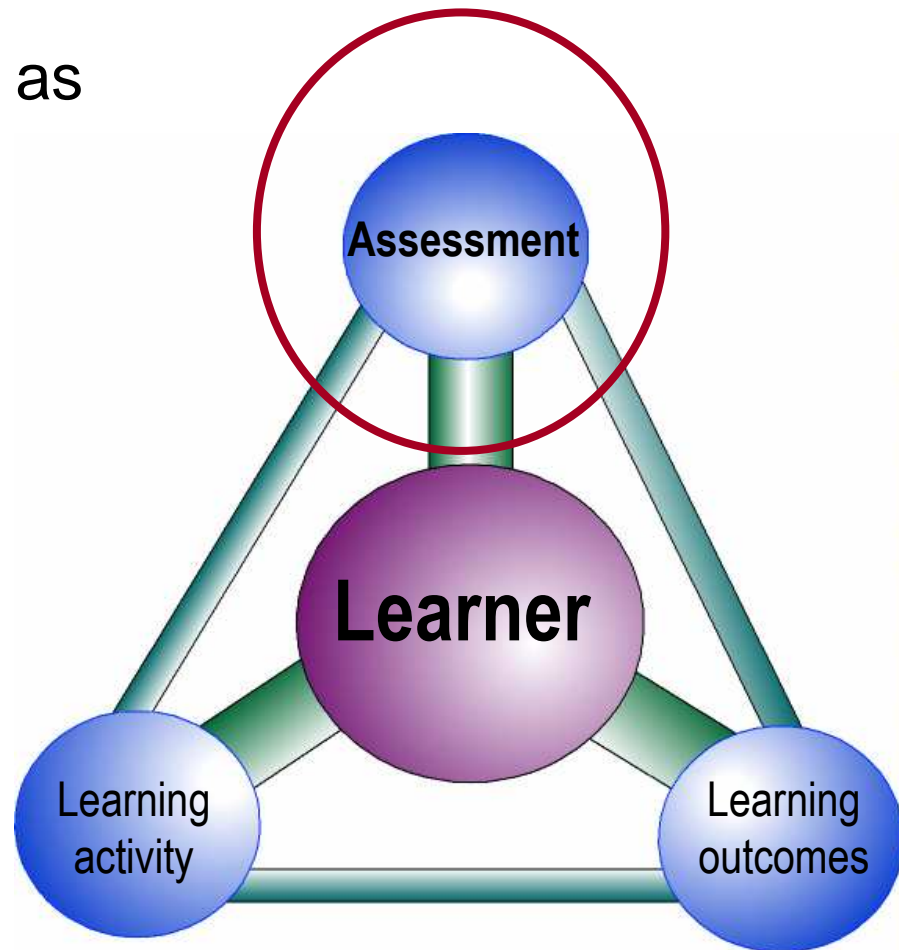
Traditional Approach

- ❑ Assessment not usually considered in the *programme* design phase.
- ❑ Often a 'bolt on' to *module* development



Assessment *for* learning approach

Assessment takes the lead as a key driver of student learning



Assessment: a key driver of student learning

“Assessment is at the heart of the student experience”
(Brown & Knight, 1994)

“From our students’ point of view, assessment always defines the actual curriculum”
(Ramsden, 1992)

“Assessment defines what students regard as important, how they spend their time and how they come to see themselves as students and then as graduates.....If you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment”
(Brown, et al, 1997)

But there are problems...

“The types of assessment we currently use do not promote conceptual understanding and do not encourage a deep approach to learning.....Our means of assessing them seems to do little to encourage them to adopt anything other than a strategic or mechanical approach to their studies.”
(Newstead 2002, p3)

“Even when lecturers say that they want students to be creative and thoughtful, students often recognise that what is really necessary, or at least what is sufficient, is to memorise” (Gibbs, 1992, p.10)

What should our assessment and feedback processes deliver?

- ❑ ***Robust and fair measures of achievement***
- ❑ **Shaping learning through a shared understanding of clear (and high) expectations and requirements throughout a coherent *programme* of study** Gibbs & Simpson (2004)
- ❑ **The ability to make informed judgements on the work of self and others**
Sadler, 1987; 2008; Boud, 2009)
- ❑ **Enhanced learning and academic performance through effective feedback processes**
FDTL ESswAF
- ❑ **Student engagement / participation**
Astin, 1997; O'Donovan et al, 2008



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Expectations of your undergraduates

What are the beliefs and expectations of the learning process held by most of your undergraduates on joining the course in the first year?

