

Education in a changing environment: critical voices, critical times.

Understanding the pedagogical significance of higher education wherever it's taught...

A process model for engaging staff and students: a case of improving ownership of academic results

Engaging Students' with Assessment Feedback: What works?

Generic feedback and self critique – University of Sunderland

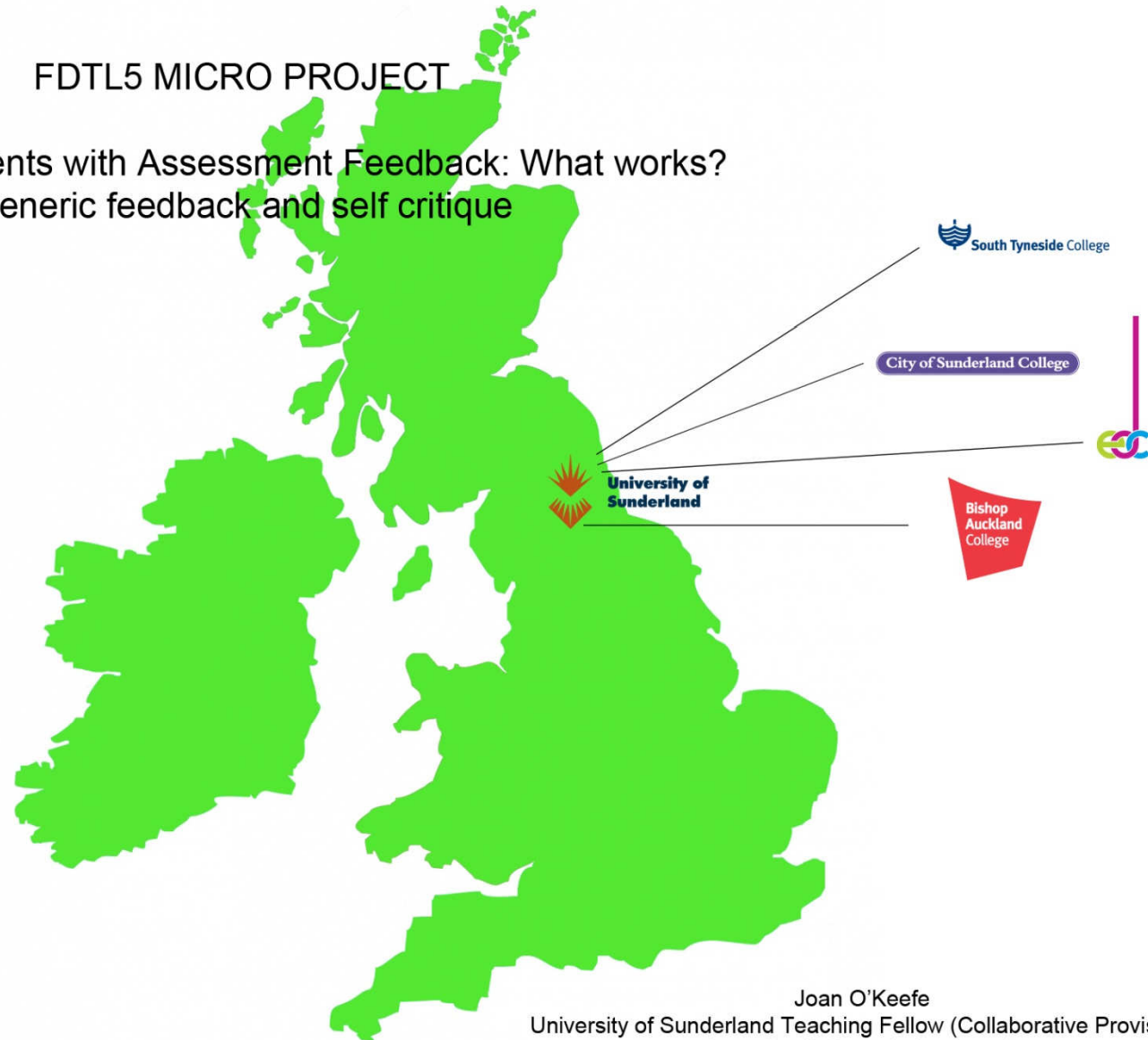
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# FDTL

- The original FDTL project was based at Oxford Brookes University
- It began in academic year 05/06 with a group of lead institutions
- A set of four models were designed to enhance student engagement with assessment feedback (phase one).
- In 06/07 findings were disseminated to an extended group of cascade partner institutions who were tasked with testing and evaluating these models (phase two).
- At this stage all project work had been done in business schools, but by the end of phase two the project team was keen to further test the models with a series of micro projects in other disciplines.

