

Comparing staff and student perceptions of assessment and feedback

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Plan for talk

1. Rationale
2. The Assessment Experience Questionnaire
3. Data collected
4. Results
5. Reflections

KEY MESSAGE: Is the feedback process broken?

1. Rationale

Previous work

Maclellan (2001): Staff much more positive than students about assessment supporting learning, feedback being useful, feedback prompting discussion

Carless (2006): Staff more positive than students about feedback being helpful, and being followed by action

Adcroft (2011): Staff more positive than students about the frequency of feedback and role of feedback in supporting reflection and self-development.

Why is it interesting to compare staff and student perceptions?

“differing viewpoints are represented as **barriers** that distort the potential for learning” (Carless 2006)

“**dissonance** will occur if different cultures have significantly different mythologies” (Adcroft 2011)

“for feedback to be effective there needs to be a **common understanding** by both staff and students of the purpose of feedback and how it should be used.” (Bevan et al 2008)

Why is it interesting to compare staff and student perceptions?

“there have been few economies of scale in assessment. Assessment costs usually increase in direct proportion to the number of students.” (Gibbs 2006)

“**Student and lecturer dissatisfaction with feedback is well reported.** From the student perspective, most complaints focus on the technicalities of feedback... and from the lecturer perspective, the issues revolve around students not making use of or acting on feedback; both perspectives lead to a feedback gap.” (Evans 2013)

“Assessment sometimes appears to be, at one and the same time, **enormously expensive, disliked by both students and teachers, and largely ineffective** in supporting learning.” (Gibbs and Simpson 2004)

Why is it interesting to compare staff and student perceptions?

“In a mass higher education system, where the task of feedback-giving to large numbers of students can be overwhelming, the **sense of being engaged in unproductive work** is particularly acute; teachers seem unsure that their efforts count.” (Tuck 2012)

2. The Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ)

What does the AEQ look like?

Quantity and quality of feedback

‘Whatever feedback I receive on my work comes too late to be useful’

Use of feedback

‘I pay careful attention to feedback on my work and try to understand what it is saying’

Quantity of effort

‘On this course it is necessary to work consistently hard to meet the assessment requirements’

Coverage of syllabus

‘The way the assessment works on this course you have to study every topic’

Clear goals and standards

‘It is always easy to know the standard of work expected’

Appropriate assessment

‘To do well on this course all you really need is a good memory’

Surface approach

‘Often I find I have to study things without having a chance to really understand them’

Deep approach

‘I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read’

Learning from the examination

‘I understand things better as a result of the exams’

Satisfaction with the quality of the course

‘Overall I am satisfied with the quality of this course’

Ideas behind the AEQ

- Programme focus
- Engagement with feedback
- Quality of feedback
- Deep learning
- Assessment motivating effort

10 conditions under which assessment supports learning

1. Sufficient assessed tasks are provided for students to capture sufficient study time
2. These tasks are engaged with by students, orienting them to allocate appropriate amounts of time and effort to the most important aspects of the course.
3. Tackling the assessed task engages students in productive learning activity of an appropriate kind
4. Sufficient feedback is provided, both often enough and in enough detail
5. The feedback focuses on students' performance, on their learning and on actions under the students' control, rather than on the students themselves and on their characteristics
6. The feedback is timely in that it is received by students while it still matters to them and in time for them to pay attention to further learning or receive further assistance
7. Feedback is appropriate to the purpose of the assignment and to its criteria for success
8. Feedback is appropriate, in relation to students' understanding of what they are supposed to be doing
9. Feedback is received and attended to
10. Feedback is acted upon by the student

(Gibbs and Simpson 2004)

Staff-facing AEQ

I receive hardly any feedback on my work

The staff seem more interested in testing what I have memorised than what I understand

The way the assessment works on this course you have to study every topic

Students receive hardly any feedback on their work

Assessments are more focused on testing what students have memorised than what they understand

The way the assessment works on this course students have to study every topic

3. Data collected

Programme	Student responses	Student response rate	Staff responses
STEM 1	121	65%	20
STEM 2	131	43%	14
STEM 3	286	52%	23
Total	538	52%	57

