

Feeling feedback: screencasting assessment feedback for tutor and student well-being

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ABSTRACT

Assessment feedback in higher education has the potential to impact on the well-being of both tutors and students: tutors feel their feedback workloads, while students often engage emotionally as well as cognitively with their feedback. Relatively little is written about the effects of feedback practice on tutor and student well-being. This study examined law tutors' feedback values and practices within the shifting contexts of higher education, and findings suggest that tutors experience professional tensions between their feedback values and practice. In response to this, the study also examined the perceptions of both tutors and students to the use of audio-visual feedback. The findings indicate that tutors may save time in providing their feedback in this way, and that students welcomed the relational dimensions of the medium, as well as asserting positive impacts on their feedback engagement. The findings are significant in that they offer a response to growing feedback demands which can threaten tutor well-being, as well as offering socio-affective feedback affordances for students.

Keywords: assessment feedback; audio-visual feedback; well-being; tutor workload; socio-affective feedback response

Introduction

The importance of assessment feedback

Feedback should help students learn but has been described as: “less like a “gift of learning” and more like a colonoscopy.”¹ Shute² likens assessment feedback to a good murder where the learner needs her “MMO”: her motive (a desire for feedback); her means (the ability to use it effectively); and her opportunity (future occasions to use what she has learned). Good learning design should therefore incorporate frequent, clearly signposted feedback opportunities, since these represent: ‘the mechanism through which students discover whether...they are on track to meet expectations.’³ Feedback can be the single most powerful influence on student achievement, even out-stripping tutor-student in-class activity,⁴ however: “higher education institutions are criticised more for inadequacies in feedback...than for almost any other aspect of their courses.”⁵ The reasons for this are complex and the literature suggests that there is a dissonance between tutor and student perceptions of what constitutes good feedback.⁶ However, for feedback to have any effect students clearly need to engage with it in some way and tutors need to

¹ Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen, *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*. 1st ed., (Penguin Random House 2015) 7.

² Valerie Shute, 2008) “Focus on formative feedback” (2008) 78 *American Educational Research Association Review of Educational Research* 153.

³ David Boud and Elizabeth Molloy, *Feedback in Higher and Professional Education: Understanding it and Doing it Well*. 1st ed. (Routledge 2013) 1.

⁴ John Hattie and Helen Timperley, “The Power of Feedback” (2007) 77 *Review of Educational Research* 81.

⁵ Boud and Molloy (n 3) 698.

⁶ Lucy Yeatman and Louise Hewitt, “Feedback: a reflection on the use of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick’s feedback principles to engage learners” [2020] *The Law Teacher* 1.

help them achieve this. To that end, tutors are often exhorted in the feedback literature to adopt feedback practices based on social constructivism, the fundamental premise of which is that learning is experienced through language and interaction⁷. Within a feedback context, a social constructivist approach reminds us that feedback is, or should be, a two-way process involving not only tutor delivery, but also student receipt and response. This feedback partnership or “educational alliance”⁸ emphasises the social process element of the feedback relationship, and Carless⁹ notes a relatively recent shift in the literature on assessment feedback which aligns with this co-constructivist approach, re-casting the learner as an active agent in the feedback process, while switching the tutor’s role to that of feedback enabler. Malecka, Boud and Carless¹⁰ describe these new learner-centred models as new paradigm feedback processes,¹¹ and Gravett¹² notes that these new models assume that students are equipped to respond to feedback, which raises questions around emotional as well as cognitive response, or as others have put it:

⁷ Erik Duval, Mike Sharples and Rosamund Sutherland (Eds) *Technology Enhanced Learning: Research Themes*. (1st ed. U.K.: Springer International Publishing 2017).

⁸ Summer Telio, Rola Ajjawi and Glenn Regehr, “The “educational alliance” as a framework for reconceptualising feedback in medical education” (2016) 90 *Academic Medicine* 609

⁹ David Carless, “From teacher transmission of information to student feedback literacy: Activating the learner role in feedback processes.” [2020] *Active Learning in Higher Education* 1.

¹⁰ Blanka Malecka, David Boud and David Carless, “Eliciting, processing and enacting feedback: mechanisms for embedding student feedback literacy within the curriculum” [2020] *Teaching in Higher Education* 1.

¹¹ Naomi Winstone and David Carless, *Designing Effective Feedback Processes in Higher Education: A Learning-Focused Approach* (Society for Research into Higher Education 2020).

¹² Karen Gravett, 2020. “Developing students’ feedback literacies” in Patrick Baughan (ed.) *On Your Marks: Learner-focused Feedback Practices and Feedback Literacy* (Advance H.E. 2020) 152.

requiring tutors to view feedback as something that students not only understand, but also feel.¹³ Emotions may therefore be important not just for building rapport,¹⁴ but may also influence future feedback engagement. Feedback which is “done with” students rather than “done to” them has the potential to foster both self-regulation and more sustainable feedback effects.¹⁵

These shifts in designing feedback practice towards more learner-focused models ask much of tutors in constructing their feedback strategies. Seeking to understand how feedback is constructed by tutors demands an understanding of the context within which the feedback is given, and how this context may interact with tutors’ own feedback roles and values.