Student expectations on entry to a business and management programme

A good teacher knows lots of 'right answers' and can:

- 1. Make things simple*
- 2. Help students memorise key points in interesting ways*

Assessment is about measurement and should be FAIR.

Knowledge is certain and uncontested

There are 'right answers' and 'key points' that students must memorise

The knowledge you learn at school and university is mainly irrelevant to day-to-day life

Discussion with peers can be both muddling and time wasting

(O'Donovan in press)



Clarify expectations through early assessment:

Also engender good study habits; diagnose areas of individual difficulty; promote engagement

“Setting students assignments as soon as they arrive at university could help cut dropout rates.....integrate students into university life as quickly as possible. This involves making them aware of the quality and quantity of work expected from them.....The freedom...is too much for some and they probably need more structure in the first year.”

Higher, 24/1/03

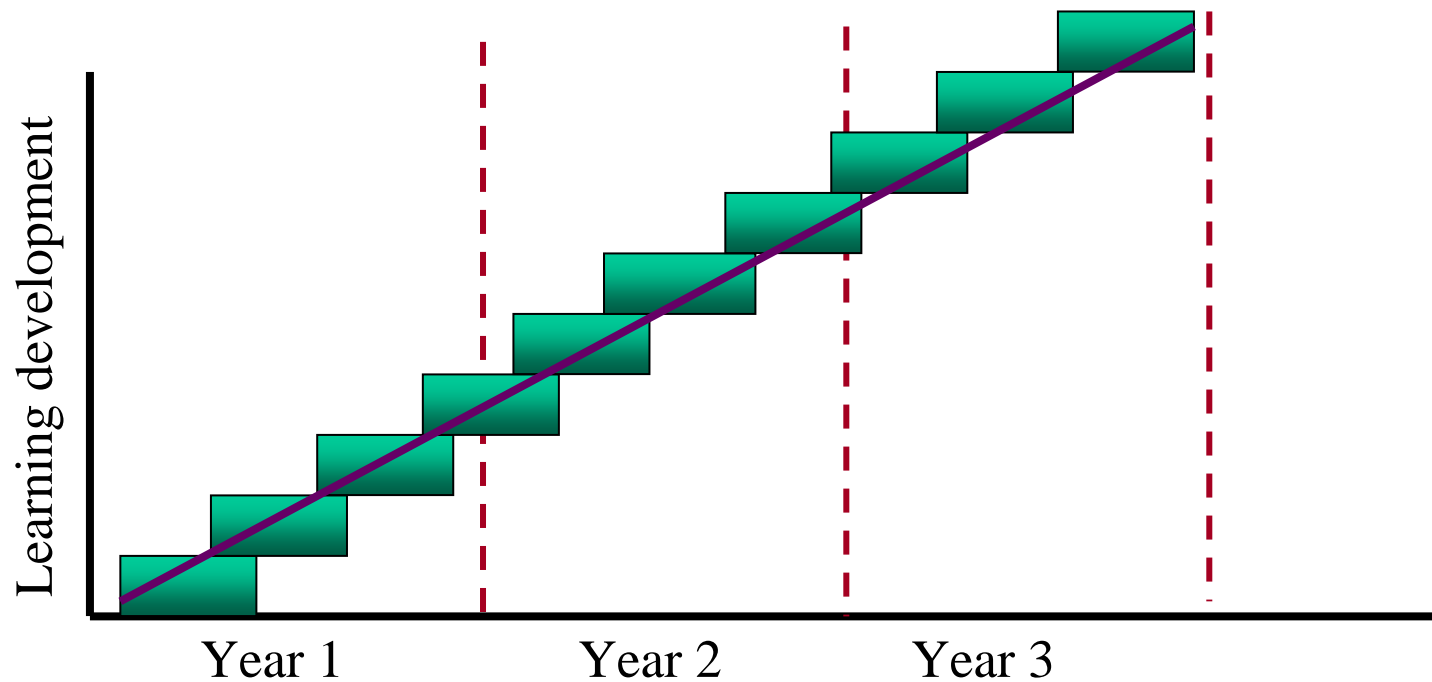
Reporting Student Transition and Retention (STAR) project

(in 5 universities)

Expectations and notions of 'quality' can remain more or less the same during a programme of study...