4. Results

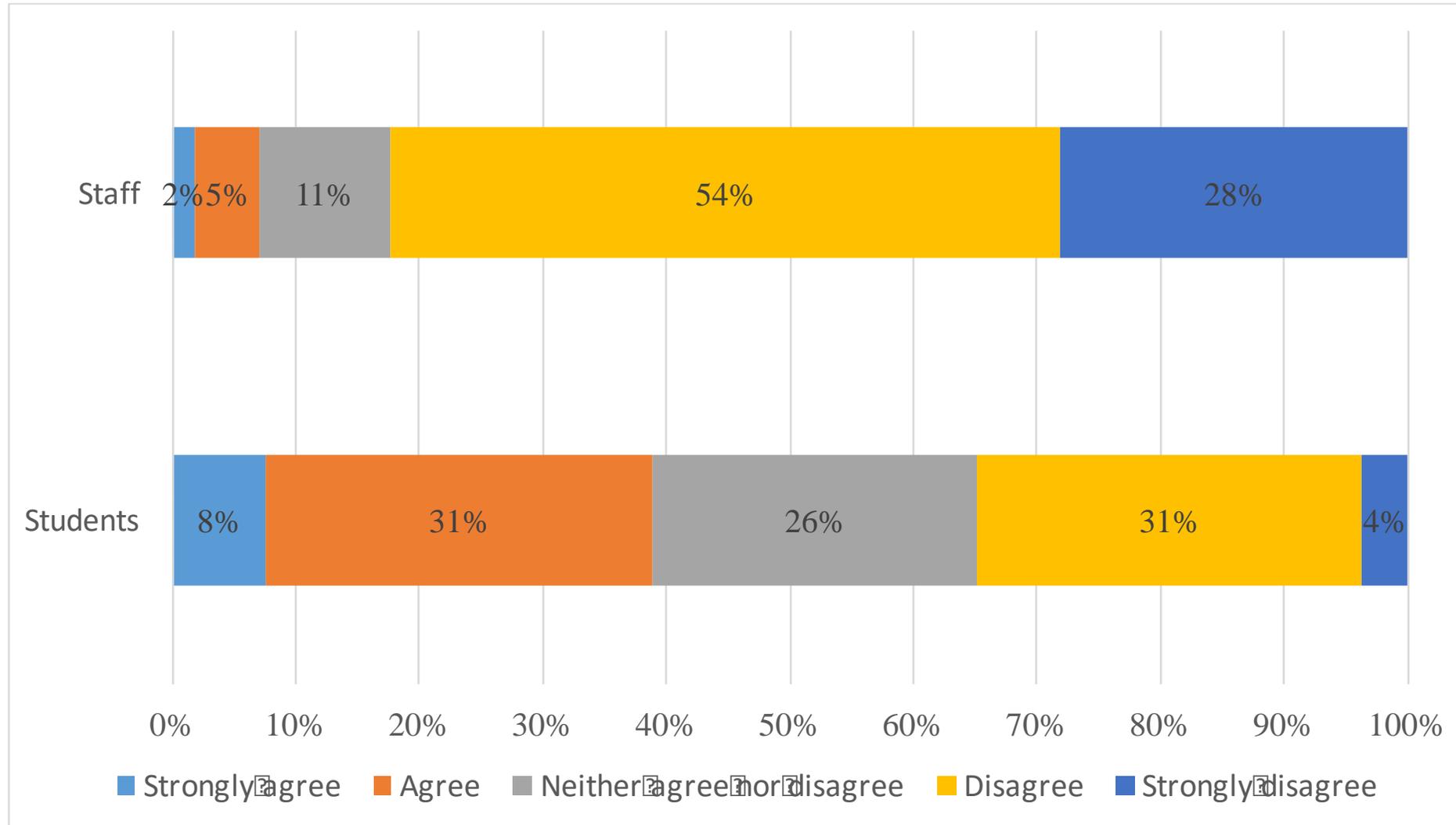
Scale differences

	Significance	Difference in means
Appropriate Assessment	++	0.29
Clear Goals and Standards	++	0.41
Coverage of Syllabus	--	-0.24
Deep Approach	--	-0.82
Learning from the Exam	--	-0.28
Quantity and Quality of Feedback	++	0.46
Quantity of Effort	--	-0.33
Surface Approach	++	0.57
Use of Feedback	--	-0.55
Overall Satisfaction with Quality		-0.18

