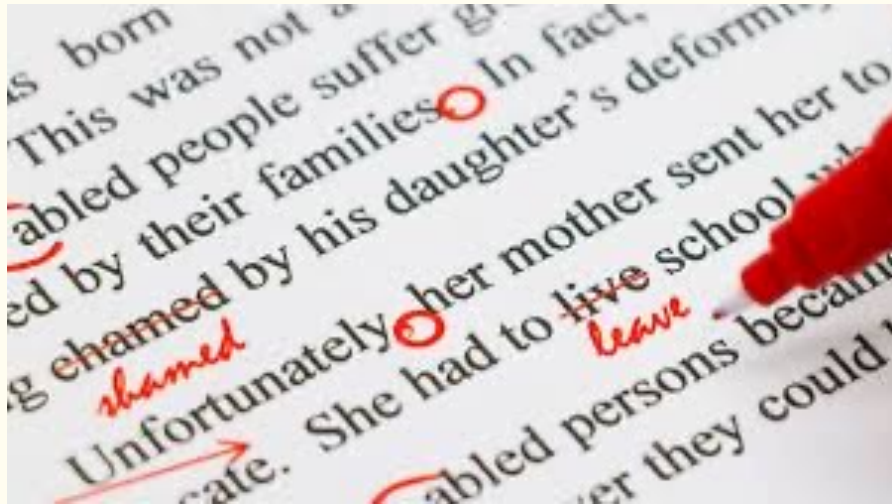# Are we literate?

Exploring how chemistry staff views on feedback influence their UG course design

Supervisor: Dr Monika Pazio

Dr Charlotte Sutherell
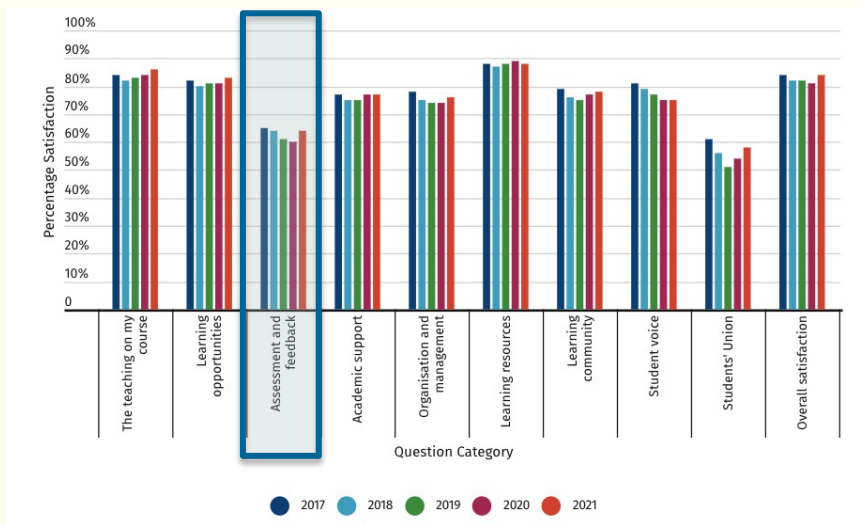Senior Teaching Fellow
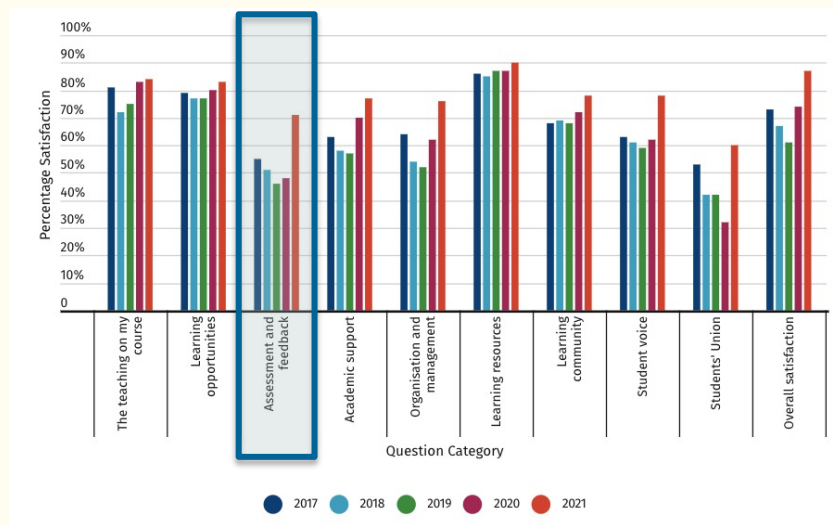Department of Chemistry

Feedback – a personal frustration

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Feedback – and a student frustration