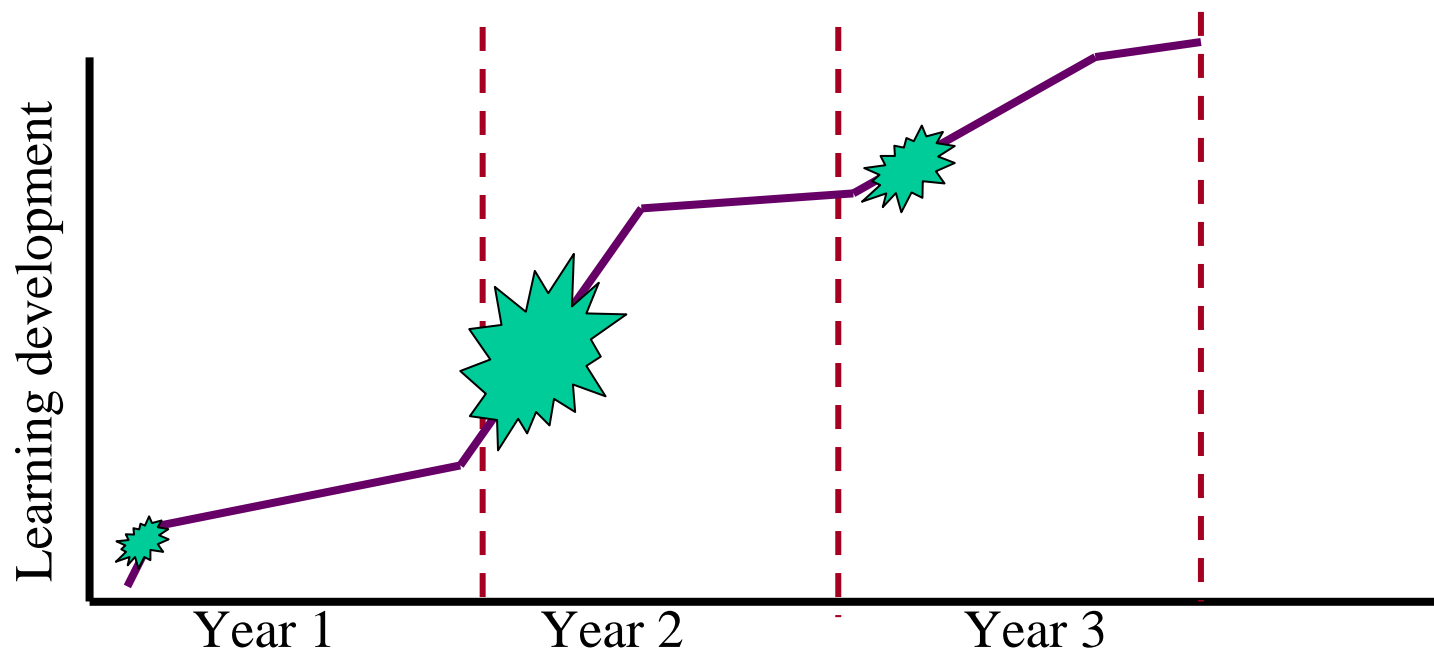
The learning journey of a programme can be seen as:

- ❑ A series of modular stepping stones of similar difficulty, involving:
- ❑ Incremental movement between zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978)



....or change radically

- ❑ Radical movement involving zones of discomfort, '*threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge*' (Meyer and Land, 2006)
- ❑ Changes in 'epistemology and knowledge structures' (Basil Bernstein in Moore et al, 2006)



The importance of a programme-view

- ❑ Some skills, literacies, conceptual understandings are '*slowly learnt*' and need rehearsal throughout a programme (Yorke, 2001)
- ❑ Where there is a greater sense of the holistic programme, students are more likely to achieve the learning outcomes than students on programmes with a more fragmented sense of the programme (Havnes, 2007)
- ❑ Many programmes involve unequal learning steps and changes in epistemologies and knowledge structures

ACTIVITY

- ❑ Can you map your programme ?
- ❑ Are there particular areas of difficulty?
- ❑ If so, is there plenty of formative assessment and feedback to support students in these areas?

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Enhancing students' self-evaluative ability

- Students holding an understanding of quality roughly similar to that held by their tutor(s) so that they can evaluate their work is ***an indispensable condition*** for enhancing students academic performance (Sadler, 1987; Sadler, 2008)
- At best, many programme assessment frameworks communicate understandings on 'quality' to students serendipitously over time and often by an undermining process of elimination (O'Donovan et al, 2004)

Developing the ability to make informed judgements

- ❑ Understandings of 'quality' in terms of learning is difficult to articulate due to the tacit nature of some of these understandings
- ❑ Tacit knowledge is experience-based and most effectively shared through processes involving practice, observation and imitation (Nonaka, 1991)
- ❑ The sharing of academic standards is particularly difficult requiring active engagement with 'anchor points' (Sadler, 1989; O'Donovan, Price & Rust, 2004)