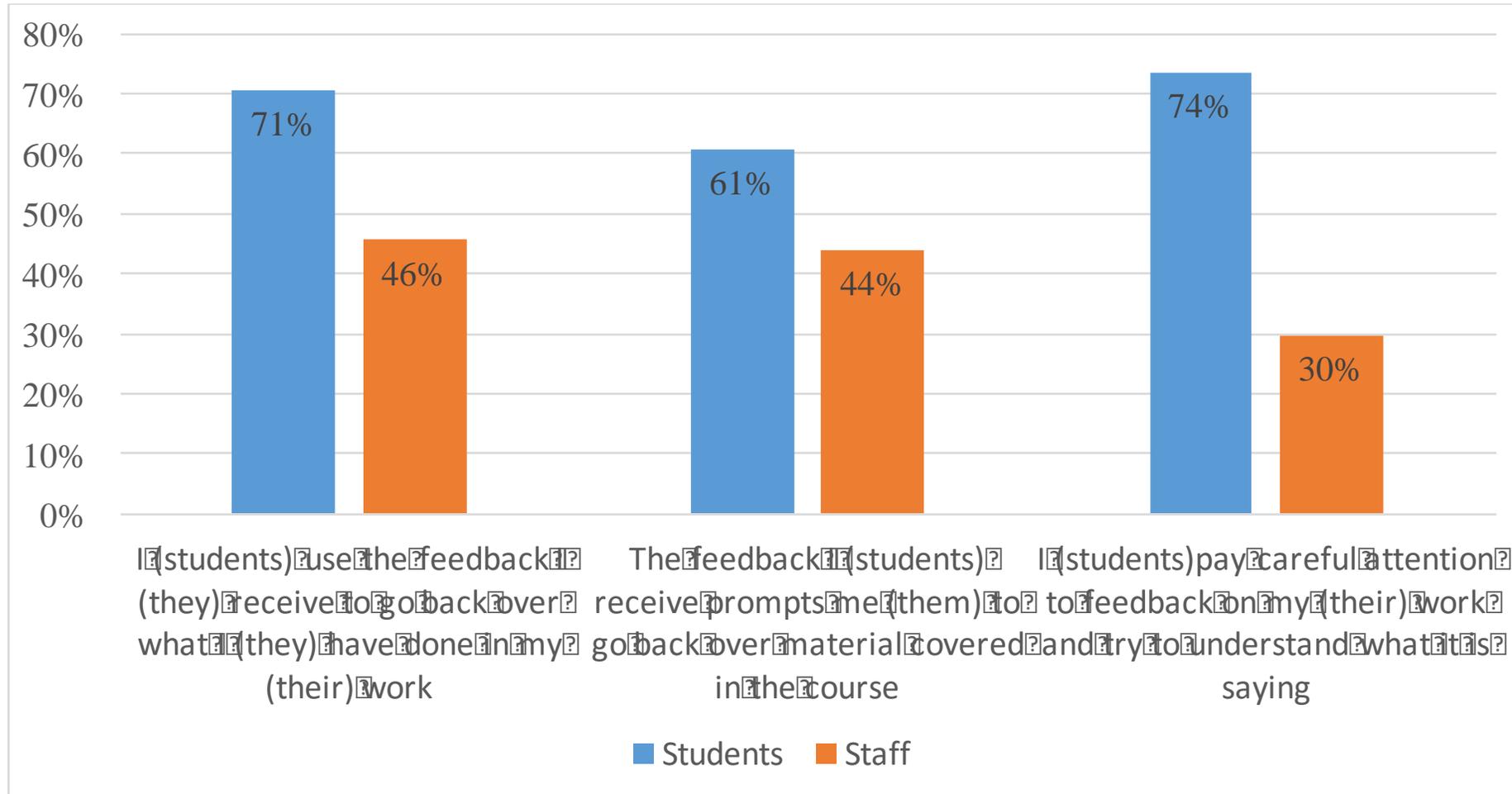
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Use of Feedback	--	-0.55
Overall Satisfaction with Quality		-0.18

“I/Students receive hardly any feedback on my/their work”



Students' use of feedback



Prior research

- feedback is frequently helpful in detail
- feedback frequently prompts discussion
- feedback frequently improves learning

(Maclellan 2001)

- feedback was followed by actions to improve student learning

(Carless 2006)

- the feedback I have received has helped to identify the gap between my current and hoped for performance
- as a result of the feedback I receive, I can accurately self-assess and self-correct my performance
- the feedback I receive is a mechanism for self- reflection and self-development

(Adcroft 2011)

Scale correlations with overall satisfaction

	Students	Staff
Appropriate Assessment	0.29**	0.29*
Clear Goals and Standards	0.40**	0.22
Coverage of Syllabus	-0.08	0.04
Deep Approach	0.07	0.34**
Learning from the Exam	0.24**	0.24
Quantity and Quality of Feedback	0.38**	0.24
Quantity of Effort	0.02	0.43**
Surface Approach	-0.27**	-0.11
Use of Feedback	0.28**	0.51**

Students: 'Overall I am satisfied with the quality of this course'

Staff: 'Overall students are satisfied with the quality of this course'

5. Reflections

Students and staff in opposition

- Students think they don't get much feedback, but what they get they use
- Staff think that students get a decent amount of feedback, but don't use it

“many students can seem quick to blame educators for giving poor feedback, whereas many educators can seem equally quick to blame students for engaging poorly with the feedback. These conflicting perspectives can lead to a sense from both parties that **the feedback process is futile.**” (Nash and Winstone 2017)

Students and staff in opposition

“Many diverse barriers, we can see, stand in the way of students engaging proactively with the feedback they receive, and by extension, stand in the way of optimizing their skill development. But a **culture of mutual blame** between students and educators seems to prevent reasonable headway being made toward breaking down these barriers.” (Nash and Winstone 2017)

Students and staff in opposition

“This transmission-focused approach... can often seem to apportion minimal responsibility to learners in the feedback process, characterizing them instead as passive recipients of advice.” (Winstone et al 2017)

Students and staff in opposition

“For feedback to influence learning and development, it must be used, yet **engaging well with feedback can be extremely challenging.**”
(Winstone et al 2016)

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