NSS - College overall
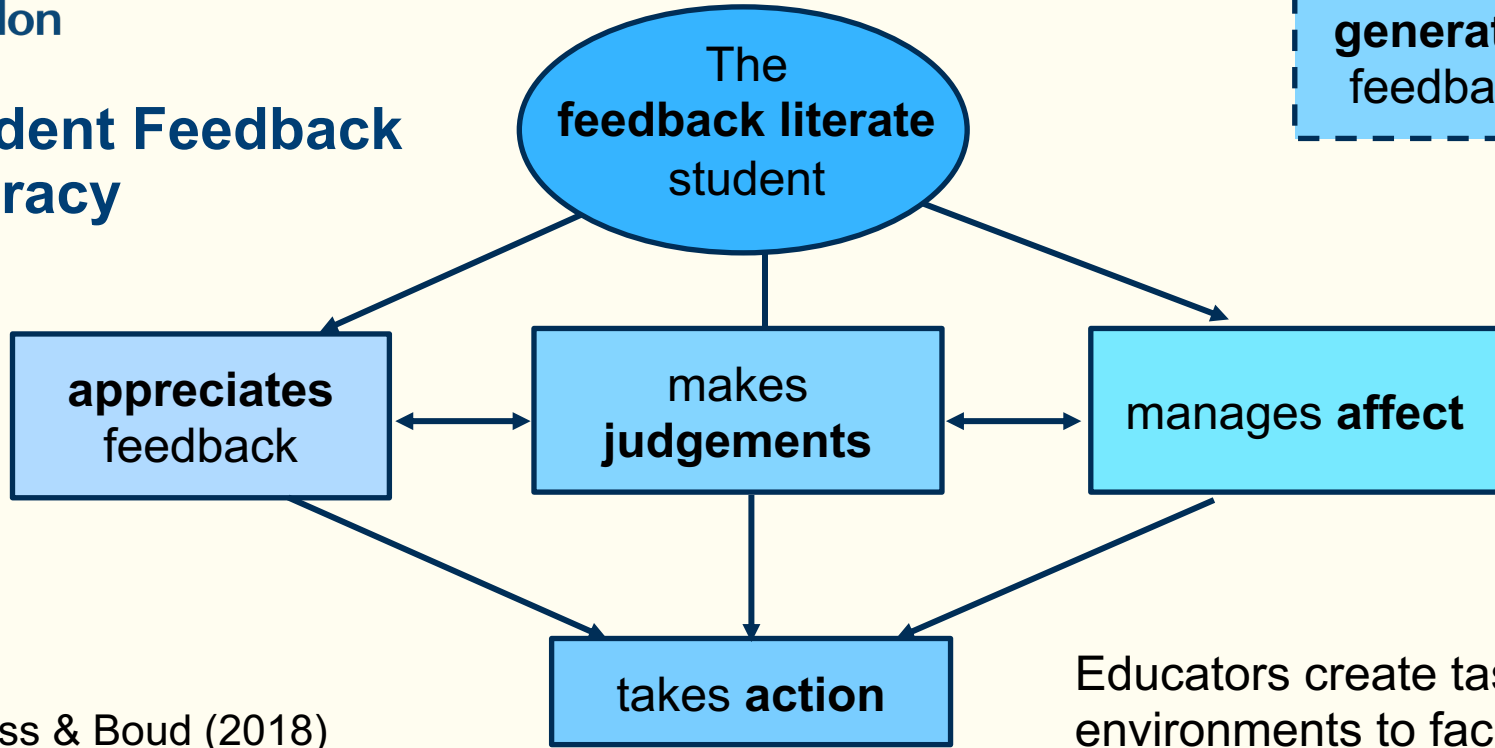
NSS – Chemistry

Feedback as product or process?

'information communicated to the learner…' (Shute, 2008, p.154)

'**A dialogic process** in which **learners** make sense of information from varied sources and use it to enhance the quality of their work or learning strategies' (Carless, 2015, p.192)

Process views of feedback require **active student participation**

Teacher Feedback Literacy

'the **knowledge, expertise and dispositions** to design feedback processes in ways which **enable student uptake** of feedback and **seed the development** of student feedback literacy'

(Carless & Winstone, 2020: p. 4)

Designs environments to facilitate effective feedback

Pays attention to the relational and communicative aspects of feedback

Technology

Manages feedback practicalities pragmatically
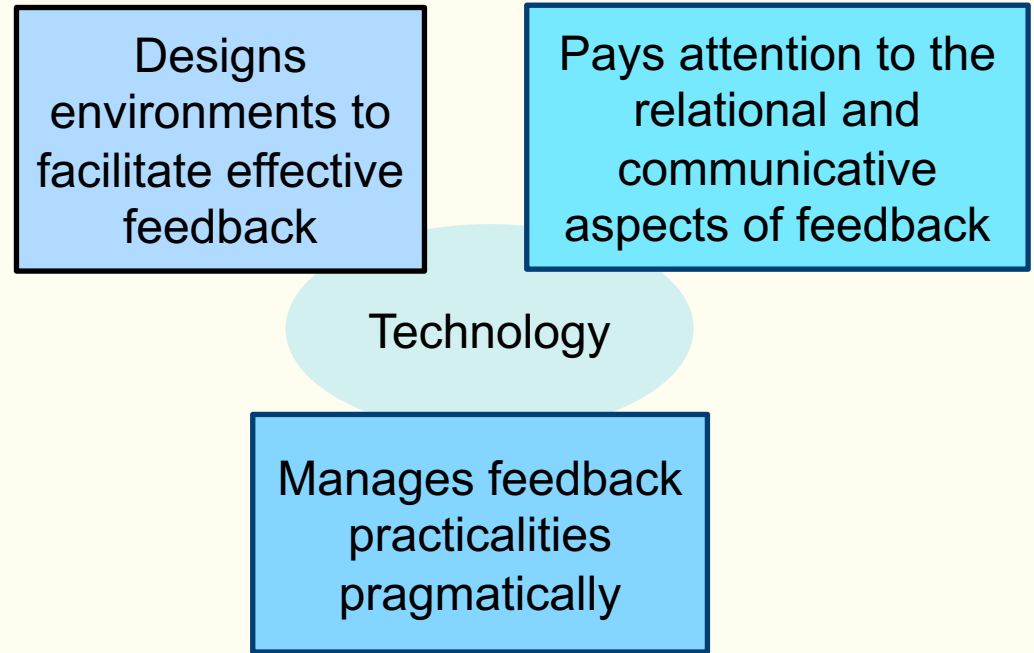
Expansion to include empirical characteristics by Dawson and Boud (2021)