Contextual change and assessment feedback practice

The U.K. higher education sector continues to undergo profound change. The last twenty years have seen substantial rises in student numbers with falling levels of face-to-face teaching¹⁶ and a diversification of the student body which some view as problematic due to the challenges which may accompany a widening participation in higher education.¹⁷

¹³ Naomi Winstone and others, 2017. “‘It’d be useful, but I wouldn’t use it’: barriers to university students’ feedback seeking and recipience” (2017) 42 *Studies in Higher Education* 2026.

¹⁴ Stephen Dixon 2015. “The pastoral potential of audio feedback: a review of the literature” (2015) 33 *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development* 96.

¹⁵ Sean Conley, “Dancing with feedback: inquiry-based feedback and teacher learning” (Doctorate in Education thesis, Columbia University, 2020).

¹⁶ Dai Hounsell and others, “The quality of guidance and feedback to students” (2008) 27 *Higher Education Research and Development* 353.

¹⁷ Stephen Dixon, 2017. “Hearing Voices: First year undergraduate experience of audio feedback” (Doctorate in Education thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2017)

Others assert that tuition fees and the growing industry around higher education audit in England and further afield¹⁸ are producing not only performativity concerns for tutors,¹⁹ but also a marketised view of higher education in general²⁰ and a commodification of assessment feedback in particular²¹. Political and institutional contextual shifts have the potential to influence, for good or ill, pedagogic practice around assessment feedback which finds itself situated in a fast-changing socio-political context. Some assert²² that sound feedback practices are difficult to implement productively within the constraints of a mass higher education system, and that contextual shifts are leading to “impoverished dialogue”²³ in assessment feedback and to an issue of obstructed values for tutors.²⁴

If such feedback strains do exist for tutors, what can they do in response? One part of the literature around feedback practice concerns itself with the use of audio-visual screencast technology and its potential affordances and limitations for learning, as well as tutor and student well-being. As part of a doctoral study, two research questions were framed to examine first, tutors’ views around their feedback practice in the changing landscape of

¹⁸ Carol Evans, 2013. “Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education” (2013) 83 *Review of Educational Research* 70.

¹⁹ John Kenny, “Academic work and performativity” (2017) 74 *Higher Education* 987

²⁰ Elizabeth Nixon, Richard Scullion and Robert Hearn, “Her majesty the student: marketized higher education and the narcissistic (dis)satisfactions of the student-consumer” (2016) 43 *Studies in Higher Education* 927.

²¹ *ibid*

²² Winstone and Carless (n10)

²³ David Nicol, 2010. “From monologue to dialogue” (2010) 35 *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 501.

²⁴ J. Clare Wilson and Caroline Strevens, “Perceptions of psychological well-being in UK law academics” (2018) 52 *The Law Teacher* 335.

higher education and second, tutors' and students' perceptions of working with audio-visual feedback. An intervention was designed in which a team of tutors in a post-1992 university law school provided formative feedback on an undergraduate law degree module using audio-visual screencast technology.

Methodology and methods

The research questions demanded a conceptual framework based on an interpretive approach²⁵ and a flexible, qualitative research design using a case study methodology²⁶ was employed, sited in a LLB second year undergraduate core module. A purposive sample of four tutors teaching on the module completed contemporaneous reflective journals, took part in semi-structured interviews and attended a focus group to discuss their feedback practice and their experiences of using the screencast technology. A volunteer sample of fourteen students also provided data via reflective journals and focus groups examining their experiences of working with the audio-visual feedback, their perceived relational and affective responses, and whether and how these responses might affect their subsequent feedback engagement. As so often with case study research (especially single site case studies), the number of participants was small, self-selecting and self-reporting. However, any claims for generalisability from the findings would be

²⁵ Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (7th ed., London: Routledge 2011).

²⁶ Robert K. Yin *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. (4th ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 2009).

limited to the theoretical level using concepts of transferability or fittingness²⁷ rather than predictive approaches when seeking to enquire whether the data might reliably transfer to another site. The data from the study were analysed thematically using a constant comparative method²⁸, and the main findings as they relate to tutor and student well-being are discussed below where participants' identities are protected via the use of pseudonyms.

Findings and Discussion

A concern: tutors' feedback values, roles and well-being

The main findings relating to tutors' feedback values and their changing feedback practices were two-fold: first, that professional tension existed arising from a conflict between tutors' feedback values and their feedback practice. This was experienced most acutely by tutors when delivering feedback to larger numbers of students, and tutors expressed growing concerns around viewing their feedback primarily through a work, rather than a teaching lens. Second, the data suggested that tutors were also concerned about a growing de-professionalisation of their feedback practice resulting from what they saw as marketized approaches to learning and a commodification of feedback.

