

**Feedback in Higher Education:
Exploring students' appraisal,
comprehension and utilisation**

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ABSTRACT

Whilst at University students will experience many instances of feedback on their work. Quite often such feedback is facilitated by academic lecturers in the hope that the student will utilise this and improve in their next assessment (Hester, 2001). Often feedback does not have the desired effect and is unpredictable in terms of enhancing a student's motivation, self-confidence and subsequent effort in future assessments. The thesis reports the findings from three studies. Primarily the present thesis, inspired by phenomenography, explored student's appraisal, comprehension and utilisation of feedback. The thesis also explored lecturer's responses to the observed student experiences in order to offer comparative research findings. The primary data collection method utilised within the thesis was one-to-one interviews however in order to stimulate discussion prior to interview visual representations were employed. In the data collection with students (study two) a drawing activity took place prior to the interview. In the data collection with lecturers' (study three) videos of student's responses to feedback were shown to the lecturers. The interviews in study two were subjected to thematic data analysis and revealed 8 main themes for the students (Lecturers, Emotions, Feedback Cognitions, Efficacy Cognitions, Draft Work, Motivation, Effort and Grades) and 6 main themes for the lecturers (Efficacy Cognitions, Student Autonomy, Problems with Feedback, Effort Conceptions, Feedback Mechanisms and Understanding Students). The findings from study two with students indicated a multifaceted interpretation of the student experience. The outcome space revealed five categories of description (Broken relationship, needy, low achiever, emotionally charged and high achiever). The structure of the variation revealed a hierarchically inclusive pattern indicating how varying patterns of behaviour and emotional reactions interact to affect the students processing and subsequent utilisation of the feedback received. In study three with the lecturers, similarities in conceptions of feedback alongside mismatches between lecturers and students were very apparent. Conclusively the thesis suggests that understanding students individually through fostering lecturer and student relationships, alongside dialogic feedback, help to improve the student's propensity to utilise the feedback received.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Edd Pitt

Declare that the thesis entitled:

Feedback in Higher Education: Exploring students’ appraisal, comprehension and utilisation.

And the work presented in this thesis has been generated by myself and is the result of original research.

I confirm that:

- I carried out this work wholly whilst as a candidate for a research degree at this University.
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
- Where I have quoted the published work of others, the source is always attributed. With the exception of said quotes the thesis is entirely my own work.

Signed.....

Date.....

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My parents have been an inspiration to me ever since I came home from school aged seven and announced that I wanted to be a teacher. My Mum who sadly won't get to see me finish this journey has been by my side throughout and she always told me I could do whatever I wanted if I put my mind to it. So Mum it looks like you were right!

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1. Chapter One - Introduction & Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The evaluative nature of feedback means that a student will receive knowledge of their performance in a given academic task or experience (Hounsell, 1987). Whilst at University students will experience many instances of feedback on their work. Quite often such feedback is facilitated by academic staff in the hope that the student will utilise this and improve in their next assessment (Sadler, 1989). However this accepted view has in recent years received some attention within the feedback literature. Researchers have suggested that feedback should be viewed as a more 'dialogic' (Nicol, 2010) process whereby lecturers and students are involved in constructing and discussing the feedback. Within the present thesis, the primary concern relates to how the student processes such feedback and subsequently utilises this in their next assessment opportunity. In particular it seems logical to suggest that the affective nature of feedback upon motivation, self-confidence and subsequent effort deployment in future assessments is rather unpredictable, therefore further understanding of such mechanisms seems prudent. In changing times within Higher Education a focus upon how students utilise the very tool designed to help foster their learning is essential, in order to improve the student experience. In light of recent National Student survey results and increasing pressure upon lecturers to carry out research as well as provide a 'quality learning experience' it seems reasonable to assert that a greater understanding of the relationship between the feedback that is offered and its subsequent utilisation by students is necessary.

The literature relating to feedback has seen many shifts in supported conceptual and theoretical understanding in recent years. In particular, there are current debates relating to what the exact purpose of feedback is. In this thesis I sought to understand student's appraisal, perceptions and subsequent behavioural adaptations to feedback within a Higher Education context. Central to the thesis is

an exploration of the emotions involved when a student receives feedback. In particular the thesis is concerned with the effect such emotions have upon the students' attempts to appraise, comprehend and utilise the feedback received. This seems a prudent area warranting further enquiry if we consider that the effect of emotional engagement is of interest to university lecturers, especially if we appreciate that potentially emotions could last for a sustained period of time and therefore potentially have a long term effect upon students' learning. Understanding this cause and effect relationship is crucial to further the understanding of higher education feedback. This research is framed around questioning the established monologic mechanism of simply giving students' feedback and expecting them to attend and adjust.

The following sections of the chapter will firstly outline the research question, the author's background, literature within the field and how this relates to the present thesis and finally a summary of the chapters contained within the thesis.

1.1.1 The Research Aim/s

The aim of the research reported in this thesis was to explore how students appraise, comprehend and subsequently utilise feedback received from lecturers during their undergraduate degree. In particular the focus was upon students emotional processing and how this affected their use of feedback. This was achieved through two studies which utilised the visual method of drawing alongside in depth one-to-one interviews, to explore student's experiences of the feedback process and subsequent utilisation of such feedback in future assessments.

A secondary aim of this thesis was to explore how academic lecturers responded to the students' experiences of assessment and feedback (facilitated by videos of student's talking to them). Within this study an exploration of the lecturer's perceptions of feedback and how they dealt with student's in feedback situations was also carried out.

Structurally the thesis follows a three study design. In Study one I explored students' general experiences of feedback when related to what they perceived to be 'good' and 'poor' work. In Study two I utilised a drawing activity method to foster conversations between myself and undergraduate students in relation to their experiences of feedback during their degree. In study three I utilised the data from study two to construct videos which depicted the student's experiences of assessment and feedback. I then played these to lecturers who taught the students used in study two and followed this up with a one-to-one interview.

1.1.2 The researcher

It is important from the outset of the thesis to locate myself, as researcher, within the context of the present research. I have been actively involved in higher education research since 2004. Initially after completing an M.Phil Sport Psychology, I worked as a research assistant on a Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL4) project called Assessment Plus. The project involved colleagues at Liverpool Hope University, Aston University and London Met. I carried out the research for a book called *Writing Essays at University*. This involved interviewing both students and staff, about the use of assessment criteria in essay writing. It was this experience which really captured my enthusiasm for higher education research and really was the inspiration for my doctoral research. Following this project I became a lecturer in Sport Coaching and worked directly with Undergraduate students. Following 4 years of this, I decided to cement my developed interest in higher education research and earlier experiences with the FDTL4 project by embarking upon a PhD. My interest and passion for improving student learning, coupled with my direct experience of teaching and assessing undergraduate students (now at 10 years) led me to choose the area of assessment and feedback.

1.2 Overview of the Thesis

The thesis comprises seven chapters. The first chapter has provided the background of the thesis and indicated the research question. A substantial literature review is

provided in order to build a case for the research carried out in the thesis. Chapter two provides a description and justification of phenomenography as the conceptual and methodological approach used in the majority of the thesis. Further a pilot of the drawing method of data collection is also reported. Chapter three reports the results from study one which asked students to discuss their experiences of good and bad work. Chapter four reports the findings from study two with undergraduate students, where the drawing method alongside 1-2-1 interviews was utilised. Chapter five re-constructs the data discussed in chapter four in order to present a holistic representation of the student's experiences of assessment and feedback through the outcome space. Chapter six discusses study three with lecturers who taught the students from study two. Chapter seven is the conclusion to the thesis; it presents key contributions of the study along with their significance and implications for the scholarly literature and for the field. The thesis concludes by referring to limitations and key recommendations for further research.

1.3 Literature Review

It is generally accepted that feedback in the higher education sector is viewed as a 'good thing'. Research has frequently attested to the notion that feedback is important for learning, development and improvement (Hounsell 2003; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Price, Handley & Millar 2011). Several drivers have promoted such a viewpoint; Black & Williams' (1998) work on assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning, the push by QAA, other stakeholders for greater transparency, the consistent National Student Survey results which say that students feel unhappy about the feedback they get (HEFCE 2010; Radloff 2010). However, simply accepting that feedback is a 'good thing' may not necessarily encompass the entire picture and certainly falls short of understanding how feedback affects the student population and their subsequent assessment behaviour. The effect that feedback has upon a particular student is unpredictable in terms of enhancing a student's motivation, self-confidence and subsequent effort deployment in future assessments (Young, 2000). In order for university lecturers to improve the quality of learning, a greater understanding of the relationship

between the feedback that is offered and its subsequent utilisation by students therefore is important.

In recent years feedback has dominated the focus of University management due to its inclusion in the National Student Survey. In the period between 2005 and 2013 student satisfaction scores in relation to feedback were proportionally lower to all other scores on the NSS survey (NSS 2005-2013). Universities have attempted to respond to this by enhancing the quality of feedback provided by lecturers, through improving its detail, quantity and promptness. Feedback related research in recent years has indicated that lecturing staff view feedback as an extremely useful learning tool (Maclellan, 2001; Carless, 2006). However research by many authors has in fact suggested that the feedback students are receiving is doing little to improve their learning (Crisp, 2007; Bailey and Garner, 2010; Wingate, 2010). It is perhaps this disparity between staff and student interpretation of the usefulness of feedback which warrants further investigation. Not least from the perspective of the student, in terms of the underlying explanations for their comparative dissatisfaction with the feedback received (if one is to interpret the NSS scores as an indication of this).

The literature relating to feedback has seen many shifts in supporting conceptual and theoretical understanding in recent years. In particular, there are current debates relating to what the exact purpose of feedback is, how students engage with feedback and how such feedback is utilised by 21st century student learners. The following literature review will discuss the formulation of the current understanding of feedback by examining the relevant literature, identifying gaps and suggesting a fruitful line of research enquiry for this thesis in order to add to the existing body of knowledge. To that end, in this thesis I will explore relevant differing constructs in an attempt to understand their multifaceted and complex interactions in relation to student's experiences of assessment and feedback.

1.3.1 Early interpretations of feedback practice

Early feedback related research was carried out in secondary school environments by Page (1958). Page, investigated the effects that grades alone versus grades alongside written feedback comments had on school children. Page (1958) discovered that:

“When the average secondary teacher takes the time and trouble to write comments (believed to be ‘encouraging’) on student papers, these apparently have a measureable and potent effect upon student effort, or attention, or attitude, or whatever it is which causes learning to improve.” (pp. 180-181).

This is perhaps a rather simplistic view of the complex relationship and interaction between staff and students. For instance, it is presumptive to contend that a teacher’s feedback will have such a profound effect upon some or even all of the mechanisms which potentially could cause learning to improve. In general terms the assumption made by university lecturers is that the comments they write on students’ work are readily understood, processed and put into action, however how can one be so sure that this is occurring? Jacobs (1974) contends that delivering and receiving feedback involves more than just an “objective transfer of information” (p.408). In this regard, Kulhavy (1977) reported that feedback acts to confirm correct answers, thus helping students to ‘know what they know’. A straightforward conclusion to draw from this would consider that a student receives knowledge of results and therefore will know what to do next time. However, where is the evidence to suggest that this feedback reinforces the knowledge that the student has? For example how does the student know what they know and more importantly how do they know how to elicit the correct response next time, to a similar assessment task? Immediate feedback to a correct response to direct questions in class, as Crooks (1988) argues, is perhaps more helpful to the student, when they experience periods of lower confidence in relation to the answers they

provide. Clearly, the type of assessment the student is completing may mediate the feedback they receive. Comprehension or tasks requiring higher level cognitive proficiency may require a deeper level of feedback from the teacher, which identifies the sources of the students' misconceptions (Block & Anderson, 1975; Fredericksen, 1984).

Within the higher education teaching system in the UK, the established norm has been to provide students with detailed feedback on the work they complete (Cross, 1986). Characteristics of such a provision can be seen in the traditional high level universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Generally students reading for an undergraduate degree at such a university would write an essay every week, read it out to their tutor and then receive immediate oral feedback relating to the contents which revealed the student's understanding of the given topic. This type of teaching method was on a one-to-one basis. Logically this can be classified as formative feedback due to the fact that the overarching goal was to improve understanding prior to the 'final' summative examination at the end of the three year degree course. The model employed by many higher education institutes differs from this. Infrequent submitted summative pieces of work, usually at the end of a module, returned at a later date to students, with detailed written comments seem to be more common (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Further, as Hounsell (2003) has suggested students receive their feedback via structured feedback forms in part due to the need for greater transparency, consistency and support for new teaching staff. Such practice is also necessary in order to satisfy quality assurance/quality enhancement processes alongside external examiners. These viewpoints seem even more prevalent in 2014 with the potential onset of students as consumers becoming an emerging line of enquiry within the media and some academic literature. Indeed, such a method of assessing students might be explained by the need to accommodate increasing student numbers under the constraints of reduced staff numbers. Conversely, within distance education (typical to courses offered by the Open University), regular assignments and tutor feedback is a feature. Students studying in such courses can expect up to fifty times more feedback than those

studying at more traditional campus based universities (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). In more recent times the development of MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses) has meant that higher education courses have reached a far wider audience and as such assessment methods have reflected this element of 'massive', but little is known within the literature relating to the feedback practice involved. Reflecting upon these differing approaches to assessment and feedback it seems reasonable to assert that students will be experiencing very different learning environments.

An accepted argument within the literature is that students need to receive feedback. Cross, (1986) argues that for students to be aware of how far they are from achieving the desired learning goals they need feedback from the tutor. However, recently Nicol (2010) has argued that a growth in student numbers has meant that feedback comments appear detached from a supportive tutorial system which once existed and thus students have become dissatisfied with the feedback process. Perhaps though, consideration of the desired learning goal is needed. Cross (1986) failed to indicate whose learning goal this indeed was. If the teacher and student have differing desires then how useful will the feedback really be? The momentum for feedback related research grew in the 1980's with researchers such as Ramaprasad (1983) classifying feedback as the:

“Information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way” (Ramaprasad, 1983, p. 4).

In this regard Ramaprasad (1983) indicated that a student would be told what they did well and not so well. Simplistically this seems an appropriate method for informing an individual about how they can make improvements to their work/this particular piece of work. However such a method could be regarded as a one-way system whereby the student is receiving knowledge of their results and not knowledge of how they can improve. In an attempt to shift the debate and question the accepted understanding of feedback mechanisms Sadler (1989) highlighted that the issue within the premise of providing feedback centres upon an

accepted view within the literature of; test, response and feedback. In this sense, the feedback for the student is outcome based rather than learning based. It seems logical that this type of feedback is acceptable for more rote learning tasks such as replication of numbered sequences, however arguably not for more complex meta-cognitive activities which the overwhelming majority of students will currently experience in HE. In perhaps a more useful sense, Bangert-Drowns, Kulick & Morgan (1991) using a meta-analysis of 58 experiments taken from 40 reports, reported that feedback was most effective when it was designed to stimulate correction of errors through a thoughtful approach to them in relation to the original learning relevant to the task.

1.3.2 Current critiques of traditional feedback practice

Sadler (1989) argues that in order for feedback to be effective the student must take an active role in the process. Implicit in this argument is the student being able to understand the gap between actual and desired achievement. Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick (2006) indicate that in more recent times the literature has seen the emergence of the term “student centred learning” (p3). Such terminology assumes that the responsibility for learning and engagement in such learning lies with the student (Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003). However issues relating to feedback, in this student centred learning environment, have been uncovered. Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick (2006) argue that within higher education lecturers are still in control of the quantity and delivery of feedback. Consequently such feedback is perceived as transmission focused. The issues associated with such a process centre on the marginalisation of self-regulation skill development, which can improve student learning (Boud, 2000). Further, the transmission process assumes that students readily understand and process feedback comments. However researchers such as Higgins, Hartley & Skelton (2001) argue that in order for a student to regulate their learning they need to be able to understand and process feedback comments from lecturing staff. Such a viewpoint indicates that a dialogue with lecturers may

facilitate this. In this regard, Gravatt & Petersen (2002) suggest that dialogue is much more than simply a chat between the lecturer and student, rather a relationship is formed whereby each party think and reason together. Finally, Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick (2006) contend that the students' motivational beliefs may have a contributing role in the processing of feedback comments. Clearly such a premise centres upon the environment in which feedback is received. Dialogue with staff could, they argue, maximise or even promote the interaction between motivational beliefs and feedback processing. Taras (2002) has also carried out research relating to the transmission of feedback identifying that it may be that the teacher, through their feedback, is the one identifying and communicating the mismatch. Inherent in this conception is the potential for misunderstanding of the lecturers feedback message to the student. Critically, the concern for academic staff is a positive behavioural adaptation to the feedback received, however, how can one be so sure that this will ensue?

The debate surrounding the apparent transmission model of feedback which has been operational within mainstream HE for many years has developed more recently. Researchers have begun to re-examine the conceptualisation of feedback in terms of its operation (Boud, 2007; Nicol, 2010; Sadler, 2010; Nicol, et al 2013). A proponent of such a shift in conceptual thinking is Sadler (2010) who argues that lecturers telling a student what is right and wrong with their work will not necessarily transfer to any improvement in such work. The concept of dialogic feedback has been suggested whereby students are encouraged to engage in self-judgement and self-regulation (Sadler, 1989; Handley, et al., 2008; Hounsell, et al. 2008; Nicol, 2008, 2009, 2010; Black & McCormick, 2010; Carless et al., 2011). Self-regulation has been defined as:

“a multilevel multi-component process that targets affect, cognitions, and actions, as well as features of the environment for modulation in the service of one's own goals” (Boekaerts, 2006, p347).

Sadler (2010) argues that in order for elements of self-regulation to be fostered students need to be exposed to opportunities in which they can critically assess others' work in order to develop their own submissions. Nicol (2008) has argued that one issue relating to feedback practice is the culture which students bring with them when entering university. In a sense what Nicol (2008) is suggesting is that some students may enter university without the necessary self-regulatory skills in order to successfully engage with a change in feedback practices. Nicol (2010) has argued that at least most researchers within the realm of feedback research are in agreement that if students are to learn from feedback dialogue opportunities to act upon the feedback received must be afforded to them (Nicol 2010; Carless et al. 2011; Price, Handley & Millar 2011). Therefore, one question which would need to be addressed is the willingness and capability of both students and arguably lecturers to engage in a transformative process to enable such skill development to occur. In this regard Cowan's (2010) contention that making the judgements that Sadler and Nicol allude to is a professional skill which needs to be developed over time.

Hounsell (2007) presented the concept of sustainable feedback which to some degree can be related to self-regulation in that it attempts to firstly promote high-value feedback which can be applied beyond the present task in hand. Secondly, it challenges the student to generate and interpret their feedback through dialogue with the lecturer. Thirdly, it allows lecturers and students to discuss feedback in relation to learning activities carried out in the module. In this sense the student's role is at the heart of the process and their ability to self-regulate mediates its successful outcome. Carless et al (2011) argue that in order for feedback to become a sustainable practice students need to develop these skills. Yang & Carless (2013) in this regard, suggest such skills will enable students to self-regulate their learning. Such a viewpoint is seen as a longitudinal development goal which centres upon the student becoming exposed to multiple opportunities in which to practice these skills. Such exposure is facilitated by the student engaging in dialogue with their lecturer alongside periods of self-monitoring, self-assessment and peer assessment

(Carless et al, 2011). Aligning with Cowan's (2010) view whilst this at a conceptual level seems plausible and positive towards improving the usefulness of feedback, Carless et al. (2011) commented that:

“Only a minority of lecturers are likely . . . to have the mindset, skills and motivation to prioritize the development of self-regulative activities congruent with sustainable feedback” (p. 406).

Orsmond and Merry (2011) explain that the problem with feedback presently concerns the fact that lack of dialogue results in students never realising the potential positive impact feedback can have upon their learning and lecturers seeming to be unaware how their feedback is used by the students. Inherently therefore it would seem that changes to practice for both lecturers and students do need to be initiated in order for the traditional transmission model of feedback to be modified. Despite the recent advancements in conceptual thinking about feedback practices it does appear that the transmission model is still very much in operation. Blair & McGinty (2012) reported that the students in their study predominately experienced lecturers telling them about their feedback.

Potential explanations for a lack of wholesale adoption or indeed change in practice could be seen in some of the earlier research on dialogic feedback practice. Beaumont, O'Doherty & Shannon (2008) reported findings from the higher education sector which seems to indicate that students experienced low levels of support and guidance during the assessment process. This was particularly the case in the first two stages of the dialogic feedback cycle, which are preparatory and in-task guidance. The crucial factors within these findings relate to students indicating that this did not meet their expectations and that they found the meaningfulness of feedback dialogue to be inconsistent (Beaumont et al, 2008). Such findings could lead one to suggest that the dialogic process was undermined by a lack of scaffolding being in place for the learners in the initial stages of development, thus aligning with Carless et al's (2011) caution and that of Price et al. (2011) whom

argue that engagement is more important than the technicalities of feedback itself. Therefore, students do need to appreciate that dialogic feedback is not the same as the transmission model and thus lecturer and student interaction is needed (Seifert, 2010).

Crucially though for the present thesis it seems prudent to perhaps take a step back from these debates in order to consider how students actually feel about their relationships and indeed dialogue with their lecturers. Such a contention becomes extremely important if one is to accept the suggestion of McFadden & Munn (2002) that 'student engagement is a process rather than a product' (p 362). They argue that a relationship between the lecturer and student strongly facilitates this. Arguing that students need to engage with dialogue seems logical; however for some students this could be counterproductive to their use of feedback. Accepting that all students, for example, wish to engage with 1-2-1 meetings with their lecturers seems to me to be a little generalised especially if we appreciate Poulus & Mahony's (2008) suggestion that some students do not feel that they can interact with their lecturer due to their own confidence level and a lack of established relationship with their lecturer. However, research has reported that some students do appreciate a combination of written comments alongside 1-2-1 meetings with their lecturers (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Hyland, 2000; Drew, 2001; Lillis, 2001; Thomas, 2002; Pitts, 2005; Crozier et al. 2008; Rea & Cochrane, 2008; Duers & Brown, 2009; Pokorny & Pickford, 2010; Reid, 2010; Blair & McGinty 2012).

Arguments relating to the non-adoption of feedback by students can be traced back to Sadler 's (1983) paper in which he explains that for academics the main conundrum with respect to learning is why students fail to act upon the criticisms offered by the feedback in their subsequent assessment experiences. Sadler (1983) and Hounsell (1995) both contend that feedback in this regard is an ineffectual tool for learning improvement. Within this contention is an inference relating to the transferability of the feedback between different assessment types, modules and

subjects being studied. An example of this disparity between what the lecturers were intending the student to understand by the feedback and what the student has comprehended from the feedback can be seen in the findings of Lea & Street (2000). They conducted a qualitative study examining students' interpretations of feedback comments. They illustrate powerfully the comprehension mismatch between lecturer and student. For example a lecturer may write a comment such as 'some evidence of wider reading shown' which as they argue implies that the tutor expected more wider reading than was evident, due to the presence of the word 'some'. The student appraises this as a confirmation of the fact they carried out wider reading. The potential issue is therefore that the student will ignore the feedback, which in the lecturers' eyes, was designed to stimulate further wider reading and continue to prepare and execute in a similar manner in the next assessment. In more recent research Orsmond & Merry (2011) confirm that there is still a misalignment between the lecturers intended meaning and the students' interpretation and subsequent usage. They argue that an explanation for this could lie in the student's present level of understanding within the subject area, thus inferring that student achievement status and level of ability may impact upon their feedback processing capability. In this regard subsequent research by Orsmond & Merry (2012) has suggested that high achieving students demonstrated strong self-assessment skills alongside an ability to distinguish their current level of learning and how that may influence future learning. The low achieving students in their study struggled with self-assessment and could not regulate their learning by utilising the feedback from their tutors due to not being able to understand the comments as they were intended by the lecturer.

Sadler (1989) argues that students need to be trained in how to interpret, process and act upon the feedback in relation to what they have already produced and how this can improve in subsequent submissions. It does appear that what Sadler (1989) is contending here has similarities with self-regulatory behaviour. Such viewpoints seem to be becoming more frequent in recent literature in this sense however; one issue which does present itself is the apparent applicability of such contentions to the entire student body. That is to say that many researchers have argued that it is

the 'better' students who quite often display the ability to self-regulate and therefore make the best use of the feedback offered to them (Covic & Jones, 2008; Fisher et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2011). It is apparent therefore that in the present thesis both the 'better' and 'lower' achieving students need to be investigated in order to appreciate what constitutes the operational skills in terms of being a self-regulated learner. Such an exploration seems prudent given the findings of Wingate (2010) who looked at development of academic writing, concluding that research should focus upon understanding why some students are able to self-regulate but others cannot. This does appear to be in direct contrast to Nicol's (2009) suggestions that students all enter with the ability to self-regulate and thus lecturers should develop this capacity rather than give feedback. However one would argue that such an approach needs to be researched further before being adopted within the sector. For example a greater understanding of the student's self-regulatory behaviour in relation to assessment and feedback seems a prudent line of enquiry. Further as Burke (2009) argues if lecturers do not offer support in terms of developing self-regulatory learners there is a very real chance that the students' apparently inadequate learning strategies may continue to be utilised whilst at university.

Despite the practice of dialogic feedback being introduced into many courses within the sector many researchers have reported that additional feedback opportunities have on the whole not been taken up by many students (Handley & Cox, 2007; Burke, 2009; Bloxham & Campbell, 2010; Fisher et al., 2011). Crisp (2007) highlighted that despite all of the available literature relating to assessment and feedback in light of Sadler's (1983) arguments, similar issues are still affecting academic staff now. However, researchers such as Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006), Hounsell (2008) and Rust et al (2003) argue that methods of giving feedback are changing from lecturing staff correcting students' work and handing it back to them, towards a more student centred process model, but this will take time to become fully operational. It does appear that aside from the willingness of lecturers to adopt this method, central to this process is the student constructing meaning in

relation to the feedback given. However one would also argue that understanding the nature and practical application of such a model requires lecturing staff to appreciate the dialogical nuances of feedback and the need for a more structured learning environment in the early stages of this approach. In this sense the present thesis seeks to explore student's appraisal, perceptions and subsequent behavioural adaptations to feedback in order to understand how students construct meaning from their feedback. Further, appreciating that other constructs may be interacting to cause the student to; not engage with the process, not be able to process the feedback and crucially close the gap between actual and desired performance.

In order to offer practical solutions to the conundrum of how to engage students in dialogic feedback, many researchers have suggested the concept of utilising peer review. Such a method has received much attention in the last three years within the literature and as such we are beginning to see studies which have practically operationalised such an approach. Nicol, Thomson & Breslin (2014) explain that peer review is:

“An arrangement whereby students evaluate and make judgements about the work of their peers and construct a written feedback commentary. In effect, students both produce feedback reviews on others' work and receive feedback reviews on their own work. Peer review is an important alternative to teacher feedback, as research indicates that both the production and the receipt of feedback reviews can enhance students' learning without necessarily increasing teacher workload”. (p103).

Cho & MacArthur (2010) reported that after receiving feedback from multiple peers' students' draft work submission improved more so than when they received feedback from one peer or indeed their lecturer. In a similar study Cho, Cho, & Haker (2010) argue that students benefit from the peer review process as their exposure to different perspectives is increased. Indeed Nicol et al (2013) report

similar results indicating that students also reported learning gains due to the opportunity to critically engage with others work. In this sense self-regulatory behaviour was evident and thus the student's reliance upon the lecturer for feedback was reduced.

1.3.3 Students' perceptions of feedback

University students' perceptions of feedback have been researched recently and perhaps offer another perspective to the views already discussed relating to usefulness of feedback (Beaumont et al, 2008). In relation to perceptions concerning assessment at a Scottish University, Maclellan (2001) surveyed 130 students and 80 lecturers. Within the questionnaire four specific questions related to feedback and a disparity of opinions appeared within the data. The lecturers considered their feedback to be helpful and facilitative towards students learning. By comparison, the students felt that tutor comments were sometimes helpful and only thirty percent of them felt they facilitated their understanding. Hartley & Chesworth (2000) reported that the students completing their quantitative questionnaire about feedback, routinely had difficulty deciphering what different tutors and subjects required of them through the feedback they received. Within their study the participants were unable to understand and implement the feedback given. Similar findings can be seen in several other studies (Jenkins, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Sommers, 1992; Leki, 1995; Plum, 1998; Lea & Street, 2000, Hattie & Timperley, 2007, Price et al., 2010). Consequently, some researchers report that students are unaware of what to do with the feedback they receive (Leki, 1990) and that students are disappointed when they perceive the quantity of useful feedback they receive as low (Spinks, 1998). In this regard, Quinton & Smallbone, (2010) suggest that some students fail to take advantage of the contents of the feedback due to a lack of critical ability and understanding of its contents. Such viewpoints seem congruent with Sadler's (2010) contentions that:

“Students cannot convert feedback statements into actions for improvement without sufficient working knowledge of some fundamental concepts” (p. 537).

As I have previously alluded to in this chapter the students’ pre-university learning experiences alongside their previous ways of doing things have also been found to impact upon their receptivity to feedback (Bloxham & Campbell, 2010). Clarifying the current practices within school based curricula, Beaumont et al (2011) argue that within schools pupils experience numerous formative opportunities and guidance whereas at university students are expected to independently learn and complete summative assessment without at times an opportunity for formative feedback along the way. It is perhaps this issue which explains why some researchers have argued that students become resilient especially with regards to making changes to their practice even after lecturers attempt to almost train this out of the students (Fritz & Morris, 2000). In the present thesis an appreciation of the impact that a student’s transition into the new learning environment needs to be explored in relation to its potential impact upon students’ assessment and feedback related behaviours.

The research discussed above, have resulted in questions being asked relating to the effectiveness of written feedback (Hillocks, 1986; Leki, 1990). Hounsell (1995) even goes so far as to argue that feedback is not enough to progress student learning. However many studies have reported that students do still require and even request feedback especially with regard to positive feedback (Beason, 1993; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Hyland, 1998; Spinks, 1998). Indeed Brinkworth, McCann, Mathews, & Nordström (2009) found in their study that students arrived at university with high expectations of receiving feedback on assignments. Generally the factors affecting a desire for positive feedback relate to the increased motivation such instances promote (Hyland, 1998). Motivational feedback is not without its inherent problems as some researchers have suggested that the feedback at times merely concentrates upon the content of the work rather than

developmental areas designed to improve future assessment performance (Glover & Brown, 2006; Orrell, 2006; Orsmond & Merry, 2011).

More worryingly, Jackson (1995) highlighted the feedback thoughts of final year students in Australia. He reported that they were more likely to look at the grade than the feedback. The purpose of the feedback in their opinion demonstrated that at least their essay had been read and marked fairly. Further some students have suggested that the feedback merely justifies why the mark has been given (Carless, 2006; Chetwyn & Dobbyn, 2011). Students holding such a viewpoint, it could be argued, have not been exposed to the framework outlined earlier by Sadler, Nicol and Taras. However, if we are to consider that students have the choice whether or not to utilise the feedback they receive, it is apparent in this case the message regarding its potential usefulness is somewhat muted.

In further support of feedback not being attended to Hounsell (1987) highlighted that it is sometimes not even read especially if the student received a grade which disappointed them. Such findings have also been reported with regards to the student only being concerned with the grade outcome rather than any improvement in the next assessment related feedback (MacDonald, 1991; Mutch, 2003; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2005; Carless, 2006; Weaver, 2006). It has even been suggested that some students either throw their essays away or fail to pick up their scripts from the lecturer if the grade does not match their expectations (Wojtas, 1998). However there is some evidence within the literature to support the notion of students attending to feedback which is received alongside a grade. (Higgins et al, 2002).

Brookhart (2001) details the learning patterns of what he regards as 'successful students'. Such students utilise both the feedback and the mark received to engage in self-assessment of their learning which in turn directs their future learning. Within the findings of Brookhart (2001) it is though apparent that the 'successful students' perhaps do not represent the vast majority of students that a lecturer will

encounter. Therefore, it seems prudent to suggest that this particular population of student is a utopian ideal for a lecturer and thus perhaps the findings can be tempered by this. The crucial understanding from such debates within the literature is a greater understanding of the mechanisms involved within the adoption of feedback when it is received alongside grades or scores. In this regard Carless et al (2011) suggest that moving students away from a concentration upon grades by engaging them in continuous quality feedback will alter their pre-assessment dispositions and subsequently transform their understanding of feedback to view it as a developmental process. The challenge though is that for many students assessment outcomes can be regarded as a competitive situation in which they can rank themselves against significant others in their peer group (Hughes, 2014).

One issue that needs to be explored further in this literature review is that of individual differences; whether each student will react in the same way to comments from lecturing staff. For example, if the lecturers' comments are disguised as suggestions, some students will recognise this and decode the message as something that they need to take account of in future submissions, whereas others will interpret the comments too literally and consider them as optional (Lillis & Turner, 2001). Academic staff, responsible for providing feedback to students, often do so in a manner which can be interpreted as foreign to many recipients. Norton & Norton (2000) reported that many students struggled to make sense of the comments they received. The issue is that students have to translate the sometime complicated language and terminology into their own language, so they can use the feedback for future assessments (Hounsell, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Lea & Street, 1998; Chanock, 2000; Hartley & Chesworth, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Higgins et al., 2002; McCune & Hounsell, 2005; Carless, 2006). In addition to terminology concerns, there is the issue of interpretation. Brockbank & McGill (1998) found that what many students want from the feedback process is to engage personally with the marker to discuss feedback rather than receive written comments alone. With rising student numbers and increased pressure on academics to produce high quality research this may not always be possible (Brown, 2007). However if one is to agree with Higgins et al.

(2001) who stated that a primary issue in higher education is how students understand feedback (how they make sense of it) and therefore how they make sense of their assessments, then clearly some form of personal engagement with students is necessary to ensure such goals are achieved. It could be argued that the students' understanding of the feedback provided may provide a catalyst to their subsequent behaviour.

Hyland & Hyland (2001) suggest that feedback is more effective if it includes both positive and negative comments, contending that the positive will increase the likelihood of students accepting the negative comments. The tone, construction and quantity of feedback have been discussed within the field. Lizzio, Wilson, Gilchrist & Gallois (2003) suggest that positive comments (those which offer encouragement) reinforce positive reactions as well as nullify the potential for negative comments to be interpreted unfavourably. In particular, the concern is that negative comments have an effect on the students' motivation for the next assessment. Therefore it is reasonable to assert that within the literature there is a consensus that positive feedback is important to foster student learning (Beason, 1993; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Hyland, 1998; Spinks, 1998). However lecturers need to be careful as being too positive to the degree whereby it is perceived as more a motivational statement rather than relating to progression or achievement, could be regarded as counterproductive.

A further concept that needs to be acknowledged is the practice of overly softened feedback, as this could be problematic. Students may dismiss the feedback as not assisting them in improving for subsequent assessments and thus the developmental value is lost (Young, 2000). Frequent research papers have suggested that many students prefer positive comments which they seem to be able to identify easier than those suggesting negative connotations (Ferris, 1995; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Pitts, 2005; Rea & Cochrane, 2008; Baker & Hansen-Bricker, 2010). Negatively phrased feedback appears to cause some students, especially those who are already low in confidence, to react in a very negative

manner (Rice et al., 1994; Young, 2000; Pitts, 2005; Weaver, 2006; Poulos & Mahony, 2008; Ferguson, 2011). It does seem though that in order for students to truly benefit from any form of comments they receive, such comments need to reflect elements of criticality (Drew, 2001; Higgins et al., 2002; Holmes & Papageorgiou, 2009). However, it does appear that although students' decisions about what constitutes good and poor grades for them as an individual are important this does not truly explain their subsequent behavioural patterns in relation to the assessment feedback. One would argue that the grade alone cannot be the only construct affecting the student's feedback utilisation.

1.3.4 Formative and Summative Feedback

In a comprehensive and far reaching review of 250 articles from infant school all the way to university students, Black & William (1998) report that in order to improve learning an emphasis upon strengthening formative assessment is essential:

“All these studies show that innovations that include strengthening the practice of formative assessment produce significant and often substantial learning gains” (Black & William, 1998, p. 140).

Their review highlighted the positive effects that feedback has upon learning compared with other aspects of teaching. Central to the issue under consideration however, is the quality, quantity and eventual usability of the feedback offered to the students. That said, one must appreciate that the student may not be positively disposed or motivated to care about it enough to actually make use of it.

Framed within this discussion is a consideration of what Gibbs & Simpson (2004) report. Traditionally in many universities students study small modules which are conducted over one or two semesters. They argue that perhaps one piece of detailed feedback on an extended essay or design task after ten weeks of study is unlikely to support learning across a whole course very well (Gibbs & Simpson,

2004). Gibbs, Lucas & Simonite (1996) indicate that modularisation and an increase in class sizes in recent years, has negatively affected assessment patterns adopted by universities. They argue that perhaps this has led to assessment becoming more streamlined and reflecting more timed assessments and formal examinations. Lea & Street (2000) also reported difficulties with institutional procedures like modularity. The issue of receiving feedback on such assessments is apparent when one considers the findings of Orsmond, Merry & Reiling (2005) who suggest that students were unable to benefit from receiving feedback when they found the comments related only to a specific piece of work or module. The argument is also confounded if we consider that even if students are exposed to consistent feedback within each of their subjects; the potential for inconsistencies between these subjects is very plausible (Lea & Street, 1998; Baynham, 2000).

