

## **Learning Bytes: Session 1: How can I mark more efficiently and give feedback to students more quickly?**

**Tues 23 March 2010 12:15-13:15**

Sue opened by thanking people for attending and explaining the purpose and format of the session. The following were covered:

- Turnitin's GradeMark
- The use of the Rubric Calculator within Grademark.
- Voting Pads

### **GradeMark**

#### **Background**

GradeMark is a feature of the Turnitin software, which integrates with Blackboard. The University contact is Abdul Jabbar but staff can speak to their School's LTA regarding the software. A GradeMark manual is available through the [Turnitin website](#), however it was felt the best way to learn how to use the system was to collaborate, have a user group and work together. The University currently has a limited site licence for its use in the Institution.

#### **Use in SEPD**

Cheryl Reynolds (School of Education and Professional Development) talked about GradeMark explaining the context of use in SEPD; a large provision of inservice PGCE, one shared course with students studying in 30 colleges with 58 tutors and some on-line delivery. It is therefore essential that there is consistency in both the timing and quality of feedback and that promises made to students are honoured. To allow students to learn from the feedback provided a three phase process is in place where students submit an outline proposal, draft and final version of a set piece of work. Once a piece of work has been assessed and saved a release date can be assigned, once this comes around the work goes straight into the module box in Blackboard. To some extent the size of your cohort is relevant to how worthwhile the time expended on learning the software is, although the basic functionality is easy to pick up.

The use of Turnitin (originality checking software) highlighted the extent of problems with referencing, students are therefore asked to submit a draft assignment which they receive feedback on before submitting the final piece for grading.

GradeMark allows for the annotation of the script which can then be sent back to the students. Standardised feedback can be generated, by use of the Quickmark palettes, for elements like referencing and spelling, anything which is a recurring element. There are some Quickmark palettes included in the software covering generic things like grammar and punctuation but you can also design your own and customise the comments to what you need.

Although there is an initial learning curve to overcome – once in place the use of GradeMark can be well worth while and save time and effort in the long term. Some users have found that using standardised comments for such things as spelling/grammar errors, marking relating to style and format can then free up cognitive space to concentrate on the content of the submission and provide individual feedback on how this aspect can be improved. Students have fed back that they appreciate being able to get their feedback in privacy as opposed to alongside peers in class. Students may also need some guidance on how to print out their annotated submission on receipt. This is occasionally problematic and dependant on which browser is used.

Marking verification – the system has benefits for second and external marking as colleagues can log onto Blackboard and be given permission to add their comments to particular pieces of work. It is believed that the next version will have blind double marking capabilities.

### **Demonstration**

Cath Ellis (School of Music, Humanities and Media) demonstrated Grademark, the system is accessed via Blackboard. It can take a while to learn your way round the system but eventually can become a huge time saver. The user can customise and build up a bank of comments which can be exported and imported to avoid redrafting. Time and effort is initially expended in drafting these comments but once in place can be drag and dropped which means some more generic feedback can be easily and quickly dealt with so the flow of reading the submission isn't interrupted quite so much.

Documents are imported into the system as pdf files (converted from Word) Some formatting e.g. indenting and italics is sometimes lost in the conversion from Word to pdf. There are buttons down the left hand side of the screen e.g. text tool, highlighter, standard comments and there is the opportunity to build personal sets of comments. Some of the current default comments are very American and quite long but tutors can take ideas from these and adapt them for their use.

### **Inputting comments**

There are various different ways to put in comments:

- Select the 'Type' button and type anywhere in the essay, you can move comments around, save, edit or delete.
- Click on highlighter tool and drag onto script – can change colour etc. Highlight areas of the text and add comments. Can make comments 'sticky' so they are permanently visible than having to mouseover (Tick comment is always visible box).
- Drag and drop comments from one of the comments palette in to the document.

- At the end of the document general comments about the submission can be included. This is always recommended even if comments have been made on the document itself.
- Can provide a link from comments e.g. to Harvard Referencing guidelines.
- If you write a comment on an essay which you want to use again this can be placed on a clipboard and be re-used in other people's work.

GradeMark is a flexible tool which can be customised to suit the individual user. Individual feedback can still be given alongside some standard comments where appropriate, and this is recommended to make it more personal to the student.

The system can be used as a diagnostic tool e.g. all comments from across a collection of submissions can be collected and analysed. Then if there are common errors some 'just in time' teaching can be done.

It was recommended that colleagues wishing to learn Turnitin either set up a Turnitin UK assignment in a module not in use, or set up a post date assignment. Alternatively there is a staff development Turnitin site on Blackboard for practicing in.

### **Rubric Calculators**

The Rubric calculator functionality of Grademark allows the tutor to specify marks for each grade of each of the criteria in the learning outcomes. When marking the tutor can then apply the rubric to the piece of work and click on the box that applies to the student for each of the criteria, and this will automatically calculate a grade for the student. This grade can be over-written, but if you are aiming for transparency it is recommended that you leave it as it is. The rubric takes a little time to get right and may need adjusting after marking a the first few assignments, but once you are happy with it, it works well and really speeds up your marking, as well as providing the students with a very transparent way of working out their marks. In addition to the overall marks, providing both feedback and feed-forward enable students to improve in future work, this dual approach is getting a good response from students. Good practice with this is to involve the students in the setting of the criteria, and applying the criteria to other pieces of work (could be dummy assignments or past students work – make anonymous of course).

Using the rubric calculator means the students can be provided with very specific feedback for example a student might be getting an overall grade of 2.1 but this could be made up of four elements assigned a 1st and one element assigned a 3rd which is pulling the overall grade down. Showing the student that by improving one element an overall grade of a 1st can be achieved can prove very motivational.

Cath uses a process with her students whereby they do self assessment using the rubric at the same time as the tutor is marking their work with the rubric. Through this process the students develop tacit knowledge and a better understanding of the assessment criteria as well as the tutor getting some rich diagnostic data about how the students rate their work, and which of the criteria the students think they understand but perhaps don't. These areas can then be targeted so that the students get the support that they need.

### **Voting Pads**

Voting pads are a relatively easy, quick and effective tool with which to engage students in participating in class. Their use has proved useful for a peer evaluation processes. Cath set up a workshop whereby students designed their own assessment criteria for the evaluation of presentations. This gave the students both an insight into the complexity of choosing criteria, practice of and a better understanding of presentation skills and also an opportunity to benefit from and participate in anonymous peer assessment. Using voting pads the students marked each others presentations. The generated data is exported to an excel spreadsheet and can then be viewed in graph format. The students enjoyed this task and it kept them focussed on the criteria they were being marked against.

Voting pads can also be used in in-class activities such as testing understanding of a particular topic/theory, this is anonymous so the students are not feeling under pressure if they do not understand. It gives the tutor instant feedback which they can act on immediately to rectify any misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge.