

# Audio Feedback

**Dr Naznin Tabassum**  
**Senior Lecturer in Strategy and Leadership**  
**University of Derby**

**Keynote speech for Nano conference,  
Coventry University**



# Session Outline

- What is Feedback?
- Issues around feedback in higher education
- Why do we need Technology based feedback (audio feedback)?
- Implementation of audio feedback
- Suggestions – sharing best practice

What is feedback?

The understanding, relevance, importance, and effectiveness of feedback has been widely discussed in higher education. Numerous authors have defined feedback; however, I believe that the National Forum Insight (2017) comprehensively addresses all pertinent aspects by suggesting that **feedback** typically involves providing guidance on students' work, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses, and ideally includes **feedforward**, which offers actionable steps for improvement.

Carless and Boud (2018) expanded on this definition, describing feedback as a process through which learners interpret information from various sources and use it to enhance their work or learning strategies (p.1).

**Feedback plays a crucial role in student learning.**

Despite academics dedicating significant time to providing feedback, its effectiveness is frequently debated.

Students sometimes criticise feedback for not being fit for purpose (Price et al., 2010) or for being vague (Nicol, 2010). Additionally, educators often find the feedback process highly time-consuming and become frustrated when their feedback is ignored or inadequately addressed in subsequent student work (Wolstencroft and de Main, 2021).

Consequently, feedback should be strategically integrated into the module and assessment design (Winstone and Carless, 2020).

*Issues around  
feedback in higher  
education*

Why do we need technology-  
based feedback?

Most feedback in higher education is text-based, and the issues with this method have been well-documented (Kirwan et al., 2023). Wolstencroft and De Main (2021) discovered that students often skim over written comments, sometimes missing crucial points.

To mitigate these concerns, there has been increasing interest in using technology-based feedback methods.

Research by Kirwan et al. (2023) revealed that **audio feedback** is more comprehensive, offering a personal touch that students responded to positively. They found that audio feedback was more holistic and multi-dimensional, incorporating emotional and personal qualities that resonated well with students.

# Implementation of audio feedback

- Over the past five years, I have implemented audio feedback for various assessments at both [Coventry University](#) and the [University of Derby Business School](#), catering to undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- Compared to traditional written feedback, this alternative approach engaged more students. Additionally, academics involved found it less time-consuming and more effective.
- Over 250 undergraduate students and 100 postgraduate students received audio feedback.
- Students found the audio feedback exceptionally clear and easy to understand.

# Implementation of audio feedback – Issues encountered

- I noticed that some students were unfamiliar with audio feedback
- Students were unaware of how to access it.
- Moreover, stakeholders had different perspectives.

# Student feedback

One student mentioned that she initially worried about a lack of detail in audio feedback compared to written feedback but ultimately found the audio equally detailed.

Other students described the audio feedback as clear, very encouraging, helpful, and more effective than written feedback.

Another student suggested that audio feedback should be used more frequently in the future.

Notably, one student felt that listening to the audio feedback gave the impression that I was assessing her work and providing feedback in her presence.

# Suggestions – Sharing best practice

- Based on my experience, I recommend using only audio feedback for reflective assessments, provided a rubric is used for mark breakdown according to the marking criteria, and overall comments are delivered via audio feedback.
- For coursework (reports), it is beneficial to include in-text comments, use a rubric for mark breakdown, and provide overall comments through audio feedback. If a module has two coursework assignments, it is ideal to trial audio feedback on the first coursework, assess student reception and understanding, and then apply the same method to the second coursework.
- If there is only one coursework, it is best to trial the audio feedback on the initial attempt and use it for the referral attempt based on student feedback.

# References

- Carless, D. and Boud, D. (2018) The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), pp.1315-1325.
- Kirwan, A., Raftery, S. and Gormley, C. (2023) Sounds good to me: A qualitative study to explore the use of audio to potentiate the student feedback experience. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 47, pp.25-30.
- National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2017) Sectoral Understanding of Assessment and Feedback. figshare. Journal contribution. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.4786300.v>
- Nicol, D. (2010) From monologue to dialogue: improving written feedback processes in mass higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 501–517
- Price, M., Handley, K., Millar, J. and O'donovan, B. (2010) Feedback: all that effort, but what is the effect? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(3), pp.277-289.
- Wolstencroft, P. and De Main, L. (2021) 'Why didn't you tell me that before?' Engaging undergraduate students in feedback and feedforward within UK higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(3), pp.312-323.

# ***Any questions***