There are many studies in the literature which advocate meaningful and direct feedback over the course of a unit or module of study. Carroll (1995) carried out formative assessment workshops with 300 medical students. The chosen method was to use multiple choice test questions followed by a short tutorial provided by the teaching staff. Although not individualised, the feedback was immediate and designed to identify gaps in the knowledge base of the students and afforded them more time to study before moving onto the next section of the course. Results from the evaluations of the teaching method revealed that 85% of the cohort wanted more such sessions. Although not insightful in terms of delivering definitive results relating to improvement in learning, this research does demonstrate the fact that immediate feedback which appeared useable to the students' harnessed positive learning related reactions. Employing a similar protocol with psychology students, Iverson, Iverson & Lukin (1994) reported that frequent ungraded tests accompanied by feedback produced no significant improvement in performance of the students. However, more interestingly, the students did report a wish to experience such tests in other courses. Whilst not improving performance in the short term perhaps it could be argued that the students were beginning to experience a learning gain and thus future exposure to such an environment may foster performance

improvement. Conversely, Schloss, Smith & Posluzny (1990) working with graduate students in teacher training for special education reported that by giving students a short formative quiz after each lecture improved student performance significantly in comparison to students not receiving the quiz. Further and perhaps more convincingly Sly (1999) highlighted the success of weaker students on subsequent exam performance after practice tests and feedback were utilised. The students completed practice tests on computers and then were offered immediate feedback in relation to areas of weakness. 197 weaker students chose to take the tests and they all improved their examination scores, even to the degree where they outperformed 417 previously identified stronger students. Furthermore the benefits of the tests were still apparent in the following examination.

Within the feedback literature a debate relating to the merits of formative and summative assessment has been very evident (William & Black, 1996; William, 2000; Taras, 2002). Understanding the complex nature of such a debate is crucial for individuals with a vested interest in Higher Education due to the associated implications upon teaching and subsequent student learning (Taras, 2002). Moreover, Knight (2000) argues that the assessment procedures experienced by students have the strongest influence upon their learning. For example the student may approach an examination differently to an essay question. The issue under consideration here is the contention that when an assessment endorses achievement it has a feedout function (Knight, 2000). That is to say the nature of the assessment means that it is viewed as a performance indicator for many stakeholders (student, institution, league tables). Crucially the grade or classification the student receives indicates their current level of performance. Such is the importance of this assessment, many researchers have labeled it as high stakes or summative and subsequently argue that it must appear to be robust in design and function (Knight, 2000, Taras, 2002.) Some have argued that summative assessment conflicts with the learning ambitions of Higher Education, to the degree whereby it impedes students (Boud, 1995). However as Knight (2000) argues, assessment regardless of the fact that it is summative can have a feedback function, if its goal is to further learning within students. Taras (2002) argues that the debate

relating to formative and summative assessment is redundant. She argues that for learning to occur, all types of assessment need to have formative elements as a primary concern within them. The feedback contained within these elements will allow tutors and students to successfully judge their performance and also allow subsequent learning to occur (Taras, 2002).

Taras (2002) contends that the teacher or person giving feedback within formative assessment has two options. The first concerns developing a student's capacity to understand the gap between actual and desired performance as proposed by Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, (2006). Inevitably, this requires the student to appraise the situation and initiate a corrective response where necessary. Implicit within this construct is the development of the student into a self-assessing individual (Sadler, 1983; 1989). The second option and perhaps the more traditionally operated method is for the teacher to lead the student towards the correct response through guided feedback. However, one can question this methodology as this certainly does not promote the independent learner capable of autonomous thought. Suggesting a more balanced approach Sadler (1989) contends that the student firstly needs to understand what it is the lecturer or teacher requires from them and then they need understand their own performance in relation to these goals. Central to this premise is the construction of a learner who appreciates and understands the 'guild knowledge' (Sadler, 1989, p.126). The guild in this case is not the property of the lecturer, rather they are a member of this and thus a student could become a legitimate member too. In a sense, it is important that the student's concept of quality become the prevailing understanding of quality, although access to this will mostly have come from a sequence of different lecturers. To facilitate this, the lecturer needs to provide access to their knowledge through discussion and guided exemplars in the classroom. Such formative practice enables the student, over time, to develop a greater understanding of where the tutor is coming from and thus carry out self-assessment of their own learning (Sadler, 1989).

Naturally the process only becomes complete when the student is able to successfully apply this to future learning situations reflecting similar parameters. After such an occurrence it is logical to contend that the formative feedback, existing within a summative assessment pattern, can benefit the student. Arguably, even if the student is completing summative work, one can contend that if a lecturer wishes to enhance a student's learning capacity then emphasising formative assessment and the associated feedback can still be the focus (Taras, 1999). Adopting such a methodology may attend to some of the issues associated with mis- understanding of lecturers' comments.

Within the debate relating to formative and summative assessment, Taras (2002) goes as far as to contend that:

“Assessment (whether formative or summative) is subsumed within the theoretical premise of formative feedback since feedback goes a step beyond assessment.” (p.506).

Therefore, it might be argued that in order for students to make positive behavioural and operational adaptations to the feedback they receive, the process of giving feedback needs to reflect the postulates of Sadler (1989). This seems especially prudent in light of Gibbs & Simpsons' (2004) indication that once feedback is given some form of follow up is needed to check whether the student has taken this into consideration. They argue that unless this occurs the student may choose to simply ignore the feedback. Framing feedback within a formative assessment process leading to summative submission could go some way to rectify this potential issue. Formative assessment is of course not restricted to the more formal assessment tasks, it can occur in any instances where a student's performance is evaluated by their lecturer or their peers (William, 2011). Many students also have the opportunity to receive formative feedback on draft work prior to summative submission (Price, et al. 2011; Sancho-Vinuesa, Escudero-Viladomsa, & Masiàb, 2013).

The relative success of formative assessment and associated feedback can be seen to be affected by the presence of graded marks or scores. In the Scottish education system Wojtas (1998) reported that some students were more concerned with the mark they received than the feedback that accompanied this. Within the present UK Higher Education system a referenced score or grade indicates achievement. However, the importance of giving feedback to students can be identified in the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) code of practice on assessment of students (2012) who state:

“Institutions provide appropriate and timely feedback to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement but does not increase the burden of assessment (p.13).

Therefore it seems within the Higher Education system a balance between giving students grades or scores on the work they submit and ensuring they attend to the feedback received is necessary. A consideration regarding the effect such indices have upon students' adoption of feedback is necessary here. Sadler (1989) argues that the presence of grades or scores diverts a student's attention away from the lecturers' judgmental reasoning behind the achievement score. Clearly therefore the feedback that the lecturer has written may not be attended to and thus a logical argument could be that the grade is destructive to the formative process (Sadler, 1989, Taras, 1999). The counterproductive nature of grades is further emphasised by numerous researchers (Enginarlar, 1993; James, 2000; Goldstein, 2006; Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Vardi, 2009). More specifically Black & William (1998) assert that if the student receives a number of bad grades or scores over a period of time, this may initiate negative behavioral adaptations such as lowering confidence levels and capacity to learn. Knight & Yorke (2003) also report that when students receive poor grades they can view this as reflecting their low ability especially if a supportive feedback process has been utilised prior to submission. In this regard the student reflects that they are not capable of engaging

with or utilising the feedback successfully in their assessment submissions. However, research has also suggested that when receiving good grades students do not read or attend to the feedback if they feel satisfied with that grade (Enginarlar, 1993; James, 2000; Goldstein, 2006; Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Vardi, 2009).

The summative nature of assessment however, does warrant some consideration and acceptance. It is particularly important to consider the ethos of assessment and where the relative positives of both formative and summative assessment integrate into improved learning. Taras (2005) argues that we must appreciate that summative assessment is central to all assessment. Such an appreciation must consider reducing the somewhat adverse reputation that summative assessment has gained with regard to certification of learning, rather viewing it as a bridge towards improved learning. Taras (2005) argues that the formative elements within assessment should be seen as the stepping stones which justify summative assessment. For such a view to become an accepted platform one must consider the design and delivery of teaching. For example if the premise behind assessment is to enhance learning then having summative assessment is perfectly acceptable as long as the feedback provided at the end and more importantly during the process, is of a formative nature and fosters positive behavioral adaptations to the next assessment. This is not without its challenges; however in a positive stance, Wiliam (2000) argues:

“We must refuse to accept the incompatibility of summative and formative assessment. Instead we must find ways of mitigating the tension, by whatever means we can” (p.15).

Although, there still seems to be some researchers unable to accept formative and summative assessment co-existing, Atkins (1995) and Brown et al (1997) both indicate that in coursework assessments the value of formative feedback may reduce or even cease to exist if it is combined with summative assessment. However in a more positive outlook upon this argument the work of Black (1995)

suggests that in the learning process the main pursuit of providing formative feedback to assist learning must continue as such instances can assist the student in summative assessment. It appears that the concern here relates to an emphasis upon guidance related to specific assessment techniques which over time results in learning becoming over technified. The assessment therefore is moved further away from being a learning endeavour but rather towards a systematic process when assessment criteria are over-specified (Norton, 2004).

The review of literature thus far in this chapter has concentrated upon students' processing feedback from a perspective which suggests that the lecturer writes feedback and the student utilises it. The review has also discussed formative and summative assessment and how this has caused much debate in the literature. However such a body of work appears to not consider many other bodies of research which may play a large contributing factor in explaining student utilisation of feedback. The following section will consider constructs relating to how students react to feedback such as; motivation, confidence, self-efficacy, attribution, self-regulation and emotions.

1.3.5 Motivation

The constructs of motivational theories also warrant consideration within any discussion of a student's involvement with assessment patterns if one is to appreciate that such experiences occur over a sustained period of time.. Within the literature there is strong evidence to suggest that motivational constructs are associated with Higher Education performance (Pintrich, 2000; Covington, 2000). However, the differential roles of achievement motivation and academic goal constructs are less clear. Several studies have supported the notion of a multiple-goals perspective (e.g., Elliot et al., 1999; Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002) by suggesting that different motivational constructs affect different educational outcomes. Harackiewicz, et al (2002), for example, reported that mastery goals predicted continued interest in college whereas performance goals

predicted academic performance. Mastery-oriented goals are defined in terms of a focus on learning, mastering the task according to self-set standards or self-improvement (Harackiewicz, et al, 2002). Conversely, Performance-oriented goals represent a focus on demonstrating competence or ability and how ability will be judged relative to others (Harackiewicz, et al, 2002). Further the existence of motivational constructs such as academic goal orientations (Pintrich, 2000 Covington, 2000; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007), self-worth (Covington, 2004), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2005) and attributions of success and failures (Weiner, 2004) have all been discussed within the literature.

Within the motivation literature a shift from traditional achievement motivation models to social cognitive models of motivation is evident (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). The social cognitive models assume that motivation is a multifaceted, dynamic construct that encompasses a far broader view than traditional motivation theories. The distinction is that the social cognitive models do not label students as either motivated or not motivated; rather their motivational state can manifest itself in multiple ways. The essential issue to the present thesis surrounds what motivates students to achieve within Higher Education. Social cognitive theories of motivation also assume that motivation is not a stable trait, rather it is changeable based on the current situation or context the individual finds themselves in. Implicit in such an assertion is that social cognitive theories of motivation are more helpful in the HE context as students are constantly faced with complex tasks, the environment is fluid and ever-changing and there are other issues to take account of such as self-efficacy and self-regulation. Therefore it follows that for the present thesis gaining further understanding of how students utilise feedback needs to consider the effect motivation has upon their involvement, self-efficacy, self-regulation and subsequent behaviour adoption.

Elliot & Church (1997) investigated the achievement motives of undergraduate students in higher education. Undergraduate psychology students' achievement motivation, fear of failure, competence expectancies, achievement goals, competence perceptions, and intrinsic motivation were assessed by a series of

inventories, interviews and grade performance indicators. A hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation resulted from student responses. In particular the effects of motive dispositions, and competence beliefs upon achievement outcomes were shown to be directly affected by the student's achievement goals. Within the model achievement motivation and fear of failure were related to motive dispositions; competency expectations were a measure of competency beliefs and graded performance related to achievement outcomes (Elliot & Church, 1997). Such findings provide an interesting insight into the motivational aspects related to understanding students' behavioural reactions to feedback. However, the findings do appear to limit the depth at which assumptions about how a student may react in subsequent assessment situations as they appear to not consider the emotional dimensions associated with reactions to academic feedback.

The literature on student reactions to feedback demonstrates the numerous effects positive and negative feedback have upon subsequent behavioural responses. When a student fails a piece of work in a module they sometimes decide to simply give up on the module, others choose to try harder (Pintrich, 2000). Comparatively when a student does well on a piece of work they may choose to 'rest on their laurels' or perhaps increase their effort in the next assessment. However, Kluger & DeNisi (1996) argue that there is no clear specification regarding the exact nature of how or indeed when feedback received increases or decreases a student's motivation. This suggestion comes despite the fact that the literature in general draws us to make the assumption that positive feedback improves motivation and vice versa. Such a debate requires consideration of wider literature in order for a clearer understanding of the complex relationship between feedback and subsequent behaviour. Carver & Scheier (1981) suggest that failure results in increased motivation to a greater degree than success. Such a relationship can be seen in the laboratory work of Podsakoff & Farh, (1989) and Johnson & Ferstl's (1999) field work. Contrary to such findings researchers investigating students' self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986), indicate that students try harder and raise their

goals after success (Phillips, Hollenbeck, & Ilgen, 1996). The debilitating effect negative feedback has upon students' behavioural response has been highlighted more recently as a cause for concern for lecturers (Ilgen & Davis, 2000; Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007; Vardi, 2009).

In perhaps the most thorough of considerations a meta-analysis carried out by Kluger & DeNisi (1996) concluded that the feedback sign (positive or negative) does not moderate the effects of the feedback intervention on performance. Van-Dijk & Kluger (2004) offer a possible explanation for such an occurrence within the literature. They argue that perhaps the effects of the feedback sign upon motivation are moderated by the students' regulatory focus. Such a belief aligns with the work of Higgins (1997, 1998) who proposed that individuals have two basic self-regulation systems. The first regulates the avoidance of punishment; instead focusing upon a prevention goal. The second regulates the achievement of rewards by focusing individuals upon a promotion goal. Similarities with other motivational theories can also be made, such as; the extrinsic and intrinsic constructs of Deci & Ryan's (1985) perspective and Dweck & Leggett's (1998) performance and learning orientations research with young children. In a practical sense such constructs apply to student motivation in relation to feedback stimuli as they can be distinguished in the following sense. Performance orientation and extrinsic motivation corresponds to Higgins (1997) concept of prevention focus. Individuals with such a goal are focused due to experiencing feelings of obligation. Conversely, learning goals and intrinsic motivation correspond to promotion focus. Individuals with such a goal are focused due to a longing to want to be involved. Considering this viewpoint one can also recall the postulates of Higgins (2000) who characterised individuals holding the prevention focus to manifest the short term perspective, be concerned with maintenance goals and happy to maintain the status quo.

Contrariwise, Higgins (2000) argues that those holding the promotion focus are characterised by an acute awareness of intrinsic needs, a more long term perspective and concerned with change and ideals. Van-Dijk & Kluger (2004) argue that the regulatory process an individual chooses to focus upon may not be

determined by the aforementioned characteristics alone. Crucially they suggest that an individual holding the prevention focus generally is sensitive to resultant poor performance punishment, whereas those individuals in the promotion focus are sensitive to performance related rewards (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). Thus if one was to assert Higgins' (2000) conclusions as valid we could expect that academic failure be matched with avoiding loss in the prevention focus and success with the strategy of approaching rewards. Therefore such a fit can be explained in a practical sense by an individual operationalising the prevention focus when they recognise a negative result as this is congruent with its purpose to avoid punishment. The same can be argued for the promotion focus with regard to positive outcomes, that is approaching rewards. Idson, Liberman & Higgins (2000) reported findings that seem to support Van-Dijk & Kluger's, (2004) findings. They inform that individuals within the promotion focus saw performance increases following success rather than failure feedback. In comparison individuals in the prevention focus saw performance increase following failure rather than success feedback. It is clear from such findings that the quandary relating to feedback as a motivator for success remains an issue for academic staff marking students' work.

The implications of the debate in the literature suggest that simplistic standpoints relating to giving students large amounts of feedback (which in many cases is framed under the sandwich approach (i.e. a positive comment followed by a negative comment and then a final positive piece) may now not be the plausible method to adopt. In this regard Molloy et al., (2013) suggests that excessive praise may be counterproductive for the student. The student may be able to decipher that the positive filling within the sandwich is being hidden by the outer layers of critical feedback. The goal of the filling is to improve the student's performance in the next assessment and thus it does need to be presented in this way through an honest reflection of its sentiment. After all trying to disguise the feedback too much may result in it being either missed or misunderstood by the student. In Weaver's (2006) study which looked at the feedback comments students received, it was suggested that they became more motivated to improve when constructive

criticism was present. However the students did concede that such occurrences were in fact a rarity particularly for high achieving students. In perhaps a more worrying sense, the students also reported that although they felt positive feedback increased their confidence such comments were rather infrequent. In a related sense students have also reported increase in confidence and motivation when they receive comments from lecturers who they feel have at their heart a desire to see the student achieve (Thomas, 2002). Further encouraging comments seem to increase a student's propensity to persist with their studies (Lizzio & Wilson, 2008). Poulas & Mahony (2008) also found students perceive feedback comments as being more credible if they respect the lecturer who is giving them to them. Such research findings indicate that one needs to appreciate the apparent differences between individuals in terms of the regulatory focus they are operating and how this will have a mediating effect on the adoption and interpretation of the feedback received. However one must also consider that the literature discussed above is in the main artificial in nature due to the fact it is scenario-based or manipulated experiment by design. It is apparent that in order to understand the mediating nature of the higher education context one must design methodology to investigate this in a real environment setting.

The literature review so far has considered written feedback that students receive from academic staff. However it seems prudent to also consider other forms of feedback that a student may encounter. It can be argued that a more holistic view of all forms of feedback upon a student's motivation and subsequent behavioural response could lead to a greater understanding of the mechanisms involved. One such feedback area that a student may encounter is praise. Baumeister, Hutton, & Cairns (1990) define praise as "favourable interpersonal feedback" (p. 131). Although not always a primary source of feedback and quite possibly not always the most overt in nature, praise is arguably second only to written feedback. Students may only receive endorsement to the degree whereby academic staff simply notices a student's effort or praise can be manifested at a more specific and personalised level. Dev (1997) has argued that praise can foster students' self-esteem, motivation and subsequent performance. However it may be naive to accept this

simplistic effectual nuance without considering the mechanisms behind the improvement in student performance. Whilst support from some researchers (Dev, 1997; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Tsai, Kunter, Ludtke, Trautwein & Ryan, 2008) is highlighted in the literature; the effect size is not always strong (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). Further, the age group that such research has been carried out with varies and thus impinges on the effect size findings across the age range (Lepper, Henderlong, & Gingras, 1999). It follows therefore that a study investigating students in higher education may not be able to draw too conclusively upon data gleaned from a study involving children from junior school for example, which is the case with much research reported in this area.

Shanab, Peterson, Dargahi & Deroian (1981) conducted research into the effect of praise on student motivation. Constructing a puzzle solving task in which participants received positive praise compared to a control group receiving neutral praise, they reported that those in the experimental group reported higher interest and more inclination to devote time to the task. It seems clear from this finding that the positive nature of the praise is a key factor to increase student motivation; this was confirmed in a meta-analysis carried out by Deci, Koestner, & Ryan (1999). However it does seem to be rather superficial to simply identify positive praise as a mediator for performance increase. The role of self- efficacy within a feedback framework requires consideration. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as the belief that one has the capabilities to execute the course of actions required to achieve desired outcomes. Crucial to this mechanism is the individual deriving their efficacy from personal achievement, however with regard to receiving praise this can also increase a person's capacity to believe in their own ability to succeed and therefore increase their self-efficacy level and subsequently academic achievement (Bandura & Locke, 2003).

The positive behavioural reaction to receiving positively framed praise has been linked with increase in motivation and subsequent goal setting (Ilies & Judge, 2005). In line with such research Gray's (1990) behavioural motivation theory could be

identified as an explanation to such an occurrence. Gray (1990) argued that the environment has a large effect upon an individual's affective state, which in turn manipulates behavioural motivation. To this end, the increased positive feelings within the individual (after receiving positive praise) subsequently increase that individual's performance outlook and subsequent effort deployment and persistence. Ilies & Judge's (2005) research demonstrates that the relationship between feedback and the setting of future goals by an individual can be explained by their affective reactions to praise feedback. A cautionary note must however be made in relation to where the praise is coming from. Investigating younger children's reactions to positive praise behaviour, Henderlong & Lepper (2002) reported that when the teacher was giving praise to students they would attend to the learning task in order to please the teacher. However, when the teacher was not present this behaviour ceased. This would suggest the children were externally motivated by the praise and that the after effects alluded to in the research by Dev (1997) and Pintrich & Schunk (2002) do not seem to have any longevity. This seems to be an interesting factor to consider, especially if we appreciate that the contact time a student in higher education will receive during their academic calendar is minimal. Clearly, the after effects of praise received; framed in both positive and negative terms needs to be considered when investigating a holistic view of feedback and subsequent behavioural response.

The negative effects of praise have also been discussed within the literature. Baumeister et al. (1990) argued that praise can have both a positive and negative effect upon an individual's performance. Interestingly their research broke skills down into two categories; effort tasks and skilled tasks. In the effort task positive feedback improved performance, however in the skilled task it had a negative effect. Within this skill task it was also reported that both task relevant and task irrelevant praise had the same result of decreased performance. To explain such a finding Baumeister et al. (1990) argue that the praise may have negatively affected the individuals' cognitive processing ability, resulting in them attending to personal concerns about their ability rather than attending to the task in hand. This perhaps is most applicable to feedback in higher education when students are writing draft

essays. Submitting a draft to a lecturer may have an effect if the praise they receive calls them to question their own ability and therefore subsequently affects their cognitive processing for the final submission. Although praise has been researched across many different environments and with differing age groups, it still seems apparent that there is a lack of conclusive evidence in relation to its effects upon motivation and behavioural reaction. As such this area becomes even more interesting and warrants further investigation if we appreciate the most recent findings of Lipnevich & Smith (2008) that students receiving praise reported lower levels of motivation than students receiving no praise at all.

To further confound this debate it may also be worthy of note to consider the work of Butler (2000). This research considers that the effect of feedback may be moderated by theories of ability; in particular entity verses incremental theories of ability. Butler's (2000) main findings suggest that when individuals regarded as entity theorists experienced negative feedback they inferred higher ability for others and the self, whereas higher ability was inferred by incremental individuals when positive feedback was received. It is important here to highlight that individuals holding the entity viewpoint believe that ability is stable and therefore unchangeable. Thus in performance related scenarios an individual in this group may be regarded as having a prevention focus and therefore would strive to protect their self-image. Individuals in the incremental grouping have an opposite viewpoint, they believe their ability is very much changeable and therefore it is within their control to change their personal ability. As such, incremental theorists may find themselves in the promotion focus as their motivation is to improve their ability level. Van-Dijk & Kluger, (2004) have therefore concluded from this that, in relation to their findings, there is apparent similarity between entity theorists and the characteristics of prevention focus and incremental theorists and the characteristics of promotion focus. Van-Dijk & Kluger, (2004) argue that these similarities explain why entity theorists raise their ability inference when receiving negative feedback. That is they believe that the task they were completing was perhaps too hard for their ability level and that is why they failed it. Incremental

theorists on the other hand raise their ability inference when receiving positive feedback. That is they believe that their ability is improving over time and the positive feedback is re-affirming this belief. The research reported here does appear important to the present thesis if one is to further understand the relationship between a student's ability conceptions and their subsequent use of feedback.

1.3.6 Achievement goal research

Within the motivational literature, aligned to motivational theories of student involvement is the area of achievement goal research. Achievement goal is defined as the purpose of task engagement (Maehr, 1989). The type of goal adopted by an individual is assumed to create a basis for how they interpret, experience, and act in their achievement experiences (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1989). In particular this construct explains the reasons why a student may or may not choose to involve themselves within a particular context. Two types of goals are apparent in this research. Firstly, mastery goals, which tend to orientate learners towards "developing new skills, trying to understand their work, improving their level of competence, or achieving a sense of mastery based on self-referenced standards" (Ames, 1992, p. 62). The second goal, performance goals orientate learners towards an ability focus and self-worth, to determine their ability by outperforming others in competitions, surpassing others in achievements or grades, and receiving public recognition for their superior performance (Ames, 1992). The distinction between these two goal types is that mastery goals foster a host of adaptive motivational, cognitive, and achievement outcomes, whereas performance goals generate less adaptive or even maladaptive outcomes (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1989; Ames, 1992).

The adaptive elements of mastery goals have been supported largely within the literature (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Ames, 1992; Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). When students are trying to improve their performance, relative to their own previous performance in terms of their understanding of subject matter, this orientation will help them maintain their self-efficacy in the face of failure and

increase cognitive capacity, thus allowing for more cognitive engagement and achievement. If a student however, is adopting a performance orientation and thus is focused upon trying to be the best in the class and achieving higher grades than significant others, there is a chance that concern about others will distract from cognitions relating to the task and therefore reduce cognitive capacity and performance (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1989).

It is apparent that present wisdom in the literature argues to the contrary of the more established achievement goal beliefs that activity in achievement settings is orientated towards attainment of success or avoiding failure (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953). Presently many have argued that both mastery and performance orientations are approach forms of motivation, that is, people have a natural desire to master a skill or achieve a positive performance outcome (Nicholls, Patashnick, Chung Cheung, Thorkildsen, & Lauer, 1989; Nolen & Haladyna, 1990; Ames, 1992). Such a change in the literature base is confirmed with the work of Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) whom postulate a more integrated perspective of achievement goals. Within this conceptual structure performance goals are divided into autonomous approach and avoidance mechanisms. From such a division, three achievement orientations are put forward. Firstly mastery focused goal which concentrates upon competence and task mastery development, secondly a performance-approach goal which is concerned with encouraging competence judgements. The final orientation is performance-avoidance which is focused upon evading critical competence judgements. In an applied sense it is suggested that the mastery and performance approach goals will promote mastery patterns of achievement such as excitement, engagement and learning. The performance avoidance orientation however is predicted to encourage more maladaptive behaviour such as anxiety, distraction and lower levels of motivation to perform the task (Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996).

Achievement goal literature and its conceptual logic can be very useful in aiding the understanding of the feedback loop in which students and academic staff engage in.

One can argue that by its evaluative nature formative feedback affects the kind of achievement goals students select. For example if a teacher wished to foster a performance goal environment within the classroom then they could evaluate students publicly and reward those students who performed significantly better than others. If a mastery environment was required the teacher could stress the importance of learning, understanding and personal task fulfilment. It is perhaps within this construct that an academic member of staff is able to push students to further themselves and to challenge their established competence levels. Further, it is also within this orientation that errors in understanding and private evaluations of such errors are common place (Patrick et al. 2001; Meece, Anderman, and Anderman 2006). Kaplan & Maehr (1999) have argued that students choose a mastery orientation when they are aware that they will be assessed on their progress towards individualised goals, participation and their strategy use. It is perhaps important here to make the association between such a concept and that of the premise of formative feedback. Anderman, Austin & Johnson (2002) have demonstrated that students within the mastery orientation tend to demonstrate more developed relational skills of prior learning and make use of deeper cognitive strategies. From a motivational perspective it is these students whom demonstrate persistence when faced with tasks or situation they feel challenge them (Meece, et al, 2006).

As previously suggested the maladaptive behavioural consequences of the performance goal paradigm suggests that students operationalising such a goal orientation will procrastinate and even attend to more surface types of learning (Meece, et al, 2006). Surface learning is characterised by memorisation or recall, essentially the learner is not engaged in understanding the subject matter, rather doing what they need to get through and move onto the next thing. The effect upon the feedback loop the student will engage in is of primary concern within the present research. It seems prudent to suggest that the student's achievement goal orientation will effect their eventual processing of the feedback. However based upon the evidence within the literature this does appear unclear. One can argue that feedback received is a reflection of an individual's competence level at a

particular time. Researchers have acknowledged such a consideration in relation to the effect feedback has upon task persistence, enjoyment, interest and adaptability (Rawsthorne & Elliot, 1999; Ryan, Koestner, & Deci, 1991). It is argued that when negative feedback is received individuals focusing upon performance goals have the greatest potential for maladaptive behavioural consequences (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). However by the same token those individuals focusing upon mastery goals are better able to cope with the negative feedback, demonstrating more adaptive behaviours such as continued persistence.

There is however a lack of consistent literature with regard to feedback effects on student's subsequent behaviour. The main issue seems to concentrate upon the exact mechanism which determines how a student will react to the feedback they receive. How feedback affects performance and how achievement goals influence its processing seems to be an area where researchers are not clear (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Senko & Harackiewicz, 2005). This area is of particular importance when we consider what is occurring with the feedback loop. The feedback received can and often does have an eventual effect upon the student's achievement goal without actually changing the operationalised goal. A student with a mastery goal focus may receive negative feedback which directly compares them to significant others. Due to the intrinsic nature of such a goal orientation the student is able to attend to the feedback offered but the direct comparison element does not affect their pursuit of the mastery goal. Rather the feedback is attended to in a more adaptive manner as the student may change strategies and continue to pursue the mastery goal. Therefore the feedback changes the student's performance but their global goal orientation is unchanged.

1.3.7 Emotions

The final area for consideration within the literature review relates to emotions. Within educational research constructivist and phenomenological approaches to researching the significance of emotion on learning is fairly common. In general,

such research focuses upon the relationship between the individual and the context in which the emotional experience occurs (Shields, 2002). The way individuals appraise and respond to social contexts as a part of a meaning-making and interpersonal process is reflected in the constructivist perspective on emotions, therefore, it is concerned with and assumes that emotions are learned and culturally mediated (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001). The sometimes undervalued and unexplored roles of students' emotions, within learning contexts, have in recent times received attention within the literature. Such research attempts to explain the effect emotions have upon learning in general terms; within higher education (Ingleton, 1999; Taylor, 2001; Schutz & DeCuir, 2002), in adult learning (Dirkx, 2001), in relation to goals (Turner, et al. 2002) and in motivation research (Meyer & Turner, 2002; Seifert, 2004). However Rowe, Fitness & Wood (2013) have argued that functionality of emotions within feedback situations have not been systematically looked at.

Student feedback situations initiate an emotional reaction to the information received. Quite often such emotional reactions influence the processing and subsequent behavioural deployment. Race (1995) argues that the value of such feedback may be "eclipsed by the learners' reactions to it" (p67). In more recent research, Price et al (2010) argue that:

"The students' ability or willingness to do this [act on feedback] might depend on the emotional impact of feedback . . . , a student's pedagogic intelligence or the student's past experiences." (p. 278).

However, although it may seem like a synonymous link between feedback situations and subsequent emotional reaction, the amount of research within the literature does not appear to reflect this. Some studies have attempted to address this gap (Varlander, 2008; Yorke, 2011) but it does appear to be an under researched area, especially if we consider that emotions can play a large part in students' learning experiences (Ainley, 2007; Pekrun & Stephens 2010). Emotions can be classified as a

mental state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort. Emotions are difficult to define (Boler, 1999; Lee Do & Schallert, 2004), but as Barbalet (2002) contends, although there is no agreed-upon definition of what an emotion is, it consists of three components:

“A subjective feeling component of feelings, a physiological component of arousal and a motor component of expressive gesture”. (p 86).

Beard, Humberstone & Clayton (2014) suggest that emotions embrace both moods and feelings. Based upon this one can assert that an inner feeling is presented, existing alongside a physiological response such as raised heart rate or laughter. Further, it can be argued that an individual’s pre-disposition and decision making processes in-situ temper the emotional reaction (Ingleton, 1999; Falchikov & Boud, 2007). Dirkx (2001) argues that central to an individual’s ways of knowing is their emotions. Such emotions can either obstruct or stimulate learning by affecting attention deployment, memory and problem solving performance. Indeed, Boud & Falchikov (2007) contend that a student’s cognitive processing could be impaired by their emotions. Weiss (2000) argues that central to optimal learning is emotional arousal. This cannot however guarantee learning will occur; rather the contention is that the more emotionally engaged an individual is the more likely they are to learn (Weiss 2000). The effect of students’ emotional engagement is of particular significance to university lecturers, considering that potentially the effect could last for a sustained period of time. If a student receives what they perceive as negative feedback the consequence could be that the learner is unreceptive to learning for a long time (Tennant, 1997). Yorke (2003) adds that there is certain amounts of variability in the way students respond to failure. It follows therefore that a student’s resilience to the potential effects of their emotional reactions is an important consideration here (Scott et al, 2011). However one perhaps should not get carried away with interpreting emotional reactions as relatively enduring

experiences. Beard et al (2014) have suggested that positive emotional reactions of happiness, relief and pride are rather ephemeral for many students.

Boekaerts (2010) has argued emotions are a natural part of the learning process. The majority of lecturers attempt to “control, manage, limit or redirect outward expressions of emotions” (Dirkx, 2001, p67). However, Dirkx (2001) argues that it is acceptable for lecturers to demonstrate acknowledgement of emotional reactions by students, as this will allow the student the opportunity to express the emotion and then overcome it and return to concentrating upon the learning process. Further it has been suggested that lecturers can demonstrate their positive response to students showing their emotions by being empathetic (Crossman 2007; Falchikov and Boud 2007). This will then create an element of trust between the lecturer and student which could enable relationship building (Carless, 2009). However, it could be argued that this interpretation suggests a rather robotic response from the student. In practice the students’ willingness to express emotion in front of the lecturer could be subdued and similarly the lecturer may not wish to enter into emotional acknowledgement with the student.

The role emotions play in this feedback process is very interesting. The way a student is able to receive and process feedback is mediated by their emotional reaction (Race, 1996). Boud (1995) argues that:

“Teachers write and say things, which can readily be taken as comments about the person rather than their work and in doing so they link into the doubts and uncertainties which learners have of themselves. Such remarks are often magnified at great cost to the self-esteem of the persons concerned” (p. 45).

It is this misconception which can affect future learning situations and the understanding a student has of future feedback received. In some very early research, Jacobs (1974) found that positive feedback fosters positive emotions such

as a feeling of well-being and energy. Such positive emotions are said to help develop a student's resilience and coping strategies in the future (Seligman, 2006; Gilbert, 2009). Pekrun et al (2002) further argue that positive emotions encourage self-regulation and learning strategies aligned to deep learning. However, negative emotions seem to foster an over reliance upon external assistance such as a lecturer and more surface type of learning. Negative feedback has also been seen to promote emotions such as anxiety and depression (Jacobs, 1974; Rowe et al, 2013; Beard et al, 2014). The research literature however, does appear to reflect a deeper concentration upon negative emotions (Moore & Kuol, 2007). It is perhaps the case as Tugade & Fredrickson (2002) argue that positive emotions are somewhat overlooked. This does seem a little surprising if one is to appreciate that positive emotions produce more resilient and socially integrated students (Werner & Smith, 2001; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002; Rowe, et al, 2013; Beard et al, 2014). Further, Fredrickson & Cohn (2008) contended that positive emotions also broaden student's temporary cognitions and as such reduce any potential build-up of negative emotions. In this sense they argue that positive emotions can act to enhance a student's learning and achievement due to their inherent propensity to assist self-regulation and motivation (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2008).

The emotion of shame has become a prominent theme in some of the literature (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Kitayama, 1994). Scheff (1991) describes shame as the 'master emotion', basic to the dynamics of relationships because of the way in which shame generates alienation while its opposite, pride, accompanies solidarity. In response to feedback situations both confidence and anxiety have also been reported within the literature as resultant emotional reactions (Young, 2000; Christie, et al. 2008; Ferguson, 2011; Yorke, 2011). Motivation has been seen to be enhanced by negative emotional reactions such as anger and fear. In this regard the emotional reaction acts to initiate what Carver & Harmon-Jones (2009) explain as approach tendencies. With regard to anger such tendencies can lead to students questioning lecturers about their grade outcome which could cause potential negative outcomes for the lecturer and student relationship. However fear by

contrast can initiate avoidance, suggesting a student may not engage with the feedback process. Pekrun & Stephens (2010) summarise research findings suggesting that although such emotions can be detrimental to a student's motivation and performance, they too can be beneficial. It appears therefore that a student's ability to regulate their emotional reaction may explain why for some students emotions are positive towards their future learning and for others they are counterproductive. The present thesis needs to explore these further as a lack of research articulating how these constructs interact within feedback situations is apparent.

To combat this potential over reliance on focusing upon a student's strengths and weaknesses, Juwah, Macfarlane-Dick, Matthew, Nicol, Ross & Smith et al. (2004) make the recommendation that lecturers should not give students positive comments followed by comments about what could be improved, rather the corrective comments should offer advice instead of just information about strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore Juwah et al. (2004) propose that more recognition should be given to the role that feedback plays in the motivational beliefs and self-esteem of students. The feedback situation has an effect on motivational beliefs and self-esteem levels due to the fact it influences how students feel about themselves, which in turn affects what and how they learn (Juwah et al, 2004). Further Crossman (2007) has argued that negative emotions foster a sense of threat to the students' self-esteem and identity and therefore the student becomes unreceptive to the feedback on offer. As such maladaptive feedback behaviours such as not collecting work could be evident (Price et al, 2011). The feedback process is central to the learning situation within higher education programs therefore it follows that a consideration of the emotional reactions of students and the subsequent adoption of behaviour is a prudent research area. Critically the present thesis seeks to further understand the role emotions play within the students' reaction to the feedback received and how this impacts upon the utilisation of such feedback in their next assessment situation.

When researching emotions within learning contexts it is important to address and appreciate diverse characteristics such as; students' internal traits (e.g., mastery-oriented or performance-oriented), states (e.g., fatigue, anxiety, self-confidence), and processes (e.g., problem-solving, self-regulation). Further it is also prudent to consider the influence of the social context (e.g., particular courses, teachers, and peers) (Eynde & Turner, 2006). The dynamic and multifaceted nature of emotions cannot be ignored whilst conducting investigations into their effect upon students in different learning context. Therefore, it follows that emotions, as processes, are composed of multiple component systems which over a period of time can regulate each other (Eynde & Turner, 2006). Weiner (1985) has specified a particular mechanism to explain how attributions influence an individual's motivation. The beginning of the mechanism is the outcome itself. This could be passing or failing a test. This outcome will cause the individual to display either a positive or negative general emotional reaction. It is at this point where the individual considers the attribution for the outcome in relation to the causal antecedents. These antecedents refer to factors that may influence the attribution formed such as personal characteristics (history of failure or success), circumstances (e.g. feeling ill, fire-alarm sounded) or comparison to others. For example, a person who has a history of failure and fails a test may make a different attribution (such as inability) than a student who has a history of success and fails a test (such as lack of study).