Developing self-evaluative ability

Students need to understand the assessment standards and criteria to be able to self-evaluate their work *in the act of production itself* (Sadler, 1987)

The ability to make informed judgements on the work of self and others is a key graduate attribute (Boud, 2009)

- Marking practice of exemplars (ASKe 123 leaflet)
- Facilitated self-assessment (e.g. generic feedback)
- Peer review and peer feedback
- Drafting and re-drafting

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Enhancing student learning through effective feedback

Feedback is the most powerful single pedagogic influence that makes a difference to student achievement


Hattie (1987) - *in a comprehensive review of 87 meta-analyses of studies*

Feedback has extraordinarily high and consistently positive effects on learning compared with other aspects of teaching or other interventions designed to improve learning

Black and Wiliam (1998) - *in a comprehensive review of formative assessment*

Students are hungry for feedback to develop their learning

(Higgins et al, 2002)

- 
- ❑ *'It is not inevitable that students will read and pay attention to feedback even when that feedback is lovingly crafted and provided promptly'*

(Gibbs & Simpson, 2004, p. 20).

- ❑ To be effective, feedback should actively *engage* students so that they think about their learning and how they can improve, thereby helping students to close the gap between their actual and required performance

(Sadler, 1989)

Effective feedback is a process in a programme not a product in a module

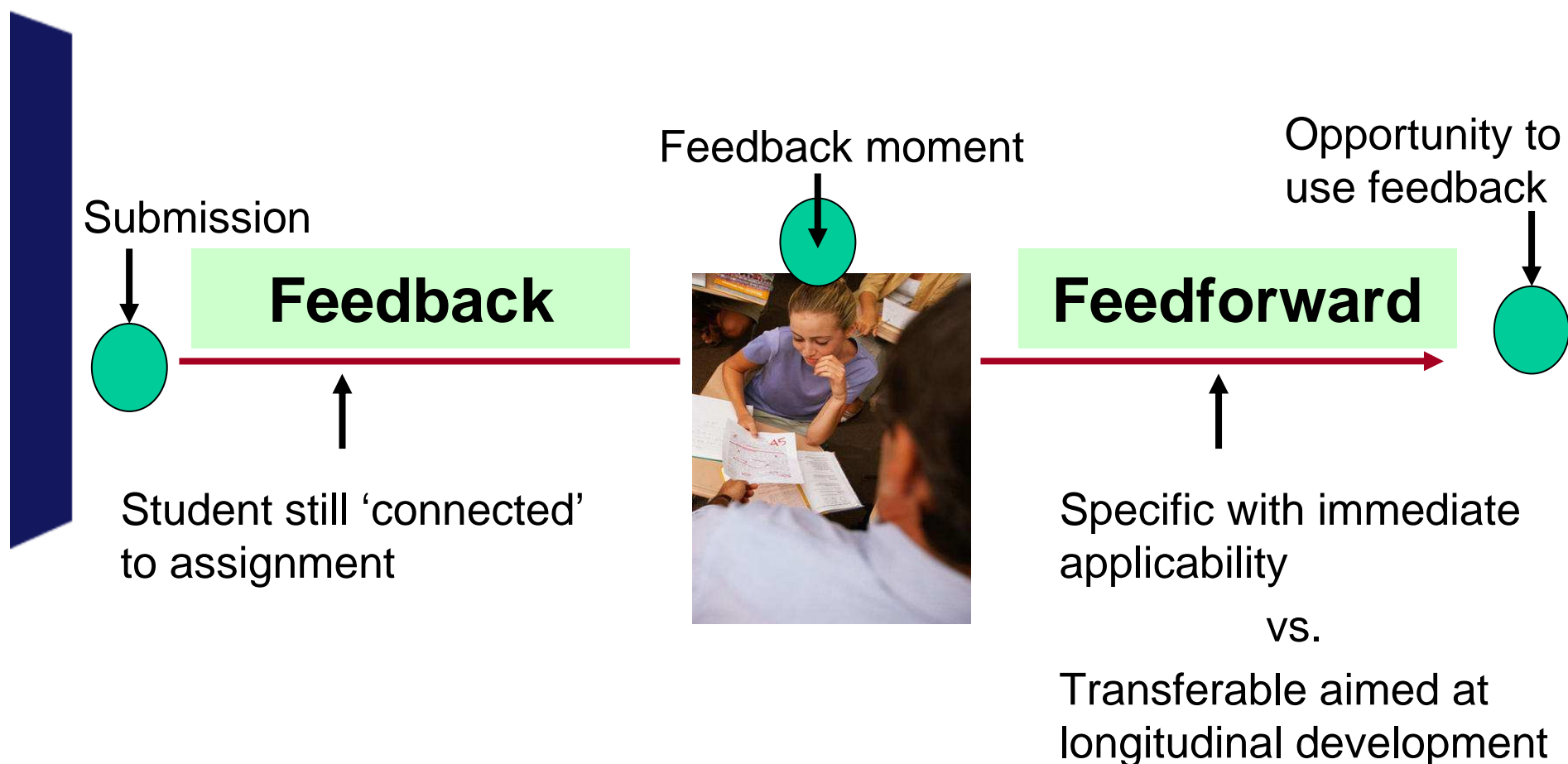
(Findings from the Engaging Students with Assessment Feedback
FDTL Project)

