### Project Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title (and acronym)</th>
<th>Assessment Careers: enhancing learning pathways through assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>Sept. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>Aug. 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Institution</td>
<td>Institute of Education, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Institutions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Director</td>
<td>Dr Mary Stiasny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Project Manager & contact details | Dr Gwyneth Hughes  
g.hughes@ioe.ac.uk   |
| Project website            | www.ioe.ac.uk/assessmentcareers                                     |
| Project blog/Twitter ID    | http://assessmentcareers.jiscinvolve.org/wp/                       |
| Design Studio home page    | http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/50671006/Assessment%20Careers%20Project |
| Programme Name             | Assessment and Feedback                                            |
| Programme Manager          | Lisa Gray                                                           |
Contents

1. Executive summary ................................................................. 3
   1.1. Brief description of project .................................................. 3
   1.2. Evaluation questions and purpose of evaluation .......................... 3
   1.3. Brief summary of evaluation methodology ................................ 3
   1.4. Summary of main findings, and implications of these ................... 3
   1.5. Summary of recommendations .............................................. 4

2. Background and context .......................................................... 4
   2.1. Purpose of the evaluation and Core evaluation questions ............... 4
   2.2. Description of the project and its context ................................ 5
   2.3. Target population for the project and relevant stakeholders for the evaluation .... 6
   2.4. Related work/studies in the wider literature (or from other programmes or projects) .............................................. 6

3. Evaluation approach .................................................................. 7
   3.1. Design of the evaluation ....................................................... 7
   3.2. Data collection and analysis .................................................. 8

4. Evaluation findings .................................................................... 10
   4.1. Evaluation of Assessment Careers principles and goals .................. 10
   4.2. Impact of the Assessment Careers approach on student engagement with feedback ........................................................................ 12
   4.3. Impact of the Assessment Careers approach had on staff values, beliefs and practices of feedback .................................................................. 15

5. Issues that need to be addressed for scaling up the pilot studies ........ 19
   5.1. Technological issues .............................................................. 19
   5.2. Social and organisational issues .............................................. 20
   5.3. Unexpected findings .............................................................. 21

6. Conclusions and Recommendations ........................................... 22
   6.1. Discussion and interpretation of findings, with associated recommendations 22
   6.2. Benefits of the Assessment Careers approach ................................ 24
   6.3. Disseminating assessment Careers principles and goals across the institution and policy development ............................................. 27
   6.4. Recommendations for further action, research and and sustaining the project 28

7. Lessons learned ........................................................................ 28
   7.1. Lessons from the project ....................................................... 28
   7.2. Lessons from the evaluation process ....................................... 28

8. References ................................................................................. 30

9. Appendix Links to Tools and Instruments and Policies ..................... 31

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Assessment Careers Project Team, Peter Chatterton for his role as our critical friend, Lisa Gray the Programme Manager from JISC for feedback on interim reports and David Nicol for consultation on feedback principles.
1. Executive summary

1.1. Brief description of project

This project explores how to develop longitudinal feedback, e.g. across a programme, that is student-centric and that builds on student’s previous experiences of assessment. Developments to promote this Assessment Careers approach include; a student feedback response sheet piloted by five programmes, a feedback analysis tool, a set of institutional principles and goals for the IOE and a Feedback policy. E-submission and the options for making previous feedback accessible to staff and students across a programme are also explored.

1.2. Evaluation questions and purpose of evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the value of the Assessment Careers approach both to staff and students, to review the impact on workloads of the approach and to identify social, technological and organisational assessment issues that need to be addressed for the approach to succeed.

1.3. Brief summary of evaluation methodology

The evaluation draws from the action research tradition. It includes institutional data on the acceptance of the principles and goals, student and staff responses to engaging in longitudinal feedback processes in the pilots and a review of the technological infrastructure needed to support the longitudinal approach to feedback.

1.4. Summary of main findings, and implications of these

The results of the pilots indicate that students can develop their assessment careers by reflecting on past feedback and being active in feedback dialogues. However, the feedback response forms did not seem relevant to them all, and more work is needed to develop student assessment literacy as part of teaching and learning so that all students can see the benefits of responding to feedback systematically. The form was also introduced too late for many students to reflect properly on feedback, but early formative assessment was very helpful to student on one of the programmes. Staff participating in pilot work were aware that they had not engaged students sufficiently in feedback dialogue.

Feedback has not been openly discussed with staff in the past, but taking part in the project encouraged staff reflections on feedback practice to, for example, increase the amount of feed forward, prompted by the feedback analysis tool which categorised feedback. The feedback analysis tool did not identify much change in feedback practice between 2011/12 and 2012/13, but the feedback profile on one programme, where the programme team had engaged in a development session on feedback, changed to include longer-term elements. In the other four programmes assessors tended to write additional comments to respond to student reflections rather than change the balance between different categories of feedback revealed in a net increase in the volume of feedback rather than a change in proportions between the categories. Despite this, staff did not report that the feedback took up more time, with a few exceptions when staff were unfamiliar with a new approach. It may be that changing habitual feedback writing will need more iterations of action research or intensive staff development. Making colleagues’ feedback more visible using Moodle is likely to help spread good practice.
The Assessment Careers goals, principles and policy have been discussed and well received by the staff and students consulted. Concerns were raised about dialogue and discussion about feedback which could be time-consuming for both staff and students but this is not supported by evidence. There is evidence of a higher profile of feedback in key institutional learning and teaching documentation which indicates a shift in culture is underway.

The development of Moodle so that feedback is captured and made accessible across a programme is underway and receiving support from staff and students and interest from the sector. Use of e-submission has become mandatory at the IOE for 2013/14 partly as a result of the project, but e-feedback is still under discussion. From the pilots a generic Student Feedback Response Sheet has been developed as a low tech tool that can easily be shared in Moodle and it has been customised and reused within and outside the IOE.

1.5. Summary of recommendations

Key recommendations are:

- A shift away from teacher-centric feedback (giving feedback) to student-centric feedback (dialogue and discussion with students and peer feedback)
- View assessment and feedback at the level of the programme and not only the module level
- Address student assessment literacy through student-centric approaches and more guidance on engaging with feedback.
- A greater transparency over feedback to enable sharing of good practice and to encourage students to evaluate feedback as well as teaching.
- Programmes should include early formative assessment so that students have a chance to engage in feedback dialogue and to pick up problems early
- Use of Moodle for e-submission and e-feedback with a student feedback response sheet easily accessible to ensure that past feedback is easily stored and retrieved by staff and students.

2. Background and context

2.1. Purpose of the evaluation and Core evaluation questions

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the effectiveness of designing, testing and implementing an Assessment Careers or longitudinal approach to feedback practice.

Assessment is often viewed as a series of one-off events. This means that learners do not benefit from feedback; they lack a sense of longitudinal progress and do not develop self-reliance in managing assessment. This project aimed to reconceptualise assessment from the perspective of an assessment career and use this to transform an institution’s feedback processes. An assessment career perspective involves taking a longitudinal view of assessment feedback by building on a learner’s past experiences of assessment as well as current trajectories across the whole programme. Like a working career, an assessment career develops through a series of related assessment events that join up to give a coherent and progressive pathway that is self-directed.

Previous initiatives suggest that linking up module assessment feedback by giving learners information on their progress (ipsative feedback –see Hughes, 2011) and structuring learner responses to feedback over time, both motivates learners and helps them focus on learning in the longer-term rather than immediate grades.
Core evaluation questions for the project are:

1. Do the Assessment Careers principles reflect staff and student views, while also being sufficiently aspirational?

2. Are the Assessment Careers principles and goals beginning to be applied across the institution?

3. What impact has the Assessment Careers approach had on student engagement with feedback?

4. What impact has the Assessment Careers approach had on staff values, beliefs and practices of feedback?

5. What is the impact of an Assessment Careers approach on workload for teaching and administrative staff?

6. What are the technological, organisational and social issues that need to be addressed for scaling up the pilot studies? I.e. what would convince other stakeholders that the change to an Assessment Careers approach is needed?