Bandura (1993) has noted that self-efficacy may influence the attribution formed. Highly efficacious people will ascribe the outcome to their own agency, while less confident individuals will attribute the outcome to inability. Seifert (2004) argues that while students may highlight specific factors as attributions (e.g. ability or effort), it is the students' perceptions of the characteristics of those attributions which actually influence motivation through emotions. For example one student may feel their ability level is fixed and therefore they are unable to do anything about it, another student may believe their ability level is measured by what they know and understand and therefore this is within their control to alter (Dweck, 1986). It is this understanding of how an individual reacts to feedback that may help

to explain the effect emotions have upon subsequent motivation and feedback usage. Students' behaviours are, in part, guided by emotional responses to tasks and task conditions (Seifert, 1997; Seifert & O'Keefe, 2001; Jarvis & Seifert, 2002). Within a situation a student given a task will produce an effective response; this in turn will be manifested in an associated behaviour outcome. Therefore the pattern of emotional reaction can be seen to direct the subsequent behaviour (Seifert, 2004). When presented with a task, students make judgements about the task and respond emotionally based upon task and personal characteristics. It is those emotions which dictate subsequent behaviour or motivation (Boekarts, 1993; Seifert, 1997; Seifert & O'Keefe, 2001; Lazarus, 2006). Weiner (1984, 1985) argued that emotions are motivational catalysts (feelings of helplessness, hopefulness, pride, guilt) which arise from attributions and influence subsequent behaviour. In more recent research Rowe (2011) has suggested that in feedback situations in particular a student can experience positive feelings such as appreciation, gratitude, happiness and even pride. However, equally such situations can produce negative emotional reactions such as anger, frustration and fear.

1.3.8 Summary

It follows that the effect feedback has upon a student's emotional and motivational dimensions within higher education is a multifaceted construct. Further it also appears that the effect emotions and motivation have upon the processing of feedback received requires investigation. Understanding this cause and effect relationship is crucial to further the understanding of higher education feedback, indeed it maybe that there is no simple cause and effect explanation. Such research needs to question the established mechanism of simply giving student's feedback and expecting them to attend and adjust. This seems to be particularly prudent if one appreciates Beard, Smith & Clegg's (2007) contentions that in the first year of university students experience an emotional roller coaster which transcends many aspects of their lives. More recently Beard et al (2014) have called for researchers to view students as affective and embodied individuals, concluding that in order to understand this phenomenon clearer theorisation of student's emotional

experiences is needed. The research discussed thus far suggests that academics need to appreciate the motivational and psychological processes that students are experiencing in order to improve the learning environment they are constructing. The present research seeks to consider the accepted literature from an alternative perspective; whereby the feedback principle is viewed in a more holistic sense taking into consideration; the student's achievement orientation, conceptions of ability, self-efficacy and self-esteem levels, emotions at the time of receiving the feedback and capacity to self-regulate. The present research is therefore striving to better understand how the constructed learning environments lecturers create affect students' comprehension, utilisation and behavioural response to feedback received.

2. Chapter Two - Methodological considerations

2.1 Introduction

Phenomenography is a qualitative “research approach” (Dall’Alba, 2000 p. 16) used to examine questions relevant to learning and understanding within an educational setting (Marton & Booth, 1997). This chapter will introduce the reader to the methodology of phenomenography. Phenomenography has undergone several developments and is therefore not seen as immutable; it is important therefore to consider its historical development in order to understand present interpretations. As such historical developments will begin the chapter. Subsequently the epistemological and ontological assumptions of phenomenography alongside its characteristics will be explored. The reader will then be introduced to a critical evaluation of the different types of phenomenographical practices. Similarities and differences between phenomenography, phenomenology and ethnography will also be discussed. The final section of the chapter evaluates data collection and analysis with a particular focus upon ensuring research rigour within phenomenography.

During the mid-1970’s in a Swedish Educational context, the phenomenographical approach began. The seminal work carried out at the University of Gothenburg (Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b; Fransson, 1977; Svensson, 1977) was not initially framed as phenomenography, even if many of the approaches adopted were consistent with what we now understand as the methodology. Research articles describing the epistemological foundations of phenomenography first emerged in the 1980s. The primary advocate, Ference Marton and his colleagues’ original research investigated students’ approaches to learning. Marton (1975) asked thirty, first year undergraduate students to read a newspaper article and then during an interview recall elements from within the article. Results revealed that students’ comprehension were hierarchically diverse. Such findings were subsequently replicated in differing Swedish educational contexts (Säljö, 1975; Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b; Svensson, 1976, 1977; Fransson, 1977; Marton & Wenestam, 1978). The research subsequently progressed towards further understanding their

disciplinary concepts (Marton, 1981, 1986). Fundamental to this phenomenographic research was viewing the world through the students' lens (Marton, 1981).

Phenomenography's popularity and increasing adoption within the educational sector can be seen in an array of qualitative research studies across the world, most notably within the European and Australasian contexts (Bruce & Gerber, 1997). Such studies contributed to the enunciation of phenomenography as a logical research approach (Marton, 1981, 1994; Svensson & Theman, 1983; Johansson *et al.* 1985; Säljö, 1988; Prosser, 1993; Marton & Booth, 1997). Within Higher Education research, phenomenography has been utilised by many researchers. In particular researchers utilising this approach have established that the type of learning outcome can affect students' approaches to learning (Ramsden, 1992). Ashworth & Lucas (2000) suggest that phenomenographic influence has been so widespread due to the acceptance that students' learning is influenced by the wider context and that teaching methods can be modified to improve learning outcomes. However, this is not to overstate the fact that another methodology could have revealed such a finding, but what Ashworth & Lucas (2000) are arguing is that phenomenography is a powerful method which has advanced the field of knowledge with regards to understanding student learning. In this regard the present thesis sought to utilise the phenomenographic approach as it afforded me the opportunity to explore student's experiences of the phenomenon of assessment and feedback in a range of varied ways.

2.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological basis of Phenomenography

Ontology refers to the study of an individual's beliefs about the nature of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Epistemology broadly refers to an individual's theory of knowledge (Schraw & Olafson, 2008). Based on the definition of epistemology as "the nature and justification of human knowledge" (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997, p. 88), in this thesis epistemology refers to the study of students' appraisal, comprehension and utilisation of the feedback they receive. Due to its recognition

of multiple and sometimes diverse interpretations of an individual's reality, phenomenography resides within the interpretivist paradigm which pursues through empirical means the ways in which a phenomenon may be experienced (Svensson, 1997; Marton, 2000; Stenfors-Hayes, Hult & Dahlgren, 2013). The ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin phenomenography exemplify the non-dualistic foundation of phenomenography. It follows that non-dualism suggests that the inner and outer worlds relate internally to one another but are not strictly distinguished (Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden, 2005). Thus for the individual only one world exists but their subjective inner world is created in relation to the objective outer world (Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden, 2005). Within phenomenography the non-dualist position indicates a constitutionalist perspective (Marton & Neuman, 1989). That is, as Bowden (2005) argues an individual's knowledge is explained by the interaction between the knower and what is in fact known. The individual's experience of the phenomenon is therefore explained by the interaction between the individual and the experience itself. Marton & Neuman (1989) maintain that "there are not two separate entities (individual and world) plus a relation between them; the world-as-experienced is all there is" (Marton & Neuman, 1989, p. 36). The constitutionalist perspective seems to fit with the phenomenographic focus if one considers that: "the object and subject are not separate; the subject's experience of the object is a relation between the two" (Marton, 2000, p.104). The phenomenographic approach is concerned with individual's experiences of the phenomenon. In fact such a position is further strengthened if Bowden's (2005) contentions are considered:

"The object of study in phenomenographic research is not the phenomenon being discussed per se, but rather the relation between the subjects and that phenomenon" (p.12).

It follows therefore, that different, relational conceptions of a phenomenon can be understood within the non-dualist explanation. It is for this reason that in this thesis student experiences of and subsequent utilisation of the feedback received were

explored and subsequently data were analysed in order to understand the inter-relatedness of the constructs under investigation.

Trigwell (2006) contends that phenomenography is a second order relational perspective, which aims to report the variation of the collective rather than the individualistic experience. Indeed Marton & Booth (1997) make the distinction between a first and second order perspective towards research. In a first order approach, the researcher describes their perspective of the world they are researching. Conversely the second order approach, typified within phenomenography, requires that researchers orient themselves towards other peoples' experiences of the world, and pose questions from a perspective that will enable an understanding of other's worlds to be derived and subsequently represented. It therefore follows that a structural framework is provided within the phenomenographic method in order to understand others' experience from their perspectives. This type of framework expedites a description of others' whole/part experience and subsequently provides a means to further understand the internal relations of such constructs. Therefore such a methodology seems to fit with the research aim of this thesis if one is to appreciate that the constructs alluded to in chapter one inter-relate when applied to feedback situations. In general this framework also provides phenomenographical researchers with the opportunity to appreciate the changes and relationships between the numerous ways experience can be differentiated by individuals (Åkerlind, 2002). To this end, in this thesis I explored students' experiences of feedback and how they utilised this personally in order to construct a more holistic understanding of student assessment related behaviour.

Marton (1986) elucidates that the qualitatively diverse ways that individuals characterise, conceptualise and comprehend numerous facets of the world around them can be represented by phenomenographical research. Marton & Booth (1997) contend therefore that, phenomenographers:

“seek the totality of ways in which people experience ... the object of interest and interpret it in terms of distinctly different categories that capture the essence of the variation” (p. 121).

Indeed Marton & Booth (1997) further argue that terminologies such as conceptions, understanding, comprehension and conceptualisation are in fact synonyms, which may be better deemed as ways of individuals' experiencing. Within this construct two principal foci seem to exist: *what* is experienced and *how* a phenomenon is experienced (Marton & Booth, 1997). In this case, the '*what*' aspect is concerned with the meaning of a phenomenon, (referential aspect) and the '*how*' aspect consists of the act of the experience (structural aspect) (Marton & Booth, 1997). In this thesis the '*what*' refers to the feedback received and the '*how*' aspect relates to how the students subsequently utilise such feedback exemplified by their reported behaviour. The premise underpinning phenomenographical research relates to the concept of partiality, which is, that an individual can experience the world differently at any given point or in any given context. Further, the degree to which they experience such a phenomenon is changeable within each individual (Åkerlind, 2008). Åkerlind (2008) argues that in order to comprehend the phenomenon the distinction can be made between an individual's awareness of what can or cannot be differentiated. In this regard Marton & Booth (1997) postulate that awareness is distinguished by an individual's appreciation of variation whereas a lack of variation is characterised by a failure to appreciate uniformity within the specific phenomenon. From a phenomenographical perspective the present thesis sought to not only to explore the diverse ways in which students comprehend assessment and feedback, but also to scrutinise how these ways of comprehension are operationally related to one another (Stenfors-Hayes et al, 2013).

2.1.2 Types of phenomenographic practice

The approach adopted within phenomenography is in some ways similar to that of phenomenology, which strives to:

“Come to a deeper understanding of what persons go through as they conduct their day-to-day life in the language of everyday life” (Hultgren, 1989, p. 50).

Indeed some researchers have argued that phenomenography is the same as phenomenology (Gibbs, Morgan, & Taylor, 1982; McKeachie, 1984; Morgan, 1984; Prosser, 1993; Taylor, 1983). Marton (1986, 1988) concedes that both methodologies were indeed relational, experiential, content-oriented, and qualitative. However certain distinctions can be asserted. For example phenomenology tends to search for common themes of shared experiences amongst a group of individuals within a phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). Further, Patton (2002) contends that phenomenology is concerned with subjective experience and how that experience becomes part of a person’s reality. Phenomenography, by contrast, attempts to identify the variance of individuals within the same phenomenon (Marton, 1989). Within the present thesis the individual variance with regard to the phenomenon of feedback was explored and therefore this resides more comfortably within phenomenography. Further, Marton (1981) highlighted that phenomenographers dealt with "both the conceptual and the experiential, as well with what is thought of as that which is lived" (p. 181). It is for this reason that researchers such as Marton (1981, 1986) identify phenomenography as an appropriate way of evaluating programs within higher education.

The comparison between phenomenography and ethnography has also been made within the literature. Francis (1993) has argued that interviewing within the phenomenography perspective is naive. Francis suggests that such naivety is born

through interviewing being classified as any form of interaction with another. Thus, as Eizenberg (1986) indicates 'chats at the foot of the stairs' or 'over a beer' are legitimate interview situations under this umbrella. This assumption could perhaps be traced back to the perceived similarity between phenomenography and ethnography; the general study of cultures, where data is collected through participant observation and researcher generated accounts of such observations (Säljö, 1987, 1988; Marland, 1989; Van Maanen, 1996). Richardson (1999) argues this could mean that researchers deduce that phenomenography is therefore a 'relaxed form of anthropology'. As such the defence of the phenomenographic approach was to concede some similarities with ethnography but to emphasise that the foci of interest and theories of description are in fact distinctly different (Marton, 1988). Ethnography, by definition is an analysis of social process by virtue of in-depth personal involvement (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Toren, 1996).

Richardson (1999) argues that to some degree phenomenography is similar by virtue of the fact that some researchers within educational fields select their participants out of convenience (i.e. they are located within the same institution). However, Richardson (1999) does concede that in general these researchers have not experienced the exact same situations as those students under investigation. Further the processing of participants' responses differs too. Whilst, ethnographic data produces rich descriptions of people's language, beliefs and behaviours from which conclusions can be drawn; the researcher can be seen to operate a certain amount of scepticism towards such data (Glesne, 2006). That said the emphasis on rich description within ethnography does bear some similarity to categories of description within phenomenography. Phenomenographers generally accept and report the participants' responses at face value (Bligh, 1993). The focus therefore is exclusively upon the phenomenon being investigated. Such an argument infers that phenomenography in this regard is fundamentally different to ethnography. Somewhat conclusively, Dall'Alba (2000) indicates that whilst phenomenography, phenomenology and ethnography share comparable topographies; phenomenography maps the qualitatively different conceptions of individuals. The present research sought to map students' qualitatively different assessment and

feedback experiences to further understand the phenomenon. This is exemplified in chapter five of this thesis.

Within the literature diverse incarnations and detractions from the original work of Marton and colleagues are also evident. According to Hasselgren & Beach (1997) five different types of phenomenographic practice are evident; (1) naturalistic; (2) phenomenological; (3) discursive; (4) experimental and (5) hermeneutic. A brief discussion of these five types of practice will now follow. Lybeck (1981) explains that naturalistic phenomenography is typified by the researcher having a more 'hands off' approach. The researcher collects data from real life situations without interfering or comprising the elements of such situations. The inference here is that a 'natural' situation is preserved in order to glean the most 'natural' representation of the situation. In contrast phenomenological phenomenography is characterised by the researcher striving to recognise a phenomenological aspect within their work. Typically researchers operating this method could be interested in developing a greater understanding of the interviewee's inner thought processes (Neumann, 1997). Discursive phenomenography is perhaps described best as the simplest form of phenomenography (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997). Researchers operating this approach are concerned with drawing conceptions of the world in general. Experimental phenomenography is perhaps the most popular form adopted. This is seen within Marton's (1975) early work where the qualitatively different ways of understanding the same phenomenon are reported. The final phenomenographic practice is hermeneutic, which as Linblad (1995) indicates is based upon deducing text which was not originally intended for phenomenographic research operating the whole/part method.

Study two within the present thesis was conducted in a similar manner to Marton's (1975) early experimental phenomenographical work as qualitatively different ways of understanding the same phenomenon (feedback) were explored. Bowden (2000) has also suggested that the original ideas conceived by Marton et al in the 1970/80's could be alternatively labelled as developmental phenomenography and

pure phenomenography. Developmental phenomenography is generally viewed within educational contexts. Bowden (2000) argues that it attempts to utilise different contexts to empower understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. By contrast pure phenomenography attempts to describe all of the ways people experience a phenomenon (Marton, 1986). What is clear here is that some of what Bowden is arguing reflects elements contained within discursive phenomenography (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997). Such debates within the literature lend support to those who champion the use of phenomenography as a viable research methodology. Certainly what such evidence suggests is that phenomenography is an adaptive method for use within many different research contexts. It therefore seems a prudent methodology to operate within the main study in the present thesis (study two).

2.1.3 Phenomenographic informed data collection

The data collection approach within phenomenographic research is distinguished by its outcome aims. The process of collecting data within phenomenography is generally through the medium of the non-directive interview. The number of interviews to conduct has been discussed within the literature, for example, Dahlgren (1995) suggests that a researcher could adequately capture the variation in ten interviews. Trigwell (2000) however suggests fifteen. Samples within phenomenography typically aim to represent a range of demographic characteristics within a population so that less common experiences are not obscured by more common experiences (Åkerlind, 2008). The rationale for utilising the interview as the best method for data collection has been queried within the literature. Marton indicates recognition of alternative ways of understanding individuals' conceptions of the world through "group interviews, observations, drawings, written responses, and historical documents" (Marton, 1994, p. 4427). Richardson (1999) proclaimed that all of these approaches are merely alternative forms of discourse and essentially the same outcome could be expected regardless of the method operated.

It seems therefore that whilst certain observers have questioned the use of one method of data collection over another, what is clear is that discovering individuals' conceptions of reality is the overriding aim of phenomenography. Thus one must assert that the interview is a recognised form of data collection, which has been used extensively within the field of phenomenography and therefore is underpinned by logical and productive thought. This is perhaps pre-eminently espoused by Svensson, Anderberg, Alvegard, & Johansson (2006a) who argue that phenomenographic interviews should be intentionally expressive. As such the interviewee is encouraged to reflect upon and confirm the intended meaning of their utterance. Adopting such an approach therefore ensures objectivity in that meanings from the interviewee are established by their own understanding of the phenomenon under discussion (Anderberg, 2000). It is for these reasons that the interview was a chosen method of data collection within all three of the studies reported in the present thesis.

Considering alternative ways of gathering data in phenomenographic research such as students' conception of literature reviews (Bruce, 1994) and within mathematics (Crawford, Gordon, Nicholas & Prosser, 1994) can be somewhat illuminating with regards to the merits of conducting interviews. In both studies participants were asked to write short statements to determine their conceptions of learning. This approach allowed researchers to gather a large amount of data from a large body of students. However, the scope of the responses was limited not least by the fact that the data was restricted entirely to what was written down and sent to them. The researcher was not able to probe and further contextualise the responses with the individuals in person for example. It seems therefore sensible to align one's own practice with that of Hammersley (2003) who recognises the issues discussed previously and advocates researchers becoming increasingly conscious of some of the dangers associated with drawing too conclusive an interpretation from the data gathered. This perhaps also aligns appropriately with Säljö (1996, 1997) who comments upon researchers becoming cautious about interpreting conceptual inferences as explained by linguistic difference between interviewees.

Richardson (1999) advances that there are fundamental issues surrounding ethics within the phenomenographic interview. His issue seems to centre upon Marton and Booth's (1997) assertion that in order to allow conceptions to be enunciated within the interview the researcher needs to transform the interviewee into a state of 'meta-awareness'. Within such a situation Richardson (1999) seems to argue that Marton & Booth (1997) are suggesting the interview could become a quasi-therapeutic situation. The researcher would therefore need to espouse specific tactics to break down interviewee's defence structures of renunciation and opposition. Richardson's (1999) point infers that this presents ethical dilemmas. One would argue that, aside from power issues (a challenge when researchers are working with their direct subordinates), the researcher's primary focus is to understand the individual's conceptions of reality. In this regard, Stenfors-Hayes et al. (2013) suggest that within the interview, the researcher needs to hold a sincere interest in relation to participants' responses. Further a relaxed, friendly and open environment should be created. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) indicate empathy and imagination help to capture participants' understanding of phenomenon. Barnard, McCosker & Gerber (1999) argue that this can be achieved by viewing the interview as a focused conversation. During the research process I was acutely aware of the need to allow students and lecturers the opportunity to not only report their experiences of assessment and feedback but also the need to allow them to delve deeper into such experiences in order to illuminate the emotional impact such experiences had upon them.

Within the phenomenographical interview the researcher needs to ensure they are constantly interpreting the meanings of the participant's life world in real and understandable language. Ashworth & Lucas (2000) contend that issues surrounding empathy are very important. Empathy requires the researcher to detach themselves from their life world and appreciate the life world of the interviewee (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000). Crucial to this understanding is the meaning making constructed through interactions between the participant and the researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Marton (1994) argues that the rapport

between the researcher and the participants, coupled with the researcher's own knowledge and experiences, have a large effect upon the experiences and understandings generated. However, as Sandberg (1997) highlights, there is an ethical responsibility for the researcher to not let their subjective impressions influence the respondents' understanding of the phenomenon, whether they be in line or not, with the participants. Reflexivity is a strategy that phenomenographical researchers can employ in order to overcome the potential criticism that their research lacks objectivity. Haraway (1991) and Malterud (2001) both argue that for researchers to ignore their own influence within the research data collection process is in itself a potential cause for a lack of objectivity accusation to be levelled. In essence the argument centres upon the researcher's ability to recognise and address their own influence and more importantly document this within the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A reflexive researcher is one who acknowledges personal prejudices, biases or preconceived ideas that they are carrying into the research process (Sin, 2010). As such the researcher systematically identifies and attempts to minimise these at differing stages of the research process. Sin (2010) argues that in order for this process to remain transparent the researcher should document how they have minimised personal prejudices, biases or preconceived ideas, so the reader can ultimately make an informed judgement about the research. I operationalised reflexivity within the study two which allowed me to minimise the potential impact of prejudice, bias and preconceived ideas during data collection. A more detailed explanation of how this was achieved can be found in the method section of study two in chapter four.

2.1.4 Bracketing

Within any phenomenographical study it is very important for the researcher to consider bracketing to ensure that the participant's view rather than the researcher's view of the phenomenon is to be understood (Bruce, 1994a; Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). In this respect, Ashworth & Lucas (2000) have argued that if the researcher intentionally brackets their perceptions, experiences and knowledge of

the phenomenon then the potential to understand the participant's interpretation of the phenomenon is greatly increased. Further the researcher also needs to empathise with the student's lived experience within the interview context (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). To illustrate how this may operate in a research context, Ashworth & Lucas (2000) identify certain elements that the researcher must bracket; pre-given theoretical structures or interpretations, previous research findings, the researcher's personal knowledge and beliefs, specific research techniques and a desire to explain the cause of certain experience. Central to this bracketing process is the separation between the researcher's conventions and those of the students. However one must explain that the researcher's previous knowledge and experience does not have to be completely suppressed. Rather the very fact that I am a practitioner in this field as well as a researcher investigating the phenomenon implies a level of knowledge and experience which would be quantifiably impossible for me to fully suppress. Implicit within this is therefore the notion that my previous experience is utilised in order to foster the emergence of understanding of the student's lived experience of the phenomenon. Indeed the literature supports this contention as Åkerlind (2002) has argued:

“the more common view is that the greater the researcher's knowledge and varied experience of the phenomenon, the better their ability to constitute a logical and meaningful structure to the outcome space” (p. 11).

It therefore follows that through my knowledge and experience, as a university lecturer, experienced in assessment and giving feedback, I can accurately reflect the student's experiences in the outcome space.

In the present thesis therefore my previous experience within higher education was an important consideration for bracketing. I have worked in higher education for ten years. In this time, I have gained experience of writing and administering feedback. I have also had further experience of students presenting themselves as stressed, emotional and angry. I bracketed knowledge and experience that related

to this aspect of the phenomenon by firstly identifying it and then ensuring that such experience was kept separate from the student's responses in both the drawing exercise and the interview. Further intentional bracketing relating to assessment and feedback theory alongside that of students emotional processing experiences was also carried out. Although a difficult task to achieve I intentionally remained as impartial as possible towards students' reporting of their experiences of the phenomenon. This was achieved by directing the focus of the interview at all times towards discussing their experience of the phenomenon and not my own interpretation of their experiences. The key aspect here was therefore not to lead the students towards the same conclusive thoughts that I had previously experienced. However it is important to note here that although my own previous knowledge and experience was appropriately bracketed this was a clear advantage in terms of understanding the phenomenon under discussion and ensuring that I was empathetic towards the students in the data collection. As such I was able to ask the students searching questions in the interview which enabled them to express their experience of the phenomenon in a more in-depth manner.

In the data analysis process bracketing continued in a similar manner. Again I intentionally remained impartial towards students reporting of their experiences of the phenomenon. Within the data analysis bracketing constituted not analysing the data with my previous experiences in mind. Rather meanings were generated from the data and not coupled or combined with my previous experience of the phenomenon. This is perhaps the most difficult element of phenomenography due to the inherent experience of the researcher. I attempted to overcome this by constant checking, through re-reading of the interview transcripts to ensure that the themes that were emerging stayed consistent to the student's experiences and not those of my own. This approach seems to be congruent with phenomenographic research within the literature (Marton & Booth, 1997; Trigwell, 1994, 2000). However what is clear here, is that although such authors agree that researcher's experience of the phenomenon helps to ensure that accurate reporting of the students' experience of the phenomenon occurs, implicit within this is a

suggestion that bracketing can never be fully achieved. In practice during the analysis phases I must concede that bracketing was very difficult to achieve. Due to my experience within the field it was impossible for me to 100% bracket my experience. Human nature decrees that one cannot suppress one's thoughts feelings and experience all of the time. My involvement and clear vested interest in the PhD process was therefore a dominant cognition. Further, my positionality as a practicing lecturer as well as a researcher also needs to be acknowledged here too.

The outcome space within chapter five depicts the area of analysis which reflects the least amount of bracketing within the thesis. It was impossible for me to fully bracket my knowledge and experience here. Arguably if I had done so then the nuanced student experiences of the phenomenon would not have been so neatly stitched together to depict what was occurring. In this case the purest form of phenomenography was not operationalised; rather I took the decision to adapt the methodological approach in order to present a richer, more holistic representation of the interactional nature of the student's experiences. In so doing I acknowledge the subjective interpretation I have made, but throughout the thesis I have sought to make the subjective transparent.

2.1.5 Phenomenographic informed data analysis

During data analysis meanings, which emerge from the data, are not established independently of one another, rather they are in relation to each other. Marton & Booth (1997) explain this as "the meaning of one bit derived from the meaning of and lending meaning to the rest" (p.124). The iterative process thus relates to the context of individual experiences within the context of the collective group (Åkerlind, 2005; Bowden, 1994). Sandberg (1997) argues that when reporting the results the focus needs to be upon the 'way' the phenomenon is understood and not the 'why' it is understood in such a way. The clear distinction within phenomenographic analysis is that categories are constructed rather than discovered by the researcher (Walsh, 1994). The researcher consequently has a responsibility to ensure that data is represented in a responsible and valid manner.

Preconceived perceptions need to be managed by the researcher coupled with discussing the data outcomes with peers (Wahlström, Beerman, Dahlgren & Diwan, 1997). Consequently, a criticism which can be levelled at phenomenography is that the descriptions are perhaps less rich than they would be within phenomenology (Åkerlind, 2005). Rather, within phenomenography individuals' unique personal experiences are in essence reconstituted by the researcher to paint a more representative picture of the collective experience of a phenomenon under investigation (Bruce & Stoodley, 2010). In this regard, Åkerlind (2005) argues that phenomenography offers a complete understanding due to the fact that the qualitatively different ways of humans experiencing a phenomenon are organised by the researcher, rather than unrelated individual experiences. Conversely, Clegg & Stevenson (2013) argue that whilst analysis within phenomenography details some real insights, it does appear a little flimsy and perhaps somewhat vulnerable. Further they assert that despite phenomenography's attempts to minimise insider research, this still features (Clegg & Stevenson, 2013). A counter approach is contended:

“A better approach, in our view, is to theorise the nature of the interview and its interpretative context and to attempt to document and scrutinise the ethnographic elements that form part of interview studies”. (Clegg & Stevenson, 2013, p.8).

In essence Clegg & Stevenson (2013) are arguing that the process of interpretation will become far more opaque unless researchers fully engage in the scrutiny of their own practice and the contents of the interview. Such assertions also conjure up questions of validity and reliability within the data analysis. Researchers who disagree with the methodological approaches of phenomenography often interrogate the validity of the term 'reality' (Richardson, 1999). From the phenomenographical lens one could argue 'reality' never truly exists, outside of that of the describer's conception and interpretation. Therefore it follows that validity is

exemplified by the relationships between the categories and further supported by direct quotes from the participants (Giacomini & Cook, 2000; Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002). Indeed, Entwistle (1997) argues a similar point suggesting that sufficient extracts need to be presented in phenomenographic analysis so that a category's scope can be fully appreciated. As such the data reported in chapters three, four and five is represented by direct quotes from the research participant's in order to illuminate the contents of the constructed themes.

Such a distinction therefore necessitates that data within phenomenographic analysis emerge in a relational manner (Åkerlind, 2008). However one must also appreciate the inferences of Ashworth & Lucas (2000) who suggest that there are a limited and sometimes definable number of conceptions of a phenomenon. They point to the area of learning conceptions stating that in Säljö's (1979) seminal study, only five different conceptions were held by students. The interesting facet of this contention is the hierarchical and inter-related nature Säljö (1979) reports. The inference within such phenomenographic studies is that individuals range from less to more complex conceptions of particular phenomena. Therefore we can see progression within individuals across their range of experiences, indicating retention of and advancement of understanding (Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton & Pang, 2008). This is perhaps exemplified with the work of Reid & Petocz (2002) that identified six ways in which students understood statistics. Within their study a contrast between the levels of student sophistication is made. On the one hand students operate at a rather simplistic level (in this case simple techniques); at more developed levels students generate meaning from the data they produce. Within Reid & Petocz's (2002) study how the student appreciates and develops their appreciation of the variation between the ways of approaching study is revealed by the phenomenographic approach.

In contrast, recent studies have maintained that categories are related to each other suggesting an inclusive hierarchy (e.g. Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Prosser et al., 2005; Åkerlind, 2004, 2008). Prosser et al. (2005) and Åkerlind (2004) argue that conceptions are both relational and hierarchical, with Åkerlind proposing that in

phenomenography the different ways of experiencing a phenomenon would be “internally related” (2004, p. 366), and that therefore, the different ways of understanding a phenomenon would “typically represent more or less complete experiences of the phenomenon rather than different and unrelated experiences” (2004, p. 366). She argues that it is this view of experience as relational which indicates that categories may be “ordered along a hierarchy of inclusiveness” (2004, p. 366) where a complex category subsumes the less complex ones. This structure is indicated by her research results where categories of description showed references to aspects of the phenomenon present “lower in the hierarchy but not vice versa” (2004, p. 366). Following the arguments of Åkerlind the data in study two in the present thesis was constructed in a similar manner in order to demonstrate the differing experiences of the same phenomenon within the student population (see chapter five).

The hierarchical development of understanding which features in the research literature discussed so far in this chapter can be classified as the ‘outcome space’ (Marton, 1994). Within this space the researcher identifies common themes in the meanings expressed by the collective group (Åkerlind, 2010). Marton & Pang (2008) explain that the outcome space represents the results of phenomenographic research as relationships between the categories of description. Marton & Booth (1997) assert that:

“The outcome space is the complex of categories of description comprising distinct groupings of aspects of the phenomenon and the relationship between them” (p.125).

It therefore follows that within this outcome space, logical and hierarchical ways of experiencing the phenomenon are displayed. Further, as Marton & Pang (2008) argue within the outcome space elements of variation can be exemplified too. Phenomenography does not set out to study objective reality; rather an outcome space that makes sense is viewed as a reliable outcome (Åkerlind, 2005c). Such a

conclusion seems logical if one were to trace the origins of the word phenomenography back to the Greek word *phenomenon* meaning 'that which is revealed' (Austerlitz, 2007). As such, the 'outcome space' therefore reveals lived experiences of people, from their own point of view (Marton, 1988; Van Manen, 1990). However the premise of the outcome space has been queried within the literature. The grounds for such a contention rest in the work of Bruce (2006) who discusses and subsequently questions the relevance and theoretical importance of the outcome space. Bruce (2006) is concerned that the ground on which phenomenography was built (within education contexts) may not have such credence or applicability outside of its foundation realm of education. However the present thesis was carried out within an education setting and therefore the arguments in favour of utilising an outcome space seem to support its use within this thesis.

The primary research tool for data collection in this thesis was in-depth semi-structured one-to-one interviews. However within study two with the students and subsequently study three with academic lecturers, visual methods were also used to promote discussion and explore the participants' experiences of assessment and feedback. In the study two students were asked prior to participating in the interview to take part in a drawing exercise. In study three, with academic lecturers, videos of students talking about their experiences of assessment and feedback were played and the lecturers asked to comment on them. Both these methods have been discussed frequently within the literature alongside similar methods. The following sections critically discuss the use of visual methods in research and explain why such methods were chosen for use within this thesis.

2.1.6 Visual methods

The following section of this chapter reviews methods of data collection which are characterised by their visual nature. An introduction to visual methods framing their nature and varied use will be offered. Subsequent sections of the review discuss the historical development of visual methods and the context in which visual methods

have been researched. The review will then progress towards how drawing in particular has been utilised to allow the students in the current research to report their experiences of assessment and feedback within an in-depth interview. A critical commentary will then be offered in relation to some potential barriers for use within research frameworks. The final section of this chapter reports the findings from a small scale pilot drawing exercise that I carried out, which has implications for the data collection protocol within the thesis. I have devoted a large section to visual methods as presently such methods feature within studies aligned to education very sparingly. I therefore felt it important to provide a comprehensive rationale for their use within my thesis. Their importance in relation to the actual tool to collect data, the interview, is therefore not over stated here, rather a justification for their use is offered.

2.1.7 Introduction to visual methods

Drawing, photography and video are all potential visual communication tools that can be utilised within a qualitatively participatory research framework. Potentially such tools could afford researchers the opportunity to view participants' lived experienced and participants the opportunity to articulate such nuances, in a supportive and constructive environment (Literat, 2013). Conceptually, visual methods suggest reflective moments for both researchers and participants. Indeed Literat (2013) has argued that visual methods are playful and not dependent upon linguistic expertise and therefore lend themselves to working with many different population groups. Visual methods therefore are "non-textual ways of knowing" that activate the "performative dimensions" of image making (Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty, 2006, p. 327). Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty (2006) contend that participants' previously ignored, rejected or suppressed lived experience accounts can be articulated through visual methods. Supporters of drawing as a research method argue that it is a fun, expressive activity that has the potential to transform an investigation into an enjoyable experience for all involved (Literat, 2013). The research experience could also become a learning experience for participants too if

one considers Papert & Harel's (1991) contention that humans learn by making things and as such a creative drawing experience could be the very vehicle to promote this opportunity. However, I must assert here that I fully appreciate that the potential for the use of a range of data sources within phenomenographic research was considered for this thesis. However I decided that drawings and videos in particular were viable methods to stimulate the discussion in my interviews.

2.1.8 The use of visual methods

The use of visual methods as a medium for collecting data on the emotional and relational aspects of human experience has been generally accepted within the literature (Kearney & Hyle, 2003). Stiles (2004) confirms such a viewpoint arguing that, drawings are well positioned as the method of choice for those interested in collecting this kind of data. However, Stiles (2004) also points out that:

“Images are still regarded by the academic orthodoxy as a subjective, inferior, or even eccentric form of data compared to words and numbers” (p. 127).

That said within the literature an increasing emergence of drawing- based research seems apparent (Stiles, 2004). Emmison & Smith (2000) define visual research as “any object, person, place, event or happening ... observable to the human eye and not only limited to photography.”(p.4) Prosser (2007) however, identifies visual research as “the production, organization and interpretation of imagery” (p.13)

Research utilising visual images can be seen within many fields. In social science, research can be traced back to visual anthropologists who explained ‘exotic’ cultures through the use of photographs and personal narrative accounts (Collier & Collier, 1986; Scherer, 1992, 1995). Within psychology and psychotherapy, the participatory nature of photo-elicitation has been utilised to further understand an individual's interpretations of their world (Gauntlett, 2007; Reavey, 2011). Researchers who have carried out investigations with children, as participants, are

the main adopters of drawings as a visual method. Such studies have concentrated upon children's understanding of health and illness (Oakley et al., 1995; Bendelow, Oakley, & Williams, 1996; Williams & Bendelow, 2000; Radley & Taylor, 2003), representation of children in their own social world (Herth, 1998; Driessnack, 2006; Mercier, Barron, & O'Connor, 2006) and childhood (Rasmussen, 2004; Streng et al., 2004; Wang, 2007; Wang & Burris, 1997). A large body of research also concentrates upon children's conceptions of play and physical activity (Holt, Spence, Sehn, & Cutumisu, 2008; Pearce, Kirk, Cummins, Collins, Elliman, Conolly & Law, 2009; Anthamatten, Wee, & Korris, 2012). The final research area that needs to be discussed here is that of the clinical psychology realm. Within this research drawings were predominantly used with young children to identify stages of intellectual development. Within such research the focus was upon analysing the drawings produced in order to test an individual's personality traits and psychological well-being (Marzolf & Kirchner, 1973; Prytula, Phelps & Morrissey, 1978; Vass, 1998). One important distinction to make here is that within the present thesis, the participant generated drawings were not subjected to such analysis; rather they were a means to promote discussion in the subsequent interview.

An emergence in recent years of more research that concentrates upon the adult population is evident (Victoria & Knauth 2001; Broadbent, Petrie, Ellis, Ying & Gamble, 2004; Cross, Kabel & Lysack, 2006). Much of this works seems to stem from Martin's (1994) study, which sought to understand adults' conceptions of their personal immune system. The work of Harper (2002; 2004; 2005) and Pink (2003; 2004) suggests that visual methodologies may be much richer than the written or oral word alone as it encompasses the context, processes, events and people within the situation under discussion. Advocates therefore argue that visual methods allow researchers to frame a social reality (Banks, 2007).

Central to the concept of visual methods is an underlying epistemology that individuals and groups see the world differently due to varied interpretations of the

socio-cultural landscape in which they find themselves (Rose, 2001). Further Rose (2001) contends that a visual culture exists within society. In this regard, though she argues that seeing should not only be restricted to what our eyes can see but rather we should consider the meanings that are constructed from what we see. Tuan (1977) summarises this process by explaining that how we see, what we are allowed to see, or what we are made to see are examples of a “selective process in which environmental stimuli are organized into flowing [cognitive] structures” (p. 10).