## FDTL5 MICRO PROJECT

Engaging students with Assessment Feedback: What works?  
Generic feedback and self critique



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# The rationale for involvement with an FDTL5 micro project

- Identified Fds as problematic in terms of inconsistencies across large college collaborative partnerships
- Criticism by critical friend (External Examiner)
- Desire to align with current HEI practices
- Wanted students to have comparable experience of using assessment feedback
- Believed the models offered could provide a catalyst for change

# The sample

- The target was 1 foundation degree programme
- The timescale September 08 – February 09
- 5 of the 7 strategic partnership colleges took part in an event in September 2008 outlining the micro project which would run until February 2009
- In reality only 4 of the 7 colleges participated
- 135 students were in the sample
- 10 members of staff were in the sample

# The process

- Initial meetings – 2 days CPD on campus
- Off site meetings with staff to talk through the process
- Collective discussion with staff and students, reinforcing the model
- Production of the large posters
- Supplied students with smaller A4 version
- Provided additional reading materials for staff on formative assessment and feedback processes

# The methodology

- Student's undertook a reflective account
- Staff directly observed changes to classroom behaviour and attitude toward study
- Staff were interviewed on the student's reflective accounts
- Staff were asked about the merit, timescale and use of the intervention tools
- NB all of the results were collated prior to the students 'knowing' their final marks. Therefore the point of data collection may or may not have biased the respondents

# What happened

- 1 college chose not to participate following discussion with their students and consideration of own time scale
- Overall 134 students achieved their modules
- Engagement with the module happened earlier
- Final marks awarded tailed upward, toward higher classification, and illustrated an increase in 55+s, 60s and 70% classifications



# What the students said

It was a good way of improving your work

I could check I was on the right track

I do feel this technique was useful when reading my draft essay however I feel my essay is satisfactory after using the generic feedback. When writing my next assignment I will use this format to push myself towards the good elements and improve

I found the pilot process hard ... overall it was worth it to find out my strengths and weaknesses

The generic feedback was interesting, but had you thinking of whether you needed to put extra work into the assignment

The feed-forward helped me to understand where I was in my assignment and where I needed to get to. Points made about the whole group were beneficial to me as an individual

# What the students said cont'd

That said, the following comment reflects the bulk of the students

I would have preferred one to one sessions instead of the group feedback, feed-forward process

# What the staff said

There were no referrals here

There was a change in classroom behaviour

There was a change in relationships and levels of interaction, sharing of ideas

This process increased self-confidence

Students told me they were '*worried about the draft assignment*'

Students nearly all said that they didn't like it, but the model had some merit as '*It was a good way of improving the quality of your work*'

# Unexpected outcomes

Students became very vocal and *'talked'* around their assignments

There was less questioning of whether *'is this right?'*

It increased research skills and improved bibliographies

It broke things down for students, no tension, no panic for their busy lives

There was a great variation in drafts submitted

It gave assurance, confidence and ownership

Weighted heavily toward the beginning of the module

This was a powerful tool in the learning process

No referrals to support (bar 1)

3 colleges investing further in micro-project, one of whom is using this with audacity – audio feedback

2 colleges have disseminated this process across all HE programmes

The penny dropped. I knew that I could do this or that, but it was my decision, and I must make my work look like ...what I want it to look like



As the only member of my group doing X option module, she found it re-assuring to have these consultations.

‘Ideas could be aired and you, in turn, always threw ‘ideas’ at me, to help me to do research, provoke concepts I would not have thought of...’

It took sometime to logically think how to tackle the process. I ordered it in the traffic light system and started with red comments; from this I read the essay and highlighted parts that I felt related to my essay and changed it accordingly. I continued this process, through the amber and to the green colours





South Tyneside College

‘The method of producing a draft made me feel confident with my work. Although the feedback was generic, I was still able to take lots from it’

‘I was able to use the feedback to help me to do my assignment’





## Engaging students with Assessment feedback – what works?

Initially students were apprehensive, they thought the process would cause them to do more work, as they were asked for a draft at the mid point.

After the feedback, feed-forward process the students understood the concepts more... They said this is what they wanted to happen all of the time.

The final assignments were of a much better quality, illustrated higher order thinking skills, use of appropriate literature, attention to grammar, and provided clearer illustrations of theory to practice.



## Engaging students with Assessment feedback – what works?

The students said that they felt they had little feedback from starting the course, but the students certainly got more confidence from getting feedback, feed-forward at the midway point.

Students had more confidence, their classroom behaviour and language changed. Constructive feed-forward meant results and quality of work were higher.

City of Sunderland College



## Engaging students with Assessment feedback – what works?

Students seem to think there is only one formula for assignments, so unlearning prescriptive rules has been tricky – I believe this has helped...

Academic freedom freaks them out, although promising by the end of the year, we are hoping for clear improvements.





## Engaging students with Assessment feedback – what works?

Students have such expectations of HE. Moving from level 3 FE with intensive and regular feedback, the model gave students a sense of knowing where they were at. It allowed them to recognise if they had to do more here, or something else there

I would definitely use the poster campaign again but like the idea of individual feedback and self critique

# Findings and indications of what's the 'higher' of HE from the micro project

Differentiated not seamless FE to HE

Raising and realising aspirations

Ownership 'of really useful knowledge' Johnson (1998)

The use of personal pronoun 'I', 'my' 'your'

Behaviour shift – self directedness and independence akin  
to the theory of *Andragogy* Knowles (1996)

Experiential learning Boud and Miller (1996)

Transformative learning Mezirow (2000)

Achievement 'developing power to perceive critically' Freire  
(1972)

Increase in dialogue 'not just banking problem, posing' (ibid)

Enthusiasm from all involved