1. Tutor feedback roles and values

All tutors in the sample independently described professional, sometimes vocational tensions between their espoused feedback values and their espoused feedback practice.

²⁷ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba in Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley and Peter Foster *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts* (1st ed., London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 2002)

²⁸ Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed., London: Sage 1994)

These tensions were thought to flow predominantly from external shifts leading to greater student numbers, and they felt that the resultant workload intensification was the most significant negative contextual influence on their feedback practice:

It's the numbers, because that stops you doing feedback how you really want to do [it]...I don't know students' names, and I can't remember when that changed. (Tutor Tess)

When asked about their feedback *values*, the tutors described feedback values centred around student support and development, often using pastoral language and an occasionally nostalgic narrative around changed feedback practice. By contrast, when asked to describe their feedback *practice*, they did so almost exclusively in terms of work, and felt that the role of feedback as work had become more dominant, describing a change towards a more process-oriented experience where performativity was becoming a professional issue for them:

I'd like to be the teacher, but I'm somewhere between teacher and worker, because...I know what I'd like to do, but I can't do it that way. (Tutor Tess)

There are fewer studies into tutors' than students' feedback experiences²⁹, and fewer still into tutors' reflections around their feedback roles and practices.³⁰ Research into the changing nature of tutors' feedback roles and values also represents a limited area of discourse which has been developed, in part, by the work of Tuck³¹. Tuck examines feedback-giving as a social practice and asserts that tutors experience conflicting

²⁹ Evans (n 17)

³⁰ Nicola Reimann and Ian Sadler, "Personal understanding of assessment and the link to assessment practice: the perspectives of higher education staff" (2016) 42 *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 724.

³¹ Jackie Tuck, 2012. "Feedback-giving as social practice: teachers' perspectives on feedback as institutional requirement, work and dialogue" (2012) 17 *Teaching in Higher Education* 209.

feedback roles: as *markers*, fulfilling institutional audit requirements; as *workers*, fulfilling contractual obligations; and as *teachers*, seeking to engage in feedback dialogue. Tuck's view that the different feedback roles produce tutor dissonance was strongly borne out by the data from the study. When acting or attempting to act as "teachers", Tuck's description of tutors experiencing "disengagement and weariness"³² certainly found resonance, but this was thought by the tutors in the study to be caused mostly by increased student numbers, rather than the internal institutional quality assurance constraints identified by Tuck's participants, and was more reminiscent of Nicol when he states:

most teachers feel overwhelmed by the workload associated with providing...feedback when numbers are large.³³

There was also strong data in the current study that the tutors were beginning to view their feedback through a "work" than a "teaching" lens. As Tuck notes, analysis of feedback-giving as *work* has been "relatively absent from previous studies,"³⁴ but the data here supports her view that feedback practice is in danger of becoming a work-dominated aspect of academic practice. The evidence of a professional, and in some cases vocational tension where tutors feel that their feedback practice and values chafe, supports the view of Ismottonen³⁵ that tutors may find themselves: "'squeezed between' two stakeholders: students and administration,"³⁶ and that the tensions felt are largely tacit. That these

³² Ibid 217

³³ Nicol (n 22) 511

³⁴ Tuck (n 26) 215

³⁵ Ville Ismottonen, "For the oppressed teacher: stay real!" (2018) 23 *Teaching in Higher Education* 869

³⁶ Ibid 870

tensions were strongly associated with growing student numbers chimes with the work of Kenny³⁷ who asserts that sector changes have led not only to increased workloads, but also to increased stress for academic tutors, and Jones et al³⁸ describe this as a threat to tutors' well-being.

2. *Marketisation and de-professionalisation*

The tutors in the study expressed strong feelings around the impacts of a perceived marketisation of higher education which they felt made their feedback practice more high-risk. This manifested for them in two ways: first, they felt that tuition fees encouraged a growing consumerist student mentality resulting in grade fixation and a commodification of assessment feedback; and second, they felt that this had led to a challenge and complaint culture around feedback as well as assessment grades. Both these shifts were described by them as having the potential to threaten their professional status. They felt that students were increasingly viewing themselves as consumers of a feedback product, rather than engaging in a feedback process:

[but]we're not talking about a product, we're talking about people and people's education, which to me isn't a product, so they don't...sit very easily for me.
(Tutor Cherie)

The discourse around the interface between higher education and the marketplace continues to grow apace, and since the introduction of tuition fees in 2004 there has been an understandable concern within the academy around standards and the possible effects of a consumer mentality on learning and teaching. The view of Collini that: "the paradox

³⁷ Kenny (n 18)

