



Tools to help lecturers mark assignments

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<http://etools.massey.ac.nz>



About the project

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Tertiary Education Commission eCDF scheme

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Aims of the project

- Help lecturers provide feedback to students on assignments such as essays, reports, design diagrams and computer programs using etools.
- Feedback on assignments that require professional expertise of the lecturer.

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Direction from the literature

- A lot of work on assessment.
- 580 journals and conference proceedings searched
- Not much on using computers to help with essay-type assignments.



What is the most important factor that influences student learning?

Student motivation

Time on task

Prerequisite experience

The presence and quality of feedback

Hattie, 1999

Tasks students do

Lecturer's enthusiasm

Effective use of technology

High expectations

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'could try harder'

The Times August 24, 2006

- “ England’s university teachers are pretty poor at meeting deadlines or explaining difficult concepts.”
- “ Only 51 per cent provided prompt feedback to their students last year, and the same percentage were able to clarify things their students did not understand, according to the second National Student Satisfaction Survey, published yesterday.”

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/student/news/article617872.ece

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The student view

- subject specific feedback comes too late
- problems with feedback: too general, too impersonal, too little information, 40% say handwriting is a problem
- often assessment criteria are not clear to students (refers especially to 'qualitative' areas where there is no absolute right or wrong?)

Higgins, R., Hartley, P. & Skelton, A. (2002). The conscientious consumer: Reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27, 53-64.



The student view continued

students want feedback and want to learn from it

- 97% of students read the feedback
- 82% of students say they pay close attention to feedback (but the question is what that means and if they need better reflective skills)
- feedback needs to be given asap
- needs to explain things in a language students understand;
- discussion with students on assessment criteria might help as might peer-feedback
- Higgins, R., Hartley, P. & Skelton, A. (2002). The conscientious consumer: Reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27, 53-64.



Seven principles of good feedback practice

1. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria);
2. Facilitates the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning;
3. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
4. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
5. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self esteem;
6. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006)



Ideal computer marking and management tool

- Electronic student submission of various file types
- A way of providing feedback that is easy to use
- Centralised pre-testing for plagiarism
- A comments bank that is easy to edit and develops during marking
- The support of marking schemes, from simple to sophisticated
- Automatic grade and report computation
- Electronic storage of marked work, feedback, marks
- Easy links to university central systems

Stephens, Sargent, & Brew (2001)

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Specialist tools

- Electronic Feedback Software
- GradeMark
- WebCTConnect
- MarkTool
- Creative Technology- Markin
- Markers Assistant
- Penmarked
- My Drop Box

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Survey

- Lecturers who use technology to help with the marking and management of assignments.