Visual methods generally constitute some form of analysis of visual items. There is now a considerable volume of literature that discusses analysis and interpretation of visual images (Mirzoeff, 1999; Evans & Hall, 1999; Emmison & Smith, 2000; Banks 2001; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Rose, 2001). Prosser & Loxley (2008) assert that visual methods usually utilise diagrams, which are either produced by the researcher or the participant. However, the majority of the studies discussed so far in this chapter share a commonality that the researcher and not the participants themselves generate the visual artifacts. Prosser (2008) argues that a shift towards more collaborative research would suggest that participants have agreed to become involved in the study and more importantly generated the data. Prosser (2008) further contends that visual studies should engage in participant generated data in order to ensure that equity, in terms of power and knowledge distribution between participant and researcher exists. The present thesis opted for participant generated drawings in study two with students and for researcher generated videos for the study with academic lecturers. In essence both visual methods are more than just visual as in the case of the drawings, the students also talked through their meaning and thus brought them to life. With the videos the auditory senses were also engaged as the actors were speaking to the lecturers and thus facial expressions and tone of voice could also be transmitted.

2.1.9 The context of visual methods

The use of visual methods as a viable means to collect data has been discussed within the literature in recent years. The adopted methods within such constructs centre upon two main distinctions. Firstly, the mechanical tools, which are typified by the use of photos and videos and secondly, the non-mechanical tools such as drawings (Literat, 2013). Young and Barrett (2001) have suggested that this distinction can be explained simply as digital and non-digital approaches. Indeed, Kress (2004) perhaps summarises the distinction most appropriately arguing that images represent:

“the recollection of the visually encountered world through the *spatially organized* mode,” while text is “the recollection of the actionably experienced world through the *temporally organized* mode” (Design as choice in context section, para. 2).

It therefore follows that visual representations afford participants the ability to depict space and time in a more unregulated fashion. That is, participants can utilise a method such as drawing to represent concepts, emotions and information which is not possible through writing or oral diction, which by definition are bound by temporal logic (Kress, 2004; Awan, 2007; Gauntlett, 2007).

Studies adopting the more digitally focused method seem to be in the ascendancy within the literature (Moss, 1999; Gumucio-Dagron, 2001; Harper, 2002; McIntyre, 2003; Frohmann, 2005). Photo elicitation resides within such a realm and is characterized mainly by researchers introducing the interviewee to researcher-created images, but have also been created by the interviewee (Clark, 1999; Samuels, 2004), or collected from existing sources such as magazines or the Internet (Banks, 2001). In support of this method Harper (2002) argues that photo elicitation allows the researcher to access different parts of the interviewee’s consciousness

than words alone allows. However, one could assert that any form of image could afford participants the potential to provide researchers with abstract, creative or indeed metaphorical representations of their lived experiences. In this regard Gauntlett (2007) has argued that the drawn image frequently acts as a metaphor for perceptions, emotions and identities. Richards (2002) goes so far as to suggest:

“Diagrams occupy that hinterland between written text and the purely graphical. That is their strength; enabling, often through the use of graphic metaphor, the visual representation of the otherwise invisible” (p91).

However, Gauntlett (2007) does offer a cautionary note for some researchers suggesting that a certain level of developed maturity is needed on behalf of the participants, thus implications for use with children can be inferred. The present thesis sought to explore students’ experiences of assessment and feedback and crucially to further understand how this potentially affected future assessment related behaviours. Participant generated drawings seemed a logical method as it afforded the students the opportunity to visually depict their complex experiences and to use them as a stimulus to articulate these experiences in the following interview.

The literature on visual methods highlights many different terminologies to explain the nuanced approaches operated. Graphic elicitation is perhaps the most frequently used term which explains how participants are required to draw, chart or offer some form of visual representation of their experience, or concept of beliefs (Copeland & Agosto, 2012). Engelhardt (2002) explains graphic representation as a “visible artifact on a more or less flat surface that was created in order to express information” (p 194). Central to the argument for adoption of such a methodology relates to its inherent capability to allow participants to express complex or abstract ideas which may be difficult for them to convey within more traditional forms of data collection such as, a semi-structured interviews alone (Crilly, Blackwell, & Clarkson, 2006). It has been previously argued in this chapter that the researcher or

the participant can create the artifact within graphic elicitation (Bagnoli, 2009). However, regardless of who creates the artifact a distinctive characteristic of the graphic elicitation approach is the time afforded to the participants in either condition (created or supplied). Wang, Kun, Wen Tao & Carovano (1998) postulate that disparate ways of knowing are expressed through images created by the participants themselves. Participants are therefore stimulated to recall experiences, which for the researcher can extend the level of data collected. As such, Copeland & Agosto (2012) contend that graphic elicitation provides a continued engagement for the participant as the recalled and created artifact (e.g. drawing) can be further analysed with or without the participant present. It is important to note here that, as stated earlier, in study two in this thesis the actual drawings were not analysed per se, rather they were used as a vehicle to promote discussion in the following interview.

It is apparent that different types of researchers are operationalising different forms of graphical elicitation within their data collection. For example the literature suggests that ethnographers utilise digital capture methods such as photography or video recordings (Banks 2001; Pink 2004). However, Nossiter & Biberman (1990) within organisational research tend to utilise drawings or diagrams. Crilley et al (2006) suggest that there is an extensive range of articles, which report the use of photographs for research within the social sciences. In this regard Kearney & Hyle (2004) have suggested that drawing related research is under represented in the literature. However, in tempering assumptions concerning the use of drawing within the literature one must consider the more recent work of Umoquit, Tso, Burchett & Dobrow, (2011) who carried out a meta-analysis of studies utilising participant drawing techniques. Umoquit et al (2011) report that in a range of academic fields of study, 233 articles were found to discuss participant drawing techniques. Within the area of Education, drawing research methodology is in its infancy, however within areas such as art pedagogy (McKillop, 2006), and media audience research (Gauntlett, 2005) increasingly the literature reflects an adoption of drawing as a tool to collect data. As such one could align the thoughts of Stiles

(2004) that drawing research is a powerful and overlooked tool in Education research today.

Early adopters of the drawing method, such as Maddox, Anthony & Wheatley (1987) utilised it to stimulate creative thinking and problem solving. They argued that after being “placed in a relaxed, receptive state of attentiveness” (p.122), the guided imagery processes enabled the strategic management team “to be more creative in visualising the future” (p.123). It is apparent in the work of Maddox et al (1987) that central to the success of such a method is that the participants are gently eased into the process of drawing. As such the present thesis employed a series of warm-up exercises so that participants felt relaxed and at ease with the requirements of the drawing task. Stiles (2004) argued that a minimum of two warm up exercises are necessary for successful drawing. Clearly the central argument of Stiles (2004) recommendation is the need to allow participants to move into a process of thinking in visual terms. As such, one could argue that without a warm-up the participant would not be comfortable with the materials, surroundings or the very idea of pictorially representing their thoughts. A further consideration is indicated in the work of Kearney & Hyle (2003); for many participants this could be the first time they have been asked to draw since primary school. Operationally they also suggest that drawing can mean stick people, something, which in practice may ease the participant into the task and counteract the issue of drawing ability concern. Post warm up the participants have sufficiently adjusted their mind-set towards the visual element and thus can draw for real (Kearney & Hyle, 2003).

2.1.10 Drawing to elicit emotional responses

The primary concern for the research in the present thesis centred upon issues of asking people to explain their emotional experiences at times I perceived as potentially stressful or upsetting. That is to say students were required to discuss how they felt during summative assessment periods and after receiving feedback. Due to the overriding effect summative assessment has upon students’ final degree

classification, I perceived these situations as potentially stressful to those interviewed. Many people perhaps may find it hard to express such emotional responses in oral form. Kearney and Hyle (2004) suggest that within the realm of art therapy this has been an accepted method to surface participants' unspoken thoughts and feelings. Working with participants' experiencing institutional change they reported that the participant generated drawings elicited emotional responses and concluded, "The cognitive process required to draw, leads to a more succinct presentation of the key elements of participants' experiences" (p. 376). This is particularly the case within organisational research, whereby visual techniques are used to stimulate creative thinking (Maddox et al., 1987). Clearly such a method is not the only type one could employ, however as Kearney & Hyle (2003) suggest, even if emotional data is not the primary focus, drawings can still provide "an important additional source of data" (p.30). It was therefore felt that within the thesis drawing activities may offer me and indeed the students a more insightful look at the experiences under discussion.

Gauntlett & Holzwarth (2006) have argued that the use of drawings could allow the participants to express their feelings in the visual form. When examining how clerical workers felt about their jobs following the conversion to a new computer system, Zuboff (1988) asked research participants to draw pictures that represented their felt sense of their job before and after the conversion. Zuboff (1988) posited that drawing helped research participants to "articulate feelings that had been implicit and were hard to define" (p141). Support for this well-established 'diagnosis' is also reported in more recent studies on the use of drawings (Stiles, 2004; Bryans & Mavin, 2006). Indeed within the Bryans & Mavin (2006) study doctoral students reported becoming more aware of their own thoughts, opinions and emotions. More importantly the students reflected that the drawing process had better enabled them to discuss their experiences with the researcher. The present thesis utilised drawing as it was expected that drawing might afford research participants the opportunity to remember and articulate implicit emotional and relational aspects about assessment and feedback that otherwise

might have been missed out had more conventional research methods, such as one-to-one interviews for example, been used alone (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). Further support for this contention can perhaps be seen in the work of Guillemin & Westall (2008) that used visual methodologies with women suffering from post-natal depression. The participants in Guillemin & Westall's (2008) study felt helpless, very vulnerable and unable to significantly convey their emotional distress in word form. The drawings the participants produced however successfully conveyed their emotional state to the researcher.

2.1.11 Drawing in conjunction with an interview

In support of the interview, Gauntlett (2005) contends that at times participant-generated images can be ambiguous and therefore conducting an interview alongside the constructed artifact allows the researcher to address this. This conclusion could be due to the fact that the majority of the research Gauntlett carried out was with children who can have abstract and imaginative interpretations. This can make it difficult for researchers to draw summative assumptions from (Young & Barrett, 2001; Gauntlett, 2005, 2007; Mitchell, 2006). Banks (2001) has therefore suggested that the informal interview allows the child to express the meaning behind their visual depiction. As such one can look to the work of Mitchell (2006) who states that:

“drawings are not a substitute for children's voices and the absence or muting or fragmentation of children's talk about their images means researchers need to be particularly cautious about over-interpreting their images” (p. 69).

However, regardless of the age or experience of the participant's one should consider the work of Zhang (2008) who suggests that, “It is useful to ask participants to describe their drawings because the descriptions to a large degree help reduce misinterpretations on the researchers' part” (p. 2096). This interview can take the

form of a reflective discussion or informal interview (Pink, 2006; Varga-Atkins & O'Brien, 2009).

It is clear that in the overwhelming majority of cases the drawing method alongside an interview seems to be favoured within the literature. Morrow (1998) argues that drawings can work as openers or icebreakers prior to the interview. This seems like a rather simplistic interpretation of the drawing process itself. In a more developed understanding of the process, Gauntlett (2007) argues that drawing encourages active conceptualisation and contemplation. However, Rattine-Flaherty & Singhal (2007) contend that from a psychological point of view drawing can unlock subconscious emotions. As such, adopting this method allows more time for participants to really understand and formalise their responses. Further as the interview can be a pressurised situation for many individuals, the drawing period time allocation enables participants to provide far more insightful responses within the subsequent interview (Gauntlett, 2005). In essence a combination of the individual's visually generated interpretation of experience and a subsequent complementary verbal affirmation of such experiences forms the basis of the generated data (Coffey, Dicks, Mason, Renold, Soyinka & Williams, 2005; Pink, 2006; Hee Pedersen, 2008). It follows therefore that within this thesis such an approach not only ensures the validity and reliability of the results but also from an ethical standpoint the participants are given an opportunity to ensure their meanings are interpreted by the researcher as they intended.

2.1.12 Potential operational barriers

The use of drawing is not without its criticisms or indeed resistance from participants. As a researcher, coping with the research participants' responses, which can sometimes be negative, and dealing with their befuddlement as to what exactly they are being asked to do, is not always going to be as easy and straightforward as it is purported to be in Stiles (2004). Researchers have suggested that in order to fully understand participant resistance research should concentrate

upon factors such as timings or the settings in which the drawing tasks will take place (Derry, 2002; Kearney & Hyle, 2003). Such researchers argue that it is this, which might also impact on participants' negative responses to the request to draw. It is apparent that research on these constructs is limited (apart from Maddox et al., 1997 and Stiles, 2004). There is a lack of coverage on what researchers need to do and thereby, how they need to be, in order to produce positive participant responses to their requests to draw. Bryans & Mavin's (2006) study seemed to demonstrate a very positive reaction to the request to draw. However a cautionary note can be highlighted. Although Bryans & Mavin (2006) indicate that drawing positively helped participants take part in the research study, this could be due to the population group selected. The participants were PhD students studying on a module as part of their course. The participants' responses to the request to draw in Bryans & Mavin's (2006) research arguably may have been more positive than the participants in Kearney & Hyle's (2003) study because the participants in Bryans & Mavin (2006) were more open-minded, forthcoming and willing to learn compared with the faculty, staff and administrators in Kearney & Hyle (2003).

Explanations for a lack of engagement with the drawing process have been offered in the literature. Both Kearney & Hyle (2003) and Stiles (2004) report that perception of drawing ability was often cited as reason why participants may react negatively to the request to draw. Derry (2002) argues that perhaps the timing of the request affects the response of the participants. Derry (2002) suggests that extensive interaction between participant and researcher is needed before the request is made. Further it is also argued that the setting has a significant impact. For example a one-on-one setting as opposed to a groups setting whereby the security attached to being part of a group participating in a drawing activity is perceived as less threatening (Derry, 2002). In light of these assertions one might argue that in the Bryans & Mavin (2006) study, although the participants were on a PhD course and therefore more likely to follow instruction, it could be due to the extensive interaction and group security that initiated positive reactions to the request to draw. Stiles (2004) challenges that perhaps the best way to overcome negative responses is to simply offer words of encouragement. However this does

seem illogical unless a relationship along the lines of Bryans & Mavin (2006) is developed, as the words could be perceived as trying to get the participants to do what the researcher wants.

The academic research world has demonstrated some resistance or reluctance to the use of drawing as a data collection tool. Bryans & Mavin (2006) report that the main reasons underlying this reluctance are, among others, subjectivity in interpretation, extreme variations in drawing ability, technical difficulties in getting published, and uncertainties about the medium. Symon & Cassell (2004) argue that both undergraduates and postgraduates are predominantly taught the procedures and concerns only of positivist research and therefore this could act as a barrier to the use of innovative research practices. Some researchers have argued in favour of the usefulness of drawing as a research tool (Nossiter & Biberman, 1990; Meyer, 1991; Derry, 2002; Kearney & Hyle, 2003; Stiles, 2004). However, it seems that the issues surrounding ability to draw by participants appear to dominate the literature and therefore perhaps cloud researchers' judgement of the positives of using such a method.

2.1.13 Piloting the drawing method

I was not experienced in utilising participant generated drawings to elicit responses from participants; therefore I deemed it necessary to pilot this method prior to using it in study two with undergraduate students. As indicated previously in this chapter using participant generated drawings to provide a focus for participants is an emerging method of data collection. Three, final year, male sport psychology degree students were asked (via their module tutor) to participate in a drawing exercise. I selected these students as they were a small group that I did not teach, but were studying a similar course to those who I planned to use within study two. In line with the findings of Stiles (2004) students were asked to firstly engage in some warm-up exercises so they felt comfortable with the drawing procedure. I constructed three warm-up exercises designed to gently ease the students into the

process of drawing. Firstly, the students were asked to draw how they felt when their sport team won. It was felt that asking students to draw positive feelings may have come more naturally to them for the first task. Secondly the students were asked to draw how they felt when their team lost. The final warm-up task required them to draw how they would feel if they won the national lottery. This final warm-up task was deemed suitable as the concept of winning the lottery is not limited in nature and therefore afforded the students the opportunity to express pictorially their wants and desires. All three students carried out the drawing task in the same room at the same time as I felt this would allow them to collectively experience the same situation without the pressure of a one-to one situation where they may have felt forced to draw. The students were given as much time as they required to complete each of the warm up exercises.

The main drawing exercise required the students to visually represent their feelings related to their experiences of higher education. In particular the students were asked to reflect upon assessment, feedback and how they had been doing in their degree so far. The students were again given a limitless amount of time to carry out this task, in practice the drawing exercise took 30 minutes to complete. Following the drawing exercises the students were asked to participate in a small 10 minute individual one-to-one interview to explore their final drawing (see appendix two for a sample interview transcript). This interview allowed me to experience how a student might describe their drawing and how I may ask related questions to such utterances. The drawing method pilot allowed me to test the appropriateness of the method for eliciting not only emotionally sensitive participant generated drawings but also more importantly conversations in relation to the produced drawings. In particular the use of warm-up drawings and the subsequent discussion of the student's main drawing allowed me to experience this in a relaxed environment.

At the end of each interview the students were asked to comment how they felt about drawing and whether this allowed them to talk more freely about their emotional experiences. The students unanimously agreed that this method allowed

them the time to think about their experiences and reflect openly and honestly about their experiences thus far. Reflecting upon the process, it is clear that the advice gleaned from the literature, coupled together with actual experience of administering the drawing protocol, allowed me to conclusively decide that this method was suitable for use in a larger scale study with undergraduate students. However, what was also clear is that although the students enjoyed the process, I could never be certain of the final student generated drawing. That is to say what the students draw is unpredictable. All three students displayed varying levels of drawing ability and thus this could be a potential issue in terms of the level of discussion which may follow in an interview. In essence, the concern is that a lack of ability to draw may hinder the student's potential to disclose their emotional experience of assessment and feedback. It therefore was apparent that some form of interview schedule needed to be constructed in advance of the one-to-one interviews. Developing such a schedule therefore required a further study in order to understand student experiences at a more in-depth level. Chapter three will address this and report on findings from study one.

2.2 Contextualising the Thesis

The three studies alongside the drawing method pilot within this thesis were all carried out at a Higher Education institution in the North-West of England. This institution can be described as somewhat different to many other higher education providers within the UK system. Firstly the institution is located within a large city which has 4 Universities. It is relatively small with around 8000 FTE's, this places it as the fourth largest in this City. The University is the only ecumenical university in Europe its work has been shaped by Christian principles but embraces those of all faiths and none. The university comprises three faculties – Arts and Humanities, Education, and Science – organised into 19 departments. The University prides itself on knowing all of its students and therefore, its staff are encouraged, by senior management, to interact with their students so that they feel more than just a number. The distinctiveness of the University is important to note within the

present thesis as this may have impacted upon the data derived and the conclusions made. In particular it is significant to highlight the unique student body which is represented within the thesis. All the students interviewed were studying subjects which were housed within the Science and Social Science Faculty. Predominantly the students who took part in this research studied a degree which included Sport Studies. Further the majority of the students interviewed also played competitive Sport and therefore represent views and behaviours which may be different to students studying subjects within the Arts or Humanities. The students were also predominantly assessed in written form. That is, the overwhelming number of the students submitted summative work which represented either a written essay or formal examination. The University also did not have a clear policy of formative draft work and apparent disparate practices relating to this were evident. Finally the policies relating to feedback within this University stipulated a 4 week turnaround from submission to notification of grade and that students had a right to request follow up feedback if they so wished to.

2.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout all three studies within the present thesis. I was acutely aware that the students and lecturers in all three studies needed to be supported and empowered in order for the research to reflect their experiences. To this end, I incorporated the British Educational Research Associations (BERA) code of ethics into the design of the studies. Further, I also ensured that the requirements of data protection were adhered to. The following section will outline the ethical considerations I made throughout the thesis.

Ethical considerations are an extremely important part of the research process. Central to such considerations are the intentions to minimise or even prevent potential detrimental effects upon research participants. In this regard, the participant's privacy and informed consent were pertinent for me to maintain. Mauthner, Birch, Jessop & Miller (2002) argue that ethical problems can arise within research when "private lives and personal accounts are placed in the public arena"

(p.1). I therefore ensured throughout all the studies that suitable pseudonyms were used for all participants and that all data was securely saved on a password protected hard drive. I also ensured that the research data was only shared with the supervisory team after such measures had been put into place. Doloriert & Sambrook (2009) argue that a deontological view should be taken within research and as such I operated within this framework. I also ensured that I demonstrated academic integrity and honesty throughout the research process (Punch, 2000) in order to create an ethic of care (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver & Ireland, 2009).

One area that was especially ethically sensitive was the fact that I was a member of staff at the university in which the research took place. In this sense the literature would suggest that I was an insider (Mercer, 2007). In this regard, Hammersley (1993) has argued that:

“there are no overwhelming advantages to being an insider or an outsider. Each position has advantages and disadvantages though these will take on slightly different weights depending on the particular circumstances and purposes of the research” (p.219)

One area which I considered an advantage was that of familiarity. As an insider I had a better initial understanding of the social setting as I knew the context and therefore was able to follow particular lines of inquiry (Griffiths, 1985) producing richer data. Some researchers, such as Hockey (1993) have argued to the contrary suggesting that insiders don't ask obvious questions or challenge assumptions so the data becomes less rich. But equally as Hockey (1993) also suggests, insiders have credibility and rapport with subjects and can engender candour in participants. Arguably given such concerns participants could think they will be judged by what they say and therefore not say it (Shah, 2004). However, as Mercer (2007) argues it's like a double edged sword. What the researcher gains from their intimate

knowledge of the context could be lost as Hawkins (1990) argues by their inability to make the familiar strange.

Drever (1995) argues that “people’s willingness to talk to you and what they say to you is influenced by who they think you are” (p.31). This seems a pertinent issue to highlight given that I lectured at the university where the research took place and therefore in terms of the power balance in studies one and two I was a lecturer and they were a student. This was of course different within study three where I was a direct colleague. Either way, I was still an insider and thus I had to ensure that I did not voice my own opinions within the interview, rather I needed to let the participants tell their stories freely. However, that is not to say that I did not engage with the participants during the interview. Hawkins (1990) identified that when researchers offered minimal responses during interviews this was interpreted by participants as a lack of interest in what they were saying. I was therefore extremely keen to ensure that the participants felt I was interested (as I was) but at the same time I was careful not to influence the responses they gave. In this regard, I constantly referred them back to their original drawings or the videos they had watched. I was also very keen to avoid what Griffith (1985) identified as, incidental data; that is data derived from informal chats over coffee or meetings. This was particularly the case with the lecturers that I interviewed, as I felt this was unfair due to the fact I had not negotiated such data collection with them. Being an ‘insider’ would have not only compromised the trust I had with my colleagues, as it would have been an abuse of access, but also undermined my own integrity with regards to data collection within the thesis.

I was aware that the potential for participant discomfort was a distinct possibility within my research. I requested participants to reflect upon their emotional reactions to situations which they may have perceived as stressful (assessment & feedback situations in HE) and potentially these could cause discomfort. I was very much prepared and willing to offer advice if such occurrences presented themselves. Some students did appear visibly upset and when this did occur I indicated that counselling services were available if the participant needed to talk to

someone in more detail about their experiences. Further, participants were also informed that if they felt it necessary, they could cease the interview at any time. This did however not occur within the research. I exercised a duty of care throughout the research process striving to treat the insights the participants gave me with dignity and respect. In this regard I gave the participants an opportunity to tell their stories within my research and attributed such stories.

I was granted ethical approval for the research within this thesis by the Educational Faculty ethics committee (see appendix seven) prior to commencement of data collection. I ensured that voluntary informed consent was granted by all participants prior to engaging in any data collection with them (BERA, 2011). This was facilitated through a participant information sheet (see appendix eight) which detailed the nature and process of the research study alongside the fact that their participation was voluntary. The consent form (available on request) outlined that the interview would be recorded, all data would be kept securely, only viewed by the researcher and pseudonyms would be used to protect their identity. I explained that the pseudonyms would be utilised throughout the thesis and in subsequent publications, conference presentations or any other discussions relating to data derived from their transcript. Prior to the commencement of the interview I also reminded the participants that they could withdraw at any point if they so wished. A further measure I employed was to allow all participants the opportunity to keep the drawings they produced (I took photographs to use in the thesis) and also to view the transcript from the interview. Allowing the participants the opportunity to check the transcripts minimises the potential for misrepresentations to occur (BERA, 2011). In practice all participants did not take up the opportunity to view the transcript but many opted to keep their drawing.

The main part of collecting the data in relation to the sensitive issue of emotions was carried out through the use of drawings. The students were asked to visually represent their emotions and then asked to talk about their drawings. The quality of their drawings was not a consideration for the research, more a tool for fostering

student reflection and subsequent discussion of themes emerging. I was fully aware that many people have a latent dislike of drawing, due mainly to a fear over the quality of their drawing ability. However, structured support in entering into the drawing process was provided in the form of several warm-up exercises to ease the students into the process. Ethically I was aware that if the students indicated that they were uncomfortable with this they could withdraw from the process immediately. However, all of the students continued with the drawing activity throughout to the end.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has critically discussed the predominant methodology utilised within the thesis. The use of phenomenography across many disparate disciplines has been discussed alongside its epistemological and ontological assumptions. Differing types of phenomenographical practices have been identified and framed in relation to the present thesis where appropriate. Most crucially data collection and analysis of data within phenomenography have also been evaluated and suggestions relating to how they can be applied to the present thesis have been made. Following on from discussions relating to phenomenography the use of visual methods to promote discussion amongst participants has also been explored in this chapter. The linkages between phenomenographic practice and operationalising the drawing method have been indicated and framed in line with what the literature suggests. In this regard, the chapter has outlined how the use of drawing and the in-depth interview were combined in order to enable the students' to report their experiences of assessment and feedback. This chapter has also reported the findings from a small scale pilot study which operationalised the drawing method. Finally this chapter has also presented the ethical considerations which were made for the thesis.

3. Chapter Three - Study One – Good work & Poor work

3.1 Introduction

The multiple constructs of; motivation, emotions, goals and praise all discussed in chapter one, highlight the multifaceted nature of feedback. In an attempt to further understand how such multifaceted constructs interact within feedback situations, I sought to explore this with undergraduate students. In the literature review, I attempted to distil many areas of literature into a more coherent pattern of understanding in relation to feedback. Thus far, I have made the case that an appreciation of more than one singular construct is needed in order to fully understand students' utilisation of feedback and their potential subsequent intended behaviour. However, the nature of such interactions is not presently understood and thus in this study I sought to explore students' experiences of feedback. Through semi-structured interviews I asked a range of undergraduate students to explain their experiences of the constructs identified within the literature review, in order to better understand how these constructs interact in relation to when students are performing well and not so well. The interviews afforded me the opportunity to seek clarification in relation to the students' experiences and more importantly discuss how these are inter-related.

As indicated in chapters one and two I was keen to approach the topic of feedback in higher education in a holistic manner. That is, an attempt to integrate several cognate research areas such as motivation, grades, emotions and self-regulation. The schedule for the semi-structured interview was devised after I had carried out an extensive search of the literature base. In chapter two I extensively discussed phenomenography which was the overriding methodology for the majority of the research carried out in this thesis. However for the purposes of this study I was keen to explore the student's experiences of 'good' and 'bad' work from a much more pre-determined approach. After immersing myself in the feedback literature for over 12 months at the beginning of the PhD I found myself in a rather confused

position. In a sense the volume and complexities of such research findings meant that I was unsure how such constructs were operating and indeed if the inter-related notion was apparent. I therefore needed to carry out this exploratory study in order to firstly ask students directed questions in relation to constructs identified in chapters one and two and secondly I needed to understand the impact that performance outcome (grades) had upon the students. This study does not therefore adhere to the phenomenographical underpinnings which I articulate in chapter two and subsequently utilise in chapters four, five. Within this study there is a clear detraction from the phenomenographical approach as I was keen to more purposely explore the students in this study so that as a researcher I could clarify my understanding of the topic area in which I was involved in order to ensure that the studies two and three within this thesis were carried out in the most organised and informed manner. It is also important to note here that the thesis construction was an organic process and one which was modified during its six year construction. With the benefit of experience and hindsight I perhaps would have chosen one methodological approach and applied this across all studies. However as a researcher within this field I too have matured and such experiences have led to my own methodological understanding developing and as such the approaches within chapters four, five, and six reflect this more so than my early approaches in this present chapter.

3.1.1 Participants

Forty final year B.Sc. sport studies undergraduate students (not taught by myself and representing 25% of the whole cohort) were approached by email and offered an incentive to participate (£10 HMV voucher) in a one-to-one interview relating to their experiences of feedback. Fourteen final year students agreed to participate in an individual semi-structured interview. The students represented the traditional undergraduate age range of between 20 and 21 years old and included equal numbers of male and females. Due to the exploratory nature of this particular study I did not feel that it was important to identify their level of achievement as a distinguishing factor, though this will be explored in future chapters in this thesis.

3.1.2 Design and procedure

The students were interviewed between October 2009 and December 2009 and interviews took place in my office. I felt that this was an appropriate location as students were familiar with one-to-one situations with staff members in their offices. I provided the students with a detailed information sheet (see appendix eight) and they all signed an informed consent form (available on request). Students were informed prior to the interview that their participation was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw at any time or if they wished at a later date withdraw their data from the study. All interviews were digitally recorded, subsequently transcribed verbatim and students were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Students were asked to bring samples of marked written work from their undergraduate degree. The students in particular were asked to bring with them assignments which they regarded as reflecting good work and poor work. The interviews were framed around discussing the student's work for which they had received feedback from academic staff members. In particular the focus was upon discussing the feedback on work which the student perceived as being 'good' for them and 'poor' for them. It is important here to acknowledge here that all fourteen of the students identified what they perceived as good and bad work in advance of arriving at the interview as they were solely responsible for selecting and bringing their work with them. Further, it was interesting to note that each student had identified their 'own level' of performance, that is, they articulated that they had a predetermined level of expected achievement prior to submission of assessment. As such, this determined their perception of what constituted good and bad when receiving their summative grade.

The piece of work that the student had identified as reflecting good work was chosen to begin the interview. Students were asked to summarise the feedback they received and interpret what the lecturer was asking them to do next time. Further to this, my pre-determined interview schedule was utilised (see appendix 1). Students were asked under the good work parameter, specific questions relating

to how the feedback they received made them feel, how they subsequently reacted to this feedback and finally how, with the previous feedback received in mind, they utilised it in their next assessment. Following this the same questions were asked in relation to work they had identified as 'bad'. The interviews lasted between 35-40 minutes in all cases and students seemed to be very comfortable discussing their work and how it impacted upon their future studies.

3.1.3 Data analysis

The interview transcripts yielded a large amount of data and were analysed using in-depth thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is viewed as a simple method as it can work with varied research questions (Braun & Clarke (2006). In particular Braun & Clarke (2013) suggest its use can range from "people's experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts" (p121). The analysis followed a theoretical thematic analysis as my prior theoretical understanding meant that the data was interpreted in an analyst driven manner (Braun & Clarke (2006). It was felt prudent to follow this approach as I wanted to attempt to explain interactions between constructs identified within the literature review which were discussed explicitly in the interviews by the students. Braun & Clarke (2006) indicated that thematic analysis is recursive. That is thematic analysis follows a linear six phase model whereby one cannot progress to the next stage until the prior stage is completed. In Table 1 on the next page the process of analysis is explained.

I initially familiarised myself with the data by re-reading the transcripts and listening to the audio files again. Patterns of meaning within the data at the individual interview level were then identified and highlighted in each transcript. I then initially coded the patterns of meaning. This involved highlighting a sentence or sentences and noting what this meant in a fairly basic manner. This process allowed me the opportunity to formulate ideas in relation to what the data meant and more importantly enabled me to see linkages between participants. At this point the coding was related to the literature that I had previously reviewed and therefore

naturally the language utilised reflected familiar terminology. A large amount of data was then organised into themes in which I sorted the initial coding into a more coherent structure. In essence the themes represent an overarching theme for the various codes that I had generated. The themes were then reviewed and some were felt to reflect similar meaning and therefore were combined to produce the final themes.

Stage	Researcher Task	Outcome
1. Familiarisation with the data	Data Immersion Transcripts read and re-read Audio data listened to again	Familiarisation Initial analytic observations
2. Coding	Areas of interest highlighted Early analytic process	Sentences highlighted Basic interpretations Codes collated
3. Searching for themes	Coherent meaningful patterns identified Similarities in data linked Themes constructed	Data codes collated Constructed themes identified
4. Reviewing themes	Check the themes work in relation to data Some themes may need combining or splitting	Final agreed themes
5. Defining and naming themes	Detailed analysis of each theme Construct informative name for each theme	Final theme names agreed
6. Writing up	Analytic narrative alongside key quotes Contextualise in relation to literature	Themes and sub-themes explained and linked to the literature

Table 1 Six Stages of Thematic Analysis (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

3.2 Results

Following the analysis process, nine themes were constructed (see appendix two for sample thematic data table): Motivation, Inter/Intrapersonal Focus, Grades, Effort, Competence, Type of feedback, Next assessment, Confidence and Lecturer. Figure 1 below visually depicts the nine themes. The wordle in figure 1 visually reveals the comparative frequency of responses for each theme. For example, it is clear that for this particular group of student's motivation seemed to be discussed more than confidence or grades.



Figure 1 Study One Themes Wordle

In the following section I will discuss each of these themes by elaborating the second order themes and associated first order themes alongside a selection of participant responses to further understand the complexity and inter-relatedness of the themes. The order in which I present the themes relates to the frequency of responses for each theme in descending order.

3.2.1 Motivation

The interviewees discussed frequently utterances aligned to how the feedback made them feel about their performance in the assessment under discussion. Overwhelmingly the most frequent utterance related to how these feelings affected the student's desire to continue with their studies in that particular module. Therefore the term motivation was chosen for this theme as it encapsulates all such feelings as it reflects the student's willingness and desire to engage with the feedback offered. In essence the student's inner drive to behave in an adaptive or maladaptive manner interacts with their overall academic achievement goals. In this regard, the student's subsequent movement towards a particular direction is therefore described by the term motivation. Within the motivation theme three main second order themes were apparent. These sub-themes related to how the feedback received affected the student's motivation towards their studies at that particular time. The second order themes generated were; positive feedback motivational (i.e. positively worded feedback which had a positive motivational effect), negative feedback motivational (i.e. negatively worded feedback which had a positive motivational effect) and negative feedback de-motivational (i.e. negatively worded feedback which had a de-motivational effect). Within this theme the students articulated an apparent dichotomy with regard to negative feedback indicating how at times it actually had a positive motivational effect. This perhaps suggests that student's process what at first sight appears to be negative feedback in different ways:

Kevin: "Saying I didn't do so well makes me feel bad and spurs me onto wanting to get a better mark next time."

Simon: "The feedback that I got to some degree was better than the feedback from a good piece of work as it made me more determined to do a good piece of work in the next two pieces of assessment."

Sean: "I looked at it and thought 'right, if I carry on like this I'm not going to come out with a good grade at the end of university, I need to put the work in."

The students highlighted here appear to be internally rationalising the feedback they receive and interpreting it in a positive manner. It is important to highlight here that students consider the feedback to be negative if it contains language which alludes to confirming errors within their work. Despite the feedback being negative and in some ways confirming gaps in knowledge and in this case performance, the students' motivation to do better in the next assessment seems to become increased. Simon reported that he felt more determined for the next two pieces of assessment. Interestingly, although the students appeared to be processing negative feedback in a positive manner and to be maintaining, and in some case increasing motivation, they did appear to be talking about increasing effort. This suggested to me that some students at least are not aware that concentrating upon increasing one's effort alone does not necessarily result in improved performance. However, it is apparent that motivationally the negative feedback that the lecturer had written did not have a debilitating effect upon these three students.

In direct contrast however, two other students explained the demotivating effect of receiving negative feedback:

Ciara "If I get back bad feedback I'm not motivated to do any work for that subject on what I've had the bad feedback on."

Researcher "Do you think that when you get negative feedback it's a way of the lecturer telling you what they think about your ability?"

Ciara "Yeah. Basically saying you're not good at it."

Researcher "How do you deal with that?"

Ciara "Not very well, I tend to shut off that subject to be honest."

Ciara appears to find it difficult to process the feedback she receives in an adaptive manner. Ciara seems to experience debilitating motivation to the point whereby she withdraws from engaging in further work for that particular module. This was perhaps an extreme reaction at the time of receiving the grade. Ciara does not normally achieve lower grades therefore this suggests that her attention, effort and subsequent performance is negatively affected for the next assessment in that particular module if she perceives the feedback as 'bad'.

In a related reaction Jon seems to be self-aware whilst at the same time not adaptive to negative feedback:

Jon "If I see a negative comment I blank it out of my mind instead of maybe looking over it and going right, that's what I needed to actually do. I try and block them, yeah, instead of looking at them and go right, that's getting sorted, that's getting sorted, and that's getting improved."

Researcher "Okay, interesting. If you're blocking it out do you have a problem in understanding the feedback when you get a negative mark/negative feedback?"

Jon "I sometimes do have a problem with understanding a negative feedback because I'm too frustrated and upset about the result."

Researcher “And is it that mark, that score being low, that really is the thing that’s going through your mind the most?”

Jon “Yeah, it’s the score instead of anything else to be honest, it’s not the feedback, it’s the score, I look at it and I go oh God!”

Jon reports that he is aware that he blocks out negative comments rather than utilising the intended feed forward function of the feedback. However when I asked Jon about the influence of grades he revealed that it was indeed the low mark and not the negative feedback which fostered the emotional reaction and his reduced level of motivation. The two students here do not seem to be suggesting that the feedback they are receiving is overly negative, in fact Jon goes so far as to suggest that the feedback is designed to be helpful for future performance. What seems to be dominating is the student’s inability to process this in a positive manner especially in Jon’s case due to the lower than expected grade outcome.