³⁸ Emma Jones and others, "Student well-being and assessment in higher education: a balancing act" [2020] *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 438

of real learning is that you don't get what you 'want' and you certainly can't buy it"³⁹ has at its heart a concern around student ends-focussed expectations, and the chafing which can occur when seeking to apply market ideology to the often unpredictable landscape of learning and personal development, where criticism and perseverance may be what is needed, but not wanted. Cheng⁴⁰ asserts that while an interest in the quality of education is both legitimate and desirable, the application of free market logic to the student-tutor relationship increases attention on grades, prioritises financial over educational outcomes, and can switch focus from student effort in learning to a more passive reception of educational merchandise. This, Cheng claims, ignores both the emancipatory power of higher education and what he terms: "the people-building purpose of higher education."⁴¹ This re-focusing to product rather than process becomes, in the context of assessment feedback, a potential issue of commodification.

Nixon et al⁴² take the discussion around commodification a stage further and, while welcoming accountability structures which improve the quality of educational offering, suggest that a novel shift is occurring where the student in a marketized context can operate not just as a passive consumer of education, but as an active *customer*. This, they suggest, lies at the root of a new and disturbing pattern of unwarranted student complaint which finds echoes in the current study where tutors described changing academic behaviour to accommodate what they saw as a more litigious climate. This concern may

³⁹ Stefan Collini, 2011. "From Robbins to McKinsey" (2011) 33 London Review of Books 3.

⁴⁰Ming Cheng, "Reclaiming quality in higher education: A human factor approach." (2017) 23 Quality in Higher Education 153.

⁴¹ Ibid 156

⁴² Nixon (n 19)

be justified in light of reports from The Office of the Independent Adjudicators for Higher Education of an increase of over 70% in the number of student complaints between 2016 and 2020. In the context of legal education, the number of complaints in 2020 was ranked fifth highest by discipline.⁴³ Additional market mechanisms such as student charters, the institutionalisation of complaints procedures and the application of consumer law to the provision of higher education may all serve to heighten consumerist approaches on the part of students. The compelling evidence of concern among the tutor sample that students were engaging in consumerist approaches to learning in general, and to feedback in particular, appears to support the work of both Nixon and Cheng.

A response: screencasting feedback for well-being

The tutors in the study gave screencast feedback to their students and the data from both tutors and students were analysed for practical, relational and affective potentials for tutor and student well-being.

1. Practical dimensions

While acknowledging the “halo effect” of using a novel technology⁴⁴, the literature concludes that audio-visual feedback is, on the whole, welcomed by students,⁴⁵ who

⁴³ Office of the Independent Adjudicator, Annual Report 2020, <www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2566/oia-annual-report-2020> accessed 12 May 2021

⁴⁴Tom Lunt and John Curran, ““Are you listening please?” The advantages of electronic audio feedback compared to written feedback” (2010) 35 Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education 759.

⁴⁵Elizaveta Sopina and Rob McNeill, 2015. “Investigating the relationship between quality, format and delivery of feedback for written assignments in higher education” (2015) 40 Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education 666.

report generally higher levels of satisfaction with it compared to written feedback.⁴⁶ This was largely borne out by the students in the study. While tutors' views on audio-visual feedback are currently under-researched⁴⁷, many studies also show that tutors generally support its use⁴⁸ and, again, the tutors in the study mainly echoed this, some even reporting a renewed enthusiasm for their feedback practice, echoing tutors in the study of Henderson and Phillips.⁴⁹

There was agreement among the tutor sample that producing written feedback could be time-consuming and that providing feedback via audio-visual means had the potential to lighten feedback workloads. However, there was some difference of view around how they worked with the screencast technology and whether it had in fact saved them time. All the tutors felt that their reliance on detailed written notes to support their audio-visual performance reduced significantly as they progressed, though to differing degrees, and these variations in approach were similar to the practices of the tutors in the study of Vincelette and Bostic.⁵⁰ The tutors also felt that since they were not trained typists, there was the potential for them to save time by giving their feedback in the audio form. However, they expressed concern that they were not able to use generic or "cut and paste"

⁴⁶Susanne Voelkel and Luciane Mello, "Audio Feedback – Better Feedback?" (2014) 22 *Bioscience Education* 16.

⁴⁷Trevor Kettle, "Using audio podcasts to provide student feedback: exploring the issues" (2007) 1 *Working Papers in Health Sciences* 1

⁴⁸Paige Mahoney, Susie Macfarlane and Rola Ajjawi, 2019 "A qualitative synthesis of video feedback in higher education" (2019) 24 *Teaching in Higher Education* 157.

⁴⁹Michael Henderson and Michael Phillips, "Video-based feedback on student assessment: scarily personal" (2015) 31 *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 51.

