3ydd Gynhadledd Dysgu ac Addysgu

3rd Annual Learning and Teaching Conference

8 Mis Medi – 10 Mis Medi| 8 September – 10 September 2015

# Crynoldebau / abstracts

What do Students want from Feedback, and How can we Meet their Needs?

Basil Wolf

An on-line survey of second year IBERS students was conducted in October/November 2014 to evaluate how they had used feedback given for first year assignments and to canvass their views about how it could be improved. A total of 386 students answered 9 questions using Likert scales and 250 responded to the open question: ‘Please comment on how you use feedback (or why you don't use feedback) and suggest how staff and students could improve the use of feedback’.

A high proportion of respondents indicated that they read feedback to understand the derivation of their mark and to improve future work. Attitudes towards the use of Turnitin to deliver feedback were favourable: unfavourable in fairly equal proportions. Feedback given via Turnitin was sometimes seen to be too generic and impersonal, and there were mixed views about the ease of accessibility and storage of electronic versus written feedback.

Respondents to the open question clearly understood the purpose and value of feedback, and indicated that it could be improved as follows:

a. Quantity: Adequate quantities of feedback should be given by all staff;

b. Quality: Feedback should identify deficiencies in the work;

c. Quality: Feedback should clearly state how deficiencies could be rectified;

d. Timeliness: Assignments tend to be concentrated towards the end of term, which means that little feedback is returned during teaching weeks. Assignments should be more widely distributed so that the messages of feedback can be transferred quickly and efficiently from one assignment to another;

e. Utility: It is often difficult to transfer feedback messages between assignments;

f. Consistency: Staff are not always consistent in their recommendations;

g. Exams: Availability and use of feedback on exams does not support improved performance;

h. Student responsibility: There was recognition that students need to take some responsibility to improve their engagement with feedback.

These responses are in agreement with guidelines published by the Higher Education Academy and the National Union of Students and suggest that markers should ensure that feedback is focused on how work could be improved and ensure that students use it to good effect.