Within the positive feedback motivational second order theme, students highlighted how receiving positive feedback improves their motivation, which is what would be expected. In this regard positive feedback constituted comments which suggested that students had written in a style which addressed the question and assessment criteria. In essence the positive feedback identified elements that the student had done well in their essay. Interestingly a number of students commented that receiving positive feedback from the lecturer improved their motivation as it eradicated their previous negative ability conceptions:

Jack “It’s good motivation to know that I can write quite well.”

Joseph “It boosted my motivation a lot because, like I said, I didn’t really think I could do it.”

Sean "If someone thinks I can do something it does make me feel confident I'm doing it and I feel like I can do it myself."

Further such feedback seemed to foster positive motivational feelings for the student's next assessment:

Mark "If you get a good pat on the back it's like brilliant, you're doing well, go out and do some more."

Jon "From then it gave me a lot of motivation to do well in the last assignment we had for him."

It seems therefore within this particular second order theme that the feedback provided by the lecturer is in some respects changing the student's perception of their own ability and acting as a motivational tool for future assessments. The students seem to like the positively phrased feedback as it identifies elements they have done well in within the essay submission.

The constructs identified in the motivation theme suggest that the feedback that lecturers are giving to students has a large influence upon the students' future assessment related behaviours. It appears at times that some students are perhaps susceptible to motivationally negative behavioural patterns in light of the comments they received. For example negative feedback which identifies gaps in knowledge for example. However, some students are responding to negatively phrased feedback in a positive manner by using it as a motivator to improve next time and thus viewing it as complimentary to the learning process. What is also apparent within this theme is the positive motivational effect that positive feedback had upon all of the students in terms of future assessment related behaviour.

3.2.2 Competence

Competence was an important area discussed by the students as it revealed an interesting insight into students' preconceived ideas of their own ability levels within their subject. Competence was one of the largest themes in this study. Within this theme three second order themes were evident; Negative effect of low perceived competence, high perceived competence and perceived competence affected by feedback received. The first two second order themes highlight the students' conception of ability, that is, many students reported low competence within certain types of assessment (exams for example) and high competence particularly in work they regard as 'good'. Perhaps most interestingly within this theme the students reported how the feedback they receive affects their perceived competence. This area has most significance to this research as it gives me an overall indication of how the feedback may be interpreted and how it affects competence going into future assessment situations.

Ciara reported that when she receives bad feedback her perceived competence is negatively affected to the point where she feels inadequate in the subject:

Ciara "If I've got bad feedback I think I'm obviously not good at the subject."

Researcher "And that's it. Do you feel that you can ever change that?"

Ciara "Basically if the tutor's saying I'm not good at it then obviously I think I'm not."

It appears that Ciara interprets this isolated feedback in a very negative manner and her behavioural response is to lower her conception of her own ability. This is concerning as it suggests that the feedback message has been interpreted in a very negative way and that the student is operating at a level where conceptions of

ability override thoughts related to improvement in future assessments. In a sense Ciara interprets the feedback as a confirmation of her ability in that subject (in this case low ability) and perceives her ability to not be changeable.

Sean on the other hand discusses how the positive feedback he received affirms his self-belief and increases his conception of ability:

Researcher "So the good feedback has enthused you, has it?"

Sean "It's actually made me think 'actually I can do this', instead of thinking 'I did all right'."

Researcher "And is that generally an important thing to be told that you can do something?"

Sean "For me, Yeah it is. I need good support, someone to tell me "yes you actually can do it". They obviously believe that I can do it, which is kind of pleasing for me."

Both Sean and Ciara report how the lecturer's opinion of their work carries a huge amount of weight with them and suggest that this facilitates their conception of competence in that particular situation. This suggests that the feedback comments written by the lecturer have a great amount of influence in the student's decision making process in relation to their conception of ability. This can impact upon a student in both a positive and negative manner. It follows that understanding why some students are so heavily influenced by the feedback comments they receive seems prudent.

3.2.3 Lecturer

The lecturer theme was constructed to highlight the importance that the students attached to this individual or group of individuals. Students talked throughout the interviews about the lecturer and how they interacted with the students and how they were responsible for generating and giving feedback to them. The lecturer theme was one of the largest in the study and reflected two main areas. First the students seemed to either utilise the lecturer for assistance or not utilise the lecturer for assistance. The students also reported utterances related to their understanding of the lecturer's feedback.

The first second order theme relates to utilising the lecturer for assistance. In this sub theme students talked about how the lecturer is a support mechanism that they access in the main for advice and clarification of the feedback they have received:

Ciara "You could make an appointment and go and see him and he'd give you your work back and he'd go through it with you. I think I've made more appointments to speak to tutors this year than I have in the whole of last year."

Lorna "Especially with the feedback as well, 'cause a lot of time I make appointments to go back and ask why I did do so well. If you go back and ask for advice on it they'll go into more detail and explain where you could do better."

Many of the students interviewed talked freely about going to see the lecturer as a matter of course once they had received their work back. They would seek clarification of feedback and in some circumstances seek further feedback from the lecturer about how to improve next time.

Some students such as Laura also though indicated that at times they would seek out their lecturer in order to query why they had received the mark they had. This

seemed to focus mainly upon times where students felt they had not been awarded the grade they were expecting:

Laura "If I am unhappy with the mark then I probably would go and see them. I guess if I had got below a C I would have wanted to see him as I would have been gutted."

Some of the students also reported that they did not utilise the lecturer for assistance even though as Jon suggest below they know that they would benefit if they did:

Jon "I should really go and speak to the tutor but I don't tend to speak to the tutors about it, I try and do it myself really, which I shouldn't. I just think it's a lot of time and stuff, especially 'cause I work outside of university as well."

Jon appears to be very aware of the support network but for reasons such as time and external commitments he does not make use of it. This is an interesting area for further investigation as not all students reported going to see the lecturer so Jon is not on his own in that respect. The issue here is trying to understand what makes students such as Jon decide not to make use of the lecturer. Perhaps one explanation could be in what Laura explains:

Laura "I don't really, as if I have been to see them with a draft and then I am happy with the mark I don't tend to bother. If I have got a high B or and A I wouldn't be like ahh why have I got that. I suppose I wouldn't go and see the tutor and say like ooh what did I do right kind of thing."

Laura feels that as she is achieving the level she wants then she does not need to access further help from the lecturer. In this situation Laura appears to think that if

she is doing well then further feedback cannot be offered by the lecturer. This does seem to conflict with what some of the students have explained in earlier themes in this chapter especially with regard to improvement related feedback on good work.

The final second order theme within this theme related to students' understanding of the lecturer feedback. This theme seemed to concentrate upon students either understanding or not understanding the lecturer's feedback. Jon suggests that he doesn't go to see the lecturer if he doesn't understand the language that the lecturer has used, this is especially the case if he has done well:

Researcher "How did you find understanding the feedback that you were given, the terminology they were using for example?"

Jon "Quite hard to be honest. Yeah, at first I was like what does he mean by that, but then when you read it over again and you look at and think that maybe he meant that, and then you use your common knowledge to understand."

Researcher "Is it hard to understand what lecturers are saying?"

Jon "I personally think sometimes yeah it is, definitely, because sometimes I'm thinking 'hang on, I've done that right. But then, like I said, if you read it over then you think 'maybe I understand where he's coming from', and some of the words I'm like oh my God, I don't know what that means I'm just going to leave that."

Jon's sentiments seem to echo with his position earlier in this section whereby he doesn't go to see the lecturer regardless of how he is performing. This is perhaps a worrying situation and one which needs to be investigated further. Why is it that

some students access the help that is made available and some do not? Perhaps one reason to explain why students do go and see their lecturer can be seen in Wilma's iteration:

Wilma "It makes me realise what they like and therefore keep that in my next essay and don't change my style of writing if they like it. It is important to know what each lecturer wants."

Although a fairly strategic approach, what Wilma is describing here suggests that understanding what certain lecturers like and dislike is a strategy for success for some students.

The lecturer theme encompasses many underlying reasons to explain why students do and do not utilise the lecturer for assistance. It appears that it could be an interaction between some of the other themes I have discussed previously in this chapter which have an effect upon someone's tendency to engage with this. However this is far from clear from these interviews at this stage.

3.2.4 Next assessment

One area that students discussed frequently during the interviews was the next assessment. This theme was constructed from any utterances in which the students directly mentioned the next assessment and how the feedback they had received made them think about the next assessment directly and more importantly how they were going to use it in the next assessment. Next assessment contained a substantial number of utterances and contained two second order themes; taking a positive from a negative, focus of improvement into the next assessment.

Taking a positive from a negative describes how some students were able to process negatively phrased feedback and utilises it in a productive manner for their

next assessment. In this regard negatively phrased feedback constituted comments which were associated with gaps in knowledge, not adhering to assessment criteria or weak arguments in the students' work. In essence any comments which the students perceived as suggesting they needed to improve or change their work significantly in order to improve the work. As I previously discussed in the motivation theme earlier in this chapter students demonstrated positive cognitive and behavioural adaptations in relation to negative feedback:

Researcher "So the feedback you've got from that bad essay, how did that make you feel?"

Wilma "I'm not sure 'cause I knew a lot of it was to do with referencing and more research and he thought that I'd changed my style of writing which I didn't know where I'd actually went wrong, I was just trying to improve. But then I knew though what I'd done wrong so I can improve that in my next essay, referencing would be something I spend a good time on making sure it was correct."

Researcher "So how were you able to take positives from the negative points?"

Wilma "I was disheartened but at the same time I decided I'm taking more time and starting everything a lot earlier to make sure I'm not getting another D."

Jack "The feedback made me realise my weakness but also the fact that with the right preparation I could do it right."

Both Jack and Wilma highlight the negative adaptations to feedback which have been highlighted earlier in this chapter however, what distinguishes what they are discussing here is the fact that they both plan to approach the next assessment in a

more positive manner whilst taking on board the negative criticisms from the feedback. In some regard both students can be seen to be thinking about not making the same mistakes again and almost making up for the disappointment of the previous assessment in the next assessment. It is clear that Wilma in particular was able to identify her weakness from the feedback and despite being disappointed by the grade she received (a D) she planned to try and improve in the next assessment.

Focus of Improvement in the next assessment appeared to be a rather individualised second order theme. Students reported directly what they were planning upon taking from the feedback they had received in both the good and bad work they had previously identified. The distinguishing factor of this theme is how it relates to the operational construct of feedback. For example the majority of iterations within this theme concentrated upon focus of improvement which suggests that students were able to process the feedback they were given and most crucially act upon it in the next assessment situation. For example, Simon and Emma both discuss their strategies for utilising feedback in the next assessment:

Simon "The feedback got broken down into what were the good bits and what wasn't so good and it helped us to prepare for the next assessments. I suppose it's like forward planning with what else you have to do. I obviously kept it in mind the feedback I had been given in the sense of what I hadn't done correctly. It made me think about the other future assessments that I had and sort of gave me guidelines of the direction that I needed to work towards."

Emma "The feedback gives you positives and negatives, tell you what to work on the next time. I always read over my last essay before I start a new essay so that I know where I went wrong before."

It is clear from the students' responses that for the majority the next assessment is at the forefront of their minds when they are processing the feedback. However what is not clear is exactly how students utilise this and whether any barriers exist which prevent them from utilising such feedback in the next assessment. So far in this chapter some of the themes have suggested that some of the students interviewed have struggled to utilise the feedback given. It does appear that a greater understanding of why this is occurring and how some of the individual constructs discussed within chapter one and two alongside those highlighted in this chapter interact with thoughts relating to the next assessment is needed.

3.2.5 Inter and intrapersonal focus

Within the interviews the students discussed quite frequently thoughts related to significant others within their cohort. Students also discussed an avoidance of comparisons to others too. Such utterances are described as interpersonal (external comparison to significant others) and intrapersonal (internal comparison to one's own performance). This theme is a representation of how some of the students reacted not only to the feedback they were given by the lecturer but also that they sought other information about how they were doing by comparing themselves to significant other students' performance. Within this theme further second order themes which describe the different inter and intrapersonal foci that the student's reported are included. In the main students reported both positive and negative effects of an interpersonal focus. Intrapersonal focus was described by a few students in the interviews and therefore perhaps only featured to a limited degree within this theme. However, that is not to say that its inclusion should be omitted, this reflected an apparent difference in assessment related thoughts for some students in the same cohort.

The positive effect of interpersonal focus was reported by students mainly in relation to competition with other students:

Researcher “Do you consciously think about what others are doing in their assessments?”

Lorna “It’s kind of like a competition. I always want to do the best if not one of the best. Because I’m very competitive so I always want to be the best.”

Researcher “What happens when the marks come out, does everyone talk about it and say I got this, I got that?”

Lorna “Yeah. Especially with my group of friends, we always compare and things like that. We give each other feedback as well; maybe you could do this and do that.”

The concept of competitiveness amongst the student population is an interesting dynamic to consider. At this point it is important that I highlight that the majority of the students interviewed in this study were studying sport. As such these students are typically engaged in playing competitive sport and this may have influenced their competitive nature. It therefore could be suggested that I may not have found the same thing with students studying another subject. In an age where data protection seems paramount students can, if they wish, not disclose their performance outcome to others. The interviewed students received their grades either via an individual online information portal or on the essay script itself. Therefore what Lorna is describing suggests that they actively attempt to ascertain others’ grades and directly compare them to their own. The work discussed by students in this interview had been criterion marked (i.e. a system where every student could receive maximum marks regardless of what other students achieve). It therefore follows that performing better than someone else does not directly benefit a student in terms of final degree classification as these boundaries for such classifications are predetermined and consistent across subjects. This suggests that it is perhaps the students’ psychological need to perform better than others which is

fostering such a behavioural adaptation within a summative assessment. It follows that students demonstrating this behaviour seem to become more motivated when they are achieving better grades than their direct peers. Interestingly Lorna alludes to the fact that she not only discussed grades with her peers but they also give each other feedback and this is subsequent to the comments received from the lecturer. However, Lorna later describes how she avoids interpersonal comparison when she is not doing well (negative effect of interpersonal focus):

Researcher "So in this assessment or one you've done badly, how do you think you've done, or is it important that you think about what other people have done? Is that more to the fore when you haven't done so well?"

Lorna "Yeah. Yeah, normally when we I bad I don't really talk about it, I just kind of hide away."

Researcher "So why do you do that then?"

Lorna "Embarrassment more than anything because I say I always want to be the best, so if I don't do so well I kind of like shy away from others and not generally talk about it."

Lorna's behaviour seems to be determined by the results she receives. When Lorna does not achieve her goal of being the 'best' she tends to avoid comparison with others and does not discuss her grade. Lorna appears here to have internally set herself an achievement level for each assessment and when she feels that she has not achieved that level (this is inferred by the fact she is discussing work here that she perceived as 'bad') this is when her coping mechanism is initiated and exclusion from discussing the grades with significant others occurs. This is an interesting result within this study as it provides an insight into the thought processes the students interviewed were going through when making their decisions relating to what constituted 'good' and 'bad' work for them. This perhaps therefore has implications

for lecturers, as it appears a greater understanding of how students reach their decision relating to the quality of their own work. It is particularly important I feel as such a decision making process may have implications upon the students' future assessment related behaviour.

Intrapersonal focus marginally featured within the interviews. Intrapersonal focus suggests that some of the students were operating in a more internal psychological pattern, that is to say they were not concerned with how they were doing in relation to significant others:

Ciara "I just try and focus on my own work than other people. I'm not jealous, I'm glad they've done well."

Emma "As long as I've done good enough for me. I'm not really competitive that way. I don't mind when they get good scores."

Sean "I think about myself and I think that's what I've learned now is think about yourself and do what you need to do instead of thinking what other people think. I wouldn't lose sleep over someone else doing better than me. The way I look at it it doesn't matter, I'm the one who's going to go for the job, it's not me and my mates going, it's me."

All three of the students here are talking about what they need to do and how they do not see comparison with their peers as a competition. This suggests that for students, who require competition and comparison in order to feel a sense of achievement, performing poorly in an assessment task can change how they perceive the situation and therefore they switch towards a more intrapersonal focus. It is therefore a concern how such students subsequently manage this disappointment and subsequently behave in the next assessment.

The utterances within this theme seem to be suggesting that two types of students appear to co-exist within the cohort of students interviewed. Some students appear to be competing against each other while others are not concerned with this. It appears therefore that for some students attempting to mitigate the negative effects of comparison when not performing well is their primary concern, but this changes when they are doing well. It does appear though that further understanding in relation to how this interpersonal comparison affects future assessment behaviour is needed.

3.2.6 Effort

The theme effort represented the students' thoughts in relation to their relative exertion within assessment tasks. Students talked about expending high volumes of effort and how this related to their subsequent performance outcome. The effort theme overwhelmingly was represented by utterances which reflected high effort deployment. A moderate amount of raw data themes were represented by two second order themes; Successful outcome due to high deployment of effort, unsuccessful outcome despite high deployment of effort.

In the successful outcome due to high deployment of effort second order theme students discussed their perceptions of effort deployment and how they expect to achieve a positive grade outcome if they expended a large amount of effort. This is highlighted by Joseph, Sean and Ciara's understanding of the relationship between effort and grade outcome:

Joseph "I think obviously the more effort you put in sometimes the better grade you get."

Sean "I think 'cause I've put a lot of effort in I'm quite happy to see that the effort I've put in has paid off in this one."

Ciara "The more effort you put in the better you do."

This second order theme constituted the large majority of the utterances within the effort theme and it therefore appears that the students shared similar viewpoints in relation to effort expenditure and grade expectation. This perhaps could present some issues in terms of students being able to handle the disappointment of such a conversion not occurring in the future. In this regard some students did share their experiences of unsuccessful outcome despite high deployment of effort:

Jon "You do sort of feel like what a waste of time that was, I don't know why I even bothered."

Lynsey "Last year in psychology I did a lot of work in it and I didn't get the mark that I was looking for.... I might put all the effort into it and it might not be great."

Jon and Lynsey both describe their disappointment at not achieving the grade they had hoped for despite their high effort expenditure. Jon's response is clearly negative suggesting that he feels that the effort expenditure was a waste of time. However Lynsey does seem to demonstrate a level of appreciation that perhaps at time effort does not always equal success. It is clear that effort is a complex issue with the level of expenditure and outcome that the student is expecting as the deciding factor. It appears crucial therefore for lecturers to understand this complex inter-relationship if tempering student reactions to negative appraisals is a plausible outcome.

3.2.7 Type of feedback

The type of feedback theme reports the student's views on the varied types of feedback they had experienced during their degree. The students discussed in a more broad sense how feedback may be given to them outside of the initial

discussion related to the written feedback they brought with them to the interview. Type of feedback was one of the smaller themes in the study and contained utterances which reflected types of feedback and its varied usability. In the main, two types of feedback were discussed; 1-2-1 verbal feedback (usually in lecturers office) and written feedback (usually on the script itself).

1-2-1 verbal feedback constituted a face-to-face meeting with the lecturer in which student in the main discussed the written feedback they had received. The relative merits of this type of feedback split the interviewees somewhat. For some students they actually preferred 1-2-1 feedback than the written feedback:

Mark "For me having one-to-ones with tutors is a lot better than having a piece of paper because there could be something the tutor writes, I don't understand. I can go away with a clear mind knowing what I've got to do."

Simon "I would rather have it in a verbal form as with the written form if you give me a script and it's got feedback on it, I might read it and not understand it."

As both Mark and Simon indicate here they prefer this type of feedback as it enables them to clarify misunderstandings and gaps in knowledge directly with the lecturer instead of mis-interpreting the written feedback on their own away from university.

Written feedback involved both positive and negative perceptions. Many students indicated they preferred this method over a 1-2-1 as they feel that the feedback is always there and they may forget what is said in the 1-2-1 meeting:

Wilma "But sometimes you forget what they say for the next assessment and then you're stuck... 'cause then I can look at the feedback . Where I'm going wrong and on assessments

seeing the actual essay that you've done and then with their comments. If you had their comments throughout the essay you'd realise them more. I want to see my actual work, where it is I went wrong so I can improve."

Interestingly what Wilma is alluding to here is the fact she feels the written form of feedback allows her to access the feedback specifically related to points within her work where she has gone wrong. One issue which did present itself is that at times some students experienced a lack of written feedback and this leads to a feeling of disheartenment for Ciara:

Ciara "It's just the lack of feedback, you just think they're not bothered, why should I be bothered type of thing."

In this situation Ciara was not referring to the work she brought with her to the interview, rather she was reflecting upon a situation where she received her work back and there were very few comments on the script which led her to feel that the lecturer was not bothered so why should she be.

Within this theme some students also alluded to when feedback is perceived as useable. This second order theme highlighted some potential gaps in feedback practice especially for work constituted as good. Kathy reported for example that for bad work she receives a comprehensive list of improvement related points but for good work this was not the case:

Kath "For the bad you've got a list of bad points so they really are highlighted. Whereas if they're good you just have maybe one or two, in the bad you've got maybe six, seven, eight."

This is also the case for Sean who felt his expectations for feedback were not met and most crucially he regards feedback as something which is designed to help him improve regardless of the grade awarded:

Sean "I was expecting maybe half a page saying what I could do to improve on. A bit more feedback from them to improve to maybe get a higher mark."

The type of feedback theme exposes some real practical and mechanistic issues related to student's use of feedback. Crucially it appears that students at times favour one type of feedback over another but what tends to unify them is a desire to receive feedback which helps them to improve regardless of the grade they are receiving.

3.2.8 Grades

The interviewees described how they interpret the marks they receive alongside the feedback on summative work. In this regard I described such utterances simply as grades. Although discussions relating to grades did not feature largely within the interviews it does warrant being called a theme as the contents of the utterances suggest that students have differing approaches to interpreting grades alongside the feedback they received. Three second order themes were evident; feedback taken on board (whilst received alongside the grade), grade more important than feedback and negative effect of low grades.

Feedback taken on board suggested that students, regardless of the grade awarded, were able to disassociate themselves from emotional reactions relating to the grade outcome and concentrate upon acting positively upon the feedback itself. Simon explained how understanding why an essay was good is perhaps more important to his future progression than simply achieving a high grade:

Researcher "What's more important to you the grade or the feedback?"

Simon "The feedback I suppose because the grade is just the grade, it's what comes with it. Knowing what you have done well can make you feel better than the actual grade awarded. Obviously the grade was good but it was the feedback that showed me why it was good."

Jon further revealed that even within a good piece of work the feedback can explain how to improve further still next time:

Joseph "Even doing so well you still want to know where you have gone wrong."

However some students did report that the grade was more important than feedback itself:

Wilma "The mark's probably the first thing that I look at."

Ciara "If I've done well then I don't pay as much attention than if I've done really bad on it."

This suggests that some students are more concerned with the grade itself and to a degree, as Ciara indicates; the grade outcome might mitigate how the feedback is interpreted and more importantly acted upon in the future.

The final second order theme identified was the negative effect of low grades. This theme in particular acknowledged the emotional effect that receiving a low grade had upon the students:

Simon "The grade itself was disheartening."

Kevin "I was disappointed as I have never got a grade that low before."

It is important to note here that this was not reported by a large proportion of the students even though all of them did bring along to the interview work which they regarded as 'bad'. It therefore seems prudent to suggest that the negative effect of receiving a low grade in this cohort was small.

The grades theme has suggested to me a number of notions which require further investigation. In one respect some students seem to consider the feedback as most important regardless of the grade received. However, other students are emotionally negatively affected by a low grade which subsequently affects their processing of the feedback. Some students even seem to not consider the feedback important irrespective of the grade received.

3.2.9 Confidence

Confidence was used to describe this theme as it encompassed utterances which reflected students' experiences of receiving feedback and how it affected their confidence level at that moment in time. Although a relatively small theme in terms of frequency of utterances it did reflect how the feedback received either reduced or increased the student's confidence level.

The first area that students described in detail related to times where feedback had reduced their confidence. This was the smaller of the two second order themes however students reported here that it was the negative feedback in the main which reduced their confidence level. Lynsey described a situation whereby she received a poor mark which lowered her confidence level and how this continued towards the next piece of work:

Lynsey "If I didn't do well in it then I would have been you know lower in confidence. If I didn't do well in that I wouldn't have been confident going into doing the next piece of work. I

do psychology now and I'm not loving it! I think that is from that mark, that it annoys me."

Lynsey's experience suggests a certain degree of longevity being attached to one instance of poor work. She demonstrates that her confidence level was reduced and that has impacted not only upon her approach to the next assessment but also her enjoyment of the subject as a whole.

The second area related to confidence being increased by the feedback received. In this second order theme students describe in the main how positive feedback was responsible for increasing their confidence level:

Jon "I felt the feedback I got was quite positive and it gave me a bit of confidence. It made me think 'hang on, if I've done well in this there's no reason why I can't do well in the last thing'. It spurred me on to do more revision and be confident about it and overall it paid off. A good bit of feedback does improve it quite a lot because I'm like oh God I've done something right for a change."

Simon "It made me feel quite confident and that I was moving in the right direction."

Jon and Simon both seem to attach their confidence level to how they are currently performing in their assessments. In this case the feedback comments and the grades have affirmed they are doing well and this has therefore increased their confidence level going forward. It appears particularly with regards to Jon that the feedback comments are a powerful tool in improving confidence and not just the improved grade outcome. Jon's statement suggests he is not used to doing well and perhaps this confidence boost could help him in the future. However what is not clear from this theme is how exactly confidence mediates or even mitigates a

student's processing and subsequent utilisation of the feedback they have received. For example confidence is such a fragile construct in many individuals arguably this cannot be the only factor in determining feedback utilisation propensity.

3.3 Discussion

This study revealed nine themes which represent the experiences of the students I interviewed. The data gathered and the subsequent analysis appears to suggest a number of areas which require further research. Student reactions to feedback have been identified as a complex issue within the literature and many chapters of this thesis thus far. The results from this particular study seem to corroborate with this. Students' reactions to feedback can be seen to be explained by multiple constructs. This is particularly changeable if one considers the differing ways in which students are receiving feedback messages from lecturers. For example it appears that in the main the students' motivation can be affected in both a positive and negative manner by the feedback received, such findings align with those previously suggested by Pintrich (2000). However what seems to be apparent across all the participants is that positive feedback improves a student's assessment related motivation. This has important implications for future research as understanding why the positive feedback has such a universally positive effect upon assessment related behaviours could shape how feedback is constructed by academic staff. This appears to be particularly significant if one considers the postulates of Carver & Scheier (1981) who suggest that failure results in increased motivation to a greater degree than success. The findings in the present study seem to suggest quite the opposite and as such this poses an interesting line of enquiry moving forward into study two. Given that the primary research question for this thesis relates to students' appraisal, comprehension and subsequent utilisation the effect that grades have upon students' processing of feedback is very interesting and may therefore provide insight relating to motivational changes the student experiences.

The dichotomous nature of the interviewees' responses, with respect to the importance of grades indicates that for those writing feedback, the grade being given, could predict how the feedback will be interpreted by the student. Furthermore the students' predetermined grade expectations also seem to affect their subsequent processing of feedback. Whilst previous literature does report the fact that students are grade focused it does not appear to indicate the nature of this focus. The present study has reported that students were holding a pre-determined grade expectation which appeared to mediate their subsequent processing of feedback. Given that previous literature has reported that some students are only concerned with the grade outcome rather than any improvement in the next assessment related feedback (MacDonald, 1991; Mutch, 2003; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2005; Carless, 2006; Weaver, 2006) this could perhaps explain the reason why they chose to not utilise the feedback. The effect that grades has upon the student is therefore an area which needs to be explored further in study two as early indications based upon the findings within this study suggest a mitigating role.

The data within study one also appears to suggest that emotional maturity underpins the processing of grades, coupled with a student's pre-conceived concept of what constitutes a good grade or a bad grade for them internally. This is a very complex relationship and although inferred in this study, it does require further research to understand firstly what impact the pre-determined conception of achievement level has upon the student's feedback processing capability. Secondly, the concept of emotional maturity or the ability to control one's own emotions in times of disappointment also needs to be factored into any potential understanding. The students within this study seem to be at differing levels of emotional maturity and some reported adaptive skills but in the main many reported maladaptive behaviour when things did not go well for them. This is particularly interesting given all the students were in their third year as undergraduates. The findings within this study support the notion that, as Rowe (2011) has suggested; in feedback situations in particular a student can experience positive feelings such as appreciation, gratitude, happiness and even pride.

However, equally such situations can produce negative emotional reactions such as anger, frustration and fear. More interestingly my findings corroborate with Boud & Falchikov's (2007) suggestion that students' cognitive processing could be impaired by their emotions. In this regard this seems very apparent with regard to feedback cognitions in particular. The role that emotions play within this complex situation needs to be further explored in study two, especially with regard to the impact that emotional processing has upon the students' ability to process, comprehend and utilise feedback. What initially seems to be emerging from this study's findings is an interaction between grade expectation and emotional maturity.

Finally, this study also suggested that the lecturer is an extremely important factor to consider if we are to understand how the students will process feedback. The students reported differing experiences of utilising the lecturer and as suggested earlier in this section; interactions between emotional processing, grade achievement level and motivation all appear to affect the student's subsequent utilisation of the lecturer. This is particularly important to understand as the lecturer is not only the one giving the initial feedback but also the person who can offer further feedback, clarify misconceptions and ultimately change the student perception (whether that be positive or negative). The data gathered from the interviews in this study helped shape my understanding of the previously read literature. In particular these findings seem to have implications for practice in particular, especially if one considers more recent developments within feedback literature which suggest that more interaction between lecturer and student through dialogic feedback episodes should occur (Carless et al , 2011; Nicol, 2010, 2013).

This study also highlighted the complex and interrelatedness of constructs within the assessment and feedback realm. However this study was carried out with a small sample and in the main the interview was restricted to pre-determined questions that I had constructed relating to the literature. Further the material on which the interview was based was determined by the work that the student brought with them. In order to perhaps more fully explore the constructs I have

detailed here alongside others which may be apparent in such a population, a more detailed and thorough study is needed. It is apparent that such a study would need to view the student experience of this phenomenon through their eyes. As such, as the researcher I would need to take a step back and allow the students to articulate their experience by utilising a reflective process which encompassed their entire experience and not just the feedback on two pieces of assessed work.

4. Chapter Four: Study two. An in-depth interview study with undergraduate students

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four constitutes study two within the present thesis. Within this chapter I will discuss the study's design, method and analysis of results, alongside conclusive outcomes in relation to the data presented. I begin with a thorough explanation of the design and procedure of the study, followed by a discussion of the data collection methods that I used. Following this the data analysis and results section will report the findings of the study. In particular, I am attempting to demonstrate to the reader how I went about breaking down the data into themes using a phenomenographically informed approach.

4.1.1 Participant breakdown

Twenty final year undergraduate students studying in the Science and Social Science Faculty at a university in the north-west of England took part in a drawing and follow up one-to-one interview procedure. Selection of participants centred upon two main criteria; the student must not be studying a module that I taught on and the student must be in the science and social science faculty due to the inherent ethical issues I explained in chapter two. I initially contacted 130 final year students via email across the faculty which met these criteria. Thirty five students responded to the email and twenty participants were selected based upon their grade point average. I was extremely keen to recruit participants which represented differing achievement levels in order to fully appreciate differing levels of ability within the chosen student population. Therefore it was important that I not only identified students at the higher end of the grade point average (i.e. those who are traditionally very keen to be involved in research projects and often well represented in the literature) but also those at the lower end (i.e. those who are traditionally not so keen to be involved in research projects and often under-represented in the literature). The breakdown of gender reflected male (n=9, 22.66

years) and female (n=11, 21.66 years). Table 2 below indicates the achievement status (grade point average) of the participants at the end of their second year of study. The interviews took place during the final semester of their final year but marks were not available for assessments completed during this year until the end of the academic year:

Level	Female	Male	Total
High 2:1 (65% - 69%)	2	1	3
Low 2:1 (60% -64%	2	3	5
High 2:2 (55% - 59%)	4	2	6
Low 2:2 (50% - 54%	2	1	3
3rd (42% - 49%)	1	2	3
Total	11	9	20

Table 2 Breakdown of student achievement status

4.1.2 The drawing activity

The identified participants were asked to come to a specified room in groups of two to participate in a drawing exercise and a follow up one-to-one interview. Due to the nature of the activity and considering previous research findings (see chapter 2) I wanted the participants to take part in the drawing exercise together. After the drawing exercise was completed I interviewed the students separately. This perhaps was a potential issue as the students who were not immediately interviewed after the drawing exercise could have not returned for the interview. However all students were very happy to return to participate. Ethical procedures were followed rigorously within this study (please see chapter two for detail commentary). Initially I asked the students to read the information sheet (see appendix 8) and then sign the consent form (available on request). All students were reminded at the start of data collection that they could withdraw at any point in time. Further, they were also reminded that the interview would be recorded and pseudonyms would be used to represent their utterances within the thesis Following this students

participated in the drawing exercise. I gave the students large pieces of A2 Flip chart paper and a selection of coloured marker pens. After the successful outcome in the drawing pilot described in chapter two I adopted the exact same warm-up exercise prior to the main drawing activity in this study (see chapter for summary). The final exercise (on a new piece of paper) was the main exercise. I asked the students to visually depict their experiences of higher education in particular with regards to assessment, feedback and how they had been doing in their degree. Following the completion of the drawing exercise participants were either interviewed straight away or asked to return to the same room in an hour (to avoid participants over hearing each other's interviews).

4.1.3 The phenomenographic inspired interview

My chosen data collection tool within the present thesis was the interview. Numerous phenomenographic research studies have utilised the interview (Marton, 1988; Bruce, 1994a; Burns, 1994; Creswell, 1994; Åkerlind, 2005c). The interview allowed me to engage in dialogue with the student in order to offer insight into their understanding of the phenomenon. It was the interactional element that the interview offers, which lead me to utilise such a method alongside the drawing activity (as discussed in chapter three). Although aligning a drawing activity to the phenomenographic interview is not a traditionally operated method I remained resolute that this would indeed provoke a deeper engagement on behalf of the students and allow them to further delve into their experience of the phenomenon. The actual interview itself was framed around the recommendations of Bruce (1994a, 1994b) who suggested certain areas and questions which need to be addressed within a phenomenographic interview to enable the researcher to fully understand the interviewee's perspective. This included bracketing by the researcher (see chapter two), description (as opposed to explanation), horizontalisation (ascribing all descriptions with equal value), open ended questions and a tapping into the subject's lived experience. This all seems rather logical and perhaps similar to the operationalisation with any other form of interview however

it is the researcher's role within this interview, which is the key to its success. Bruce (1994b) argues that the researchers' role is:

“to see the phenomenon from the interviewee's perspective, to identify the meaning being ascribed, to identify what is being focused on in order for that meaning to be experienced, to obtain descriptions of the phenomenon, to obtain examples and comparisons, to reach the internal and external horizons of the interviewee's experience, to confront and pursue areas of confusion, to probe for analogies, to encourage reflection on experience”
(p. 3).

The methods employed within this interview are then analysed from a second order perspective. That is the researcher has not imposed their subjective experience rather they have in a sense influenced the data collection process but in a bracketed fashion.

4.1.4 Conducting the phenomenographic inspired interview

I solely facilitated the interviews to ensure that each interview was carried out in a coherent, consistent and reliable manner. Furthermore as alluded to in the bracketing section of this chapter, I was mindful that sufficient bracketing had been observed prior to the interview commencing. The interview began with a discussion of the last drawing produced (experiences of HE). Participants were asked firstly to explain one of the parts of their drawing. It was here that, subject to the student's explanation, I asked further more searching questions of the students in relation to their drawing. Some students chose to draw one large picture others chose many small pictures on one sheet which depicted different areas of experience. Figures 2, 3 & 4 are examples of the drawings generated.