⁵⁰Elizabeth Jackson Vincelette and Timothy Bostic, "Show and tell: Student and instructor perceptions of screencast assessment." (2013) 18 *Assessing Writing* 18 257.

feedback when working with audio-visual technology as they might when giving written feedback, reporting that they accordingly spent time making the same points many times over to different students. Acknowledging technological challenges,⁵¹ three of the four tutors concluded that they saved time overall compared to their written feedback practice, and while this issue remains hotly contested in the literature, the majority view of the tutors aligns with most of the previous research,⁵² while challenging the work of others including Borup et al⁵³. Significantly, all the tutors reported giving more feedback, more feedforward and more explanatory comment, and three out of four maintained that they did so while still saving time overall.

All the tutors agreed that physical *workspace* had become a challenge in their feedback practice since they all worked in shared offices, some with over a dozen academic colleagues, and accordingly recording audio-visual feedback at work was, they felt, often impractical. They cited difficulties in achieving the seclusion they felt they needed for audio-visual feedback in the office, with some also experiencing difficulties recording their feedback at home. This is in line with other work where tutors report needing to: “set aside space and time”⁵⁴ to allow for the performance elements of the medium. These

⁵¹Alan Cann, “Engaging students with audio feedback” (2015) 22 *Bioscience Education* 31.

⁵²John West and Will Turner, 2016. “Enhancing the assessment experience: Improving student perceptions, engagement and understanding using online video feedback” (2016) 53 *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 400.

⁵³Jered Borup, Richard. E. West and Rebecca Thomas, “The impact of text versus video communication on instructor feedback in blended courses.” (2015) 63 *Educational Technology Research and Development* 161.

⁵⁴ *Ibid* 268

issues around workspace represented an emerging issue and continued to be reported while tutors worked at home during the lockdown periods of the pandemic.

The students in the study welcomed the flexibility of audio-visual feedback and some reported that using the technology to access their feedback found some synergy with their private lives, with student Megan reporting accessing her audio feedback on her mobile telephone while cooking her tea. Some have termed this the “Martini effect”⁵⁵ and these findings are in sharp contrast to the recent work of Kay and Bahula who describe negative accessibility potentials of the medium.⁵⁶ In terms of potential reverberation on student feedback use, audio-visual delivery seems to promise potential for students to engage more fully with their feedback by offering increased flexibility.⁵⁷

Difficulties with navigating through audio-visual feedback and later returning to review it were, however, noted by both tutors and students as posing challenges to engagement with the medium. Many students preferred written feedback in this regard, which they felt was easier and quicker for them to navigate, and this aligns with the majority of the studies in the area.⁵⁸ There was some suggestion in the study that students were forced to

⁵⁵ Sally Quinn and Julian Oldmeadow, “The Martini effect and social networking sites: early adolescents, mobile social networking and connectedness to friend.” (2013) 12 *Mobile Media and Communication* 437

⁵⁶Robin Kay and Timothy Bahula, 2020. “A systematic review of the literature on video feedback used in higher education” 12th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies DOI 10.21125/edulearn.2020.0606.

⁵⁷Michael Carmichael, Abigail-Kate Reid and Jeffrey D. Karpicke, *Assessing the Impact of Educational Video on Student Engagement, Critical Thinking and Learning: The Current State of Play* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing Inc. 2018)

⁵⁸For example, Edd Pitt and Lin Norton, 2017. “‘Now that’s the feedback I want!’ Students’ reactions to feedback on graded work and what they do with it” (2017) 42 *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 499.

engage differently with audio-visual feedback, and that the multi-modal nature of audio-visual feedback can encourage deeper feedback engagement due to the cognitive demands it places on students to work with it, and this issue of qualitatively different feedback engagement is a theme in the work of both Orlando⁵⁹ and Dixon.⁶⁰ The students in the study, however, did not welcome spending more time and cognitive effort engaging with their feedback, and intimated that the additional effort required in this regard could negatively affect their feedback engagement.

2. *Relational dimensions: presence, connection and care*

Mahoney et al (2019) assert that the potential of audio-visual feedback lies principally in its relational possibilities and may serve to strengthen tutor-student relationships. In terms of student well-being, the relational dimensions of receiving audio-visual feedback loomed large in the study and two themes with the potential to impact on well-being arose for consideration: perceptions of presence and connection; and perceptions of care.

In terms of perceptions of presence, some students reported feeling that their audio-visual feedback was akin to “meeting” with their tutor. This aligns with the works of Grigoryan⁶¹ and Kay and Bahula⁶² who assert that audio-visual feedback has the potential to produce perceptions of social presence via an illusion of transparency or non-mediation,

⁵⁹John Orlando, “A comparison of text, voice and screencasting feedback to on-line students” (2016) 30 *American Journal of Distance Education* 156.

⁶⁰ Dixon (n 16)

⁶¹Anna Grigoryan, “Audio-visual commentary as a way to reduce transactional distance and increasing teaching presence in online writing instruction: student perceptions and preferences” (2017) 3 *Journal of Response to Writing* 83.

