[P12] Incorporating formative feed-forward feedback into summative tutor marked assignments and setting targets for student achievement of learning outcomes

Janet Dyke
Centre for Open Learning of Mathematics Science Computing and Technology CETL,
The Open University
jed83@tutor.open.ac.uk

Assessment at the Open University is predominantly summative. However tutor marked assignments (TMAs) also provide the major, and sometimes the sole source of personalised teaching within the University. Previous research has shown that students do not necessarily build on feedback to improve and further develop study skills within the course, and are probably not taking forward acquired skills into future courses. Student perception was that feedback is only related to a specific assignment, and that skills are not particularly transferable between assignments.

The aim of this project was to determine whether formative feedback built into summative TMAs can help tutors provide students with the means to become more effective learners. Students should then be able to improve their skills and take them forward through the current and future courses. By setting targets the tutor should be able to focus the student towards more self-directed learning.

The project involved use of a tick sheet of skills, devised to accommodate the limited time which tutors have available for marking. The sheet focused on the course-wide learning outcomes, and students were assessed as to whether they had 'well demonstrated', 'adequately demonstrated' or 'not adequately demonstrated' each skill. Students were also given a target to meet by the next or a subsequent TMA, and advice as to how that target might be met.

It is hoped that students will benefit from increased awareness of what effective study entails, will have specific support aimed at increasing those skills, and will be able to monitor their own progress. They will have a greater understanding of how they are learning and be better able to recognize that TMAs provide a progression of feed forward support as well as a method of assessment. Tutors will benefit by being able to monitor progress of their students' skills more effectively by checking targets.