2.2 Description of the project and its context

The project context is given in detail in the Assessment Careers Institutional Story which accompanies this report. The IOE is a small mainly postgraduate institution which uses a VLE as the main technology for learning and teaching with potential to make better use of this with a change from Blackboard to Moodle in Summer 2012. In 2013 the IOE started negotiations with UCL over a merger and the outcomes of this merger will influence future direction of the project work, but it is not yet possible to predict how.

The project objectives were as follows:

1. Document the range of assessment practice across the IOE and, in particular, to identify those assessment practices which students value most with regard to supporting their learning over time. (Completed in Baseline Report)

2. Build on the work of REAP, other projects such as MAC and institutional assessment needs, to develop a conceptual and practical model of the ‘Assessment Career’ that can be used at an institutional level to benchmark existing assessment practice and plan development. (Completed in Baseline Report)

3. Apply the Assessment Careers approach to identify a set of principles and goals that can be used more widely across IOE Masters and PGCE programmes.

4. Pilot the Assessment Careers approach in five contrasting Masters programmes and provide those piloting new assessment practices with systems and technologies for supporting that practice, e.g. assessment templates and feedback analysis tools.

5. Evaluate the new pilot assessment practices to identify (a) student perceptions of whether, or in what ways, their learning has been supported as well as (b) teaching and support staff responses to the innovations.

6. Design systems and processes to scale up and embed the changes at an institutional level.
7. Achieve this change in professional assessment and feedback practice though redirecting workloads rather than workload intensification.

The completion of objectives 3-7 is evidenced in this report.

The project had three phases:

Phase 1. To create a baseline using existing institutional practice and use external research and development to develop tools to support the Assessment Careers approach.

Phase 2. Five pilot studies explored the use of student feedback response forms to help students reflect on feedback and take it forward and to enable them to be more active by requesting feedback. A feedback analysis tool was used with pilot leaders to explore how they might ensure feedback addresses longer-term learning and not only short-term corrective goals. A set of Assessment Careers principles and goals were developed in this phase.

The five pilots were:

MA in Research
MA in Education, Health Promotion and International Development
MA in Clinical Education with shared modules from MA Teaching and Learning in Higher and Professional Education (TLHPE)
PGCE Primary
MA/MSc Psychology of Education

Phase 3. The project extended the new Assessment Careers principles and goals across programme clusters and embedded the principles and goals into an IOE institutional feedback policy. The policy will inform QA and other documentation. Moodle reporting to store feedback and make it easy for all staff teaching on a programme to access a feedback record for students on all modules was also piloted.

2.3 Target population for the project and relevant stakeholders for the evaluation

The project is of relevance to all in higher education who are interested in improving and joining up feedback across programmes to enable learners to progress their learning journey, without extra resources. This might include teaching staff, learning support staff and senior managers including the Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching and International) and also students so that they can be active participants in assessment. Our Bloomsbury consortium of Moodle partners also has an interest in our use of Moodle for e-submission and e-feedback records at the programme level. The project builds on existing technologies rather than developing new ones, but will be of interest to learning technology support staff and quality managers who seek to better capture and make feedback visible across a programme in the same way that grades are captured.

2.4 Related work/studies in the wider literature (or from other programmes or projects)

Assessment has always been about measurement of learning that is assessment of learning, but recently the focus has shifted on to the key role of assessment in driving learning or assessment for learning. A strong feature of assessment for learning is recognition of the importance of formative assessment and feedback.

This project has been informed by literature on effective feedback and the REAP assessment principles. Firstly, feedback informs learners of any gap between their performance and an achievement outcome and, secondly, feed forward – or developmental feedback – guides the learner on what to do to next to improve (Hattie & Timperley 2007; Sadler, 2005). Including feedback as part of an ongoing learning dialogue is also important and accords with a
constructivist view of learning where the learner is the active maker of meaning. Dialogue allows learners to clarify assessment aims and criteria, identify progress and develop self-reliance (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Hughes 2011, 2014).

As well as the cognitive aspect, the context influences learning and learning is socially mediated in that it involves social interaction. This context includes all aspects of a learners’ life past and present, their identities and it follows that a learner brings previous experience of learning to any new experience. Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) have used the term learning career to capture this longitudinal and contextualised view of learning. In a learning career, learners bring dispositions to learn from previous events which have evolved through their learning and life course pathway. These dispositions are shaped by factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity and generation.

Ecclestone & Pryor (2003) use the term ‘assessment career’ to focus on the role that assessment has in shaping learning over time as part of a learning career. Thus, learners’ previous experiences of assessment influence their response to assessment and feedback so that, for example, emotionally negative experiences of critique and perhaps failure may influence they way learners perceive marks and interpret and act on feedback. Even successful learners who have been highly praised in the past may bring with them an expectation of continued high achievement.

A focus on an assessment career highlights an underlying problem with many assessment regimes: that assessments are undertaken on a piecemeal basis and that there is little continuity. Feedback tends to focus on the immediate task and not surprisingly does not routinely include feed forward to future learning and assessment. Meanwhile, any impact of feedback on a learner’s performance is rarely monitored as part of an assessment career.

The project aimed to promote a student-centric view of feedback where students are able to act on feedback through engagement and dialogue about feedback. It recognises feed forward that enables student to self-review and self-correct is more valuable for learning in the longer-term than giving students immediate praise or correcting errors (Nicol, 2006, 2010; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Boud & Molloy, 2013).

The project was not technology driven, but we acknowledge that technology can enhance assessment by reviewing many examples from the sector such as Making Assessment Count and TESTA which demonstrated that assessment processes should use readily-available technologies which are quick to learn, easy to use, which are efficient after the start-up period, saving time and effort and increasing productivity and which bring a significant learning benefit to students.

3. Evaluation approach

3.1 Design of the evaluation

3.1.1. Approach to evaluation

The evaluation data was collected from the 5 pilot studies by the pilot leaders supported by a researcher. Data were analysed at the pilot level and then synthesised for an institution level evaluation by the project leaders and the researcher. Data were also collected on the responses to the principles and goals and on the Moodle reporting system and analysed by the project leader. The main purpose of much of the evaluation was for future learning and planning and so this was a formative internal evaluation. The pilot evaluations were influenced by the ideas of action research or practitioner research.

3.1.2. The role of the Baseline Report in the evaluation
The Baseline Report reviewed institutional policy support documents on assessment, and staff and student views on feedback practice. It was the basis for the Institutional Change Report to chart the changes made in these areas that can be attributed to the project and pilot work. However, it is recognised that changes will occur beyond the lifetime of the project and that some of the small changes since the baseline position will be indicative of a trajectory towards larger changes for the future.

3.1.3. Evaluation framework or overview

The framework consists of a synthesis of pilot evaluations and institutional evaluations (see diagram 1) including:

- The five pilot evaluations with student accounts of use of previous feedback and staff and student views of piloted practice
- A feedback profile analysis for the pilots
- An institutional level response to the principles,
- Video recordings of pilot leader reflections,
- Technological evaluations including piloting of a Moodle feedback reporting tool
- Document. See diagram 1.

Diagram 1.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The following sources of data were collected for the pilot studies:

3.2.1. Staff and student interviews on reflecting on feedback

A total of 135 students reflected on their past feedback responses and a total of 39 students and 23 staff were interviewed individually or in small focus groups for the pilot evaluations individually or in groups. Some interviews had to be done via email or online as students were distance learners or part-time students who did not visit the IOE often. Interviews were mostly
conducted by pilot leaders, but an independent researcher conducted interview for the Clinical Education Masters. This was partly because the pilot leader did not have time but it also had the benefit of providing an outsider more independent interpretation to compare to the practitioner perspectives. Students and staff were asked to discuss how their approach to feedback had changed as a result of the intervention and to reflect on any limitations or improvements that could be made.

3.2.2. Written feedback analysis

Feedback profiles of 217 samples of feedback written before the pilot and 190 samples after the pilot interventions were analysed using a feedback analysis and profiling tool. The feedback categories were developed by Orsmond & Merry (2011) and with an additional category of ipsative feedback from Hughes (2014).