- Engagement is strongly influenced by opportunity to apply feedback to future performance:
 - ability to understand feedback
 - expectations of the utility of feedback
 - perception of self efficacy

MOM – motivation, opportunity, means (Angelo, 2007)

The 'Temporal Dimension' of the Feedback Process

Engaging Students with Assessment Feedback FDTL Project



Effective feedback is a process in a programme not a product in a module

(Findings from the Engaging Students with Assessment Feedback
FDTL Project)

- ❑ Engagement is strongly influenced by opportunity to apply feedback to future performance This relies on
 - ability to understand feedback
 - expectations of the utility of feedback
 - perception of self efficacy
- ❑ The relational dimension within the process is key to student engagement
- ❑ Dialogue supports understanding and engagement

The relational dimension

To engage with feedback students need to:

- Believe that the assessor has carefully read their piece of work
- Respect and trust the assessor
- Believe that the feedback will be useful
- Consequent difficulties of anonymised marking

(FDTL 'Engaging Students with Assessment Feedback')

Findings: Song – Another Tick in the Box

Importance of dialogue

- ❑ Even when written feedback is '*lovingly crafted*', students may be disengaged (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004, p. 20).
- ❑ The relational dimension within the process is key to student engagement. Dialogue supports understanding and engagement (Engaging Students with Assessment Feedback, FDTL)
- ❑ Limitations of written feedback
 - Passivity
 - Interpretation
 - Feedback on complex, high level tasks require clarification and dialogue

Student *engagement* with feedback

What processes do you already have to facilitate student engagement with feedback?

Are there ways to spread and enhance these processes?

What should our assessment and feedback processes deliver?

- ❑ ***Robust and fair measures of achievement (AC clauses 2.4; 2.7)***
- ❑ **Shaping learning through a shared understanding of clear (and high) expectations and requirements throughout a coherent *programme of study* (2.1; 2.2; 2.3)**
Gibbs & Simpson (2004)
- ❑ **The ability to make informed judgements on the work of self and others (2.6)**
Sadler, 1987; 2008; Boud, 2009)
- ❑ **Enhanced learning and academic performance through effective feedback processes (2.5)**
FDTL ESswAF
- ❑ **Student engagement and involvement (2.9)**
Astin, 1997; O'Donovan et al, 2008

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Student engagement and involvement

- ❑ Student involvement as measured by student/staff and student/student interaction is *the most significant predictor of students' academic success* (Astin, 1997)

- ❑ Improving the relational dimension of LTA (Price et al, 2008))
- ❑ Cultivating community and increasing density of interactions:
 - Social learning, 'affinity' space
 - Collaborative activity within the classroom (group work; field trips etc.)
 - formal involvement outside the classroom (PAL; Module Assistants; Student Reps; CTAs; PDTs; Student/staff joint research projects)
 - Informal involvement outside the classroom (social events, societies etc.)

(O'Donovan, Price and Rust, 2008)

- ❑ Assessment literacy

Programme Assessment Strategy

❑ Take a programme-based approach to assessment

- Develop a constructively aligned rationale for the programme assessment
- Clarify & agree the programme's expectations of students and approach to learning and assessment
- Develop an assessment schedule showing assessment timing, load and type and feedforward opportunities

❑ Develop assessment *for learning*

- Increase formative assessment particularly in Yrs. 1 & 2
- Communicate clear and high expectations and foster students' self-evaluative ability through the programme
- Determine those areas/literacies that are commonly 'slowly learnt' and allow for slow learning
- Provide opportunities for dialogue on student learning

❑ Create a learning environment that fosters involvement & engagement

- Value, develop & prioritise processes that build relationships and involvement