Assessing Design through Assessment Buddies

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Teaching Aims

• The philosophy
  ✓ To foster creativity and critical thinking

• Underpinned by
  ✓ Provision of positive critical assessment and feedback
Context

Creative discipline:

-no ‘finite solutions’

-contain ambiguous terms such as 'creativity' and 'originality'

-summative marking schemes are seen to offer little value in isolation.

*Davies, A. (2003). Writing learning outcomes and assessment criteria in art and design. Report for the ADCLTN (ADM Subject Centre)
Higher education students have consistently expressed **dissatisfaction** with assessment and feedback.

Launch of **Assessment and Feedback Charter**: ten key principles addressing issues such as the lack of formative, face-to-face, verbal and timely feedback.

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**UK National Union of Students’ Survey**


Origins of the Assessment Buddy System

Changes to the Industrial Design Programme created new modules including:

201AT Automotive and Transport Design Specialist Skills

- A quadruple module
- Worth 2/3 of marks
- 3 Assignments of increasing complexity and content
- Teaches specialist skills in Design, Ergonomics and Engineering
- Runs for full academic year
Previously

1. ‘Pin-up in absentia’

2. Assessment of verbal presentation via written feedback
Industry Practice

Image showing the indoor viewing area at Ford’s Design Studios in Essex
Problem and Solution

The Feedback Problem

• Complex pieces of work
• Assembled audience
• Scary
• Deaf ears’ (Blair 2006)

The Coventry Solution

• ‘Assessment Buddies’
Assessment Buddy System

Volunteer student buddies

Staff direct buddies to note comments: 4 negative, 4 OK, 4 positives

Accuracy of feedback agreed

Student takes away feedback

Audio recording emailed to student within one week

Summative marks conveyed within two weeks
Assessment Buddies in Action

**First Iteration (November 2009)**
- Written feedback forms only
- Two columns: buddy/assessed student
- Buddies ‘conscripted’
- All parties signed and dated form
- Photocopy made
- Student takes form

**Second Iteration (May 2010)**
- Form redesigned - single large box for feedback
- Only assessed student/staff sign and date
- Audio Feedback emailed at end of assessment week.

**Third Iteration (May 2011 – Present)**
- Form redesigned now just 12 comments required
  (4 good, 4 okay, 4 needing improvement)
- Buddies now volunteers
Effectiveness of ‘Assessment Buddy’ system

• Focus groups with:
  o Year 4 students - 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd} iteration of system in 2009-2010
  o Year 3 students - 3\textsuperscript{rd} iteration of system in 2010-2011

• Adapted National Union of Students’ survey
Findings

You can tune out sometimes when you are having your feedback – it depends on your mood, how nervous you are or how confident you are.

(Year 4 student)

It is tricky because the course is trying to accommodate different job titles so areas will almost be given a similar weighting to each other...you might find a package drawing or technical drawing is given the same value as a render or a really nice illustration

(Year 3 student)
Findings

Get it on the day: that is a major advantage

(Year 3 student)

As an immediate form of feedback you instantly know where you have gone wrong

(Year 4 student)

To be honest I have got to the point where I just don’t care about the mark

(Year 3 student)

Marks are not really my biggest concern – it is just a bit of paper at the end of the day what degree classification - marks for me are not hugely important it is whether I have learned something, moved forward, pushed myself further

Year 4 student
Findings

[the] comments that were made [were] tailored and bespoke to the person’s project [so] you are not being shoehorned into categories

Year 3 student

From that point of view when you are in a presentation and you have someone with their head down writing notes, it does have a confidence effect, so that is more a ‘pro’ as opposed to a ‘con’

Year 3 student
Findings

It was really useful seeing other people’s work and you can gauge an imaginary league table kind of thing. I also benefited from seeing how everything was done so you knew what to expect when it was your turn to go and present and it was interesting to see what the lecturers had to say

Year 3 student
Findings

Worse still is when people completely miss the point of what the buddy system is and write their own assessments or opinion – this lecturer here giving you their opinion is actually just decoration, but actually ‘you fellow student, what do you think’?

(Year 4 student)

When you are in industry you are one unit supporting a company and it is important that everyone gets a view on what could go into production – whereas when you are a student it is about your personal development

(Year 4 student)
Findings

Much better than the pin up and leave: in fact it highlighted it – it wasn’t that much of a problem until we started doing the buddy system just how crap it is to do the work, put it on the wall and just leave it and then come back and get a nod or a shake about whether it was OK

Year 4 student
Findings: NUS adapted survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment and Feedback: agreement</th>
<th>Year 3 (%)</th>
<th>Year 4 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Assessment arrangement and marking have been fair</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Feedback on my work has been prompt</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I have received detailed comments on my work</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
National Union of Students’ Charter on Feedback and Assessment

Points 1 – 5:

1. Formative assessment and feedback should be used throughout the programme
2. Students should have access to face-to-face feedback for at least the first piece of assessment each academic year
3. Receiving feedback should not be exclusive to certain forms of assessment
4. Feedback should be timely
5. Students should be provided with a variety of assessment methods
Advantages of Assessment Buddies

• **Staff**
  - spontaneous feedback dialogue
  - feedback that is not specifically included in module outcomes
  - eye contact with students

• **Students**
  - immediate personalised feedback including ‘average’ comments
  - follow up audio/tone/international students
  - reflection before numerical mark

• **System**
  - simple to implement using readily available tools
  - addresses aspects of the National Union of Students’ Feedback and Assessment Charter
Any Questions?

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References

Blair, B. (2006). At the end of a huge crit in the summer, it was “crap” – I’d worked really hard but all she said was “fine” and I was gutted. *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education*, Vol 5. No. 2. Intellect Ltd


Davies, A. (2003). Writing learning outcomes and assessment criteria in art and design. *Report for the ADCLTN (ADM Subject Centre)*