The feedback categories were:
- Praise for good work
- Recognising progress or ipsative feedback
- Critical feedback. This was subdivided to distinguish error correction and critique of content and ideas
- Giving advice. This was also subdivided to distinguish advice for the current assignment and advice for the future
- Questions addressed to learners to request clarification of their ideas
- Unclassified statements. Neutral comments, for example that describe the piece of work but do not make any judgment, were unclassified

A feedback profile for an individual assessor, for a module or for a programme was compiled from looking at the balance between the categories. The feedback analysis was performed by an independent researcher to avoid the bias that might arise if staff analysed their own feedback. Using one analyst also gave consistency across the 5 pilots. Details of the pilot data collection, the instruments used and a discussion of reliability of the practitioner-led action research approach and its limitations can be found in the Pilot Methodology document.

3.2.3. Reactions to the feedback principles and feedback policy

Responses to principles document were collected and analysed by the Project Leaders using the action research approach taken by the pilot projects and with similar limitations of insider research. The document was presented to Teaching Committee (30 people approx.), a Programme Leader’s forum (25 people), Academic Board of a mixture of professional, academic and senior management staff (30 approx.) and the discussions were tape recorded or notes taken. Students were consulted by email via the Student's Union (15 responses). Feedback on the principles was also provided by David Nicol as an external consultant by phone and email. The principles were adjusted to improve clarity, to include institutional goals and to make reference to addressing student diversity in response to the discussions.

3.2.4. Video of pilot leader and student reflections on change to practice

Video of team and students. A video recording was made by the project learning technologist of pilot leaders' reflections on the project. The video was edited so that it provided a concise message to viewers about the effect of the project on values and beliefs about assessment. This synthesised video contributed to the project evaluation and is widely used in staff development and dissemination events.

3.2.5. Technological evaluation
A Moodle Assessment and Feedback Reporting system was commissioned and then set up by the University of London Computing Services in April 2014. Although this was much later than planned it was still possible to pilot the system in the Summer term.

Two programmes piloted the Moodle reports and two focus groups were held with 18 students, a programme team meeting was held as a focus group for staff and individual staff were interviewed about their views on using the system (if they had not yet used this) and for how they used it, for those who had integrated the reports into their teaching (total 11 staff). Further interviews with staff on how they used the system are planned for November 2014 and a full evaluation will be presented to Teaching Committee then.

3.2.6. Policy document analysis

Documents such as Assessment Guidelines, Learning and Teaching Strategy and QA process documents were analysed for the numbers of references to marking and grading processes and references to feedback and formative assessment. Documents were analysed for the Baseline Report and this analysis was compared to documents analysed at the end of the project which included a new Learning and Teaching Strategy and the new feedback policy.

4. Evaluation findings

4.1. Evaluation of Assessment Careers principles and goals

The 6 principles are:

1. Feedback helps learners to self – evaluate their work
2. Feedback enables students to address performance goals in both the short-term and longer-term
3. Feedback includes dialogue (peer to peer and teacher-student)
4. Learners have opportunities to apply previous feedback
5. Feedback is motivational for all students
6. Students have frequent formative assessment opportunities

Each principle is accompanied with a rationale and some examples of practice taken from the pilot studies

4.1.1. Staff views

The principles originally emerged from the experiences of the pilot leaders and learning technologist in implementing longitudinal feedback. These principles could be evidenced with examples from the pilot studies and had in effect been ‘tested’ with teaching staff. However, early consultations with staff and an external expert suggested that the principles were too general and promoted a teacher-centric rather than student-centric approach to feedback that is recommended in current literature (see Boud & Molloy, 2013). A Dean suggested that group work was not sufficiently emphasised:

What it doesn’t talk about at all is what you can do in a group. An example might be getting a group of students to look at some previous essays that have been judged at different standards and get them to imagine that they are looking at them and dealing with them and also general feedback about things like usually when students are
Assessment and Feedback programme  
Final Evaluation Report: Assessment Careers

answering this kind of essay the things they don't do well are...this is very much on the individual....students can learn a lot in the collective.

A student support officer was concerned that the principles did not meet the needs of students with disabilities and address diversity:

If you get a paragraph that's half a page long then there’s people with dyslexia ...(who) can't wade themselves through that paragraph. I'd like to see goals on feedback to make it more accessible to students.

The wording of the principles was adjusted to strengthen the use of peer review. The document was also amended to include more explicit reference to enabling a diversity of student to engage with feedback. There was also some suggestion that the term ‘assessment careers’ is not transparent and so the subheading ‘principles for action on feedback’ was added.

Tweaking of the principles was straightforward but there was a more serious challenge to the usefulness of principles. The programme leaders viewed the principles to be non-contentious, but were concerned about the implications for practice and their workloads, for example, interpreting dialogue as meaning ‘more feedback’ rather than enabling students to be more self-reliant. It is quite possible for staff to agree with a set of principles, but take no action on them. Our external expert suggested that the principles should challenge current practice and be aspirational.

We therefore found designing principles can be quite paradoxical. On the one hand they must be general and non-contentious so that they attract wide support, but if so then the principles are unlikely to provoke changes to practice. On the other hand, if principles are radical and require changes in beliefs about feedback practice, then they will not be readily accepted. Because principles do not imply change in practice we rewrote these as institutional goals but then there was some concern about staff resistance to compliance. The Head of Academic Student Support Centre expressed this view:

...the danger with that (goals) could be a compliance situation ..there are one or two of these things that are you might get resistance if you tried to impose them across the piece. I would tend to go for principles with some possible illustrated actions around them.

We have reached a compromise by pairing up an institutional goal with each principle. See Assessment Careers Principles document for details.

4.1.2. Student views of the feedback principles

The Student Union president had assured us that students would agree with these principles and be supportive. In our survey, students were positive about the principles which they thought would address some of their concerns about feedback. For example making opportunities for dialogue about feedback clearly available:

I like the proposed changes to the assessment at the IOE! Especially that students get a say in it as well and that the structure will be more interactive! Since learning is an ongoing process I feel that students would benefit greatly from having an ongoing dialogue with their assessors regarding their skill development. So far I felt that one issue was that there wasn’t sufficient communication between assessor and student. And, if I as a student tried to get more feedback, it would be difficult.

However, there was some concern from a part-time student about the workload implications of greater student engagement with feedback:
My thought is that this (dialogue about feedback) should be voluntary as for some part
time students with full time jobs this could become something that might be an additional
burden. However it could be very very useful too.

However, this student does recognise the value of dialogue. Enabling students to discuss
assessment during teaching sessions and to become self-reliant with practice could be better
than adding an additional layer of dialogue to either staff or student workloads. The
longitudinal approach of spreading out dialogue over a programme as part of the normal
feedback practice is also a way of ensuring that student workloads are manageable.

Another student was concerned about peer review and collusion.

I'm not so sure about number 6 (peer review for formative assessment) as some
students might feel that other students use their ideas for their own work... It would
probably depend on how those assessment feedback opportunities are structured,
therefore do you discuss simply the draft or only ideas, thoughts... how detailed will it be?

This confirms the literature which suggests that peer review needs careful guidance and
structuring from teachers (Nicol, 2010).

4.2. Impact of the Assessment Careers approach on student engagement with feedback

4.2.1. Student engagement with feedback before the interventions.

As an attempt to evaluate the nature of student engagement with feedback before the pilot
interventions, students on each pilot programme were asked what they did with the last piece
of feedback they received. They were asked to indicate whether this was feedback on
formative work (draft) or summative (graded) work. They were also prompted to think about
who they discussed feedback with and the timescale in which any action was taken.

Responses to the question: What did you do with your last piece of feedback?
The results of 108 student responses from 3 programmes are summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Formative n=54</th>
<th>Summative n=54</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>didn’t respond to the question</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no feedback received</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>did nothing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read the feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revised the assessment</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systematically took forward</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was clearly a difficult question to answer and a number of respondents wrote what their
opinion of their feedback, rather than how they had acted upon it. What doesn't come through
from this is a filtering process where students accept or disagree with feedback. Agreeing with
the feedback is a pre-requisite for acting on it. There were also few interesting examples of
students not knowing what to actually do about an issue raised in feedback, which has
identified a problem but not an action. Less than half describe a systematic reflection on
feedback focusing further efforts in their learning, and even fewer mentioned a transformative
effect of feedback. Only a couple of students mentioned discussing feedback with anyone
and the ‘read’ category includes reading, thinking about it and the rare ones who talked it over
with someone.
The overall picture is that the majority of students revised assignments if they have an opportunity to repeat that assignment, but if the next assignment is different, then less than half of students made use of that feedback. There was also some variation between the programmes depending on whether the last piece of feedback was for that programme or previous study elsewhere. Where the feedback was the last piece of feedback received on their previous programme of study several expressed that it was difficult to take that forward at that time as they had stopped studying.