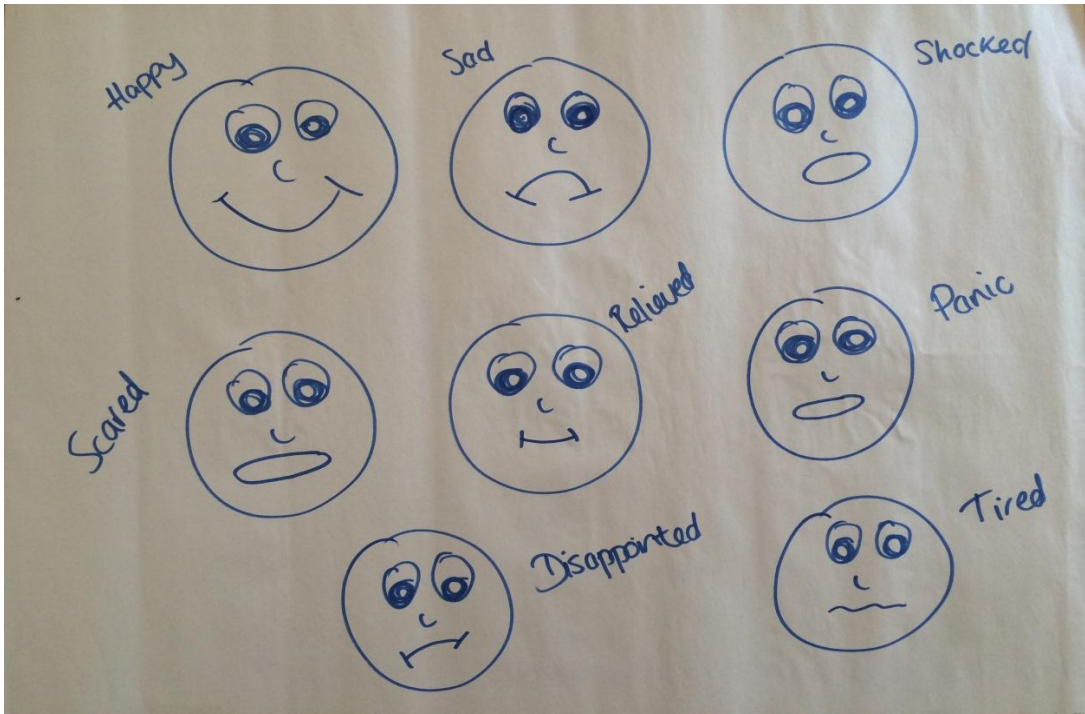


Figure 2 Student generated drawing

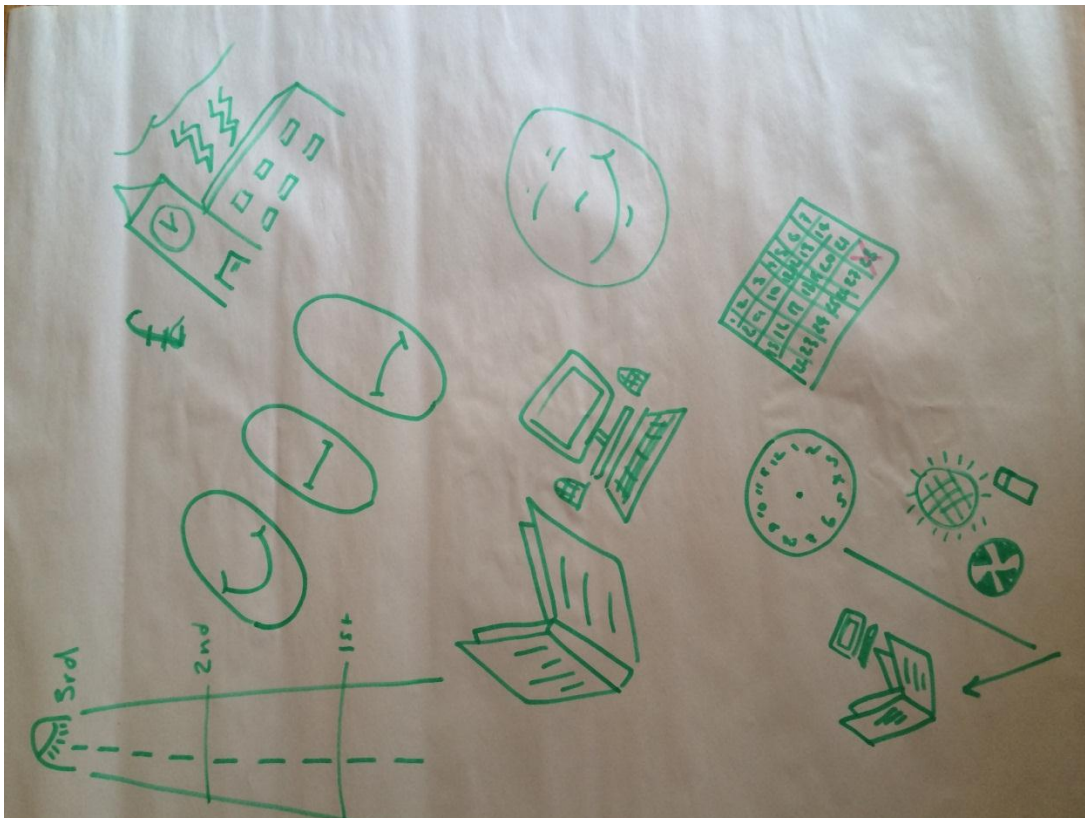


Figure 3 Student generated drawing

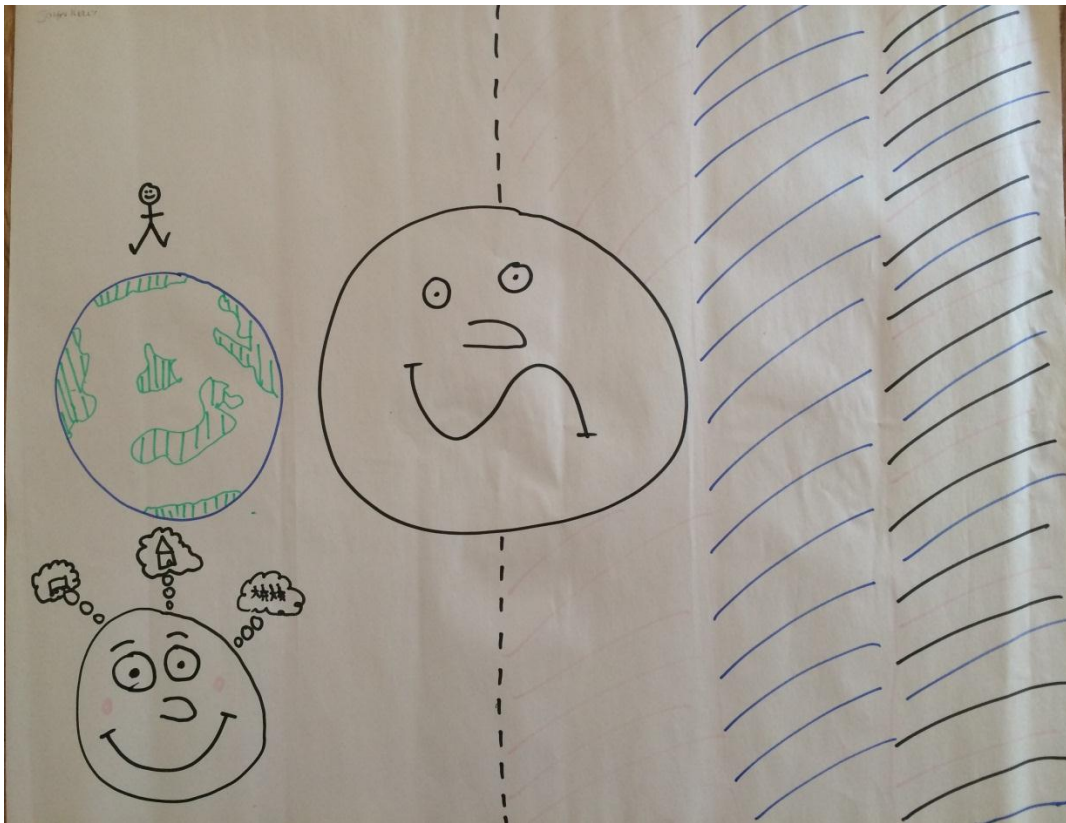


Figure 4 Student generated drawing

The interview was semi structured with the drawing prompting discussion. The flow of the interview was determined by the contents of the drawing and proceeded to discuss the meaning of the student's entire drawing. In respect of this Åkerlind (2005c) discussed the concept of the interview within phenomenography highlighting that it is very important for the researcher to not introduce ideas to the interviewee or lead the subject during the interview. Allowing the students the time to construct their own drawing which depicted visually their experience was a way of ensuring that the subsequent interview related directly to areas generated by the students themselves. In a sense my previous experience although bracketed did allow for a level of empathy and engagement with the drawings and subsequent utterances from the students. This enabled the interview to flow and also for more searching questions to be asked which truly allowed the students to express the full extent of their experience of the phenomenon. Indeed at times this was difficult to achieve as some of the participants appeared to struggle to express their experiences in graphical form, in the drawing activity. Subsequently this did, in the

initial stages, make the interview a little slow to begin with. However what was clear is that all of the students had experienced the phenomenon and therefore my own knowledge and experience came to the fore not only in relation to the phenomenon but also with regards to interviewing. Therefore during the interview I repeatedly asked the students to try and express how, what they were experiencing, made them think and feel. This was not in any way leading the students but giving them the opportunity to fully express their experience both cognitively and emotionally. The interviews were all taped recorded and I transcribed them verbatim. Pseudonyms were assigned to all students so as to preserve their identities. The data was then prepared for phenomenographical analysis.

4.1.5 Phenomenographical data analysis

After all of the interviews were transcribed I familiarised myself with them. This was achieved by reading and re-reading the transcripts in an iterative process in order to make sense of the context and meaning of each interview. I further enhanced this process by highlighting a selection of key quotations and utterances deemed relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Marton, 1986; Irvin, 2006). The literature in relation to how best to carry out this stage of interpretation seems to reflect two schools of thought. In one camp Marton & Booth (1997) support the notion of identifying key excerpts from the transcripts and placing them in pools of quotes. However researchers such as Bowden (1994) look at the transcript as a whole and allocate to draft categories. It appears that either method has support within the literature and therefore I operated data analysis more akin to that of Bowden (1994). I felt that this method allowed me to organise the data into small manageable chunks which allowed for multiple layers of experience to be analysed across the student participants. Further I felt that by operating this method all of the interviews could then be viewed together rather than looking at each interview individually which might have resulted in a narrow focus upon one meaning within the transcript.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Introduction

This section discusses the findings from the primary interview study with the undergraduate students. The interviews yielded a significant number of utterances which I have classified into themes. As such this section of chapter four will explain the main themes and how these relate to the student's assessment and feedback experiences. In chapter five, the discourse will then move towards a 're-constructed' understanding of the students' experiences. Students' assessment and feedback journeys from pre-submission to post feedback and beyond will be explained through detailed flow diagrams and accompanying prose.

The phenomenographical analysis generated eight themes which elucidate the student's experiences: These were termed Lecturers, Emotions, Feedback Cognitions, Efficacy Cognitions, Draft Work, Motivation, Effort and Grades. Within these themes, numerous sub themes were constructed. Figure 5 below depicts the themes (represented in the central circles) and their associated sub themes (represented in the smaller outer circles). Figure 5 is a visual representation of the data to aid understanding and as such the colours merely act to identify the different themes. As can be seen by the number of segments in each of the outer circles, there is some variation in the number of sub themes for each theme. The sub themes are included as I want to highlight the inter-relationship between the sub themes and the main themes. The following section of this chapter will discuss the themes and connected sub themes alongside a selection of participant responses to further understand the student's experiences of assessment and feedback in higher education. The order in which I present the themes relates to the frequency of responses for each theme in descending order.

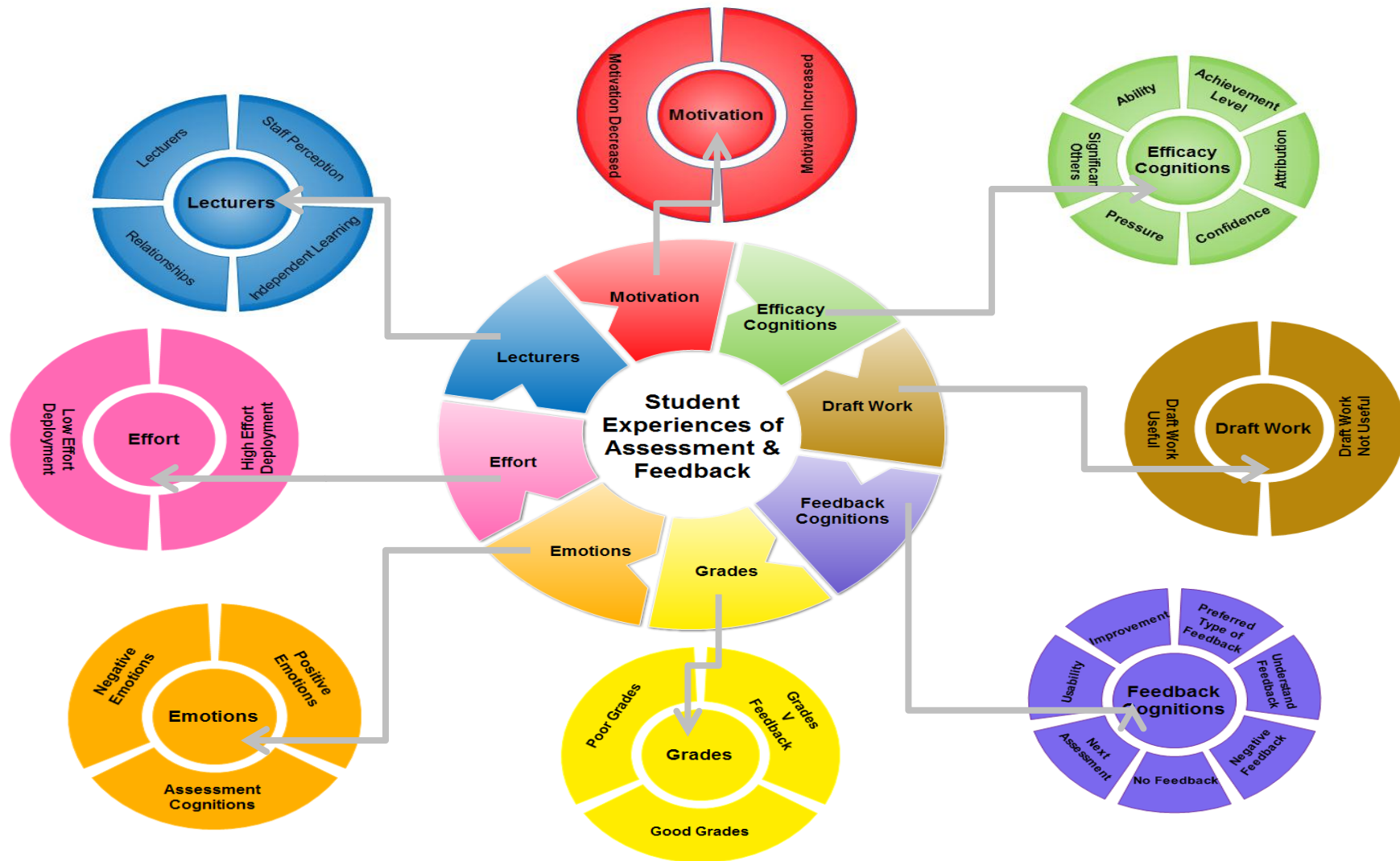


Figure 5 Student Experiences of Assessment & Feedback

4.2.2 Efficacy cognitions

The efficacy cognitions theme relates to the student's thoughts about performance that are hopeful, doubtful, productive, or self-debilitating. In general efficacy cognitions are influenced by mastery experiences which promote cognitive expectations. That is to say the student's efficacy is increased after successes within their academic experience which lead to expectations for future academic success. Within this theme the student's internal perception of their relative capability of interpreting the feedback and how this interacts with their capacity to act upon such feedback is discussed. This was a complex area and encompassed many sub themes. This theme yielded the largest amount of utterances from the students and as such I felt that the sub themes of; ability, confidence, pressure, achievement level, significant others and attribution really encapsulated the student's assessment efficacy related thoughts. The sub themes illuminate the complex constructs which intertwine when students are making decisions about their personal capacity to act upon the feedback they receive.

The Achievement level sub theme indicated that many students have a pre-determined achievement level in their mind when entering an assessment situation. The students suggest that it is this pre-set level which determines their interpretation of the grade received after submission. In essence it informs their decision making process in relation to whether the grade was better or worse than they expected:

Researcher "And you said that a 42, it's not what you want, do you have a level that you sort of aspire to?"

Simon "To be totally honest if I got anything over a 50 I'd be happy with but obviously I want to aim as high as I can but for what I am doing and the amount of work that I have got

on at the moment, like a 50 would be you know. I'd settle for that any less then I would be disappointed in myself"

Simon appears to have a level which he sets at 50 and anything above this is almost a bonus. It is this level which determines his satisfaction as anything below 50 is seen as a disappointment. Tara also expressed a similar sentiment, but for her the aspiration is higher but below her personal level is also seen as disappointment:

Researcher "Have you got a level that you sort of want to get to?"

Tara "Oh I want to get a 2:1 like, at least a 2:1. So if I get lower than a 2:1, it's very disappointing"

In a related conception the ability perceptions in which students reported both positive and negative ability cognitions alongside some believing their ability was fixed were a consistent theme. In this sub-theme the students were discussing their achievement level (in a similar regard to the previous sub-theme) but here they are making direct links to their ability:

Researcher "What is a good grade for you, what would you have as a good grade?"

Sunita "A good grade would be a B for me"

Researcher "OK. Is that what you always aim to get to?"

Sunita "Yeah because I don't think I could achieve more. Like I want to but it's being unrealistic on myself."

It was apparent that for students such as Sunita that they perceived their ability to be fixed and that regardless of their efforts to change the course of their grade

outcome they would only achieve a personal ceiling level. This has important implications for the different ways in which students may react to and process the feedback they receive. In one respect the student is receiving a grade which they perceive as their ceiling level however the feedback given is designed to provide the student with an opportunity to improve next time and in essence go beyond this ceiling level. It appears in these cases that the student's pre-expectation of grade achievement (that is the grade they want to achieve on that assessment) overrides the feedback messages and therefore they hold the belief that they have achieved all that they can and as Sunita alludes to, other factors such as ability within a subject prevent the feedback from being acted upon.

Although a relatively small sub theme attribution was reported by some of the students. Attribution refers to how the students rationalise the grade they have received. In this regard the term attribution is derived from attribution theory (Weiner, 1985, 2004). In particular they attribute poor grades in some circumstances to external forces such as, the lecturer. However it must also be noted that some students attribute their success or failure in particular, to their own personal performance in that piece of assessment:

Zena "I am really made up with myself so especially when I get like an A or a B I feel really proud of myself doing it cos I think well I have done that on my own and I can do it like"

Simon "If I had a better lecturer for such and such I'd probably end up being more interested in it and then I'd get a better mark"

Simon seems to be attributing his lower than expected performance to his lecturer. Simon indicates that his lecturer could be better and it is this which has a negative effect upon his grade achievement. This is an interesting contention suggesting that some student's appraise the quality of their experiences in relation to how well they

are performing in a subject. In essence it appears Simon has a negative perception of his lecturer because he is not performing to the level he would want to and thus he attributes this to the lecturer. Such an appraisal leads Simon to conclude his experience is affected by his lecturer and not by his own ability to achieve his own pre-determined grade level. This does appear to be a fundamental attribution error on the part of Simon as he is essentially blaming his lecturer for his poor performance. Zena on the other hand appears to operate a more conventional interpretation of attribution whereby she attributes her success to her own hard work.

The Confidence sub-theme within the efficacy cognitions theme centred upon increases or decreases of confidence in relation to the feedback and grade received. When the students receive a good grade it appears their confidence level is increased:

Sunita "It does make me think that my next piece of work, it gives me confidence into like starting it continuing on with it be like if I've kind of done well in the last one maybe I'll be fit to do the same".

Mike "Yeah you feel you can do even more you know when, it gives you a lot of confidence no matter what you do".

However when the student receives what they perceive as a poor grade they report that their confidence level could at times adversely affect their performance in the next assessment. Reflecting upon receiving a 40 for a piece of work Alfie explained:

Researcher "what do you think the reason is for getting that grade then?"

Alfie "No confidence, not feeling that it's going to come to anything anyway, I am not going to get a decent grade".

It therefore appears that positive feedback has a positive effect upon the student's confidence which stays heightened into their next assessment situation. It seems that the students recall their previous positive performance which in turn has a positive effect upon their future assessment related behaviour. It does however appear that previous negative performance outcomes can also be recalled and in Alfie's case have a negative impact upon his confidence level going into the next assessment situation. It seems reasonable to suggest here that a student's performance outcome and not the feedback they are receiving seem to be dominating their efficacy related cognitions. As such the students seem unable to disassociate themselves from their grade mark and process the feedback which is designed to improve their subsequent performance. In this regard their confidence related efficacy cognitions seems to be performance outcome orientated rather than being informed by the feedback they are receiving alongside the summative score.

Within this theme pressure also was constructed as a sub-theme. Students indicated that they feel a lot of pressure in highly weighted pieces of work and similarly they tend to place a lot of pressure upon themselves to perform in such pieces. When students do not perform to their expected level disappointment ensues. Most interestingly students reported that not achieving their pre-desired grade on a piece of assessment increased pressure for the next assessment as they felt they needed to compensate for their earlier poor grade:

Simon "I could have done better and it puts me in an awkward position for the next piece of work cos it makes me feel like I have got to do like so much more to get the grade that I should of got in the first place."

The final sub theme in this theme was significant others. This sub theme reflected the largest number of utterances in the theme and suggested both positive and negative implications for the students when interpersonal comparisons were made:

Researcher "Does it make it feel worse if you do worse than other people? You know you said 41 you were pretty upset with that but then people are saying oh I only got 49, does that make it even worse for you?"

Simon "Cos I'm a really competitive person so if anyone beats me at anything I feel gutted"

Tara made the distinction between her friends and the rest of the class to:

Researcher "You haven't mentioned anyone outside of what you've been doing. Does it worry you when other people are doing well and you are not doing so well?"

Tara "I think more so within your friendship group cos you know them better and, but then also your whole class as well, it does. If you don't do well compared to the rest of the class you start worrying"

Researcher "So if you don't do so well but some of your friends do well, how does that make you feel?"

Tara "Just disappointed and less confident, more pressurised"

The concept of competition amongst the student body was not a surprising feature in this study given that students within study one also referred to competition. Students talked openly about being competitive and how as Simon and Tara explain above they were negatively affected by not performing better than significant

others in their cohort. Such utterances suggest a level of comparison which exists within the student body whereby students are actively engaging in discussion with each other designed to ascertain their relative achievement standing within the group. It appears that for Simon and Tara such comparisons at times foster negative efficacy related cognitions such as questioning ability level relative to others. However some students explained that they do not actively seek comparisons with significant others:

Sharon "I feel like if I'm pitching myself against other people with better grades I'm never going to gonna feel good enough. My grades perfectly adequate you know I might never feel as good as those other people"

Sharon's position suggests that she is operating in a different manner to Simon and Tara. Sharon avoids comparison with significant others as she rationalises this as a counterproductive venture, explaining that she is overtly aware that such comparison will only lead her to experience negative related thoughts. In a sense Sharon's actions protect her efficacy level as she actively avoids comparison as she is aware that her efficacy level could be damaged as well as her emotional wellbeing. The efficacy cognitions theme presented many differing constructs which seem to affect how students process feedback and subsequently how they say they will behave in the next assessment. Ability cognitions and their relative flexibility to change were reported by many of the students and it appears that conceptions of ability seem to override the student's ability to process feedback messages. Confidence was also discussed within this theme and conclusively it is apparent that positive feedback enhances confidence whilst negative feedback reduces it. What appears most interesting is that some of the students reflect that negative feedback's effect upon confidence seems to be fairly enduring, in that it affects the students going into the next assessment episode. Finally, the impact that a focus upon significant others has was discussed and it seems that some students are very competitive which has negative connotations when interpersonal comparisons are

less than favourable. Further some students appear not to consider interpersonal comparison as important; rather they concentrate upon what they can do to improve irrespective of the achievement status of others in the cohort.

4.2.3 Grades

Discussions relating to grades were a constant theme throughout the interviews. In the main, student utterances within this theme related to their summative mark for the work they had submitted. Predominantly students made a distinction between feedback and the grade received and as such I felt it important to dedicate a specific theme relating to grades in order to highlight the important part the summative scores play in a student's experience of assessment and feedback. For the most part students distinguished between grades they perceived as good and poor (as indicated earlier in this chapter and in study one, students appeared to have a pre-determined level of achievement in mind prior to receiving their summative grade). Subsequent utilisation of the feedback received alongside the grade was therefore affected by the grade achieved. Many of the students interviewed alluded to a rather interesting dilemma of grades versus feedback. This sub theme explained the issues that some students face when they receive their summative work back. Some students specify that they always look for the grade first and then the feedback, other students quite the opposite:

Ellen "If I get a piece of work back I always look at the grade first and then that's why I think the feedback always comes second to that."

Sunita "Because the grade is going towards something while the feedback yeah it is kind of important but it's not going to be, you can't change it. Like changing the type of person that you are if you know what I mean because like if you've been doing things the same way for like 20 years whatever so the

chances of you changing just because of one piece of feedback is slim."

Researcher "Is that what you feel, that you are at a level that can't change?"

Sunita "Yeah I think so. But obviously if something keeps occurring like up in feedback you are going to be like yeah maybe this is a problem."

Researcher "So is that only if it's pointed out a few multiple times that you would use it?"

Sunita "Yeah I think so because once again it's like the teacher's marking style so like you are going to want to be sure that if he says no it's wrong but you could have another person that's like yeah that's really good."

Both Ellen and Sunita alluded to the fact they look at the grade first and that the feedback is quite often secondary. Interestingly Sunita explains that the feedback cannot be changed which suggests a rather terminative stance. Sunita highlights the importance of the grade as this contributes to the overall final degree score whereas the feedback is viewed as non-changeable. It appears therefore that Sunita does not view the feedback as something which could assist her in future assessment situations (if we take the notion that feedback is designed to improve subsequent performance in assessments) unless it is pointed out to her multiple times and by different lecturers.

The students also discussed Poor grades in great detail. Within this sub theme the students seemed to react varyingly to poor grades. Some students reflected that the poor grade had increased their motivation whilst some reflected it decreased,

which seemed to negatively affect the students' subsequent motivation. Similar findings can be seen with regards to the students' subsequent utilisation of feedback:

Zena "It's just seems if I get like a bad one it just sort of drops and that's when I tend to give up and I don't want to bother with it. Cos I just don't want to do anything, I feel like I don't want to come to me lectures, I don't want to concentrate on me work."

Sally "You just approach it the same as you did the first time, because you really don't know what you are meant to be doing or where you can improve and because you have got a bad grade you haven't been bothered about it, the next assignment you are just more bothered about passing it."

The two students in this example appear to be adopting differing approaches to coping with poor grades. On one hand Zena seems to be fairly fragile with respect to her motivation to continue with her studies. For Zena receiving a poor grade diminishes her motivation to the degree that she wants to give up. This is rather maladaptive assessment related behaviour and it is apparent that the grade outcome is overriding any processing of the feedback which accompanies such grade. Conversely, Sally although receiving a poor grade rationalises that the feedback received is designed to help her improve and that she must now concentrate upon passing the next assessment. Sally's subsequent assessment related behaviour is to utilise the feedback and make sure she improves the next time. Clearly, Sally's reaction is more adaptive than Zena's and illustrates the differences between students' approaches to the next assessment following an assessment setback such as a poor grade.

The final sub theme in this theme was good grades. Within this sub theme the majority of students reacted positively to achieving above their pre-set level of

achievement. Students explained that they attended to the feedback, were motivated for the next assessment, their confidence increased and their related emotional reactions were positive. A small minority of students however, reported that they did not attend to feedback following a good grade:

Researcher "Do you take it on board as much as perhaps the negative feedback?"

Shona "Probably not no, because you are like OK basically I got an A sort of like attitude"

Researcher "would you rather look at the grade first or feedback first?"

Mike "If the grade's good I suppose you don't really look too much into the feedback cos you think oh yeah, you are not going to concentrate awfully on it cos that's a good grade that's a really good grade."

This is a rather interesting finding as it suggests that students receiving a grade which they interpret as being above their pre-set level indicate they have achieved better than they had initially set out to do. Operationally therefore the feedback messages that the lecturer is conveying about the work are ignored as the student interprets the grade as an affirmation of success. However in the case of Shona, she refers to achieving an A which indicates a score above 70% (this was the minimum score needed to achieve an A at this institution) but this still means that 30% of the marks were not awarded by the lecturer. It seems logical to suggest here that the lecturer will have written feedback designed to improve the quality of the work beyond the A grade as indicated by a potential 30% more marks available. However it appears that Shona does not attend to this feedback as she perceives that she has achieved above her pre-set level. Mike also seems to corroborate with Shona's

feedback utilisation. The achievement status of the students in this regard seems to be overriding feedback utilisation to the point where it is ignored if individual achievement is perceived as almost over achieving a pre-set level.

The grades theme provided an interesting insight in student cognitions when they receive their summative mark. Many students reported that a grade versus feedback thought process ensues and in the main they reflected that grades quite often were seen as more important. Many of the students in this study were holding a predetermined level of achievement that they expected to achieve. If this level was exceeded they ignored the feedback from the lecturer (Shona and Mike for example). If their grade outcome was lower than their pre-set level then the students tended to either ignore the feedback due to being unable to emotionally come to terms with the disappointment (Zena and Sally for example) or they adaptively processed the negative feedback and increased their motivation and effort to achieve better in the next assessment (Ellen in the previous theme for example).

4.2.4 Feedback cognitions

In this theme I was keen to encompass the various utterances which directly alluded to the student's experiences of specific feedback episodes and how they subsequently utilised such feedback. In this regard I labelled this theme as feedback cognitions. In this chapter I discuss specific themes which stemmed from the assessment and feedback related interviews and therefore the distinguishing factor within this theme is utterances which reflect constructs which largely explain the student's pragmatic utilisation of the feedback messages received from their lecturers. Feedback cognitions were a very large theme reflecting the importance students attached to the feedback they were receiving. It also suggests that students demonstrated differing strategies for utilising the feedback they received. Within this complex theme, seven sub themes emerged. Preferred type of feedback was an interesting sub theme that concentrated upon students' preference for one-

to-one meetings with their lecturer. The majority of students reported that they had a positive view of such meetings:

Ellen "I think if you just got feedback given on a sheet you just like got given to you and you were sent off and can't go back to it, if you sat there and read through it and thought well I don't have a clue what they are going on about, you are stuck. Whereas if you have got that offer to come back and speak to them and say well I don't quite understand what you mean by this then that helps."

Researcher "Do a lot of your lecturers do that?"

Ellen "Yeah, all my lecturers offer that option. They just say if you are struggling?!"

Denise also agreed that they were a good way of her getting the feedback she needed:

Researcher "Why do you like 1-2-1 meetings then?"

Denise "Well it's good because you feel like the lecturers are actually listening to you and like I know they have got a lot of people to see so even if they spend ten minutes, twenty minutes with you it's like they are still like are interested in what you are doing and you know you get the feedback you need."

The students appear to particularly like to interact with the person giving them feedback in a 1-2-1 situation as they feel they can clarify misunderstanding. The students also suggest that the offer of individual meetings builds a relationship

between lecturer and student, suggesting that such interactions foster feelings of belonging and attachment. However a significant number suggested they were not the best medium for receiving feedback. This suggests that some students sought out different mediums to receive their feedback. Other mediums such as group feedback and written feedback also featured within this sub theme. One reason why students may not engage with 1-2-1 meetings could be explained by Zena's thoughts:

Zena "I am a little bit nervous cos you tend to feel like you are wasting their time a little bit. Cos there's like loads of people that they have got to deal with sort of thing and you think like well I won't bother them I'll just leave them to it!"

There appears to be a distinction within the interviewees that some feel it is appropriate and enhances their understanding of the feedback. Whereas some students feel they are overly burdening the lecturer and therefore choose to accept the written comments in isolation regardless of their ability to process such feedback in a positive and productive manner.

The students' understanding of feedback sub-theme noted that some students struggled with the language of feedback and some did not. The issue surrounding understanding did lead some of the students to suggest that this was a barrier to them accessing and utilising the feedback:

Researcher "Is the way they are written helpful enough?"

Jordan "The way they are written can be a bit of a problem because it, they are very effective with their comments but some of it I don't understand and I don't know what it is, it might be the vocabulary or it might just be the way they pronounce something or the way they have just said that particular comment, and it's just a bit like I'll look at it and I'll

think what are they going on about there, what are they talking about.”

Researcher “And what happens when you don’t understand that then, what do you do?”

Jordan “Unfortunately I don’t go back and ask them and I should do and that is probably a very, very big mistake.”

Researcher “So do you feel like if you can’t understand what they have written then there’s not much you can do?”

Jordan “Yeah. No there would be a lot I can do like I said I should go back to them and ask them but instead I don’t. I take the easy route to be honest and just go oh OK whatever I’m not really bothered but really deep down I am quite disappointed.”

The apparent linguistic barriers reported here suggest that the lecturer and the student are not communicating in the same manner. It therefore appears such barriers may lead to students misunderstanding the conveyed feedback message and consequently positive adaptations in the next assessment may not be evident. Of course what is also apparent here is that Jordan is aware that he could go and see his lecturers to clarify his understanding but it appears that by his own admission he takes the easy way and ignores the feedback even though in the long run this does disappoint him.

Students also reflected upon their experiences of *Negative feedback* in this theme:

Researcher “What do negative comments makes you feel about yourself?”

Sunita "Not that great. I don't think anyone likes negative feedback."

Simon also revealed how negatives comments make him feel:

Researcher "So when you get your feedback, say you get some negative feedback, how does that make you feel?"

Simon "If it's something that I feel I've done loads of work and I feel like I should of, like say for presentations and I feel like I've just nailed it and then later on I get like you should of put this, this and this in it, I feel gutted because it's like you know I felt like I'd done that."

The students in these examples seem to have viewed the negative feedback in differing ways. Sunita's experience is perhaps more traditional in that she reports that no one likes receiving negative feedback. However, Simon reports a level of frustration and disappointment if he receives a grade mark below his expectation level. In this regard Simon's perception is that his gut feeling and high effort expenditure mean he will receive a high grade for his presentation. When the feedback and grade suggest something lower he cannot understand why he has not achieved higher. This reaction suggests that Simon has not met the criteria for the assessment despite the fact he seemed to think that he had done all he needed to in the presentation to do well. This suggests that for this instance Simon interpreted what he needed to do in a different way from what the lecturer was expecting. It therefore follows that how Simon subsequently reacts and processes the feedback made available may predict his future performance outcome. Simon alludes to 'feeling gutted' which suggests a negative reaction to disappointment. I asked Simon how long those feelings lasted for:

Researcher “So when you feel like you have put the effort in and you should of got rewarded for it and you don’t, and you feel bad, how long do those sort of feelings last for?”

Simon “I don’t know maybe. It’s one of them where I could just read it and go right I got a bad grade and just stick it in my drawer and have a think about it but then later on before the next assessment when I’m looking like at the feedback and my grades and stuff, I am just thinking every time I look at the grade I got I feel gutted.”

It appears that the longevity of Simon’s feelings is sustained to the point of such feelings returning when he re-looks at the grade and feedback.

Positive adaptive reactions to negative feedback were also highlighted by the students:

Researcher “how long do you think you can remember feedback for then? You know someone’s written something on your work if you were asked, you know could you like tell me now what you got for some stuff that you did last year and things?”

Alex “It’s usually good if I’m honest, it’s usually good feedback and the negatives are pretty much go away, phase them out so I don’t really remember because the points that I do get I pretty much quickly try and solve for next time.”

I asked Emma in relation to this if she could understand the feedback and act upon it:

Researcher "Are you able to understand the language of that from what they say?"

Ellen "If they, yeah, I'd say definitely because if they are saying to me this is an area of improvement. I'll automatically just relate to that and be honest with myself and say oh well I did not do so well on that, that is something that in terms of another assignment or another assessment needs to be worked on"

Both Alex and Ellen seem to be operating at a level whereby they are actively able to engage with the negative feedback and process this in a positive manner. For example Ellen in particular demonstrates adaptive processing of negative feedback as she identifies that her work has weaknesses and that the feedback from the lecturer exposing such weaknesses is designed to help her improve next time. In particular this adaptive processing allows Ellen to utilise the feedback in the subsequent assessments as she is able to understand the feedback which identified areas which she needs to improve upon next time. It is interesting to note here that both students did not mention emotional reactions which presented themselves as debilitating. Therefore one could assume that in these cases emotional processing did not override positive adaptive assessment related thoughts and potential behaviours in future assessments.

The fourth sub theme in this theme reflected issues associated with no feedback being received at all. Within this sub theme students explained that they either did not receive feedback on formative work (draft work) or that it was not offered at all on summative work which negatively affected their future grade accomplishment.

Students also reported many thoughts related to the next assessment within this theme. The large majority utilised feedback in the next assessment, however some did report that they did not use it:

Jordan "It's just you know all them comments like if you can make right then your grade will get bumped up a lot but instead I don't always acknowledge them to the best of my potential and it just goes to waste and it's like all them comments that they've given me to help support me, I've sort of, not threw back in their face, but sort of not took them on board as effectively as I should of"

Jordan is clearly aware of the purpose of feedback, however he seems to not be able to sufficiently act upon the comments he receives. Jordan's explanation whilst open and honest is symptomatic of a student who is unable to access and utilise the feedback they receive. Whilst he is aware of its presence he appears to not be able to delineate between comments in order to make positive assessment related behaviour adaptations in the next assessment. Comparatively Joel explains how he utilises previous feedback in the next assessment despite also having the added pressure of worrying about multiple assessments:

Joel "It's still on your mind, your other assessment that you have handed in, it's definitely on your mind but you can't focus, I try not to focus on it too much because you are like you have handed it in and you know there is nothing more you can do you are just waiting on your result and you have got to try and get back to the state where you know you were happy with your last assessment and you have got to try and take that again into another assessment like remember the feedback, same again, but it is still on your mind, the other essay that you have handed in and it won't come off your mind until you know you have got your grade back."

Despite the fact the Joel has indicated how he feels a sense of worry about the work he has submitted he appears to be able to handle multiple assessments at the same

time. Joel is describing a situation which many undergraduates will find themselves in within higher education today. In an ideal world students would submit a piece of work and then receive feedback which they could act upon for the next piece of work, in a feed-forward sense. However when multiple assessments occur within a small time frame the prospect of submitting one piece and not receiving feedback prior to submission of another piece is very apparent. It appears that Joel is accessing the feedback from previous work where he can but as he explains in the back of his mind is still the potential outcome for the work which has yet to be marked. This apparent juggling of assessments and constant worry about performance consequently adds pressure to students which has the potential to undermine the feedback process itself.

Finally within this theme students also outlined that the feedback received needs to be honest and instructive in order for it to be utilised. Furthermore some students explained that feedback helps them to understand what they need to improve upon for the next assessment. In a related sub theme the usability of feedback was also highlighted. Some students suggest that feedback in one assessment in a particular module may not be transferable for them to another piece of work in a different module:

Ellen "I always relate them probably more so between subjects. So if its, if I get negative impact on History that won't affect the Sport"

Sian "Like I say cos I do the sport and disability it would be kept within the whole of the disability not just the one module in it."

In summary feedback cognitions was a large theme reflecting diverse experiences. The students discussed their preferred type of feedback which in the main showed that they viewed 1-2-1 meetings with their lecturer in a positive way. A small proportion felt 1-2-1 meetings were over burdening the lecturer and therefore they

avoided such meetings. The students also described written and oral feedback too. The linguistics of feedback appeared to cause an issue for some students and this presented itself as students not being able to process the feedback because of such a barrier. It was apparent that a student's pre-set level of achievement also mitigated their reaction to poor grade outcomes which in turn led them to perceive the feedback as negative and not attend to it. However not all students processed this feedback in the same manner and some actually turned overtly negative feedback into positive behavioural adaptations in the next assessment.

