

THE FEEDBACK CAFE

Improving assessment literacy and dialogue between staff and students



The Practice

The Feedback Cafe is part of a wider BILT funded project to improve assessment and feedback literacy amongst students and staff in the School of Biological Sciences.

The aim of the Cafe is to provide a regular opportunity for students to ask questions about assessment and feedback, gain advice on interpreting feedback and understand how to improve their academic performance.

The Cafe is run by a mix of academic staff, study skills advisors and student study skills advocates.

We run the Cafe as a stall in the Atrium of the Life Sciences Building and allow students to drop by, rather than needing to book an appointment. We advertise the Cafe through the weekly student newspaper and a reminder email each week the Cafe is running.

The Impact

It's been a slow start, but student numbers have been increasing each time we have run the Cafe and conversations with students that do attend have been productive and show how thoughtfully they are considering how to feed-forward.

Most of the time students come with a specific piece of feedback they would like to discuss, but others see the stall and drop by to ask a quick question about an upcoming assessment.

We have found that the students that currently attend are mostly students doing quite well (achieving high 2:1 grades) and would like advice on how to be producing work at a 1st class standard. These students who are generally doing well, get positive feedback (as expected) and so find it difficult to identify how to improve. The extra advice we were able to provide, using the marking criteria as a guide, seems to do the trick!

Next steps

In the future, we hope to provide more meaningful advice by looking at a student's portfolio of feedback that they have amassed throughout their degree.

As part of a School funded project we co-created with student partners the [Assessment & Feedback Portfolio](#) (AFP). The AFP is a collection of tools available to students in Blackboard, which contains clear information about assessments, resources to help them improve their academic skills, and a tool which allows them to consolidate their feedback themselves by aiding them to identify common skills they need to improve on.

We hope that students will bring the completed portfolio with them to the Feedback Cafe so we can help them holistically identify their main strengths and weaknesses and show them how feedback can be applied to a wide range of assessments.

3rd year Student feedback

"I felt like I had a better idea of what exactly to do better in my next report. I found it especially helpful that I was able to show my actual report and get very specific feedback on particular parts of my report and discuss how to push my marks even higher."

"I'm planning to attend the next session with the feedback from exam essays because I'm confident it'll help me figure out how to prepare for my upcoming exams"

Staff feedback

"As a unit director, it's a really great chance to field any feedback queries from students and to create opportunities for dialogue about feedback"

Please contact Dr Bex Pike (lecturer) or Dr Rose Murray (Senior Lecturer) in the School of Biological Sciences for more information about the Assessment and Feedback Portfolio (AFP) or the Feedback Cafe