4.2.2. The usefulness of the feedback response sheets

The Pilot Reports provide details of 39 student responses to the feedback response sheet. In all five pilots there were significant numbers of students who did not fill in reflections on feedback or requests for feedback on the response sheet, or if they did wrote very little. Nevertheless, the results indicate the beginnings of a shift from the baseline position above towards students taking a more pro-active response to feedback.

The most favourable responses to reflecting on feedback were from the two distance online programmes. This could be because students welcome any opportunity to engage with tutors because they do not have the face-to-face interaction. Students welcomed the opportunity to request feedback:

“I like being able to ask the tutor quite directly the area that need work and [what] to focus on” (MRes student)

And the form helped them look back at previous feedback and response to it:

“Particularly as I’d taken a long break between this and the previous module so it actually made me go back and consider feedback from earlier assignments.” (MA in Health Education student)

But, other students expected tutors to give them feedback and viewed the form as a bureaucratic device to help assessors rather than a tool for reflection.

“I just created a list of the things that I changed and it didn’t take me long but I did do it after I’d changed everything, I didn’t do it as I went along. I thought it was more of an exercise I’m going to hand my essay in and I need to do this.” (PGCE student)

When the Student Feedback Response Sheet included student requests for feedback but not reflection on their actions, some students very clearly viewed feedback as the marker’s job:

“I don’t care! If I knew what areas I want feedback on I’d know how to write the essay in the first place….. I thought that’s your job, surely.” (Clinical Ed student)

“…it was like this is ridiculous... how do they expect us to know what they want? I want to know everything.” (Clinical Ed student)

Others found that they did not look at the form until they were about to submit their assignment and then it was too late to do anything about reflection on feedback except use the form as a checklist.

“I didn’t look at it until I had written the draft and was just about to submit, so I didn’t spend time like thinking in detail when writing about what to ask the tutor. If I had, maybe I would have written more, so it was more like, at that moment of submitting, what am I thinking, and I am not sure I could remember all the issues, so I just wrote what came to mind.” (MRes student)
Having a form to complete on their own without guidance did not seem to help these students engage with feedback. It might be that it is not the reflective response sheet that is not ineffective but the way it was presented to students as a form to fill in retrospectively, rather than as a tool to help think and act on feedback and make requests for feedback and guidance. In other words much more work is needed to help students engage with the process early on and to develop their assessment literacy – even at Masters level when we might expect more engagement than for undergraduates. We can learn from the MAC project in which the process of feedback is built into a programme and automated although automation might be too restrictive for the range of level of programmes at the IOE, the need to integrate reflections is relevant. The interACT project used wikis to build student reflections and this helped students engage, but is too resource intensive for our purposes. Programmes leaders at the IOE will need to decide the best ways to build responding to feedback into their programmes. One suggestion has been to help students to write feedback on sections of past assignments and compare their feedback with the tutor feedback and other peer feedback. This might give students a better understanding of why action of feedback is important as well as help with interpreting feedback.

4.2.3. The value of feed forward

The students gave indications of a more positive view of feed forward than was presented in the past feedback survey and continues the work identified in the Baseline report of innovation having an impact on assessment literacy. Students mostly recognised that although praise is pleasant to receive it does not help them unless there is specific information about what is good or what progress they have made. For example:

*The feedback itself was detailed, and offered both positive, reinforcing feedback for the things that worked; and constructive criticism for the things that did not.* (Health Promotion MA student)

A few students took a clear longitudinal perspective to look to the next assignment:

*I found it (feedback on final assignment) less micro in detail and more holistic and I used that to take forward to my next assignment.... The macro feedback, higher level feedback.....is helpful to take forward to the next piece of work.* (Clinical Ed student)

*Advice for future assignments help to make a good reminder so that the next assignments is an improvement from the previous one.* (Health Promotion MA student)

Another developed a very personal professional approach which demonstrates the importance of student ownership of an assessment career:

*One of the requirements is to develop your own philosophy of teaching. If you didn’t have that ownership I think you’d end up with very dictated to essays... (your own philosophy) ... will help you I imagine in the future to become very much your own sort of teacher.* (PGCE student)

The PGCE pilot differed from the others in that students completed an early formative writing assignment of writing an introductory theoretical piece before they began the module which was reviewed by assessors. All students received feedback and one student commented: *I was able to use that theory and introduction (from the early formative assignment) in my final essay. Those who were judged to be most in need of help were given a tutorial. Such students found the tutorial very helpful:*

*It gave you a chance to have a good conversation with them (the assessor) rather than them sitting there telling you what you need to improve...it enable me to fully understand where.. there are issues with how I've interpreted the question.....Whereas I was given a lot of help with the planning it was very much my*
way that I’d interpreted the readings and the arguments and philosophies that I’d develop in my own essay writing. (PGCE student)

The PGCE team reported improvements in the number of A grades this year—higher than the last two years and directly attributed this to the improvements in feedback and the early piece of writing with tutorials for weaker students (see PGCE Pilot Report)

But some students wanted a set of clear instructions on how to improve a draft piece of work rather than to address longer-term learning goals and this might also explain improved grades. For example:

I suppose the feedback I got was quite extensive it was like an entire rewrite of the essay .... The way it did it was a kind of ABC way of helping ... I was able to send a plan in an email and she gave me further feedback on that. (PGCE)

I was really specifically told what bits to improve. (PGCE)

Feedback on the final assignment was often considered to be short, less useful than feedback on draft work:

I think you pay more attention when it is formative. I mean... you can actually change, you can do something about it and it has a very big impact on your assessment, whereas once you’ve done it, you are just reading how well or badly you’ve done. (Clinical Ed. student)

Once again we have an indication that more work is needed to develop a longer-term approach to assessment for these students and this means students need to know that they will be able to apply feedback from one module to future assignments. Introducing a tool is not sufficient in itself without more discussion about feedback and its longer-term benefits. Students also need information on how well they have applied feedback.

A psychology student who did not seem to be aware of the response form, nevertheless indicated that having a way of knowing how well they had implemented feedback would be useful.

But I don’t know if I finally succeeded to be more critical, because the draft was very good, but I don’t know if the essay was as good as the draft, this was my problem. I didn’t know whether I implemented the feedback… (Psychology student)

Implementing feedback (or not) can be addressed through ipsative feedback on progress which is one of the categories in the feedback analysis tool.

4.3. Impact of the Assessment Careers approach had on staff values, beliefs and practices of feedback

4.3.1. Evidence of changing staff beliefs

All pilot leaders gave examples of how taking part in the project had raised their awareness of feedback practice, for example:

Having categories for assessment (such as praise or advice for future assessments) was useful to the member of staff providing feedback – to identify what sort of balance of feedback types was being provided to students. (MA Health Promotion tutor)
Pilot reports also suggested that staff beliefs about feedback practice were changing particularly in taking a more future orientated perspective and a realisation that many students need help to engage with feedback.

*It seemed that many students needed to be taught how to use feedback, what it could be for, and the role it could play in the learning process.* (MRes tutor)

The use of student feedback response sheets to help students engage with feedback received a mixed reception. Some staff found it helped them to write feedback. For example:

*Two aspects have changed: a. additional answer to the candidates' requests and b. additional references to previous assignments in order to provide the candidates with a 'follow-through' approach.* (TLHPE tutor)

One pilot leader even described how reading student responses and requests made marking easier and more enjoyable:

*I found it easier but not necessarily quicker to provide the feedback because I had a sense that I was providing feedback to someone about something rather than on a piece of written work... it brought it to life in some way. It took a little bit of extra time but that was offset by my sense that it was a slightly more enjoyable thing to do.* (Health Promotion tutor)

But for others there was recognition that simply giving students a form to fill in to request feedback did not challenge a teacher-centric approach to feedback.