Project Design

Research Paradigm – social constructivism, interpretivist paradigm

Methods - semi-structured online interviews

Q1-4 general conceptions of feedback

Q5-7 consideration specific design (ideal vs reality)

Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis

Inductive generation of codes

Participant recruitment

Sign up in response to e-mail from CS

–   active involvement in UG course design

–   > 1 year experience in Department

11 participants – background information not included

Feedback definitions product focused

"about getting **comments and information**, someone else's viewpoint about what you're doing that allows you to **improve in the future**"

- information-centric definitions
- effectiveness frequently linked to quality of comments

- multiple purposes:
  - future improvement
  - motivation
  - grade explanation

… but often more complex

"I think inherently that this feedback is **conversational**, so even if it's done in writing and in a asynchronous manner"

"where the real training happens… **empowerment for students to take their work forward** themselves, independently"

"It's also important to have **regular** feedback because you need these kind of progress checks to see if things are changing… it's sort of **a reflection, take some actions, see what effect it's had** - essentially like doing an experiment"

Is it feedback…

"Even the more casual conversations one might have, when doing rounds in the lab... I think all of that is feedback whether students view it as that or not... **essentially any interaction with the student often can be framed as feedback**."

Is it feedback… or is it teaching?

Informal interactions, between staff or students, highly valued by staff

"they struggle to recognize that some of the things we do are feedback... In tutorials they will probably just think its problem solving or discussion"

Challenge of perception differences recognized… but no solutions

A gap in the feedback literature?

Overestimation of feedback opportunities?

Heron *et al*. 2021 – feedback talk

Our ideal feedback: personalized, verbal 1-2-1 discussion

"One of the most useful things you could do actually is **talk to them individually** about their assignment... I could imagine that having a bit more impact actually is if you sat them down individually and said, '**right, what did you think of this'**."

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- immediate and timely
- reassurance
- inherent dialogue
- greater nuance
- misunderstanding of text
- understand student's problem

A chemistry view? A scientific attitude?

Imperial College London

Our ideal feedback: personalized, verbal 1-2-1 discussion

"my impression is that the dialogue is generally more effective. I mean, essentially **because you have to listen, right**? You're talking to someone and you can't just skim over it or put in a drawer "

"unrecorded verbal feedback, it's in a sense **fleeting** and if you have a student who is emotionally upset… I think often some of **the value** in what's being said **can be lost altogether because there's no record** of it"

"Fear of exposure" increasing resistance to dialogue

The challenge with our ideal

By **dialogic feedback:**

'we mean much more than a conversation between two people... One-to-one teacher-student oral dialogues are extremely resource-heavy so we do not view them as a major element of new-paradigm practices, more an occasional option.'

(Winstone & Carless, 2020; p. 97)

Design beyond conversation

Strategic **curriculum design** and **collaboration** to enable cycles of feedback and consistency

"We very much operated in silos… I think there's now a good number of people who have a decent understanding of this longitudinal development and that's come from basically just putting people in the same space at the same time"

Dawson and Boud (2021)

Design for dialogue

Lecture courses mostly implicit, verbal, or unstructured feedback opportunities pre-assessment

Practical work and coursework

Linked formative and summative tasks

Drafting – an uncommon chemistry practice

"Some students, sadly, then don't take the formative assessment seriously 'cause they think 'actually **the marks don't count**, I can't be bothered'"

"**When students are very busy then the engagement with this feedback drops off** completely and you'll find people really just going through the motions"

Conclusions & Recommendations

Feedback as product perspectives predominant

Blurring of feedback and interactive teaching

Focus on verbal feedback may limit feedback opportunities or design ideas

-> consider feedback in design from outset

-> sharing of practice and design ideas

"I don't think I had a very clear, formulated idea about feedback"

"Most of where I've added in additional things that would give some feedback are where that's **good practice that I've heard that other people are doing**"

Imperial College London

And particularly to:

Participants

Dr Monika Pazio
Dr Iro Ntonia
Kate Ippolito

and all the MEd and EDU team

Imperial College London

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