4.2.5 Emotions

The emotions, theme reflected a high number of student utterances. Student emotions in this theme reflected overt emotional responses to the feedback received. Such reactions are characterised by the students reflecting upon their subjective conscious experience through overt utterances which highlight changes in mood, temperament, expression or disposition. In previous themes within this chapter some elements relating to emotional reactions can be seen however such reactions related to the highlighted area in a somewhat secondary manner. Three sub themes were evident within the emotions theme; positive emotions, negative emotions and assessment cognitions. Within the positive emotions sub theme in the main students highlighted that their positive emotions were in relation to performing well. However, in some cases students mentioned that despite not performing well they experienced positive emotional adaptations.

Alex "If it's something that you've done bad you can just look on it as a positive and think well next time I won't do that."

Shona "You have to get on with things like that sort of way."

Some students also commented that their positive emotional reaction resulted in feedback being ignored:

Ellen "If it's positive sometimes emotions take over and I think oh I have done really well in that and sometimes I just push it to the side."

Ellen's stance here echoes sentiments made in a previous theme (grades) whereby the achievement status initiates positive emotional reactions which seem to override the feedback message and thus the student does not attend to its contents.

Negative emotions were the largest sub theme in this theme. Predominantly students related negative emotions to not performing well and highlighted the debilitating nature such emotions had upon subsequent assessment related situations:

Denise "For me to get an F, I would of been absolutely devastated like when I got that E in physiology I mean I was devastated like I was beside myself, I was crying."

Joel "I did the blue for like sad I used the blue pen for sad feeling. I used the red for angry. Sometimes you will just be one, like you will just be 100% angry or you will be 100% sad, you know that will just be your feeling, your set feeling. And then on the odd occasion it can be a bit of both like disappointed, sad and angry all mixed into one and that's why in the final column I did a mixture of the blue red and like if you mix them together it would be like a black, well it would not be black but a sort of mixture year" (see Student Picture 1 in this chapter).

It is apparent from Denise and Joel's utterances that performing poorly has a debilitating effect upon their emotional status. Both students discuss feelings of

disappointment, devastation and overt emotional outpourings such as crying. Such emotional reactions are particularly strong and intimate the importance that students attach to their performance outcomes. It appears that the students are consciously aware of their emotional reactions as indicated by the fact they are able to vividly recall such instances long after they have occurred. In this regard some students also discussed the length of time these emotional reactions continued for, with some varying degree of longevity:

Researcher "And you know when you get those good marks and you are happy you said earlier, how long do those feelings last then?"

Francis "To be honest it's like oh I've got a good grade I feel good for the day, go out and party or something and next day just get on with it really."

Researcher "How long does that last for then?"

Simon "A long time, like at least a couple of days just like thinking why didn't I do that? I'll have like a couple of days like where I am gutted and I am thinking right I'll do this, I'll do this, I'll do this and then like it wears off and I sort of calm down and just don't do anything about it, which is my main like drawback."

Sharon "Until the next piece of work you know you will always look back and go oh I wish I'd just tried a little bit harder just spent a bit longer just you know this, that and the other."

The longevity of emotional reactions, although varied amongst the students, suggests that they have a significant impact upon them. For instance one could argue that whilst the emotional reaction is at the fore front of the student's consciousness then a potential barrier to feedback processing could be present. For Francis this does seem to be the case; however for Simon his processing is rather different. Simon's emotional reaction appears to actually enhance his assessment related cognitions as he thinks about what he did incorrectly for a few days. This strategy though appears to not improve his feedback utilisation as once the emotional reaction dissipates so too does his impetus to change his assessment related behaviour. In the light of these student utterances it follows that the student's emotional processing seems to directly affect in both a positive and negative manner their capability to utilise the feedback received.

The emotions theme described periods of time where students experienced both positive and negative emotions. The students in the main reflected upon positive emotional reactions explaining that they were initiated if the student had exceeded their pre-set level of achievement. In such cases the students identified that they failed to process the feedback received as the emotional high was overriding their cognition. Conversely when the students experienced negative feedback attached to a poor grade they displayed negative emotions such as disappointment and frustration which lasted for a varying amount of time. For some students the longevity of emotions continued until the next assessment. In such instances the student's ability to process the feedback was hindered and subsequently affected their utilisation in the next assessment.

4.2.6 Effort

Effort related thoughts were moderately referred to in the student interviews. The students talked about their exertion levels in certain assessments and how at times this varied across differing modules. I labelled this theme effort as the students were directly discussing exertion levels and how these either directly related to their expected grade outcome or their actual grade outcome. This theme featured

two distinctly differing viewpoints relating to effort deployment. Firstly students discussed high effort deployment which focused upon their expectation that if they deployed high effort then a grade worthy of such effort should be the resultant outcome:

Francis "Generally I think for this year it's proving that the more effort I put in the better I get out of it."

Joel "If I put a lot of effort in I expect a good grade."

Sian "Yeah to get a good grade, I don't think you get anywhere unless you put effort in."

The simple calculation of effort equating to success in some respects seems to be working for Francis. However for Joel the perception appears to suggest an expectation rather than this actually being the case. It is apparent that all of the students interviewed referred to effort as something which they could internally control. For example as Sian suggests in order for a good grade she must put effort in. This appears a more rational understanding of the effort deployment strategy however my thoughts as a lecturer rather than as a researcher must interject here and suggest that effort needs to be deployed in the right direction in order for a positive outcome to ensue. That is to say one must make sure that one is doing things correctly otherwise the effort expenditure may be immaterial to the resultant outcome if this is not the case. The students also discussed low effort deployment, expressing a perception that if they did not put enough effort in then the resultant grade should be lower than desired:

Denise "I am used to getting such good grades at school, I always did. And then the majority of the time at uni I have and then when I got that I wasn't even bothered because I

was like well I've got this but it's my own fault but I was like it doesn't faze me."

Francis "If I worked hard for something and didn't get the grade I wanted I would still be disappointed but it's just the fact that last year it's like I didn't put the effort in and it's like I think that was the most disappointing thing cos I was here just doing nothing really, just wasting my time."

The students' viewpoints relating to low effort deployment seem reasonable and reflect a more developed attitude than those of the students in the high effort deployment sub theme. For instances both students represented here indicate that they are aware that if they do not put effort in then they will inevitably not achieve a high level grade outcome.

The effort theme includes varying levels of effort deployment within the interviewed students. Many of the students referred to deploying large amounts of effort and expecting a high grade as a result of such effort expenditure. Some students rationalised that effort needed to be directed in the right direction in order to benefit. Some students also reported more mature attitudes towards low effort deployment rationalising that if such effort was deployed the resultant grade outcome potentially could be lower than they wished for.

4.2.7 Motivation

In this theme students talked about their motivational state after receiving feedback from their lecturer. The term motivation in this regard explains the student's future willingness to engage with not only the feedback at the time of its delivery, but also the degree to which it is likely such feedback encourages positive or indeed negative future assessment related behaviours. That is to say the students' desire to continue along the path they were following, alter the course or stop moving completely. This theme reflected a minority of utterances in relation

to other themes reported in this chapter. This suggests that the students perhaps did not place as much significance upon motivation compared to some of the other themes previously identified in this chapter. This also suggests that for this group of students, motivation for future assessments was not as much of a primary predictor of future assessment related behaviour. Equally, this may be a reflection of the fact that they were in their final year so probably did not have too many more assessments to do. However, the sub themes within this theme indicate that the students did report increased motivation and decreased motivation after receiving feedback. Reasons for these sub themes seem to suggest that the students' achievement level (grade mark) in the assessment affected their subsequent motivation in either a positive or negative manner:

Researcher "So what do those negative comments, what effect do they have on your motivation?"

Shona "I don't know sometimes like they can motivate you more because like if you do like worse than what you would of thought you will be like oh my God I actually need to get a good grade in this next piece of work so it will like motivate you to do more but like that just brings on more stress sort of like."

Researcher "How do you find that then, would you say is it motivating you more because you didn't get such a good grade?"

Simon "If I don't get a good grade then, and I know I need to get a better grade in something else, then it will, I will focus on it like straight away."

Although this theme is labelled motivation it does appear that grades seem to almost inevitably transcend into this theme. Students in this respect seem to

associate the feedback they are receiving as a grade mark. Shona and Simon both appear to be relating their relative achievement level to their subsequent motivational state. Both students suggest that not achieving a high grade motivates them to concentrate upon the next piece of assessment in order to compensate for their poor achievement.

However, the students also describe times when the negative feedback is perceived as motivational:

Researcher "Let's think about the negative stuff now. Like you know you have got a sort of unhappy face and you've put less than I wanted, gutted, next time better [indicated in student drawing]. Talk me through that process then in terms of your emotions. How are you feeling when you don't do so well?"

Ellen "Basically if I do get a mark back and it is really negative, so if it's below what I expected, I am so so gutted and I will go on about it for a while, then I will get people like mum saying just forget about it, look at the feedback and leave it and then just work on it. But because I'm absolutely gutted if it's really bad but in terms of the next assignment it does not negatively impact on it, I would say it definitely helps me in a way because I will look at that feedback cos I know that's been a poor assignment, I will look at it and think right well if I want to improve these are the areas that I need to look at".

Researcher "Is this grade or feelings from the feedback comments? Has that got an effect on?"

Ellen "if I get a negative mark back in terms of the next one I am always thinking about the negative mark. Although I always say to myself I am going to do better that negative mark will still be in the back of my head. If it's a negative feedback, if I got a poor comments then I will think right I need to improve that"

Ellen appears to be interpreting and processing the negative feedback in a manner which suggests she is able to detach herself from the disappointment associated with doing poorly. Ellen alludes to the fact she feels gutted however in terms of her future assessment related behaviour she is able to utilise the negative feedback as she perceives this as helpful to her future development and is therefore motivated to improve the next time. In essence she is motivated to act upon the negative feedback in order to avoid a repeat situation next time.

Some students however did report that negative feedback could also promote a negative motivational state:

Francis "Whilst I suppose it would make me, it would make me like less happy or less motivated than say if I got positive comments."

Clare "Makes me not want to do it cos I just think well can't change it or not good enough to do it sometimes."

It is apparent here that Francis and Clare both suffer a reduction in their motivational state as they are negatively affected by the negative feedback. Both of these students argue that they feel less happy or motivated due to the negative feedback they receive. This does not indicate that they are unable to understand the feedback but rather they are unable to act upon the feedback. This suggests that for these students the grade outcome combined with the negative feedback has

interacted to reduce their motivation to act upon such feedback in the next assessment episode.

Finally in this theme students reported that they find positive feedback motivational:

Sian "If my feedback's more positive makes me think strive to the finish line and maybe improve. "

This viewpoint perhaps seems to be the most logical thought process when a student receives positive feedback, their motivation increases. What is most interesting here is that Sian suggests the word maybe indicating that just because she is motivated entering into the next assessment this does not necessarily mean that improvement will occur. Such an expression indicates that perhaps a simplistic assumption resulting from an increase in motivation and students improving in the subsequent assessment cannot be made.

The motivation theme presented differing experiences in relation to motivational states after feedback was received. Some students indicated that the grade outcome mitigates their motivational state in that if they perceive the grade as good then the feedback is interpreted and the motivational state for the next assessment is enhanced. Other students however suggest that if they perceive the grade as poor then the feedback is interpreted as negative to their motivation. Although at times some students suggest that despite a grade outcome setback accompanied by overtly negative feedback they respond to the feedback in a positive manner suggesting an enhanced motivational state. Therefore at times negative feedback can be motivational for some students but de-motivational for others.

4.2.8 Lecturer

The Lecturer theme reflected utterances which students related to members of academic staff whom they had interacted with during their studies. Typically this

person or persons referred to was the lecturer who was teaching them at the time or the marker of their summative work. Therefore the term lecturer describes all people who the student has come into contact with in such instances. In this regard the lecturer is referred to as the person responsible for giving feedback to the students in either written or oral formats. This theme represented in relation to other themes a moderate amount of utterances and as such perhaps reflects the relatively low importance the students interviewed attached to the lecturer during their studies. Such an interpretation can be explained by the sub themes in this theme. In the Lecturer sub-theme some students discussed how their lecturers could be helpful and others not so much:

Denise "Like the way they said that as a third year now as if it was something that I should know and that like why am I even asking in the first place. That really annoyed me and then I was just like well fine, whatever, I will do it myself then".

Ellen articulated how she might feel if she was unable to see her lecturer:

Researcher "if that was not an option how do you think you would feel?"

Ellen "I'd just probably, the feedback, if I don't understand it and you can't speak to someone, I'd end up, I'd just leave it cos I would not have a clue how to improve it and just carry on with what I am doing".

Researcher "Do you think that would affect your performance?"

Ellen “Yeah, definitely. I think it would either stay at the level it is or drop”.

Denise appears to be suggesting that her perception of the lecturer has been negatively affected due to the apparent lack of help on offer from the lecturer. Denise’s experience could be interpreted as a realisation that she was in fact on her own in this particular situation. However her behavioural response of ‘I will do it myself’ suggests that even though her request for help was not suitably met, she was still able to regulate her reaction in a positive manner as she planned to attempt to overcome the situation herself. It is apparent here that some form of autonomy was developing within her reaction. Ellen reflected how important she finds utilising the lecturer and when asked how she would feel if that was not available to her she suggested that her behavioural response would be to continue in the same manner as she did prior to receiving the feedback as she would be unable to understand its contents and does not have the opportunity to seek clarification from the lecturer. In this situation Ellen highlights the benefits of an interaction with a lecturer to clarify her understanding of the feedback. If this was not available it appears then Ellen would be unable to process the feedback and the result would be a continuation of similar performance thus suggesting the feedback in this case would not produce the lecturers intended outcome of student improvement. It is interesting here that Ellen has been able to so eloquently articulate the concerns she has regarding the potential issues if the lecturer’s help was not present.

A further sub theme in this theme was labelled Staff perception. This related to how students viewed their lecturers’ attitude towards them and how they were directly concerned with the lecturers’ perception of them:

Denise “When I got the grade back from the 2:1, the next assignment was the qualitative one which the lecturers were a bit more helpful on because they knew that it was, with it being a research methods one, that it was going to be a lot

more confusing and it was, I think we had to do where you had to record and then do the transcript and stuff, they were a bit more helpful. One of them did voice the same thing as the first lecturer but in a lot, in a way that you know you can come and ask for help but I can't sit and actually you know go through your stuff and I said well yeah that's totally fine I just need somebody, for me, I just need someone to tell me that I am right, otherwise I have a lot of just doubts thinking well this isn't right. So all I wanted from the other lecturer, just a simple yes or no."

Denise's overwhelming thoughts here suggest that she struggles with academic confidence. It appears that for Denise to succeed she needs to be told that she is right or wrong at certain junctions of her assessment journey (prior to submission). Due to this desire for verification Denise's perception of lecturers is affected. For example if a lecturer helps Denise and provides verification, her perception of that lecturer is positive. Joel explained how he feels that the lecturer should have expectations of the students:

Researcher "Is there expectation from the teaching staff do you think, for you to do well?"

Joel "Yeah and there should be. Cos if there wasn't an expectation you know you'd feel like oh me tutor's not even that bothered if I do well or not."

Joel's perception of the lecturer appears to centre upon a desire to ensure that the lecturer demonstrates some form of expectation of Joel. In this regard his perception of the lecturer is positive if they appear to overtly demonstrate an expectation of him. Joel suggests that if the expectation is not there from the lecturer then he feels they are perhaps not concerned with how he is doing. Both

Denise and Jordan seem to require external verification in order to feel like they are progressing in their learning which poses an interesting conundrum for the lecturer and suggests a further sub layer of the lecturer- student relationship. It appears that the lecturer providing feedback on the work submitted is not fulfilling enough for these students, rather they need to know that the lecturer is concerned for them and has expectations of them personally.

The final sub themes within this theme, related to relationships with lecturers and independent learning. In particular independent learning highlighted how dependent some students were upon the help they received from the lecturer:

Sunita "I think rather than doing the whole feedback I'd rather have them give me like a class before we hand it in to be like this is what I am looking for. Cos like obviously yeah we are in the third year and stuff they can't feed us the work and write it for us but if we have more of an idea of where we are going or where they want us to be at it will help us. Cos also then it will reflect on the teacher cos if we are all doing well clearly the teacher is doing something right."

Sunita appears to be demonstrating similar viewpoints to Denise and Jordan in that they all require verification at stages in their learning. On the surface this suggests that the level of autonomy is low within these students. I do not think this is inherently a major issue but rather it suggests that at times these students have struggled to grow accustomed to the dynamics of higher education. It appears for these students the lecturer is tasked with reassuring the students of their ability and progress and the student is dependent upon this verification in order to move to the next stage in their learning. In this respect for the student to utilise the feedback they are receiving it seems that they are suggesting that the lecturer also needs to demonstrate expectations alongside verification of achievement. It is perhaps prudent here to suggest that the dynamic of the lecturer/student relationship therefore needs to be shifted from instructional (that is lecture delivery

and marking of assessment) to instructional/scaffolded learning environment (that is lecture delivery alongside structured feedback at junctions along the assessment journey). Such an approach seems congruent with that of Sadler (1989) in that these students, if sufficiently nurtured in the early years of university would develop the necessary autonomy to not require such verification in the final year as the students reported here seem to need.

The lecturer theme has identified some interesting dynamics which seem to exist within the students interviewed. The students appear to have differing perceptions of the lecturers; some find their lecturers helpful whilst some do not. It is also suggested that some students need their lecturer for support and others do not. What was clearly apparent is that some students actively seek verification of their achievement from the lecturer and require this in order to progress in their learning. This does not appear all that surprising; after all this is what we all do when we are producing a piece of work. We want to check that it's ok before we carry on. This does seem to be a sensible and mature way of producing any written work. I have followed a very similar pattern myself whilst writing this thesis. However what some of the students have alluded to is that the level of help they receive does appear to affect the way they subsequently perceive and interact with their lecturers.

4.2.9 Draft work

The students discussed draft work infrequently within the interviews. At times I did ask them to clarify whether the feedback they were talking about stemmed from draft work but in the majority of cases they did not consider draft work a great deal. However I did feel this was an important theme as it revealed a dichotomy within the interviewees who talked about draft work. Such a distinction indicates that students either regarded draft work as useful or not useful. Draft work is referred to as work that is submitted to the lecturer in advance of the summative submission, which allows the student to receive feedback that may or may not enable them to

improve such work prior to the final submission. Draft work was available to the overwhelming majority of students interviewed as the departments at the university used in this study operated such a policy. Students could submit one draft piece of work to their lecturer prior to the final hand in deadline and receive formative feedback. The majority of students seemed to suggest that on balance draft work was useful in assisting them in their assessments:

Clare "You should like go and see your tutor. Like in first year I never went to see anyone cos I didn't even really know that you could but definitely helped in second year, giving draft work in and stuff."

Ellen explained how draft work really helped her in the writing process:

Ellen "this year with Sport I have handed work in or I go and see lecturers beforehand and just like give my plan in and then my essay draft and then changes to that as well"

Researcher "And you find that improves the way you write?"

Ellen "Yeah definitely. Cos otherwise I would hand in an assignment that's not all that good whereas now they are saying well you should improve this so instead of getting the feedback at the end when it's all been marked, I am getting helpful feedback during the process of writing it."

Ellen's experience is very interesting here and links can be made back to a previous theme (Lecturer). What Ellen is suggesting here is that the draft work gave her an opportunity to modify her work during the assessment opportunity due to the formative feedback rather than receiving the summative feedback and not being able to act upon it as the opportunity had ended.

However, some students indicated some issues in relation to a mismatch between staff comments on draft work and the final grade awarded. In some cases this led to frustration and a lack of confidence in the draft work process itself. Some students also reported that not all lecturers offered draft work and that some of the students did not utilise the opportunity afforded to them:

Clare "Wrote an essay the other week and I got told it was good off one member of staff and then he marked it and I got told it was bad. I only got told I had a couple of changes to make and then I handed it in two weeks later with a couple of changes and I didn't even pass it."

Joel "One of my tutors last year I remember, I showed her a piece of work, it were a lit review, and she said oh yeah she like looked through it and she said oh yeah you are doing well you are on right lines, cos I had never done a lit review before, she said yeah yeah you have done that OK. But I'd only got half way through it and she said yeah you are on the right lines, finished it off showed it her again she went through it again and she said oh yeah that's at least a C more than likely a B you know you have done well if you are happy with a B, it's going to be a B. Got it back and it were an E, someone else marked it like the Head of Geography marked it, so she'd told me I'd done well and it came back and I'd got an E!"

The apparent disparity between the markers and its effect upon the student's perception of the draft work process is an interesting area for discussion. The students in the examples above (Clare and Joel) appear to need affirmation of their potential achievement outcome status prior to submission and therefore as a result give the impression as grade outcome focused. It is interesting to note that at no

point did Joel refer to feedback, rather he seems more interested in what potential grade he will achieve. The student's ostensible annoyance relating to not achieving the grade that the lecturer had indicated seems to be a reasonable position to hold. Such a situation clearly has a debilitating effect upon not only the relationship between the student and the lecturer but also upon the potential for the students to utilise draft work in future. The premise of draft work is to offer formative feedback to assist the student prior to final submission; it is not however to give the student an indication of potential grade outcome. In practice in these examples this appears to have operated in a somewhat different manner. Indeed the fact that the student was given an indicative grade score prior to full marking may have caused further problems when a grade outcome mismatch occurred, post submission.

The Draft work theme although minimal in terms of overall utterances in the entire study suggests that the majority of students who did mention it found it useful however this usefulness was at time undermined by mismatches between the comments made and the resultant summative grade. It appears that relationships between lecturers and the students were strained when this occurred and the potential benefits of such feedback therefore undermined in the future.

4.3 Discussion

Taking a phenomenographical approach to the data analysis allowed me to represent the students' experiences of the phenomenon in a holistic manner. That is I was able to firstly view the individual student's experiences via their drawing and subsequent interview. Secondly, I was then able to view the experience of the students as a collective as I merged their utterances and constructed themes, sub themes and extended quotes which really captured the nuances of such experiences. What was apparent to me from the data and subsequent discussion in this chapter is the qualitatively different ways that the students interviewed have experienced and reacted to the feedback they received. At times a dichotomy was present in relation to how students reacted emotionally, motivationally and behaviourally to the feedback they received. I think perhaps some of the most

important findings relate to the concept that students were entering into assessment situations with pre-determined grade outcome expectations in their mind which seemed to be either derived from a desire to achieve a 2:1 degree classification or determined by the students' ability conceptions i.e. what they felt they were capable of. This seems particularly important as such findings replicate those from study one within this thesis. It was clear that in many situations this pre-determined grade outcome expectation mitigated their subsequent reaction and utilisation of the feedback received. In many instances I was also struck by the apparent differences in the ways some students were able to positively react to situations which were adverse; that is when the student received a grade which was lower than their pre-determined expected level. Some students suffered what appeared to me to be catastrophic drops in confidence, efficacy and motivation in the face of adversity whereas others were able to utilise the disappointment as a motivator for future assessment situations. The literature has attested to such notions as students focusing upon the grade and not the improvement related feedback which causes lecturers much frustration (MacDonald 1991; Mutch 2003; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling 2005; Carless 2006; Weaver 2006). However, the literature has yet to explain this in relation to how students manage their emotional reactions and the associated motivational changes. It is apparent from my findings that this is possible and chapter five of this thesis will seek to make these connections in order to further the knowledge base within the field.

Emotions were a very important consideration for students within this study. In particular the data in study two indicates that some students are able to self-regulate their emotional reactions and conclude that achievement is beyond their predetermined level but that they can use the feedback in order to maintain or improve this level next time. In this regard Fredrickson & Cohn's (2008) suggestion that positive emotion enhances the student's propensity to self-regulate seems to be operating here. For example, being able to self-regulate your emotional reaction seems to corroborate with cognitions related to using feedback in order to further improve in the next assessment. Conversely, the findings in this study also suggest

that for some students, who are not able to self-regulate their emotional reactions as described by Dirkx (2001) and Boud & Falchikov (2007), they are unable to cognitively process the feedback received and by inference are unable to utilise it in the next assessment. The findings within this study therefore seem to suggest that the 'better performing' students are often the ones capable of self-regulating and therefore able to make the best use of the feedback available to them which does support previous literature in this area (Covic & Jones, 2008; Fisher et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2011).

Many of the students that I interviewed articulated concerns relating to their ability. Such concerns seem to act as pre-dispositions that students carried with them into assessment episodes. Further these pre-dispositions were informed to some degree by previous experiences. Some students held a belief that their ability level was fixed and therefore regardless of the feedback received this level would not change. The minority of students articulated viewpoints which support the suggestions of Dweck (1986) who argued that individuals holding a belief that ability is changeable, tend to view their ability level as being measured by what they knew and understood and therefore this was within their control to alter. In this case the findings within study two seem to suggest that the population group I interviewed overwhelmingly held a conception that ability is fixed. This therefore does suggest that feedback processing utilisation could be inhibited in individuals holding such a belief (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Many of the students within this study discussed how much they liked 1-2-1 meetings with their lecturers, which is congruent with findings within the established literature (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Hyland, 2000; Drew, 2001; Thomas, 2002; Pitts, 2005; Crozier et al. 2008; Rea & Cochrane, 2008; Duers and Brown, 2009; Pokorny and Pickford, 2010; Reid, 2010; Blair & McGinty 2012). Reasons for this ranged from discussing their work, receiving the grade or clarifying feedback comments which they did not understand. Such viewpoints seem to concur with Brockbank & McGill (1998) who reported that students like to have the opportunity to engage personally with the marker to discuss the feedback rather

than just receive written comments. However that is not to say that all students liked this. It was apparent that certain students who were low in confidence tended to avoid, if they could, interaction with their lecturer. This suggests that for these students, the operational method of speaking to students about their work in a more 'dialogic' manner, via a 1-2-1 meeting would not foster comprehension and subsequent utilisation of feedback.

The phenomenographical analysis thus far has to some degree concentrated upon examples derived from students' personal experiences. The data produced in this study was vast and as such the categorisation of utterances into themes I feel only goes so far in explaining the phenomenon. With this in mind I was very keen to display the data in a more phenomenographically traditional manner via an outcome space. I was therefore inclined to attempt to both visually and verbally represent the variation of experiences that the interviewed students had articulated. In chapter five I will discuss the secondary analysis process whereby I firstly conceptualise what was occurring within this participant group and secondly present the outcome space as five categories which depict the student's experiences.

5. Chapter Five: Study two outcome space

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four of the thesis I presented data from the student interviews. Such data was phenomenographically analysed and presented as organised themes containing themes and sub themes which were presented alongside direct quotes from the students to elaborate and explain their experiences. As the thesis has developed my desire to articulate the inter-related and complex relationships between many different constructs has increased. Although chapter four is illuminating in terms of describing the students' experiences of assessment and feedback in order to phenomenographically represent such data the outcome space needs to be displayed.

In this chapter the conceptual underpinnings which informed the outcome space in relation to the data from chapter four will be explained. Following this I will present the outcome space as categories of description which indicate the variation in meaning of the student experience. This will take the form of five flow diagrams and accompanying commentary. Finally in this chapter I offer an explanation of the hierarchy of inclusiveness relating to the five categories of description.

5.1.1 Developing the outcome space

Having analysed the student interviews using a phenomenographical approach, I was now ready to reconstruct the findings and insights into the outcome space. By this term I mean that I have reconstructed the data to represent the range of ways that students have experienced/understood feedback. Therefore it is important that I stress here that the categories do not reflect actual individual students, rather composites of many utterances from within the data which I have reconstructed into categories of description. Central to this process was my desire to interpret the data holistically in order to visually represent the student experience within what are undoubtedly complex and multi-layered assessment and feedback situations.

Prior to reconstructing the data it was important that I conceptualised what was occurring within the data from chapter four. Conceptually the data takes the form of a cyclical process, whereby student experiences of assessment and feedback impact upon how they perceive subsequent assessment and feedback situations. The process begins at stage one and continues through to stage 6 whereby the process re-starts at the next assessment opportunity Figure six below demonstrates the cyclical nature of such a process:

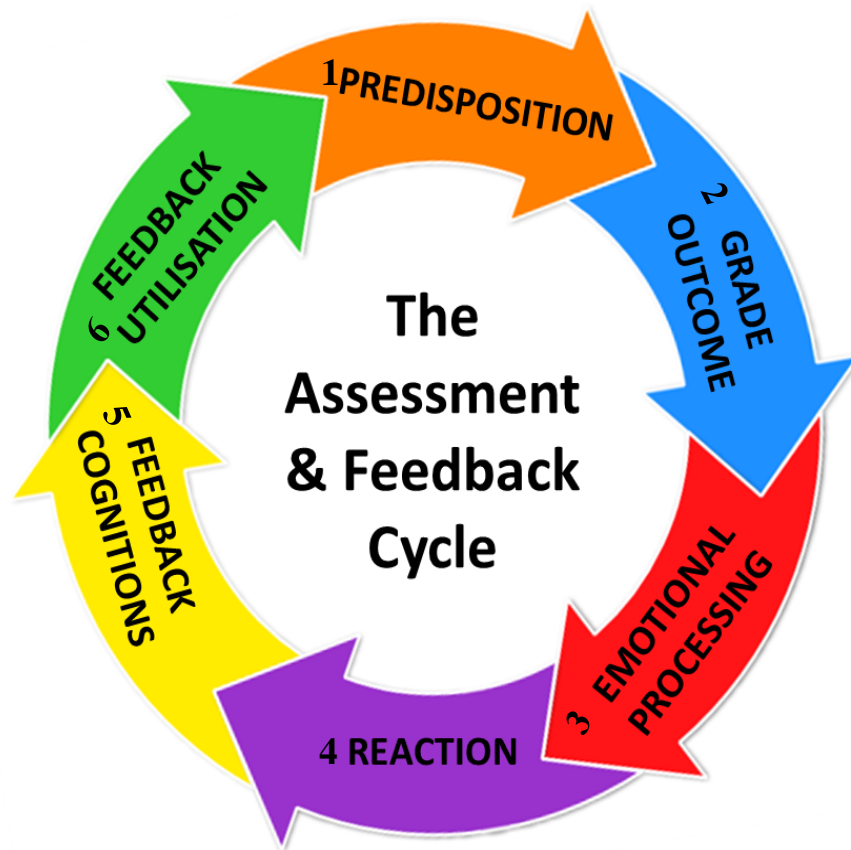


Figure 6 The Assessment and Feedback Cycle

Based upon my research findings from study two (chapter four) the beginning of the assessment and feedback cycle is that students arrive at any given assessment

situation, with pre-dispositions. As such the research findings I have already alluded to in study two suggest that the pre-dispositions are not regarded as personality traits or characteristics; rather they reflect student's current thinking in relation to the forthcoming assessment task. The students' disposition could have been informed by previous assessment and feedback situations within higher education. Equally at the beginning of higher education such dispositions could be related to experiences of assessment from school or college (Krause, 2001; Lowe & Cook, 2003; Jensen & Elander, 2009; Pitman, Elander, Lusher, Fox & Payne, 2009; Beaumont et al, 2011; Itua, Coffey, Merryweather & Norton, 2012). The lecturer is therefore presented with a student who holds certain beliefs about assessment and feedback. The determining factor used with the present thesis was the distinction students make about the quality of their work, that is to say students reflected upon times when they perceived their work to be either good or poor (generally determined by the grade awarded). When I interviewed the students they discussed their experiences of assessment and feedback in relation to attaining equal to or better than expected (which I have termed 'good grade') and doing worse than expected (which I have termed 'poor grade') (see chapter 2 for rationale). It was very clear during the interviews with the students that they all held a pre-determined level of grade expectation. That is to say they had a grade in mind which they considered good and thus this grade and above were viewed as achieving what they wanted to and below was seen as a disappointment.

The literature reports the value that students place upon grade outcome (Sadler, 1989; MacDonald, 1991; Mutch, 2003; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2005; Carless, 2006; Weaver, 2006; Hounsell, 2007). It therefore seemed prudent to identify moments within the data that appeared to reflect periods when the students discussed both the good grades and poor grades in order to further understand their effect upon the students' emotional processing and subsequent behavioural actions. Following the grade outcome in the cycle the students' immediate emotional reactions are reported; subsequent to these non-emotional reactions are then reported. The final two stages are where the student experiences cognitions related to the feedback, whereby processing occurs and utilisation of the feedback

in the next assessment, which completes the cycle. It is here that the students' assessment and feedback behaviour could have been potentially modified by the feedback they have received and the cycle begins again for the next assessment situation. The cyclical nature of this process is illuminated in this chapter where I detail the outcome space which contains the categories of description.

It is important at this junction that I highlight the fact that lecturers' feedback is designed to initiate change within the student. However the literature has demonstrated this is as a rather simplistic view (see Nicol, 2010). In this present research, I therefore sought to further understand how multifaceted constructs such as; emotional processing, grade outcome, motivation, goal setting and self-regulation interact to affect the student's utilisation of feedback in the next assessment opportunity. To this end therefore, conceptually the assessment and feedback cycle I have proposed here in this chapter attempts to demonstrate the adaptive and maladaptive processes that students experience in terms of their assessment and feedback behaviour. The cycle proposes that subsequent assessment situations are therefore informed by previous experiences and those pre-dispositions could change and therefore positively or negatively affect the subsequent student performance.

The assessment and feedback cycle proposed in this chapter at a conceptual level seems logical and reflective of the data produced in the thesis thus far. However in order to truly reflect the phenomenographic methodology alluded to in chapter two the outcome space needs to be articulated and displayed. The outcome space demonstrates the qualitatively different ways that the students experienced the phenomenon. In this sense the variation in meaning that the students attached to their experiences of assessment and feedback are highlighted by this outcome space. Within this outcome space, logical and hierarchical ways of experiencing the phenomenon are displayed. In this case I felt that some form of visual flow diagram depicting the student's decision making, processing and behavioural activation was needed. Utilising the assessment and feedback cycle as a precursor to such a flow

diagram was essential and therefore I felt the best way to proceed was to demonstrate firstly the constructs involved and secondly how they flowed in order to represent the student's experience.

Figure 7 demonstrates the basis of the outcome space as it indicates the constructs which interact in order to logically explain the student's journey from 'pre-hand in' to grade outcome decision and receipt of feedback to utilisation of feedback. Within the diagram this is indicated by the green text boxes to the left hand side of the flow diagram. Within the flow diagram itself I have determined elements such as pre assessment dispositions, the student's decision making process based upon the grade outcome and then the flow diagram branches into two discrete sections (based upon grade outcome decision) to demonstrate the student's emotions, reactions, feedback cognitions and subsequent utilisation of the feedback. As can be seen the flow diagram then returns to the pre-disposition element which indicates the beginning of the next assessment (for special reasons I have only shown one branch in figure 7). It is here where the student's previous assessment experiences affect the next assessment's pre-dispositions; in essence replicating the cyclical nature alluded to earlier in this chapter (Figure 6). Tables 3 and 4 which are displayed later in this chapter reflect the outcome space itself and explain the variation in meaning.

Pre-Hand In (orange)

The student displays predispositions which may have been influenced by their previous assessment or pre university experiences.

Grade Outcome Decision (blue)

The student makes a decision whether the grade is good or poor based upon their pre-determined grade expectation for that assessment.

Receipt of Feedback

The student receives their feedback and is also aware of their grade.

Here their emotions and reactions are seen. (Red and purple)

Utilisation of Feedback (Green)

The student's planned utilisation of feedback influences the way they approach next assessment.

Predispositions are influenced by the experiences from this assessment (dotted line feeding back in)

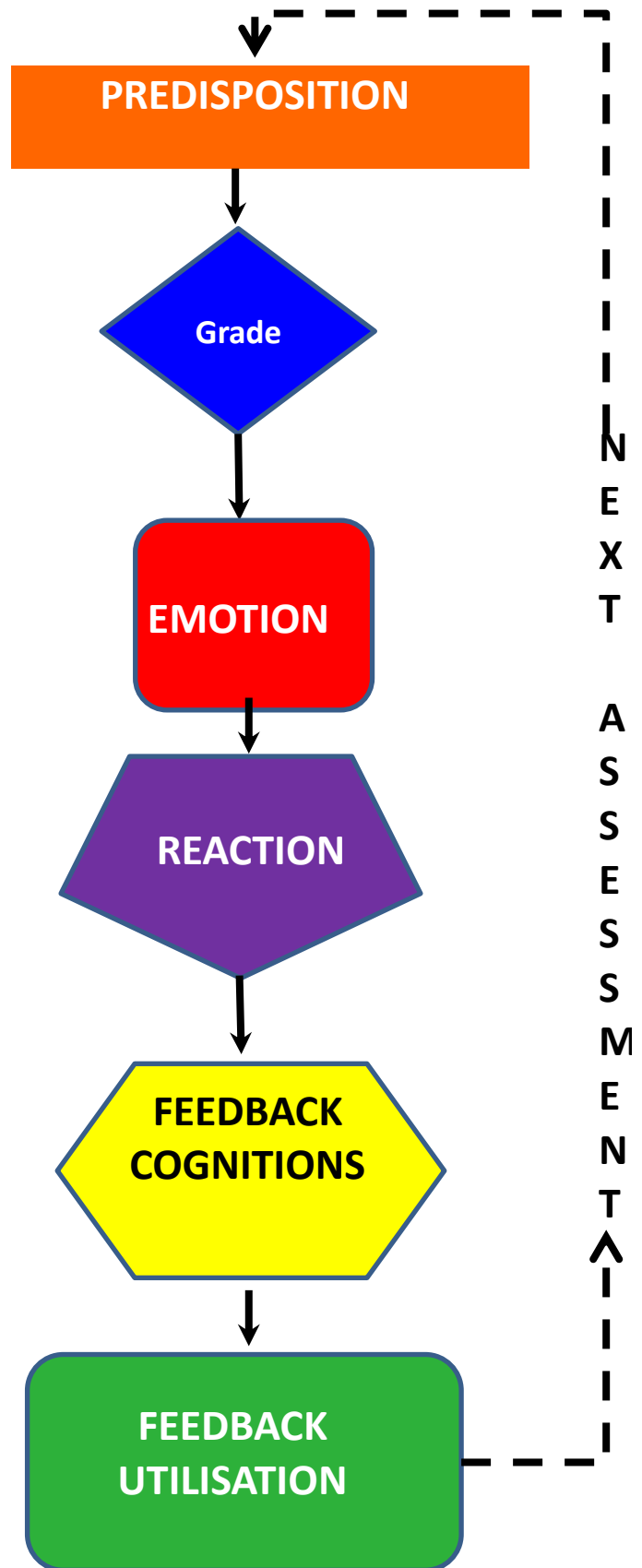


Figure 7 Logical flow diagram of student's journey through the assessment process

5.1.2 Categories of description

The aim of this study was to explore the different ways students experienced assessment and feedback. The phenomenon investigated in this study was therefore student's experiences of assessment and feedback. The desired outcome was a structured space of variation (Akerlind, 2005b). As such the outcome space reported in this chapter represents the qualitatively different ways of understanding, the students interviewed, experiences of assessment and feedback. Therefore the outcome space represents the collective experiences of the students interviewed. The outcome space in this study can be defined as reflecting the different values that appear to be attributed to feedback. In this sense the student's pre-dispositions, performance outcome, emotional response, behavioural response all interact in a range of ways to effect the students subsequent use of the feedback received. Further the outcome space suggests that student responsibility and relationships with feedback also interact at varying levels. I propose five categories of description within the outcome space. The variation within this sample is reflective of the variation of meaning that one could conceivably expect within other similar population groups, though I do accept that it is somewhat limited to one group of students in one institution. The five categories of description representing key elements of variation in meanings and experience which emerged from the data are:

1. Broken relationship student
2. Needy student
3. Low achiever student
4. Emotionally charged student
5. High achiever student

The following section will display the five categories of description alongside commentary, which explains the students' variation in meaning.

