

SPEAQ

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PROJECT REPORT **SPEAQ YEAR 2 PARTNER PROJECTS**

Institution: LLAS, University of Southampton

Institutional coordinator: Alison Dickens

Title of project: In the loop: getting the most out of feedback

SUMMARY

Provide a short description of the project

We have produced informative resources which can be delivered online and in workshop format which approach issues of feedback in practical, clear and meaningful ways illustrated with real examples.

We have:

- examined current methods for giving and receiving student feedback at the university. This is illustrated by case studies (interviews, animated movies, tweet wall) of what is already being done successfully by some teachers and students;
- provided activities (card game, interactive check list, animated movies, 'feedback quality model') which encourage reflection on how staff and students can improve the ways in which feedback is delivered, received, and reported;
- provided clear explanations of quality assurance processes and mechanisms at the University and how these relate to the feedback given and received by student.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Why was this project chosen for implementation (out of the potential projects initiatives identified by your institution in the SPEAQ first year activities)?

The issue of the relationship of feedback to quality processes came up in a variety of ways during our data collection interviews with students and academic staff. It was subsequently flagged up as an area which needed addressing within the institution by the PVC for Education. The university was also recently subject to QA review and is in the process of responding to issues raised by this process, which include reviewing the role of feedback in the quality mechanisms at the university. In addition, the UK's national student survey also repeatedly reported that feedback issues were commented upon most negatively by students, so this was also a national as well as local issue and we intended to promote the website to other HEIs in the UK. We also learnt that in our own Faculty (Humanities) feedback was to be a quality theme for the next academic year.

What immediate needs did the project answer?

Issues with feedback were highlighted by students and staff in our data collection interviews. Feedback was not always seen as relevant or meaningful. In this project, we tried to encourage staff to deliver relevant, timely, meaningful and enhancing feedback to students, and to approach feedback as a dialogue.

OBJECTIVES

Indicate aims (as bullets)

We aim to:

- examine current methods for giving and receiving student feedback at the university. This is illustrated by case studies (interviews, animated movies, tweet wall) of what is already being done successfully by some teachers and students;
- provide activities (card game, interactive check list, animated movies, 'feedback quality model')

which encourage reflection on how staff and students can improve the ways in which feedback is delivered, received, and reported;

- provide clear explanations of quality assurance processes and mechanisms at the University and how these relate to the feedback given and received by student.

Were the objectives set achieved? If not, why not?

The objectives of the project have been achieved in terms of creating resources to support better understanding and practice in the area of feedback. We found that undertaking and editing interviews with staff and students took longer to arrange than planned, and other multimedia resources also generally took longer to produce than anticipated. What has resulted is a well populated website which will serve as an effective basis to encourage greater interest and engagement with the area of feedback at the university. It is a timely project in that the university has selected feedback as its quality theme for the year 2013/14 so there will be many opportunities to further develop the project outcomes, to disseminate this work and to obtain further funding to add to and enhance the website.

ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES

Describe the actions completed and provide photos from any of the activities, if available
 We have produced a website with resources for students and staff to reflect on and improve their feedback, and a workshop with staff and students. Here are some of the activities featured on the website:

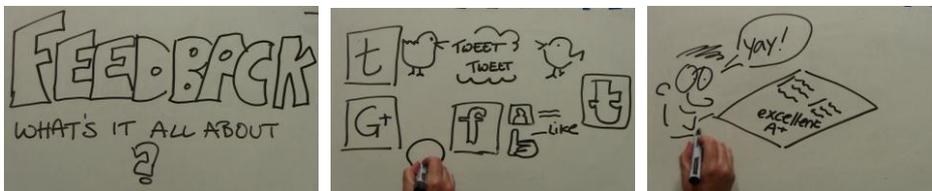
- website: <http://blog.soton.ac.uk/gmoof/>



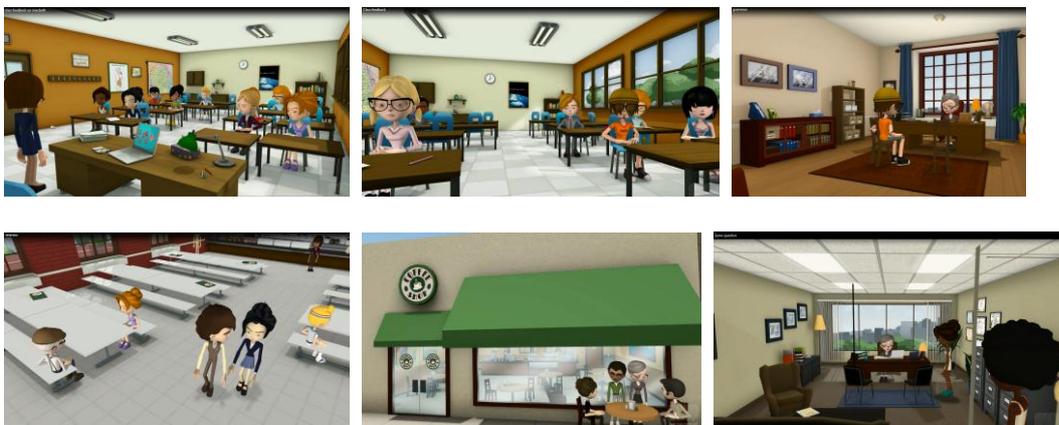
- interviews with staff:



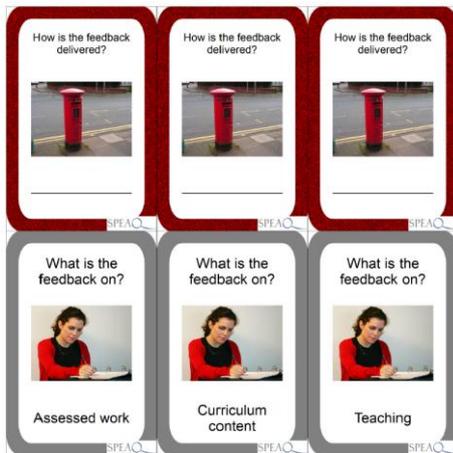
- Animated drawing:



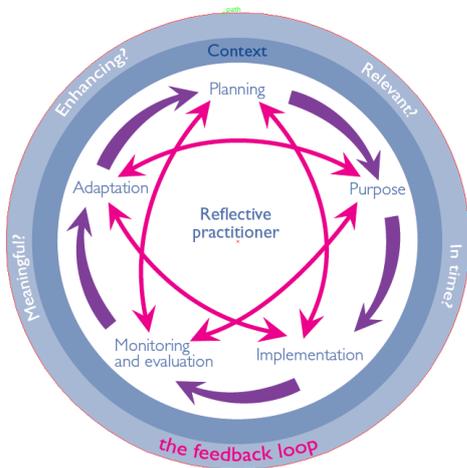
-Animated movies:



- Card game:



- the feedback loop:



Choose one activity and detail as an illustrative case study/example of the work carried out in the institution

As part of the feedback project, we interviewed Bella Millet, Professor of Medieval literature at the University of Southampton. Prof Millet received an 'Excellence Teaching Award' for feedback from the Student Union and we thought it would be a great opportunity to interview her. We asked her a few questions in order to know more about what she does in terms of feedback within her teaching practice. Prof Millet insisted on the importance of knowing students so that feedback can be adapted to their circumstances. To achieve this, she ensures that she knows her students and that she sets time aside for a mid-term one-to-one interview. This is of course challenging with big cohorts of students but this is in her opinion the best way to give relevant and meaningful feedback.

Did you cover all activities planned for? If not, why not and where are you at? Are there intentions to complete the activities not covered in the future?

We have completed all the activities we intended to do. Our feedback website is now live. The resources we developed have taken longer than planned to produce for a variety of reasons, i.e. availability of staff and students for interviews, video editing is time-consuming. We were hoping to collect more resources but were not able to. However, we are confident that there will be ongoing support from our institution for this initiative and that the website will offer a valuable range of interactive resources for staff and students and will serve as an excellent 'talking point' in staff development sessions and education committee meetings.

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the activities from the stakeholders participating in your partner project

To date the ideas behind the project have been well received by those from whom we have collected feedback (staff, students and quality managers). The University has feedback as its quality theme for the coming academic year so it has been suggested by one of the participants that the outcomes from this project could contribute to activities (workshops, internal conference) planned for this initiative. This has been supported by our Faculty Associate Dean for Education who has agreed to act as an advisor for a small bid for internal funding to pursue this project by creating a university Feedback Champions Network.

DELIVERABLES

Describe the deliverables produced, i.e. podcasts, worksheets, blogs, wikis, interactive quizzes etc. (and provide as annex)

Include the list of deliverables you are annexing

Website <http://blog.soton.ac.uk/gmoof/> including the following resources:

- Interview with John Canning, Senior Academic Coordinator
- Interviews with Bella Millet, Professor of Medieval Literature, recipient of an 'Excellence Teaching Award' for feedback
- Interview with Simon Kemp, Principal Teaching Fellow in Environmental Science,. Mr Kemp has also been awarded a National Teaching Fellowship and is seconded part-time to the UK's Higher Education Academy as the Sustainable Development academic lead.
- Animated drawing: 'feedback, what's it all about?'
- Animated movies:

'Feedback to whole class'
'Feedback to new class'
'Feedback on new module'
'Everyone asks the same question'
'New lecturer meets her mentor'
'Nearly a first'
'Talking to the Head of Department'
'Low mark'
- Card game
- Tweet wall
- Interactive feedback checklist for staff
- Interactive feedback checklist for students

Were the deliverables anticipated achieved? If not, why not.