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Survey participants

- 40 % campus courses
- 40% distance courses
- 20% campus and distance

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Survey participants

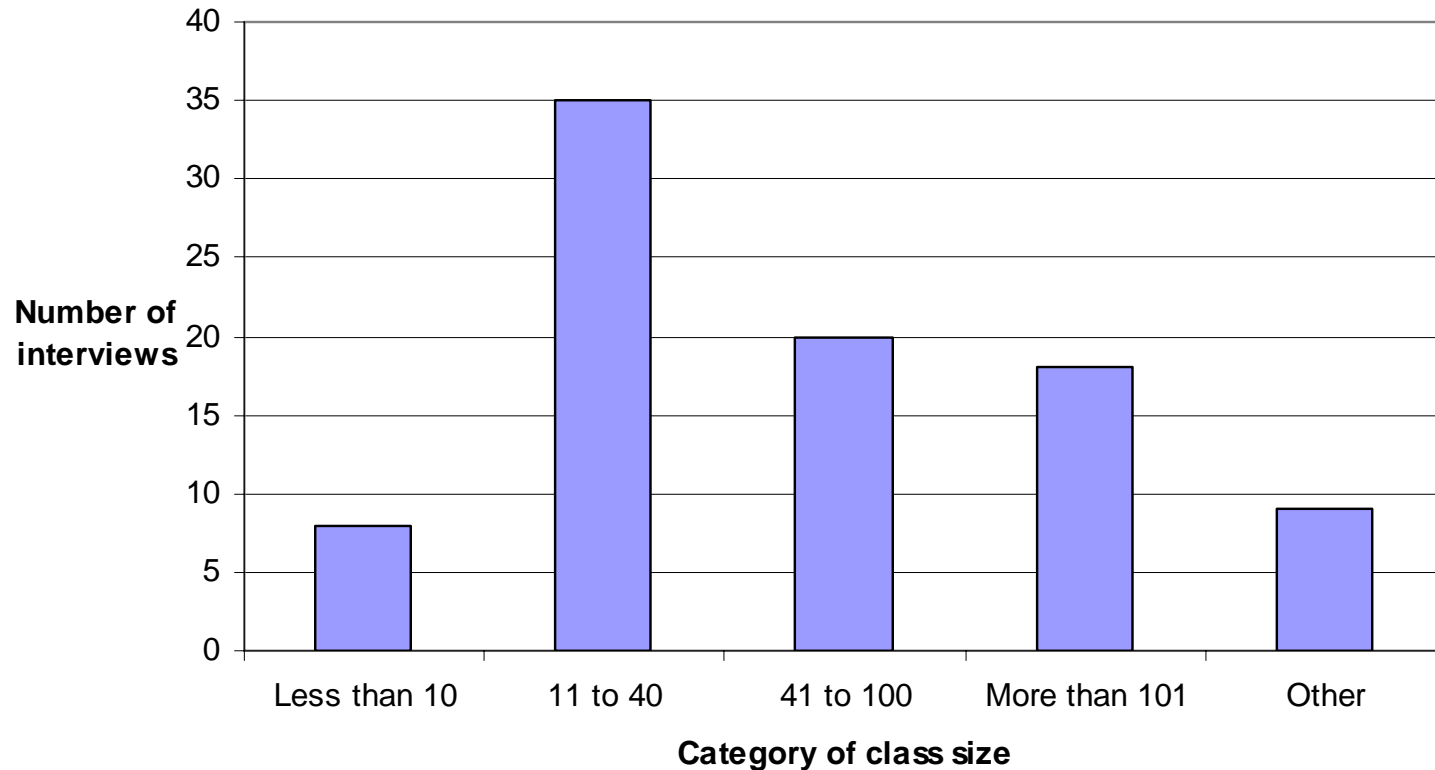
Subject area	Percentage of staff interviewed
Management / Business	29
Information technology	26
Education	11
Humanities, Social Sciences, Arts	10
Health Sciences	9
Sciences	8
Creative Arts	4
Engineering, Food, MFP	0

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Survey participants

Distribution of class size





Survey results

- Submission of assignments

LMS (Moodle, Blackboard etc)	33%
Specialised Systems	10%
Email	17%
Paper	5%
Paper & Electronic	35%



Benefits

- manage electronic submission
- organise marking teams
- integrate marking scheme into student feedback
- share feedback with marking team
- quick return of feedback to students
- evaluate feedback



What do lecturers do?

- Learning management system and Word

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- Specialist systems
- Assessi, WebCTconnect, Grademark

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Guiding the individual lecturer

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Profiles

- Profile 1: Getting there faster
Working towards Efficiency Improvements
- Profile 2: Getting there better
Working towards Quality Improvements
- Profile 3: Stepping outside the conventional
Moving beyond standard tool use



Action Plan

Start of Course Planning

Release of Official Course Documentation

Announcement of Assignment Task

Assignment Submission Deadline

Release of Marking Results

End of Course

End of Course Review

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Conclusion

- Assessment by assignments is of highest educational value.
- Strong opportunities exist for using e-learning technologies, tools and approaches to facilitate essay-type assessment.
- E-learning technologies, used for the appropriate pedagogical reasons, show a high potential for improvements in the assessment area.