*The coversheets are not helpful in encouraging less aware students to do this as they do not prompt a self-assessment. In fact, by suggesting students write a 'shopping list' of what they would like feedback on it reinforces the idea that tutors give and students receive feedback.* (TLHPE tutor)

Some staff described changes to their feedback practice while others stated that there was no change. The PGCE staff in particular were clear about what they had changed.

*I try not to provide generic positive feedback but rather have tried to be specific about the assignment’s strengths and why these aspects are strong* (PGCE tutor)

*I have endeavoured to be still more specific about what the student should change to further improve their assignment and in giving examples about how they might change the assignment in this way.* (PGCE tutor)

4.3.2. A longitudinal view of assessment

There was evidence of pilot programme staff taking a longitudinal view of assessment – or at least realising that this is currently missing. For example:

*I’m thinking about the programme level* (MRes staff)

*We’re not really making them (students) think about the feedback ... we did not include it from the beginning as part of this degree* (Psychology staff)

For others, having an overview of the programme to see student progress was considered problematic. One issue is the alignment of modules:

*... there may be scope to consider how the social research assignment could be better aligned with students small-scale research projects (such as that for a report or dissertation) and so guidance could ‘feed forward’ into that work – although this may*
A student suggested that a method of recording feedback would be useful:

But then I was just thinking it might be helpful if we can do like a double loop sort of feedback, like you know, you got the first feedback, you kind of tried to implement it, make it work, and then saving for another time before we write the whole essay ...(Psychology student)

Another issue was different tutors marking each module which was particularly a problem for tutors who teach on only one module in a programme and therefore do not have a good programme overview:

...making longitudinal links for future development required a good knowledge of the overall programme, and therefore could only be successfully undertaken by tutors who either had worked on the programme for a long time, or who had a strategic overview of the course. The tutor who only worked on one module found it quite hard to make those kinds of longer-term assessments. (MRes staff)

The Moodle Reports have much potential for storing feedback over a programme to address such concerns (see Institutional Change Report).

4.3.3. Feedback profiles before and after the pilots

The tool identified feedback profile by counting the number of comments fitting the following categories (see appendix 1 for analysis tool):

P1 - Praise. Praise is thought to be motivating for students, but if used indiscriminately it can appear insincere.

P2 - Recognising Progress (ipsative feedback). Acknowledging progress can be motivating and informs students about their learning. Lack of progress also serves as an early warning that action is needed.

C - Critique. Students need to know how their work falls short of expectations or criteria; however, criticism can be discouraging especially when not accompanied by information on how to improve.

A - Advice. Important when the main purpose of feedback is to help students take future action to improve.

Q - Clarification requests. Asking learners to think more deeply about their work and generate actions themselves can be achieved through questioning and dialogue.

O - Unclassified statements. Neutral comments, for example that describe the piece of work but do not make any judgement, are unclassified.

We might expect that staff reports of change in their beliefs about feedback might be demonstrated in changes to feedback profiles. However, the feedback analysis which compared samples of feedback on both draft and final assignment before and after the pilot interventions did not indicate significant changes in the profiles of feedback for four out of the five programmes (see Feedback Analysis Report). Feedback on draft work was dominated by advice as expected, but feedback on final assignments retained a predominantly praise-critique profile apart from the PGCE which included advice for the future and the Health Education MA which increased advice about the current assignment.

There was some overall increase in advice for the future and for ipsative feedback which are the indicators of the assessment careers approach, but one programme, the PGCE primary was mostly responsible for the change. On the other programmes, staff seem to have
responded to students by writing extra feedback on top of what they would ordinarily have done rather than changing the balance of feedback categories.

Typically, this did not involve writing long extra sections to answer the student questions, but, rather, entailed writing an extra sentence or two after the ordinary feedback that responded to the questions (MRes tutor)

There was evidence from the analysis that in feedback on final assignments there were more feedback statements than before the pilots took place.

This approach of writing slightly more feedback rather than different feedback would explain why the feedback profiles did not significantly change. A possible explanation for the changed profiles in the PGCE is that while all pilot leaders and some programme teams were introduced to the feedback analysis tool and some results of the analysis, the PGCE team had a lengthy workshop on feedback in which they discussed some of the feedback literature. The PGCE pilot leader claimed that this workshop is what prompted a premeditated and deliberate change in feedback practice. It also may be that changes by one person in a team will not show up and it is also likely that one cycle of action research is not enough to significantly change practice, as one pilot leader explained:

Where there was a group of staff whose feedback was analysed the effect of one making changes may not show up. Staff feedback practice is also difficult to change with one iteration of action research. (Clinical Ed. staff).

If the PGCE intensive workshop was the catalyst for the change in feedback profiles and we might expect profiles in other programmes to begin to shift towards longitudinal feedback in future.

Feedback profiling is very useful and some further insights can be found in Hughes, Smith and Creese, (forthcoming).

4.3.4. Senior Management view of the project

There is evidence that Assessment Careers has influenced the thinking of senior management staff. The Pro-Director: Learning and International gave a statement about how the project had influenced thinking at the institutional level:

This project has enabled us to take the time to think about and reflect on the way we engage with students, and it has influenced staff thinking – and policy development. I have no doubt that this will prove to be one of our most formative experiences with far-reaching outcomes for the way we operate and develop best practice in assessment in general, and in feedback in particular. We are currently developing our new Learning and Teaching Strategy and this, together with our current strong focus on the student experience here at the IOE, will benefit from the insights and learning from the project.

4.3.5. Workload implications for teaching and administrative staff

As noted above on the pilot programmes most staff found that they could incorporate responses to student reflections and requests for feedback into their existing practice without significant increase in workload. One assessor did find giving advice more time consuming than correcting errors:

The most time consuming aspect was creating written responses which would support students to know how to implement changes, rather than just pointing out what was missing or what was wrong with their submission. Since some issues were common across a number of submissions I felt that the advice I was giving was repetitive. (PGCE Tutor)
Greater familiarity with a new practice might reduce the time taken to feed forward. Also this assessor is repeating feedback across submissions and presumably could refer the student back to previous feedback instead of rewriting feedback. However, it is also possible that repetition occurred because the student did not understand feedback and so kept repeating their mistakes, so feedback might need clarifying through dialogue. Once embedded it is predicted that engaging students with feedback will not add to workloads and may even bring efficiency benefits as students become accustomed to the approach and require less support and motivation to engage with feedback.

But, on the Clinical Ed. programme teaching staff found using Moodle and Turnitin for feedback increased workloads and one tutor thought it reduced the coherence of comments. Using e-submission and Turnitin for feedback was new to this programme and the workload problem may well disappear as staff become more used to the system. By contrast administration workloads appeared to reduce.

> The use of the electronic drop box and Turnitin reduced the workload of the programme administrator with regard to assessment dramatically (Clinical Ed tutor).

Feedback is only one part of teaching and staff may already feel under pressure suggesting a wider issue of planning academic workloads may need consideration.

> (Feedback) is not the only work that staff have to do in their academic role so it is rarely possible to 'block out' time that can only be used for marking and the crafting of feedback which has to be completed in a particular time envelope in the academic year. (Clinical Ed tutor)

5. Issues that need to be addressed for scaling up the pilot studies

5.1. Technological issues

Four out of the five programmes used e-submission in Moodle and no issues were reported. Two of the pilots also used Turnitin for e-feedback comments, but this was not helpful for some students:

> It was just a lot of dispersed comments. It was difficult to work out whether the essay was any good or whether it was a pile of rubbish.... (Clinical Ed student)

An assessor agreed:

> ...the entirety of comments the pre-formatted bubbles which I used initially felt a bit bitty and I could not get a grip of what I said - it interrupted any narrative. (Clinical Ed tutor)

The problem of being able to access feedback across a programme was also recognised:

> A wider issue with the Moodle technology is that at present we are unable to use Moodle to look at each individual students' feedback from the different modules of their programme to assess their progression and/or identify any issues for remediation that appear across modules. (Clinical Ed tutor)

Technological developments in year 3 included:

- Piloting use of Moodle for online feedback and the use of the reporting server to collate feedback across a programme. The results will be presented to Teaching Committee in
November 2014, but data collected so far indicate that staff can see a wide range of benefits in using the system:

...for people who are new to tutoring on a module ...three tutors who ....hadn’t done that particular module so they a bit unsure about the level of comments they should be giving, it would be really nice to have access to the historical (feedback). (EdD tutor)

-Embedding an exemplar version of the Student Feedback Response Sheet in Moodle. To be developed in 2014/15

5.2. Social and organisational issues

The pilot studies have highlighted a number of points.

Assessment literacy of students has arisen frequently in the pilot studies which indicated that there is a wide range of views on feedback: from those who think it is the assessor’s responsibility to tell them what to do, to those who realise that they must take responsibility themselves and be proactive. It seems that even for IOE Masters Students we cannot rely on students bringing experience of good practice in responding to feedback with them. While devices such as a reflective assignment Student Feedback Response Sheet may help students, this is not sufficient alone to bring about change and discussion of the benefits of student-centric assessment and feedback needs to be routinely embedded into modules, especially early on.

Fragmented curricula and the different degrees to which staff have an overarching knowledge of programme goals are also barriers to a longer-term assessment careers view of learning. The IOE has undertaken a Curriculum Review in which programmes are clustered around common themes and modules and cluster planning may help staff see the overall coherence of the structure. Each programme has a core module as well as options and the core module could be used to develop assessment literacy which is then followed up in options. Also students need to understand the programme aims, and discussion of overall programme goals with students as part of teaching and learning is also needed while giving student a sense of ownership of their assessment career. Discussion of programme goals might help ensure all staff, particularly part-time staff are aware of programme coherence too.

It was clear from the pilots that staff are not accustomed to discussing and sharing feedback and may not feel that they have time to this. This contrasts with grades which are discussed between two assessors and made available to the programme team at Examination Boards. Formative assessment needs to be brought out from under the radar as a key learning mechanism for students. Staff need to be willing to share and discuss feedback practice and be able to identify time to undertake this which might mean reducing some other aspects of teaching. This requires a significant cultural shift across the IOE.

The feedback principles are key to addressing the points above. The principles were developed into a Feedback policy which was approved by Teaching Committee. These principles and policy have resulted in increasing importance attached to feedback in policy and strategy. A new Teaching and Learning Strategy has a focus on feedback for 2014/15. There is evidence that this shift is underway in a comparison of documents analysed for the Baseline Report and current assessment documentation. For example compare the following statements in student handbooks:

You can expect us to......provide timely feedback to you on your academic progress, with clear guidance as to how to further improve your work where necessary (Student Handbook 2013/14).
This contrasts with the statement from the 2011/12 handbook which refers to feedback only in a summative capacity and not as developmental:

You are entitled to...copies of written summative feedback in relation to your assessed work. (Student Handbook 2011/12).

The Bloomsbury Learning Group with whom we share Moodle also will focus on e-assessment in 2014/15 and will promote the Moodle reports.

The institutional impact was evaluated in year 3 of the project in an Institutional Change Report. The project team identified some strengths that workshops and programme team events had taken place in which feedback practice had been discussed and plans for developing practice such as using the student feedback response form were implemented. The spreading of new practice from one programme team to another worked well and now this has started it is expected to continue so that each year more programme teams will discuss feedback practice. Implementation of the feedback policy next year and the emphasis on feedback in the Teaching and Learning Strategy will help.

Participating staff also highlighted tensions and confusion arising from the e-assessment processes that were under development and this meant that an institution wide impact of the technological aspects of the project have not been fully realised.

Difficulties of communicating strength of the idea in a large and diffuse institution. (Pilot programme leader)

5.3. Unexpected findings

One expected finding was that the way that student evaluations are collected, typically at the end of teaching but before assessment has taken place, means that teaching staff do not normally get any evaluation of their assessment practice apart from External Examiner comments which are usually focussed on the marking process and equity issues. The IOE standard module evaluation pro-forma only has a question to students about whether the assignment processes and criteria are clear and makes no mention of feedback. Involving student in feedback processes could fill this gap:

Although an evaluation sheet is completed after the teaching of each module at the IOE, this can tend to omit feedback from students about feedback and assessment. By inviting feedback on this elements of their study, the module leader was able to find out more about whether and in what ways in assessment itself was thought to be useful with regard to student learning and the perceived value of different types of assessment feedback. (Health Promotion)

QA officers are exploring the possibility of including questions about feedback in the module evaluations although this work is currently stalled until after merger with UCL in December 2014.

Another unexpected finding was that staff participating in the study did not expect feedback to provoke contention between staff and students:

...in our focus groups, feedback was revealed to be a difficult issue, and was seen as a potential area of tension between students and tutors (MRes staff)

Students have opportunities to give extensive evaluation of teaching and make any concerns known through both a programme committee with student reps and through completing end of module evaluation forms. Neither process aligns with the timing of formative and summative assessment. This means that tensions over assessment and feedback usually remain hidden.
Asking for student evaluations of previous assessments as part of the existing evaluation process might begin to address this issue.

Staff have also made unpredicted suggestions on how the Moodle reporting system will help with efficiencies e.g. to enable a tutor who takes over a student when a supervisor leaves to quickly see a student’s past assessment and feedback history. (See Institutional Change Report).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Discussion and interpretation of findings, with associated recommendations

6.1.1. Shifting from teacher-centric to student-centric feedback

Many staff who took part in the project were aware that giving feedback to students which tells them what to do has limitations and that this does not encourage students to be active in using feedback to learn. Some students want a set of clear instructions on how to improve their work, particularly draft work, and some do not want to engage in dialogue or request feedback or do not know how to do this. This means that they do not see the benefit of engaging with devices for reflecting on feedback such as the student feedback response sheet, or if they do their responses are superficial. The recommendation here is that discussion about giving and receiving feedback are integrated into teaching sessions and the benefits of reflecting on feedback in a systematic way are discussed. Giving students opportunities to give feedback to peers could also help them understand how to engage in dialogue about feedback. (See institutional goals 1 and 3 in Assessment Careers Principles).

6.1.2. Viewing assessment at the programme rather than module level

The findings above suggest that inviting students to reflect on past feedback and to request feedback using a Student Feedback Response Sheet was very useful for some students and did encourage them to review past feedback. However, other students found that they did not look at the response sheet until it was too late to be helpful. In four of the pilot programmes staff did not change the profile of their feedback to address the programme level. However, in one programme there was a deliberate effort to provide students with more advice for the future and comment on progress which does begin to suggest taking a longitudinal approach.

The recommendation here is that devices such as the feedback response sheet or the profiling tool which encourage an assessment careers approach need to be part of a shift in thinking for everyone away from learning at the module level to learning at the programme level. This may require some curriculum review to clarify how programme level skills and attributes –including learner self-reliance- are developed. (see goals 1 and 4 in Assessment Careers Principles).

The use of part-time staff is likely to continue and so exploring ways of ensuring that these staff appreciate how their contribution fits with programme goals will be important. Mapping programme learning outcomes and relevant assessment criteria for all sessions might be a way forward.

The Moodle reporting system makes viewing student progress at the Programme level much quicker and easier. It also enables assessors to build on assessment and feedback from past modules rather than start giving feedback from a blank slate with each student. Concerns that staff may be influenced by seeing a student’s past records have not materialised because staff have often had access to past grades and are aware that these should not influence a future grade. See Institutional Change Report.

6.1.3. Addressing student assessment literacy
There are two types of student at the IOE. Many of our students arrive without much experience of formative feedback and without a predisposition to systematically engage with feedback. This may be because they have studied under different assessment regimes abroad and in the UK or on first degrees that they completed many years ago. Such students see feedback as something that is done to them and some even thought the response sheet was a device to help the assessor not them.