⁶² Kay and Bahula (n 51)

supporting the earlier theoretical work of Lehman.⁶³ There was strong data from both tutors and students that these perceptions of presence led on, for some, to perceptions of connection between them. Students talked in terms of “walls” or “barriers” being removed by the audio-visual medium: “I feel that it removes the wall that tends to be built up through the words...used in feedback when it is written.” (Student Alia) Appreciation of these feelings of connection was noted with particular strength in the reflective journals of the six students in the sample who spoke English as a second language (hereinafter referred to as “international” students), and also by student Jenny who disclosed a life-long mental health condition. The tutors delivering the audio feedback also welcomed what they saw as the enhanced relational possibilities of audio delivery:

I felt more connected with the student doing it that way...because I'd call them by their name... it gave me a bit more of a connection with them...It's a human thing, isn't it?" (Tutor Sarah)

These perceptions of presence and connection were taken further by some of the students who described enhanced feelings of *care* on the part of their tutors. For some, this took the form of caring more about their work and their academic progress supporting the work of Knauf,⁶⁴ while others felt that their tutors cared more about them and reported feeling more supported by their tutors, echoing Dixon's study.⁶⁵ Additional significance of these

⁶³Rosemary Lehman, “The role of emotion in creating instructor and learner presence in the distance learning experience” (2006) 2 *Journal of Cognitive and Affective Learning* 2.

⁶⁴Helen Knauf, “Reading, listening and feeling: audio feedback as a component of an inclusive learning culture at universities” (2015) 41 *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 442

⁶⁵ Stephen Dixon, “The pastoral potential of audio feedback: a review of the literature” (2015) 33 *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development* 96.

perceptions of connection and care may lie in their potential to positively affect feedback engagement, and this seemed again to be particularly the case for the international students in the study and for student Jenny, who asserted that her audio-visual feedback helped relieve the anxiety associated with her mental health condition.

Perceptions of presence, connection and care have led some to laud the audio-visual medium for its rapport-building or pastoral potentialities,⁶⁶ and this was borne out by tutor Cherie's data in particular when she reported an increased number of students to whom she had given audio-visual feedback later seeking her out for pastoral as well as further academic advice. She wondered whether this could be due to a reduction in social distance associated with the medium. If so, this would align with the views of both Brearley and Cullen⁶⁷ and Mahoney, Macfarlane and Ajjawi⁶⁸ and may signal interesting shifts in the tutor/student feedback relationship. Knauf⁶⁹ asserts that the use of audio-visual feedback can contribute not only to feelings of connection and care, but also more generally to the development of an inclusive university. The data of the international students in the study suggests that the medium offers particularly significant potentialities for such students by encouraging their access to and use of feedback. Some of these students described feeling less anxious in relation to their audio-visual feedback, and this builds on the recent work

⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁷ Francis Q. Brearley and W. Rod Cullen, 2012. "Providing students with audio feedback" (2012) 20 *Bioscience Education* 22.

⁶⁸ Mahoney, Macfarlane and Ajjawi (n 44)

⁶⁹ Knauf (n 59)

of Olave-Encina et al,⁷⁰ who suggest that such students' relationship with assessment feedback is largely negative, and that building trust and connection is crucial. Student Jenny's feedback experience suggests that there might be similar affordances for students facing mental health challenges, and develops the recent work of Jones et al⁷¹ who examine assessment and well-being and assert that feedback is becoming a pastoral as well as a pedagogic practice.

3. *Affective dimensions*

Molloy et al assert that: "feedback is an inherently emotional business [that] can have a lasting impact beyond its intent,"⁷² and many of the student participants talked with some passion about how they responded to feedback (both generally and in relation to the feedback in the study) at both cognitive and affective levels, asserting that their emotional response could eclipse their rational response at least in the short term, and this finds echoes in the literature.⁷³ The interaction between emotions and assessment feedback is a relatively under-researched area, despite the existence of an already established literature around emotions and learning more generally.⁷⁴ Emotional reactions to

⁷⁰Karen Olave-Encina, Karen Moni and Peter Renshaw, 2020. "Exploring the emotions of international students about their feedback experiences" [2020] Higher Education Research & Development

⁷¹ Jones and others (n 33)

⁷² Elizabeth Molloy, Francesc Borrell-Carrion and Ron Epstein, 2013. "The impact of emotions in feedback" in Boud, D and Molloy, E. (eds.) *Feedback in Higher and Professional Education: Understanding it and Doing it Well* (Routledge 2013) 51

⁷³Tony Dowden and others, 2013. "Students' perceptions of written feedback in teacher education: ideally feedback is a continuing two-way communication that enhances progress" (2013) 38 *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 349

⁷⁴Anna D. Rowe, Juile Fitness and Leigh N. Wood, "The Role and Functionality of Emotions in Feedback at University: A Qualitative Study" (2014) 41 *The Australian Association for Research in Education* 283.

feedback can be significant since they can alter a student's perception and acceptance of her feedback, as well as changing her engagement with it. The students in the study acknowledged that their reactions to feedback could be variable, but, significantly, felt that the medium of feedback delivery could affect how they viewed their feedback, lending weight to the recent work of Winstone and Carless who advocate⁷⁵ that the medium of feedback delivery can strongly affect the extent to which students both accept and engage with their feedback.

