

Assessment feedback practices in postgraduate speech pathology students

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Timely and effective feedback is acknowledged to be highly valued, particularly in the first year of tertiary studies (Poulos & Mahoney, 2007). The provision of feedback is often reported as an area of dissatisfaction by students in higher education. Whilst studies have evaluated preferences in assessment types (Wilson et al, 2014), and learning opportunities (Grimmer-Somers et al, 2011), few have evaluated preferred methods of receiving assessment feedback specific to postgraduate allied health students.

The aim of this study was to examine the preference of mixed feedback (written and face-to-face) versus written feedback only in a cohort of first semester postgraduate (graduate entry masters) speech pathology students. Students were enrolled in a unit with historically low satisfaction ratings for 'assessment feedback'. Students received mixed feedback for their first assessment task within the unit. An online survey was developed to examine student assessment preferences and reflections, and student satisfaction scores were compared for 'assessment feedback' for the unit evaluation compared with previous years.

The study revealed no difference between preferences for the provision of mixed assessment feedback compared to written feedback only. However, all students who preferred mixed feedback implemented changes to subsequent assessments, compared to only 17% for student who preferred written and 50% for face-to-face feedback only. Students were more likely to 'reflect' on their feedback and implement changes when provided with mixed feedback (100%) compared with written format only (17%). In addition, unit satisfaction for 'assessment feedback' increased from 60% to 94%.

In summary, no preference was reported between written versus mixed feedback, however, students were more likely to implement changes and valued the process of obtaining personalised face-to-face feedback to support their learning journey. The findings highlight the importance of listening to the student voice to tailor assessment feedback practices.