By contrast other students, perhaps those who have worked as teachers and studied assessment practice, have highly developed assessment literacy and can see how to use a device such as the Student Feedback Response Sheet to help them respond to feedback. They seek high quality feedback that informs them about future learning and not just about how to improve the next grade. (see goal 2 in Assessment Careers Principles)

A recommendation is that assessment literacy is not assumed at Masters level and that all students are provided with advice and practice in developing the skills of self-review, systematic action planning in response to feedback and dialogue over feedback. A student-centric approach to feedback as in the recommendation above will also develop student assessment literacy. Student guidelines on assessment and feedback have been developed in year 3 of the project through the feedback policy.

6.1.4. Transparency and openness about feedback with feedback evaluation from students

Feedback has not hitherto been very transparent and accessible at the IOE. Staff have previously only received evaluation of a small sample of their feedback from External Examiners, if at all. Staff do not routinely discuss feedback or have access to the feedback of colleagues in the programme team in the same way that grades are discussed. A recommendation is that student reps are asked to present an evaluation of the feedback the cohort received on previous modules at Programme Committee meetings and/or a question on feedback is included in module evaluation questionnaires. In addition feedback can be discussed and shared between programme teams to ensure not only that there is uniformity, but also that feedback is appropriate and helpful for students and that the processes are efficient e.g. an emphasis on quality not quantity of feedback. (see goal 5 in Assessment Careers Principles). The feedback analysis tool may be helpful to structure these discussions.

6.1.5. Earlier formative assessment well before first submission drafts

The first submission of an assignment for formative assessment often occurs after the teaching has finished. Some students may not have understood what is expected and consequently feedback must cover many urgent points for attention. Early formative assessment could pick up problems during the teaching. The PGCE used a piece of pre-course early reading and writing for formative assessment which was very helpful to students. However, the additional tutorials they provided for students who needed particular support may not be sustainable in terms of time. Structured peer discussion of feedback and goal setting may be an alternative here. (see goal 6 in Assessment Careers Principles)

6.1.6. Role of technology in providing efficiencies in all the above

The technologies used in the pilots included: various assignment feedback responses sheets in MS Word, e-submission and e-feedback using Moodle. The low tech feedback response sheets were easy for programme leaders to use and adapt and easy for students to access and download. However, lack of standardisation could be confusing for students if they have modules using different feedback response sheets. It is recommended that a standard version is included in Moodle as the default and that minor adaptations are only made if absolutely necessary for a programme. This will also ensure that the generic Student Feedback
Response Sheet is available to students for early reflection on past feedback so that this is not left until the point of assignment submission when it becomes a bureaucratic exercise.

Use of e-submission was straightforward and efficient for administration. E-feedback using Turnitin was not liked by staff or students on one programme and was time consuming to use so it is recommended that this method is reviewed by other programmes and other e-feedback mechanisms are considered.

The use of Moodle Reporting to collate feedback across a programme was recognised by staff and students as being potentially valuable but was not ready to be implemented in time for the pilot studies. Moodle reporting was piloted in year 3 with 2 programmes (EdD programme and PGCE Primary) and the indications are so far that this tool will greatly help with particularly with efficiencies, but also with ensuring that feedback builds on previous feedback.

It would be very useful for making our feedback more uniform... the amount you write and the degree of detail ..... Consistency is better for students. (EdD tutor)

6.2. Benefits of the Assessment Careers approach

Our Baseline report identified that feedback is to some extent an unknown at the IOE, but where we do have information practice is inconsistent, sometimes unsatisfactory for both staff and students and not necessarily efficient. The Assessment Careers project has addressed these concerns as follows.

6.2.1. Enhancing learning

The Assessment Careers approach means taking account of student starting positions, developing assessment literacy through student-centric feedback processes and viewing feedback in the context of the programme and not only the module.

The benefit of the approach is that it enables students and staff to take not only a short-term corrective approach to feedback, but also a longer-term development approach. In other words it is indeed possible to enhance learning pathways through assessment. It is worth noting that enhancing learning is not just about enhancing grades – although this might be expected -but is about enhancing the capacity to learn in future.

The diagram 2 below has been developed from the Baseline report and represents the Assessment Careers approach to enhancing learning.
The project has provided some strong evidence that the Student Response Sheet helped students understand that feedback can be cumulative and build on previous feedback. There was tentative evidence from staff and students to support the pathway that feedback needs to be discussed: in the pilot studies students learnt much from discussing feedback and staff realised that more discussion would be needed to enable more students to see the value of reflecting on feedback and responding to it. But there was a possible concern about the impact of peer discussion and review of feedback on workloads for part-time students. Staff and students who engaged have recognised that balanced feedback that addresses the longer term as well as short term goals enhances learning, and this pathway is also tentatively supported by evidence, although part-time or sessional staff may have difficulty in taking a longer-term view and some students expect that feedback will be for the short-term only. Nevertheless, staff feedback profiles did not change apart from one programme where
the feedback on progress and the feed forward significantly increased following an intensive staff development workshop, it is probable that it is too soon for changes in beliefs to influence practice without an intensive workshop. There is also tentative evidence here that some students found requesting feedback was helpful to them, but others thought that this was the tutor’s job or did not know how to ask for feedback. A few staff reported that student requests for feedback helped them tailor feedback and that might have helped students even if they did not acknowledge it. That feedback must be useable, timely and motivational is well supported in the literature and students’ comments were consistent with these requirements although not reported here for lack of space.

6.2.2. Efficiencies

There are potential efficiencies arising from the longitudinal approach to feedback. Firstly, engaging students more with feedback reduces the need for assessors to write lengthy and time-consuming feedback. Secondly, if students are better able to heed and understand feedback through dialogue there will be less repetition of feedback across a programme. Thirdly, tailoring feedback to student requests is also more likely to have an impact than feedback that the student is not looking for at the time - again targeting resources effectively. There was indication from staff participating in the project that the approach did not increase their workload and they were able to amend feedback without taking up more time, although the feedback analysis suggested that they were writing more comments. More openness about feedback might help staff devise strategies that enable them to provide student-centric feedback for longer term goals and to cut out feedback that is not going to be helpful to students. Capturing and recording feedback on Moodle Reports was also recognised as having great potential for efficiencies by having all the feedback and grades in one easy to reach place.

....good idea having all the feedback in one place. (EdD student)

6.2.3. Student and staff satisfaction

Student dissatisfaction with feedback may arise from unrealistic student expectations that feedback should tell them what to do, as well as from unclear or irrelevant feedback. Greater transparency over feedback good practice and what is expected from both students and assessors is expected to improve student satisfaction. Also seeing students making progress as a result of feedback helps to ensure that marking and feedback are worthwhile and rewarding activities for assessors. There is no reason why assessment cannot be as enjoyable and inspiring as teaching. The reward comes from knowing what students gained from the teacher’s efforts, but in the case of feedback on summative assessments there needs to be a whole programme approach to make progress visible.

6.2.4. Moving from short-term to longer-term more coherent assessment and feedback

The key challenge of an Assessment Careers approach to feedback practice is a shift from short-term to longer-term assessment practice when the unit of learning and progression is a module and programmes typically consist of two core modules, a recommended module, plus optional modules and for Masters programmes, a dissertation or report. Modules tend to be set up in Moodle rather than programmes. Progress is monitored through grades. Some programmes have a ‘tutor’ who follows students through the programme, but others have different approaches to tutoring. Many programmes employ part-time staff or visiting speakers who only teach on a small part of the whole programme.
Implementing *Assessment Careers* effectively means a review of some of these practices to ensure that the programmes are not fragmented and that feedback and learning can be cumulative. This could mean giving programme learning outcomes much more emphasis and making student progress across the programme more visible. The pilot of use of Moodle to enable students and staff to easily view and retrieve feedback on all modules suggests that staff and students see the value of a longitudinal approach to assessment.

*Well for example I have recently taken on an EdD student, I don’t know if this would work this student because she has been on the course possibly longer than the last three years I have taken her on quite late in the day and she is doing her thesis now but in the case that that feedback was available to me that would be inordinately helpful for me because I am new to her and her work and her style of writing. (EdD tutor)*

*This is a good starting point. Helps you to build on positives (EdD student)*

We might hope that such students would build on past critique as well, but again the question of student assessment literacy is pertinent.

But, widespread use of the Reporting tool in Moodle for longitudinal assessment is likely to take some years to achieve at the IOE.