The students were asked how they normally felt when receiving written feedback and while acknowledging that different students may have different affective responses to feedback, and deal with those responses in different ways, there was strong evidence from the students that they often experienced negative feelings on written feedback receipt. This echoes the work of Pitt and Norton who assert that negative feelings are often associated with feedback and can produce what they term "emotional backwash."⁷⁶ The tutors, while acknowledging that feedback receipt was an affective as well as a cognitive experience, thought that students' negative responses to feedback could be attributable not only to the judgements involved in the feedback process, but also to the higher-risk landscape of higher education involving tuition fees and, for many law students, the prospect of entering a progressively competitive job market. They felt that this could produce feelings of vulnerability and affect the emotions students attached to their grades and feedback. In addition, some of the tutors felt that students could suffer from what they saw as a lack of emotional resilience and advocated the need for students to build

⁷⁵ Winstone and Carless (n 10)

⁷⁶ Pitt and Norton (n 53)

what has been termed “academic buoyancy.”⁷⁷ Shafi et al⁷⁸ argue that an active process of feedback dialogue which includes socio-emotional support could be key in developing this academic buoyancy and mediating emotional response.

The students in the study were also asked to describe the feelings which they had associated with their screencast feedback. They reported two principal responses: feeling “encouraged” and feeling “motivated.” They asserted that their audio-visual feedback was, in the main, less judgemental than they were used to and spoke more to the positives than the negatives of their work, which some of them found encouraging and which they associated with higher levels of support from their tutors. The significance of feeling encouraged for some students was that they felt this increased their motivation to engage with their feedback or with their studies more generally. The largely positive emotions associated with audio-visual feedback lend strength to the work of those such as Winstone⁷⁹ who assert that feedback is not only something which students understand and do, but is also something which they *feel*, and challenges the recent work of Kay and Bahula⁸⁰ who conclude that evocation of negative emotions is a danger of the audio-visual medium. The data from the students around the effect their emotions could have on their feedback engagement also aligns with the work of Shafi et al⁸¹, who argue that emotional

⁷⁷ Adeela Ahmed Shafi and others, “The role of assessment feedback in developing academic buoyancy” (2018) 43 *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 415

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ Naomi Winstone and others, “‘It’d be useful, but I wouldn’t use it’: barriers to university students’ feedback seeking and recipience” (2017) 42 *Studies in Higher Education* 2026.

⁸⁰ Kay and Bahula (n 51)

⁸¹ Shafi and others (n72)

response can be used to positively affect feedback engagement and can move students towards what Winstone terms “pro-active feedback recipience.”⁸²

Responses to feedback, whether positive or negative, may of course be highly nuanced, with affective responses mediated by a number of factors, including a student’s disposition, her prior feedback experiences and, one might add, her state of digestion, resulting in a considerable variety of feedback response.⁸³ One area which attracted more discussion than any other in relation to feedback and feelings related to students’ receipt of feedback criticism. The tutors were alive to the potential affective consequences of their feedback and some felt that audio-visual feedback could allow them to “soften the blows” of criticism: “It made it easier to deliver feedback that might have seemed “colder” in writing....to tell somebody...in a way that was more constructive.” (Tutor Cherie) Once again, student Jenny found receiving feedback via audio to be particularly helpful to her, and she shared that she normally did not access her written feedback at all, since it triggered anxiety which was associated with her otherwise well-controlled mental health condition. She found the socio-affective affordances of the medium helped her to access and accept critique: “Receiving the feedback felt a lot more personal, making the improvements needed seem less like failing.” (Student Jenny) Other students, however, felt that audio may not be well-suited to the delivery of a lot of feedback criticism: “Imagine...eight minutes of ‘this is wrong, this is wrong,’ (laughter) probably wouldn’t be very motivating.” (Student Marea)

⁸² Winstone and others (n 74)

⁸³Mantz Yorke, 2003. “Formative assessment in higher education: moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice” (2003) 45 Higher Education 477.

