

*Clarity and Consistency:  
Improving Assessment & Feedback for Students with Dyslexia*

An Access Working Group funded project.

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# Acknowledgements

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Constructive Alignment  
Social Constructivism  
Communities of Practice

John Biggs *Teaching for quality learning at university* (2003)

Lev Vygotsky *Mind in Society* (1978)

Etienne Wenger *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*  
(1998)

## How do we assess in Art & Design?

Susan Orr [Marking Marks: Assessment in Art & Design](#) (2010)

Group marking i.e. marking by many staff – an “artful social practice”

Assessment “Binaries”

The student and the work

Intention and outcome

Process and product

## What are the issues for students?

- Perceptions of (un)fairness
- Parity amongst staff (many HPLs)
- Lack of transparency
- Conflicting advice
- Not understanding the feedback, or how it can help them progress
- Disconnect between studio practice and theory

# FADA Online Assessment & Feedback Project

Literature Review

Standardising Assessment Template

Marking Criteria

Rubric Grids

iPad pilots and audio feedback

Student interviews and evaluation

Finding out what support KU offers

Checking out other HEI systems and processes

Staff debate, deep reflection, revision of LOs.

**Key Points for Online Assessment and Feedback Systems from our Literature Review  
prepared by Laura Stott, Academic Skills Advisor**

- Repetition is a very useful tool for embedding knowledge at a deeper level. This is about systems rather than words. It may be about the repetition of the rubrics being used. Perhaps it is about enabling students to repeatedly access feedback as often as they like, and keeping it all in one place which they can repeatedly go to for new feedback.
- Consistency seems to be vital. Certainly the students interviewed in Habib et al. (2012) report that the use of different platforms to disseminate information caused confusion. We can take from this that it is of utmost importance that all assessment and feedback information is in one place and the same system is used consistently. Forcing students to learn new VLE of feedback systems numerous times can create a reluctance to engage in them, which will inevitably have an impact on their learning and on receiving information in a timely manner (Habib, 2012).
- The volume of text should be as minimal and concise as possible.
- Control, over pace of learning and format, can be of great benefit in helping dyslexic students overcome their own personal and specific manifestations of the condition.
- Positive aspects of having forms of dyslexia

# The interviews

- Who we asked
- What we asked
- What we found out

# Who we asked

- Students with dyslexia
- Students who volunteered from open call
- Students feeding back on pilot projects trialling audio feedback and rubric grids
- From Design School, ADH, A & L and another institution

## What we asked

- Student understanding and experience of assessment and feedback in general
- What electronic device students currently use to access their course material and feedback.
- Suggestions for how we could improve assessment and feedback to help them in their studies.

# What we found out

- Confusion about the terms formative and summative, and modules and projects terms of assessment
- Lack of standardization
- Students would like opportunity to clarify feedback – not always possible due to size of cohort
- All wanted prompt, succinct summative feedback, bullet points
- Not always consistent with formative feedback
- Verbal feedback might be hard to understand/mumbled/ difficulty with language and accents

## What we found out 2

- HPLs not available for follow up on assessment
- Students would all like comments divided into what they had done well and areas for improvement so they could understand their strengths and weaknesses
- Students would like more regular opportunities for face to face progress tutorials.
- In their contextual studies modules, students found group tutorials useful because of the variety of suggestions from their peers.

## What we found out 3

- Email is most common way to receive summative feedback
- Facebook not good as some students miss out
- Don't assume students have smartphones or access to internet on their phone
- Audio feedback appreciated

## Dyslexia – what helps?

- Some students liked the audio feedback, dependent on form of dyslexia they have, would like to have more in future
- All students with dyslexia reported our current VLE difficult to use, not user friendly
- Students want *“clarity and consistency, I think that makes anything better”*
- Preference for electronic rather than handwritten feedback forms

# What students thought of Audio Feedback

- Dyslexic students on the audio trial initially found the feedback different but thought this would be an improvement for feedback in the future.
- *“I think there was a lot more feedback. There was some written feedback as well, but to hear it, there was more in there; it was more nuanced. I could tell what was more positive, what was not as positive. And it was easier to understand the module leader’s point of view, rather than just from a blank, flat piece of text. “*
- *“there’s an issue where the tutors are expecting a certain level of comprehension, which is understandable but our students aren’t always there. So I think in this case an audio feedback, where the student can pause it and go back and listen again, would be very helpful.”*

- Dyslexic students welcomed getting feedback electronically, rather than on written sheets.
- *“I find it to be completely advantageous, because I have it in front of me and I can refer back to it, and I don’t have to go flying through sheaves of paper.”*
- *“I would prefer it written, and the audio kind of falls into that, mostly because I’m socially anxious so face to face interactions can get to be a little too much. ”*

## A.N. Other college

- These students understood terms formative and summative
- Formative feedback F2F, then via email through Google Drive
- Students noted or recorded verbal feedback on their phones
- Laptops and phones used to access feedback, but phones not as useful
- Google Drive popular and accessible
- Still a preference for F2F meeting for clarification
- Feedback for studio and contextual modules all in same format so consistent.

## What next?

- Rubric Grids and more standardised templates for assessment and feedback being introduced by the next academic year.
- More trials of iPad marking and audio feedback, more student evaluation.
- Developing new Assessment & Feedback guidelines for staff and students to embed best practice.
- Developing guides for staff and students on best practice and support available in relation to dyslexia.

## Example of Criteria developed by Illustration Animation

**ANALYSIS:** critical examination of context and interpretation

**EXPERIMENTATION:** testing of thinking through making, risk taking and problem solving

**COMMUNICATION & PRESENTATION:** realisation of intentions and skill in appropriate media

**PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** planning, time-management, commitment & subject engagement

# Interim Conclusions

## Benefits for us as a faculty

- deep reflection on how we go about A &F, might not have been the case if we had imposed a rigid structure?
- Finding out more about how we can support students with dyslexia (and Asperger's)
- Uncovering difficulties with technology for staff with dyslexia that we need to address.
- Saving time on marking, better experience for all our students.
- When will results (hopefully) begin to come through?
- Expansion of project this year.

- our templates for UG and PG summative and formative Assessment and Feedback, provide a model that can be adapted by each course, but provide consistency across the Faculty.

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