

The Big Feedback Conversation

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Why the Big Feedback Conversation?

Making feedback transparent is a strategic goal of the institution via the University's *Inspiring Learning* (HWU, 2019) strategy. The aim of the project is to make assessment and feedback an **active, empowering learning conversation**. In order to do this, we have initiated conversations with staff and students about **creating an effective understanding** of what feedback and assessment means so that we have a common language.

The UK National Student Survey (<https://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>) surveys all final year undergraduate students. Effective feedback and assessment is consistently scored lower than other categories. Staff complain that **students do not act on feedback** while students complain that they **do not receive enough feedback**. The purpose of the Big Feedback Conversation at Heriot Watt University is to **change some of these perceptions**, and **create a common language** around feedback and assessment that both staff and students understand.



How will we do it?

Working with the **Students' Union**, **University Quality Assurance** and **academics from across the campuses**, we are developing resources to support staff and students understand the feedback and assessment process (Neary, n.d.).

- **making the message visible** across campuses
- supporting staff to **embed assessment and feedback** in their teaching
- **continuing discussion** around formative feedback and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009)
- **constant, informal opportunities to improve work** via discussions with tutors and peers which are in addition to formal, written feedback that appears on coursework
- **changing the conception of feedback** from something that happens at the end of learning, to something that happens during learning.



Achieving change

The purpose of The Big Conversation is to **empower both staff and students into making the most of feedback**, encouraging a reflective approach which builds on and improves previous coursework. Peer feedback is considered as important as tutor feedback in this process (Huisman et al., 2019). We will **evaluate progress** and share our experiences and findings with the sector.

Huisman, B., Saab, N., Broek, P. van den, & Driel, J. van. (2019). The impact of formative peer feedback on higher education students' academic writing: A Meta-Analysis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44(6), 863–880. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1545896>

HWU. (2019) Shaping Tomorrow Together: Heriot-Watt Strategy 2025. Available at: https://strategy2025.hw.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Strategy_2025.pdf

Mezirow, J. (2009). An overview of transformative learning. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning theorists ... In their own words* (pp. 90–105). Routledge.

Neary, M. (n.d.) <https://studentsproducer.lincoln.ac.uk/>