Conclusions

The findings from this study are drawn from a small-scale study from which one cannot generalise, save at a theoretical level. They also appear against a particular contextual backdrop involving an on-going neo-liberalisation of the higher education sector which continues to exert pressure in various forms upon universities and their employees. It has been noted that tutors' feedback practices and experiences represent an under-researched area. The data suggest that there is evidence of professional dissonance resulting from fractured feedback relationships and practices linked to higher education contextual change, and that professional feedback tensions exist, in part, due to obstructed feedback values and practices. This finds particular support in the work of Tuck⁸⁴, most especially in relation to a shift to a work, rather than a teaching feedback lens. The study also builds on Tuck's work where tutors expressed strong concerns around feedback commodification, student feedback complaint and personal reputational risk. The finding in relation to pressures around feedback workspace seems to represent an emerging issue. Screencasting feedback might be a useful, partial response to these feedback practice strains. The findings around the intervention align in large part with existing literature to support the proposition that feedback generally can often produce negative emotional "backwash," and that screencast technology offers particular affordances in relation to its socio-affective dimensions. Principally, the study advocates the advantages of flexibility, tutor time saving, and enhanced perceptions of social presence, connection and caring. The study also aligns with existing work in relation to the limitations of the medium in terms of navigation and reviewability. The findings challenge prior work which suggest

⁸⁴ Tuck (n 26)

that negative emotions are often associated with the receipt of audio-visual feedback; and that tutors in higher education are insufficiently aware of the emotional dimensions of their feedback practice. The findings are significant in that first, the relational affordances of the medium were of particular importance to the international students in the sample, as well as to a student facing mental health challenges, and positive impacts on these students' feedback engagement were reported by them. Second, audio-visual feedback may stimulate subsequent dialogue of a pastoral as well as pedagogic nature, which may be of significance in building inclusivity and student well-being.

The existing research on audio-visual feedback suffers from a number of limitations, but most significantly Mahoney et al⁸⁵ assert that the current state of play of the research into audio-visual feedback discloses little evidence of any *impact* on students' subsequent academic performance, with few studies reporting on whether the relational or other affordances of the medium translate into student action or any measurable learning gains. They conclude that current findings on the impact of the medium are limited and that merely viewing a practice through a socio-constructivist lens does not avoid the fact that many studies have: "merely substituted one medium (written) for another (video)."⁸⁶ Their central concern remains that audio-visual feedback, while perhaps creating an illusion of dialogue, may still offer limited avenues for students to respond and to develop agency.

Feedback is, however, not just about its impacts, but also about the subjective experiences of those giving and receiving it. While it may be fair to assert that tutors should avoid

⁸⁵ Mahoney, MacFarlane and Ajjawi (n 43)

⁸⁶Ibid 170

unnecessarily wounding their students in providing feedback, it may equally be contended that students cannot and should not seek to escape the discomfort or emotional pain associated with challenge or failure, which is often a valuable part of the human learning experience.⁸⁷ Beard et al⁸⁸ argue, however, that we need richer conceptions of students as affective as well as cognitive beings, and a clearer theorisation of the role of emotion in educational encounters which can be achieved, they assert, without a collapse into therapeutic discourse.

As incentive to reflect further on our own feedback practice, one might consider whether it is true that: “individuals at any point on their path from novice to expert are able to recount a ‘painful feedback anecdote.’”⁸⁹ One challenge tutors face is that feedback is largely a sub-silencio practice⁹⁰ open to quick fixes or “nostrums,” often based neither on sound theory nor evaluated practice.⁹¹ Audio-visual feedback must therefore be seen as only one part of a more holistic, person-centred response to student learning and, as our feedback practice develops, it is a wise person who knows what to embrace and what to leave behind.⁹² To reclaim feedback well-being for both tutors and students involves

⁸⁷Forsythe and Johnson, “Thanks, but no thanks for the feedback” (2017) 42 *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 850.

⁸⁸Colin Beard, Sue Clegg and Karen Smith, 2007. “Acknowledging the Affective in Higher Education” (2007) 33 *British Educational Research Journal* 235

⁸⁹ Molloy and others (n 67) 17

⁹⁰ David Boud, “Reframing Assessment as If Learning was Important” in *Rethinking Assessment for Higher Education: Learning for the Longer Term*, David Boud and Nancy Falchikov (eds) (Routledge 2007).

⁹¹ Boud and Molloy (n3)

⁹²Antonio Martinez-Arboleda, “Student feedback through desktop capture: creative screencasting” Seventh International Conference on E-Learning and E-Technologies in Education (ICEEE September 2018) Lodz, Poland.

institutional commitment of time and resource, and there can be no clearer driver for this than the consistently low National Student Survey results for assessment and feedback, which for most universities persist year on year.⁹³ Audio-visual technologies may have something to offer in the re-building of emotionally aware pedagogic relationships fractured by contextual change, and its reported affordances, both pedagogic and socio-affective, suggest that it may be worth considering as part of our feedback practice. In the particular context of law tutoring, Jones notes: “emotions have a fundamental role to play in student learning...in the emotional well-being of law students and in relation to both the work and well-being of legal academics.”⁹⁴

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⁹³Alistair Blair and others, “What feedback do students want?” (2013) 33 *Learning and Teaching in Politics and International Studies*.

⁹⁴Emma Jones, 2017. “Transforming legal education through emotions” (2017) 38 *Legal Studies* 465.