Yes.

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the deliverables from the stakeholders participating in your partner project.

In relation to more specific feedback on the resources produced there are indications that we would need to create additional student generated content together with a more student-friendly interface for the website (feedback from a student), but appreciation for the 'airtime' by academics who contributed to the video interviews: "I was expecting a ten-minute cut rather than a forty-minute tape from my interview---thank you." Another comment from one of the academics who took part in the project said she had found it personally interesting to compare her views on feedback with those of colleagues (also working in the project) and noted that the need for more time for individualised feedback in an increasingly crowded curriculum is an area of common concern.

IMPACT**Describe the impact the project has had.**

It is still too early to say as we have not formally launched the website. We are planning to promote it to the whole university via faculty staff-student committees, teaching forums, digital champions (students), and to the UK HE teaching community via SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) and the Higher Education Academy. Our work has been flagged up to our Associate Dean for Education and to the staff-student liaison committee both of whom will be taking a leading role in the 'feedback theme' planned for next academic year. Further impact is anticipated when the site is presented at the University's learning and teaching group and discussed at the University's Digital Literacy group.

Did the project have the impact envisaged? If not, why not.

We did hope to engage with more staff and students but so far it was difficult to do this as at the time of year when we were trying to collect student data they were engaged in end of year and final assessments. In addition there has been a change in personnel at the Students' Union so we are anticipating increased interest in the project when the new SU President takes office.

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the impact from the stakeholders participating in your partner project

In terms of impact it is probably too early to say what effect the project has had (other than on those who took part in it) but it is looking likely, following discussions with colleagues, that it will have an impact in the coming months as there has been interest and support in further developing and disseminating the site as part of an upcoming university initiative to engage staff in activities (workshops, conference, networks) relating to feedback practice. The project team has already been approached to contribute to a Faculty event and will be actively participating in an internal conference on this theme in February 2014.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION**Describe ways you evaluated the activities and the outcomes**

We collected feedback from colleagues who were involved in contributing to the project and also from one of our student Digital Champions.

How did the project address the quality assurance agenda of your institution?

This was timely as the QAA review highlighted feedback as an area for improvement and this was selected as a 'quality theme' for the next academic year.

How did the project connect the three quality circles and with what effect?

The project fits in the agenda set out by the Quality Manager following the QAA review and connects the teachers and students by collecting their views and offering them resources they can use to improve their approach to feedback.

What were the major difficulties encountered?

It was hard to engage students and staff to produce case studies, but where this happened the results were very good, e.g. video interviews with academics.

What kinds of constraints or impositions affected the implementation, if any?

Internal communication is a problem at the university. We had a similar problem when organising the data collection activities as there is no system in place to reach all staff or all students. Instead we rely on individuals that we know and to help us find other people suitable for the project.

DISSEMINATION**Describe dissemination methods applied/envisaged and provide photos from any dissemination events, if available**

In the light of feedback on the resources to date we have decided to take a 'soft' approach to dissemination as the website is in need of several revisions (design and creation of additional content) which means that it would not be appropriate to disseminate it at this stage. However, we have been using internal networks to disseminate our work and align it with upcoming initiatives relating to feedback which will be university-wide

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the dissemination from the stakeholders participating in your partner project

Essentially the stakeholders with whom we have spoken about our project (some of whom have commented on the resources as well) have indicated that this project and its outcomes are a very good fit for the work that is being proposed at university level in this area and we have been encouraged to bid for funding from our 'student centredness' fund to support further development of the website (with a high degree of student involvement) and networking initiatives with a grassroots (bottom-up) orientation.

CONTINUATION/MULTIPLICATION/EXPLOITATION**Describe continuation/multiplication/exploitation plan, if appropriate.**

As discussed earlier, this project is proving very timely in a range of ways. Our institution was recently subject to a Quality Audit which raised a number of concerns which the institution needs to address. The issue of feedback is one which is commonly raised by students as a cause for concern and this, together with the outcome of the Audit and internal strategy, led to feedback being a theme for quality in the forthcoming academic year. This will most likely be taken forward at Faculty level through the Associate Deans for Education and the staff-student liaison committees. In addition the Students Union is very keen to contribute to quality enhancement activities and there are a number of other university initiatives such as the teaching and learning group and the digital literacies group which will be able to support and extend this initiative.