### 6.3. Disseminating assessment Careers principles and goals across the institution and policy development

*Assessment Careers* Principles and Goals were presented to Teaching Committee, which oversees QA and QE and curriculum planning, as a document to inform policy and practice e.g. through the new Learning and Teaching Strategy. The committee requested that the principles were developed into a feedback policy which the team wrote and which was subsequently approved by Teaching Committee. The project outcomes including the feedback principles are listed in the objectives of the draft strategic plan 2013:

*Strengthen structures for facilitating the ongoing development of pedagogy and assessment at the IOE.*

*This objective informs the work of the Academic Affairs Unit and the Teaching Committee and will also inform the new Learning and Teaching Strategy that is under development. For example, the Committee is responsible for: using the outcomes from the JISC-funded Assessment Careers project to improve the quality of rubrics, feedback, and feed-forward for students.*

The feedback policy will inform quality monitoring processes such as Periodic Programme Review (IOE’s internal review of programmes every 5 years) and/or student module evaluations. The feedback policy and its development has influenced a new Teaching and Learning Strategy and the project has helped the promotion of e-assessment at the IOE (See *Institutional Change Report*).

Pilot leaders and project leaders acted as consultants to programme teams and programme clusters for implementing the Student Feedback Response Form and the need to work with students on assessment literacy. A further 6 programmes implemented the Student Response Forms and others discussed feedback practice and consideration of the form. (see *Institutional Change Report* link)
Faculty Directors of Learning and Teaching were invited to include feedback in Faculty staff development events. However, in year 3 the Faculties were disbanded but an IOE seminar on assessment was held in collaboration with the Bloomsbury Learning Group.

The Moodle Reporting system is being piloted with the aim of disseminating this across the IOE in 2014/15. UCL is also interested in the Reporting and closer collaboration is planned once the merger between IOE and UCL is completed.

6.4. Recommendations for further action, research and sustaining the project

The recommendations for further action research and sustaining the project referred to above are:

That the exemplar Student Feedback Response Sheet is made widely available to staff and students to use in the VLE as part of feedback processes that are integrated into teaching sessions so that all students appreciate the benefits of devices such as the Student Feedback Response Sheet. The project team will continue to be available as consultants to other project teams to promote effective use of the Student Feedback Response Sheet.

That tools to make feedback practice more transparent and shared such as the feedback profiling tool and Moodle Reports are made available to programme teams and programme clusters. The Learning Technologies Unit will continue this work as part of their remit.

The video capturing the themes of the is available to be shown at IOE internal events.

The feedback policy will be used to inform key documents in keeping with the new Teaching and Learning Strategy. QA documents will be renegotiated after merger but it is predicted that UCL staff will be keen to draw the findings of the project as they are looking to the IOE for expertise in teaching and learning.

7. Lessons learned

7.1. Lessons from the project

These are discussed in detail in the Assessment Careers Institutional Story that accompanies this document but in summary they are:

- Engaging students with innovation in assessment takes a lot of work and forethought
- Changing assessment and practices means changing beliefs and takes time and probably several iterations of action research
- Innovation must be well aligned with institutional priorities to succeed
- A large project team has both advantages and disadvantages and changes to the team can be productive if there is the resource to manage the change.
- Staff have different views on how far e-assessment is helpful and this can restrict the use of technology enhanced assessment processes. The use of technology for process efficiency is more easily recognised than the use of technology for enhancing formative assessment and feedback.

7.2. Lessons from the evaluation process

7.2.1. Gaps in data and robustness of data
There were up to 9 people gathering and analysing data on the project and this was difficult to co-ordinate and manage even with a clear data collection timetable. One consequence was some missing formative feedback data for analysis from 2 programmes in year 1. This was feedback on draft assignments which is not formally recorded so is difficult to chase up as it relies on individuals being willing to pass on their feedback.

The interviews took place after the grades had been released to students to encourage students to speak openly, but some student interviews and focus groups were carried out by a member of the programme team who they knew. This had an advantage that students were willing to be helpful, but a disadvantage that students might temper critical comments and emphasise the positive.

Staff were also interviewed or asked for reflections on the project by colleagues and this affects the robustness of this data. Nevertheless, many staff were critical of the innovations and offered constructive suggestions for improvements.

The feedback profile analysis is also subject to different interpretations. To improve inter-rater reliability, all analyses were carried out by one independent researcher. In addition two others applied the tool and discrepancies were discussed with the researcher and this process indicated that other analysts would produce similar profiles with the same data.

7.2.2. Including a wide range of students in the evaluation

Many students at the IOE are part-time and for two of the pilots the students were distance students. This meant that arranging focus groups in person was not possible in most cases although some individual interviews in person did take place instead. Much of the student evaluation was via email or online discussion groups. This meant it was not easy to probe students to get detail and in some programmes there was a very low response.

Tips to address these problems are to offer refreshments or other rewards for focus groups, but such incentives may not be enough for part-time students with full-time professional jobs. It might be better to plan student evaluations early on and not leave this until the end of the course/module as we did, so that evaluation can be integrated into taught sessions to get a better response rate. This was achieved for the piloting of the Moodle Reporting tool and ensured all students attending could take part in the evaluation process. There are ethical implications about including all students because it was clear from the MRes pilot report that students learnt much about feedback from taking part in the evaluation and this could be advantageous for these students and disadvantageous for those who did not/could not take part.

7.2.3. Use of audio

Audio recording of meetings with permission and guarantee of anonymity were very valuable. It would have been difficult to arrange extra focus group meetings with busy staff – especially senior staff and their views were recorded at Teaching Committee and Academic Board. A disadvantage is that people might self-censor what they say in formal meetings and might be responding to other agendas. Audio recordings of conference presentations and workshops were also useful.

7.2.4. Limitations of feedback analysis

There were limitations to the validity of the feedback analysis tool because it does not pick up subtle changes to feedback language and clarity of feedback e.g. in illustrating and explaining points, with reference to the student’s work. One assessor felt that the tool did not pick up a dialogic style of feedback where all comments are phrased to invite dialogue. Also the tool only measured written feedback given to students and not informal or peer feedback and so captures only a part of the feedback process. However, the tool could be used to structure peer feedback sessions and for staff development. It could also be used to structure verbal
feedback but recording of tutorials – with permission from students - might be needed if a full analysis of verbal feedback is required.

It might be interesting to consider whether or not verbal feedback profiles are different from written feedback. Tutorials probably involve a more detailed discussion of verbal feedback so we might expect a similar profile, but possibly with more questioning of the student and agreement over actions to take. At the IOE not all students—whether distance or on campus – attend tutorials so it is important that the written feedback process is helpful. Use of audio feedback at the IOE would be useful to pilot and then analyse.

Comparisons of feedback before and after the intervention were made with the same module just in case different modules with different outcomes produce different feedback profiles. Also the aim was to include the same programme team staff in the comparison in recognition that staff may have different approaches and a change of staff might affect the results. What we could not allow for is that staff might produce different feedback profiles depending on the level of pressure they experience. It is also possible that feedback profiles differ for high and lower achieving students and it would be interesting to explore this possibility. However, the consistency of the profiles suggests that staff approaches to feedback in which praise, critique and short-term advice dominate, are habitual and indeed quite difficult to shift.

7.2.5 Limitations of the Moodle Reporting tool evaluation

Because the Moodle reporting tool was only available from April of the 2014 academic year there was limited opportunity to test it out and ensure that staff could access and use the tool. The evaluation was limited to demonstrating the tool to staff and students and asking for their views on one programme but staff will be further consulted once they have used the tool in November 2014. However, in the other programme staff usage was investigated but results are not available at the time of reporting. A full evaluation report will be available in November 2014.

8. References


Hughes, G. Smith H. & Creese, B. (forthcoming) Not Seeing the Wood for the trees: developing a feedback analysis tool to explore feed forward in modularised programme Assessment and Evaluation


9. **Appendix  Links to Tools and Instruments and Policies**

- [Feedback Profiling Tool and Guidelines](#)
- [Student Feedback Response Sheet](#)
- [Feedback Principles and Goals](#)
- [Feedback Policy](#)