Category One: Broken Relationship Student

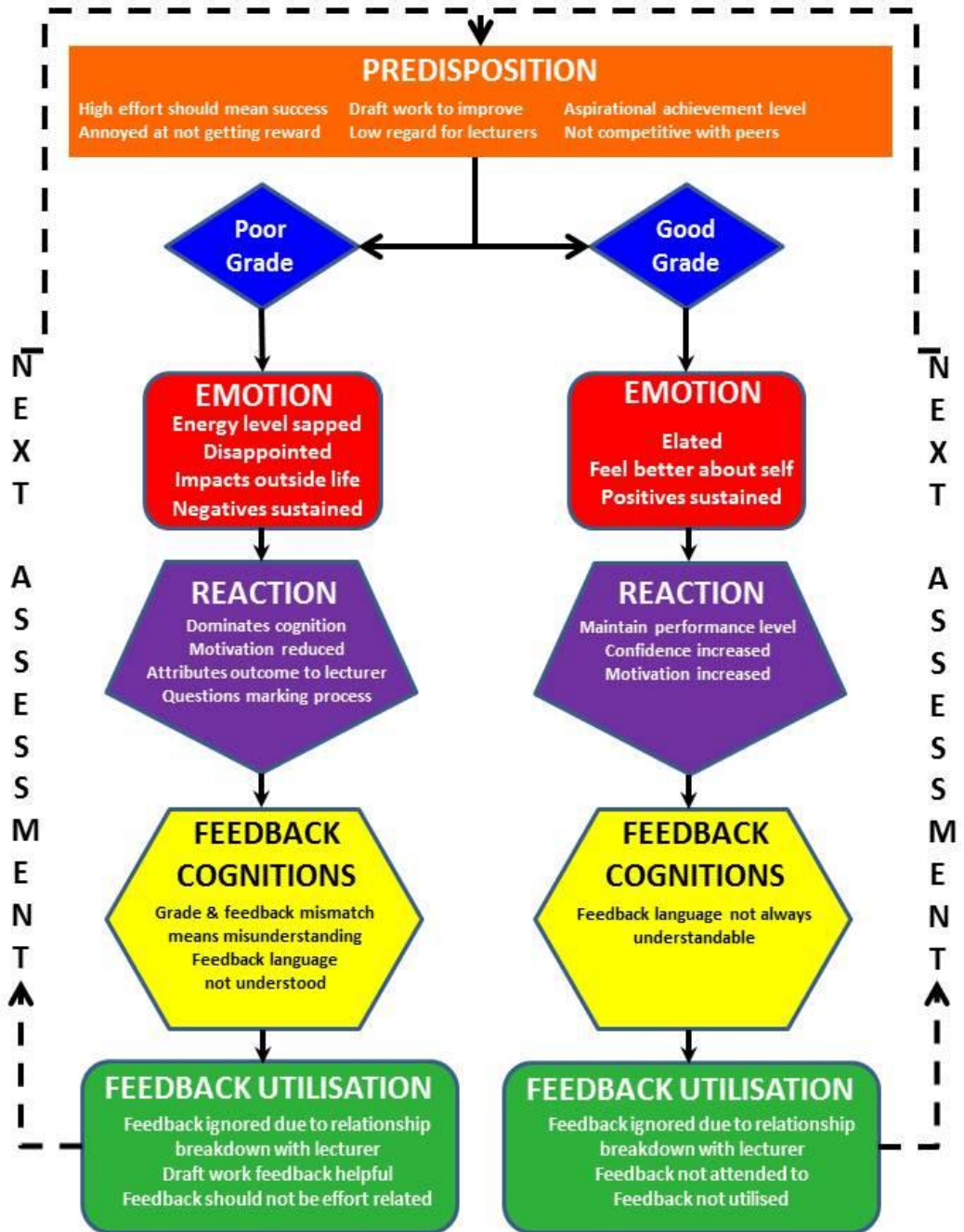


Figure 8 Category One: Broken Relationship student

5.1.3 Broken Relationship - Predisposition

The broken relationship student attributes their performance outcomes generally to the lecturer. They have experienced poor grades in the past which they feel were rather unjust. The broken relationship student has a low regard for their lecturers even though they would still like them to look at their draft work submissions. The broken relationship student has an aspirational level of achievement in mind but hardly ever reaches this level in practice. When they do not achieve the level they rationalise that their high effort deployment should have resulted in a successful grade outcome and thus they generally feel annoyed about this. The broken relationship student tends to operate in an introverted manner and thus avoids interpersonal comparisons with peers in terms of grade outcomes and performance.

5.1.4 Broken Relationship - Grade Decision – Poor

When the broken relationship student receives a poor grade their emotions are negatively affected. This can be sustained for a considerable length of time and sometimes the emotions transcend their personal life in a negative manner too. Their disappointment at achieving a poor grade means they feel like they have no energy and generally feel debilitated. The broken relationship student attributes their performance outcome to the lecturer arguing that it is their fault as they have not helped them enough through draft work or in teaching situations. At times they even question the marking process and suggest that it has not been consistent across the cohort. With a reduced level of motivation, due to the poor grade, the broken relationship student feels like this for sustained periods of time and as such negative thoughts dominate their cognition both inside and outside of university.

The broken relationship student often struggles to understand the language that the lecturer uses in their feedback. Similarly they also interpret the feedback messages in a way which suggests that they do not always match the grade awarded. Such experiences have led the broken relationship student to feel like the relationships they have with their lecturers have broken down. This is especially the

case with those lecturers who have provided them with unhelpful feedback on their draft work for example. As such, the broken relationship student does not feel like the feedback is very useful for them in the next assessment; this is particularly the case when feedback relates to effort deployment rather than content improvement.

5.1.5 Broken Relationship - Grade Decision – Good

The broken relationship student has experienced what they define as good grades from time to time. They generally feel rather elated when this occurs and this makes them feel better about themselves. In this sense they feel like they have proved the lecturer wrong and their positive emotional state is sustained for a long period following the grade outcome. The broken relationship student aspires to maintain this level of grade outcome and experiences an increase in self-confidence and motivation going into the next assessment opportunity. However in terms of feedback they struggle to understand the language that the lecturer is using and as such they do not attend to this feedback. A reason for a lack of engagement with the feedback is due to the breakdown of the relationship with their lecturers. The broken relationship student does not respect their lecturers' perceptions or judgements and therefore decides not to utilise their feedback comments in the next assessment.

5.1.6 Broken Relationship - Comparisons and conclusions

Central to the broken relationship student's assessment and feedback related behaviour appears to be their disdain for the lecturer. In a sense due to a lack of confidence in the draft work feedback process and the marking process on summative submissions the broken relationship student feels this way about the lecturers. It appears that regardless of the resultant grade outcome the feedback comments are largely ignored and thus not utilised in the next assessment. It also appears that the broken relationship student does not understand the language of feedback used by the lecturers and this may also explain why the feedback is not

utilised the next time. The broken relationship student therefore appears to be managing their own learning independently of the lecturer's feedback and therefore one could assume that any improvement in performance is down to the student's own propensity to adapt and learn from their experience without any form of outside assistance being utilised.

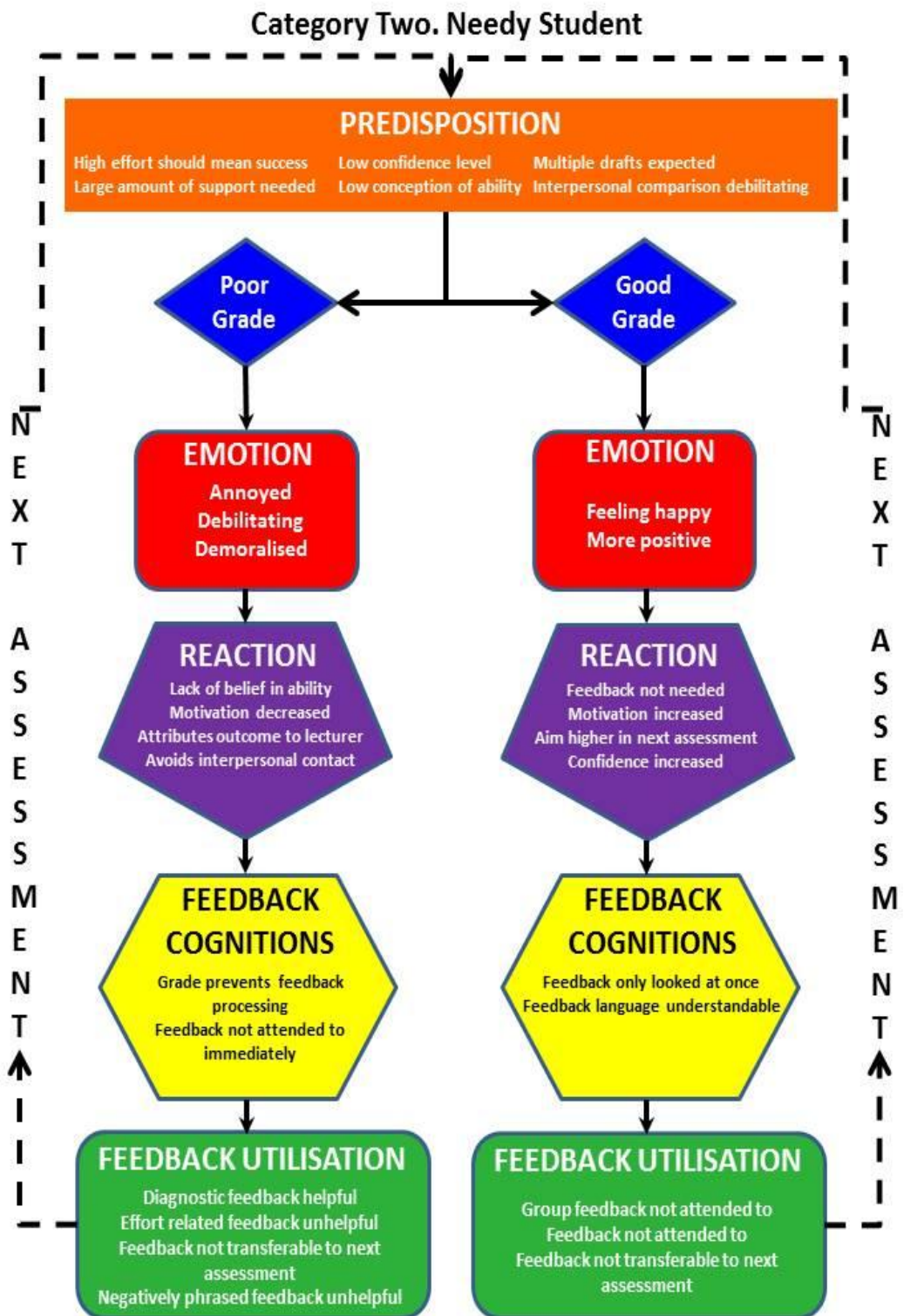


Figure 9 Category Two: Needy student

5.1.7 Needy Student - Predisposition

Students who most closely fit with the needy student, presents themselves as having a low conception of their ability alongside low self-confidence. This student expects to hand in their work multiple times to the lecturer so they can improve upon their drafts. They therefore also tend to expect a large amount of support from the lecturer during the learning process. They tend to think that if they put lots of effort into their work (regardless of how well placed this effort is) they will do well in their assessments. This student does not like to compare themselves to other students as they feel this makes them rather jealous when their friends do better. In general this student is fragile and has perhaps not quite grasped the concept of autonomy at university.

5.1.8 Needy Student - Grade Decision – Poor

The student with a needy profile receives a grade which they consider to be poor. Receiving a poor grade results in the needy student displaying emotions such as feeling annoyed, alongside a general emotion of feeling demoralised. The needy profile student finds such emotions rather debilitating and as such these emotions have a significant effect upon how they feel about the grade outcome and feedback. Following their negative emotional reaction the needy profile student can also be seen to react in a generally negative manner. Firstly they attribute the poor grade outcome to their lecturer, suggesting therefore that the outcome was not in fact down to their performance rather it was due to poor teaching on the lecturer's part. The needy student is unhappy with their grade and therefore does not want to enter into the practice of grade comparison with their peers, in fact when this is happening in the class they actively attempt to avoid it. Due to this poor grade and associated negative emotional reaction the needy student's belief in their own ability is reduced as they feel they are not capable of achieving at university. Subsequently therefore their motivation to engage with their studies and for the next assessment opportunity is diminished significantly.

For the needy student the poor grade they received seems to act as a barrier which prevents them from processing the feedback. They feel so demoralised and annoyed that it is not possible for them to engage with the feedback immediately at the time of receiving it. Despite the needy student's disappointment and annoyance and lack of desire to engage with the feedback they are able to articulate what it is they desire from their feedback in these situations. The needy student really requires diagnostic feedback. They want to be told in a prescriptive sense what it is they have done wrong and what they need to do to correct it (which seems to corroborate with their multiple drafts predisposition). However the needy student indicates the types of feedback which they feel are counterproductive and less likely to imitate adoption or adherence in future assessments. The needy student does not like feedback which reflects effort expenditure judgements made by the lecturer, nor do they like overly negative feedback. The needy student also believes that the feedback they have received in this assessment cannot be applied or even transferred to any other assessments.

5.1.9 Needy Student - Grade Decision – Good

The needy student receives a grade which they consider to be good. Receiving a good grade results in the needy student feeling happier about this outcome compared to when receiving a poor grade. In general, the needy student feels more positive about their performance and the future of their studies. The needy student's first pragmatic reaction (aside from the emotional reaction) to receiving a good grade is that any feedback present is not needed as they think they have done better than they thought they could and therefore all the feedback will do is confirm that. They do not feel that the feedback will include anything which will help them in the future. The needy student does however feel more confident and motivated because of the good grade. The needy student also plans to try and achieve higher in the next assessment because of their performance in this assessment.

The needy student articulates that they understand the feedback the lecturer has written (mainly because it is mostly positively worded) but that they only have looked at it once because they feel that it won't help them next time. The needy student although happy with their grade and willing to read the feedback still feels that it is not transferable to their next assessment even though the feedback is positive and tells them what they did well. In this regard the needy student does not attend to the feedback messages and thus its content is not acted upon in the next assessment.

5.1.10 Needy Student - Comparisons and conclusions

The needy student has articulated similar thoughts in relation to feedback usage in both the poor and good grade situations. It appears that for the needy student in the poor grade situation that their emotional feelings prevent them from attending to the feedback alongside their lack of belief in their own ability and low self-confidence. The needy student, when achieving a good grade, perceives this in a positive manner in terms of positive emotional feelings of happiness, however, such feelings do not appear to foster and engagement or adoption of feedback messages received. Rather this student does not appear to hold feedback in any form of regard, irrespective of the grade achieved. It appears as if the needy student, based upon their predisposition, views assessment situations as isolated occurrences which at the time they want assistance and guidance from the lecturer but when receiving summative feedback at the end of the assessment fails to implement this in the next assessment. It is therefore apparent that for the needy student the feedback will not help them to address the gaps between actual and desired performance as it appears they are not willing to engage with it as they do not either appreciate the transferability or that they cannot overcome the disappointment of performing badly.

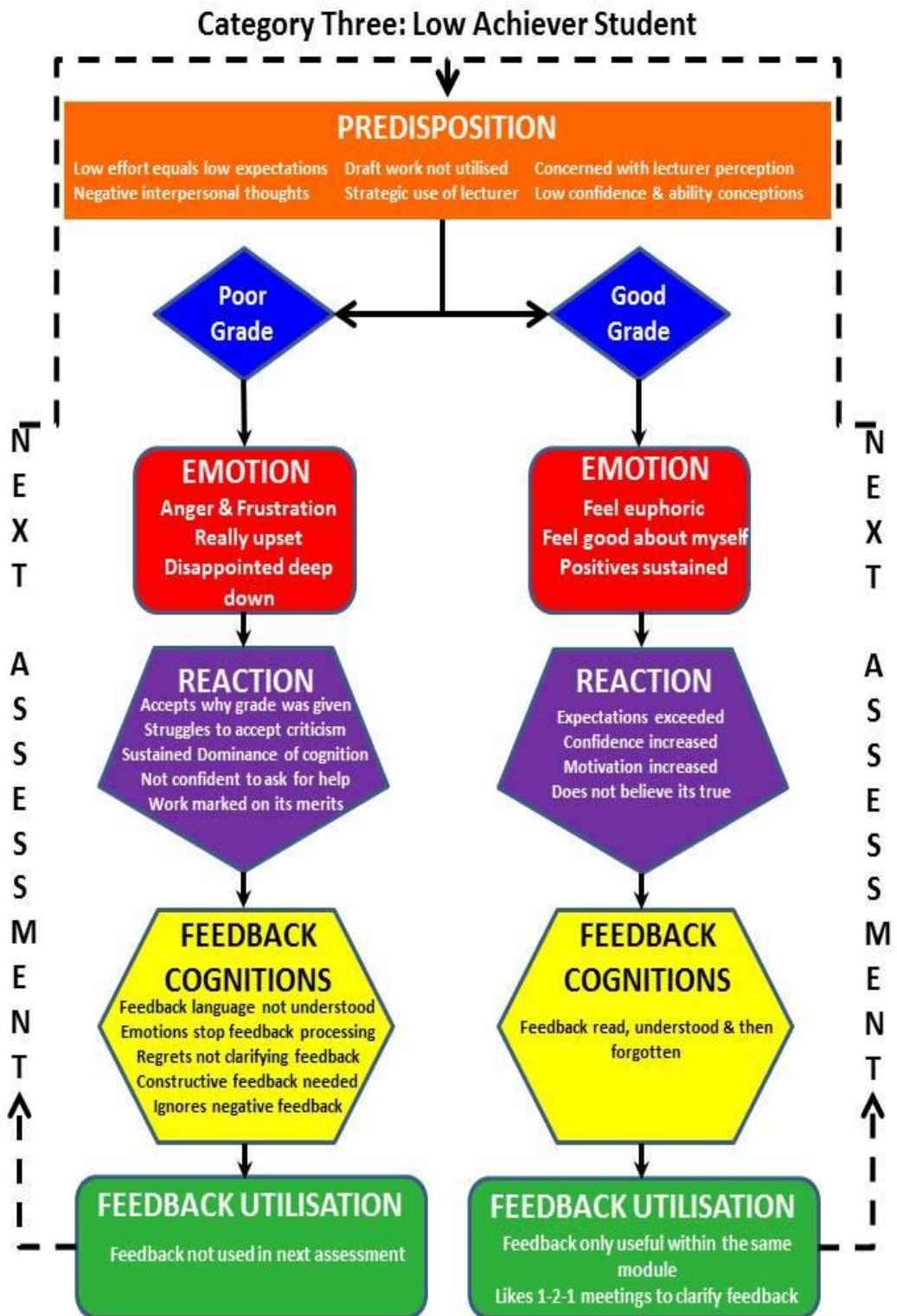


Figure 10 Category Three: Low achiever student

5.1.11 Low Achiever - Predisposition

The low achiever student is typified by low self-confidence and low conceptions of ability. The low achiever student does not really utilise any form of draft work prior to submission and at times views the lecturer in a very strategic manner. That is to say they will ask questions relating to the assessment in lectures but won't go and see the lecturer as they are worried the lecturer will think they are stupid. They are really worried what the lecturer and others in their class think about them and they do not really think they are 'cut out' for university. When thinking about the potential grade outcome they have low expectations if they feel they have not deployed a great deal of effort in relation to their summative submission.

5.1.12 Low Achiever - Grade Decision – Poor

When the low achiever student receives a poor grade they tend to externally try to mask their emotion especially in front of peers and the lecturer. Deep down however, they actually feel very upset, angry and frustrated at the grade outcome. The low achiever student struggles to cope with their emotional feelings and as such alongside more cognitive thoughts; they are sustained for a long period after the grade outcome. The low achiever student rationalises that their work would be marked on its merits and does tend to appreciate why the grade was given indicating at least that they understand the feedback they are being given. However they are unable to accept criticism and this causes them to struggle processing the feedback in a useable manner. Further, the low achiever student does reveal that they struggle sometimes to understand the language used in the feedback. As such they ignore the negative feedback and fail to ask for help as this would reveal a weakness to the lecturer which is something they are keen to avoid, even though they concede they know it would help them if they did. The low achiever student really would like constructive feedback to be given to them due to the fact they cannot process overly critical feedback however, this does not occur very frequently and therefore even though feedback is given it appears to not be utilised in the next assessment.

5.1.13 Low Achiever - Grade Decision – Good

When the low achiever student receives a good grade they experience feelings of euphoria which is sustained for a considerable period of time. Such a grade outcome fosters positive intrapersonal feelings. The low achiever student tends to view the good grade as exceeding their achievement level and although their confidence and motivation is increased by this outcome, deep down they do not believe that this grade reflects their actual ability, rather they feel it was a lucky occurrence. Following the positive grade outcome and in part due to the euphoric emotion, the low achiever student does read the feedback but concedes that they forget the contents almost immediately. When achieving a good grade the low achiever student does go and see their lecturer as they are proud of the outcome and therefore interprets this as the lecturer holding a positive perception of them. In such meetings they clarify the feedback with the lecturer but this seems to be disconnected. The student thinks that this feedback is isolated to only this module and therefore lacks transferability to other modules. The feedback in this case is therefore not attended to and not utilised in subsequent assessments.

5.1.14 Low Achiever - Comparisons and Conclusions

The low achiever student appears to reflect assessment and feedback behaviours which are counterproductive to improvement. Despite the grade achieved the low achiever student's conception of ability, confidence and beliefs about what lecturers are there for seem to negatively affect their achievement outcome. The low achiever student finds it very difficult to engage with feedback and in particular when they do not understand the feedback especially after doing poorly they fail to seek clarification. Even when the low achiever student does perform well they do not attribute this success to anything they have done and their emotional euphoria seems to prevent the feedback from being understood or utilised in the next assessment.

Category Four: Emotionally Charged Student

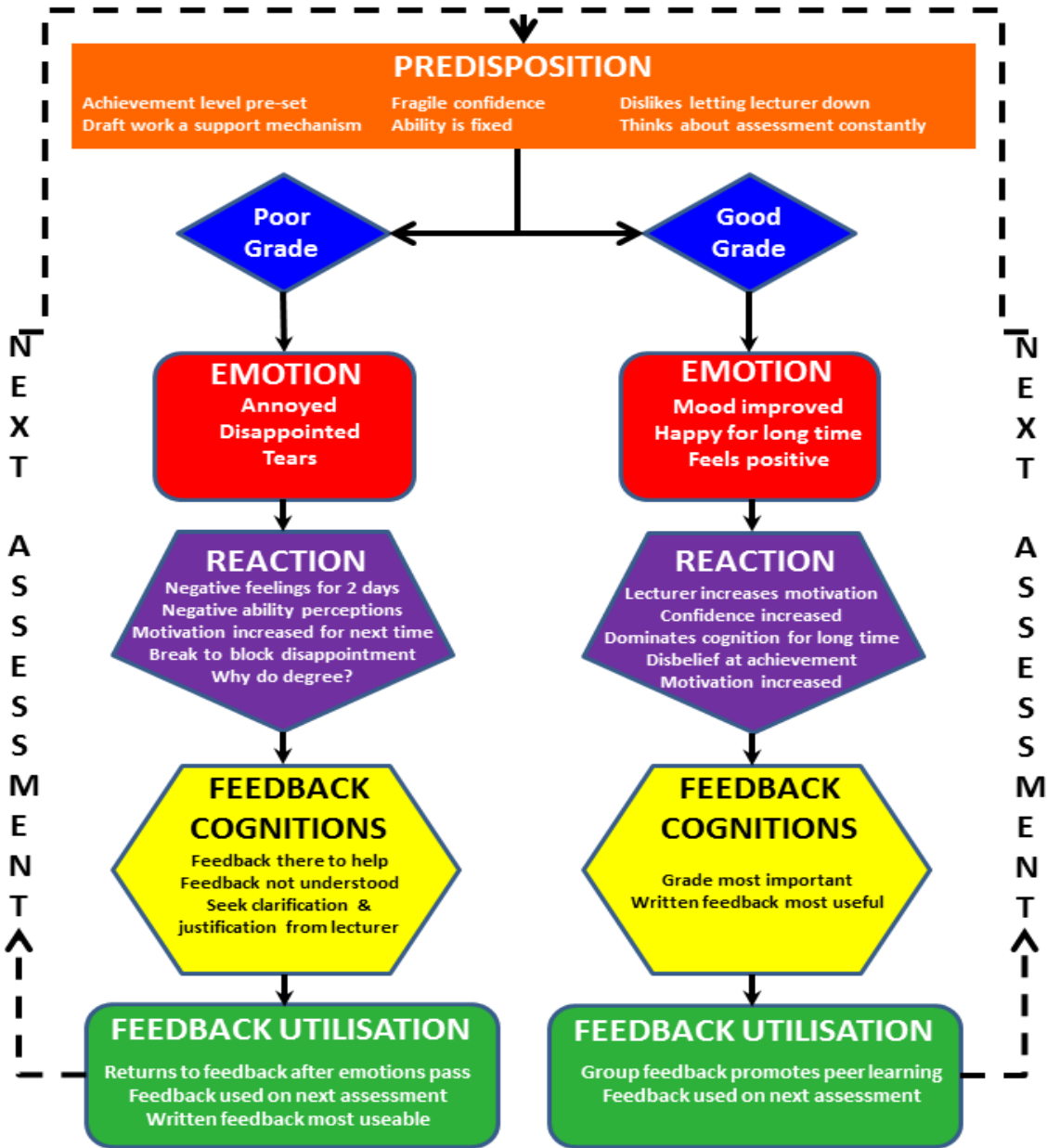


Figure 11Category Four: emotionally charged student

5.1.15 Emotionally Charged - Predisposition

The emotionally charged student is very changeable and their assessment and feedback behaviours change when their emotions change. The student is very engaged in their studies and thinks about their assessments all of the time both inside and outside of university. They believe that their ability is fixed and therefore their pre-determined achievement level is modest. The emotionally charged student's confidence level is fragile and can be affected by the slightest issue which presents itself at university. For example they do like to utilise the lecturer for draft work but if the feedback on this comes back as negative then their confidence level decreases. Overwhelmingly they don't want to let anyone down especially not the lecturer.

5.1.16 Emotionally Charged - Grade Decision – Poor

When the emotionally charged student receives a poor grade they generally feel angry and disappointed about this. Sometimes their emotional reaction is so heightened they outwardly cry. Despite these overtly emotional feelings they attempt to block these in order to try and attend to the feedback, however, they do find this very difficult because the strength of the emotional feelings is so great. The negative feelings are generally experienced for a few days and during this time the student tends to take a break away from their studies in order to get over the disappointment of the poor grade. However, during this period they experience negative ability perceptions to the point whereby they question their future involvement in the degree. Following this episode the emotionally charged student tries to forget about the performance outcome and move on. To this end they experience an increased level of motivation towards attempting to improve their grade outcome in the next assessment.

When the emotionally charged student reads their feedback they find it difficult to understand it due to their emotional reactions. They are aware that it is there to help them in the future but at that point in time they are unable to attend to it. Due

to their emotions they tend to see the lecturer to seek clarification of the feedback and at times justification. In some situations the annoyance and disappointment initiates' feelings that the marks may be unjust, though the emotionally charged student is aware that this is not the case rather their emotions are taking over. The emotionally charged student needs to wait until their emotional reactions have passed (usually after a few days) until they can return to the feedback comments and attempt to process them. The emotionally charged student finds written comments the most useful and once the emotional reactions have subsided they are then able to utilise such comments in the next assessment.

5.1.17 Emotionally Charged - Grade Decision – Good

When the emotionally charged student receives a good grade they tend to experience an improvement in their mood which means they feel happy and positive for a sustained period of time. Despite the apparent disbelief at achieving a higher than normal grade they experience an increase in their motivation and self-confidence and attribute this to their lecturer. The emotionally charged student is so keen to not let down their lecturer that they feel that their good grade will make the lecturer proud and therefore subsequently the student's motivation increases. Receiving this higher grade is something which they think about for a long period of time due to the fact that they are so pleased with this achievement.

It does appear that for the emotionally charged student the grade outcome is the most important factor here. That said they do concede that feedback in written form is their preferred medium as they find this most useful. The emotionally charged student does use the feedback they receive on the next assessment however it appears that they also like to receive group based feedback whereby peer learning is promoted. In this case the student likes to work through the feedback with their peers in order to utilise it in the next assessment.

5.1.18 Emotionally Charged - Comparisons and Conclusions

The emotionally charged student's assessment and feedback related behaviour does appear to be greatly influenced by firstly their grade outcome and secondly their subsequent emotional reaction. When they receive a poor grade their emotional reaction is the barrier to feedback processing and subsequent utilisation. It is apparent that at least the student is aware of this and therefore waits for such emotions to pass before attempting to engage with the feedback. This suggests a level of developed personal understanding of which emotional situation enables their feedback engagement. This seems particularly the case when the emotionally charged student receives good grades as they do seem to be more in control of their emotions. In such situations, they are able to process and utilise the feedback despite experiencing heightened positive emotions. It therefore is evident that the negative emotions are the debilitating factor with regards to feedback utilisation.

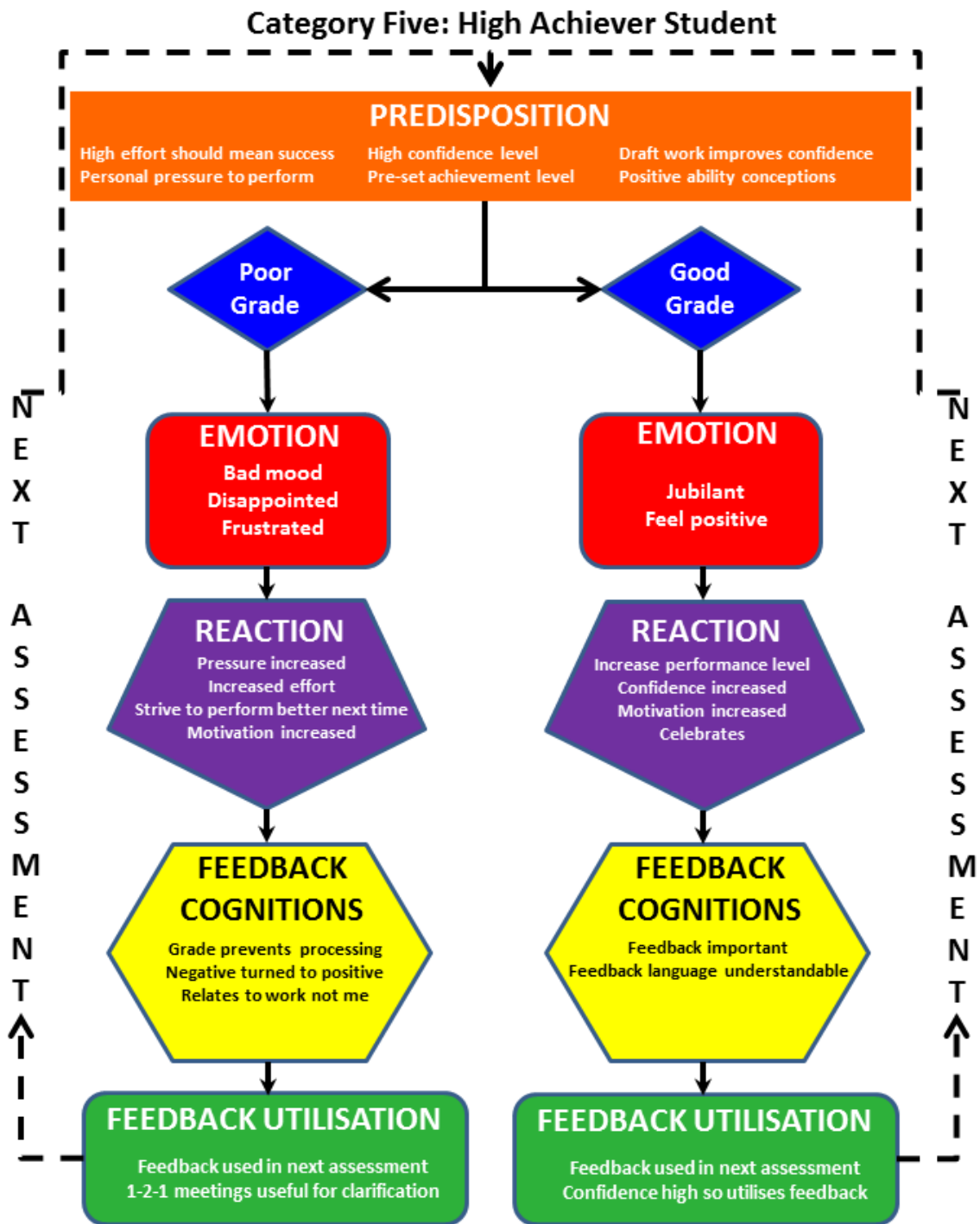


Figure 11 Category Five: Higher achiever

5.1.19 High Achiever - Predisposition

The high achiever student presents themselves as high in confidence alongside positive conceptions of their own ability. When the high achiever has their good work confirmed through the drafts they submit prior to summative submission their confidence is improved even more. They have a pre-determined achievement level in their mind prior to submission and this is normally set at the higher end of the grade scale. There is a certain amount of personal pressure to perform as they want to do the best in the class and generally equate that the more effort they put into their work the higher grade they should achieve.

5.1.20 High Achiever - Grade Decision – Poor

The high achiever student receives a grade which they consider to be poor. Receiving a poor grade results in the high achiever student displaying emotions such as disappointment and frustration at the fact they have not achieved their normal high standards. The high achiever's mood changes and reflects what they describe as a 'bad mood'. Such emotional reactions coupled with the lower than normal grade outcome cause the high achiever student to feel more pressure to perform better in the next assessment in order to compensate for this. The high achiever student indicates that they will increase their effort in order to strive for a more favourable outcome next time and generally their motivation is increased by this desire.

The high achiever student rationalises the feedback received on poor work and concludes that this feedback is a reflection of the actual work and not themselves as a learner. In this case they are able to understand the language used by the lecturer in the feedback and although at times the grade outcome is a barrier to prevent them from processing the feedback immediately they eventually are able to turn the negative feedback into a positive outcome as they can understand that the

feedback is developmental and designed to initiate improvement in the next assessment. The high achiever student engages in 1-2-1 meetings with their lecturer when they have achieved lower than they normally would in order to clarify the feedback messages to make sure they can attend to the content of the feedback in the next assessment. In this regard the high achiever student despite their disappointment and frustration at the grade outcome is still able to utilise the feedback in the next assessment in order to try and improve their performance.

5.1.21 High Achiever - Grade Decision – Good

The high achiever student receives a grade which they consider to be good. Receiving a good grade means that the high achiever feels jubilant and positive about their achievement outcome. The high achiever's reaction to this positive outcome is to vow to maintain this level of performance in subsequent assessments. They have higher levels of confidence and motivation to achieve following the good grade and generally feel like celebrating the fact this has occurred.

The high achiever student's thoughts relating to feedback do not reflect a high level of engagement. They do acknowledge that the language used in the feedback is readily understood but that in most cases it is only confirming what they have done well and there is not a great deal of developmental feedback present with regards to the next assessment. That said the high achiever student does appreciate the feedback and feels that because their confidence level is so high following the grade outcome they will utilise the positive comments in the next assessment by making sure they continue to do the things that were identified as good in the next piece of work they complete.

5.1.22 High Achiever - Comparisons and Conclusions

The high achiever student appears to be a very adaptive and stable student. When the high achiever student receives a good grade they show signs of increased motivation, confidence and engagement with their studies. The high achiever

student is able to utilise the feedback they receive in the next assessment readily. When the high achiever student receives a poor grade, despite the disappointment they are still able to positively adapt to the disappointment and rationalise that the feedback is designed to improve their performance the next time. The high achiever student therefore is a student who is able to self-regulate their reactions in order to maintain their high level of performance despite experiencing some grade outcomes which are less than favourable. Crucially the high achiever is an adaptive learner who is able to utilise feedback from the lecturer in order to improve their performance in the next assessment despite the grade outcome received.

5.2 Categories of description – key variations in meaning

In this chapter the outcome space from the student interviews shows five categories of description which represents the qualitatively different ways of student's experienced and utilised feedback. As such this outcome space represents the many multifaceted and complex relationships that the students had experienced. Frequently the literature within the feedback realm articulates research which at times views student's experiences as one dimensional in nature. What this chapter has demonstrated is firstly the interactional nature of the student's feedback experiences and secondly, how such experiences impact upon their future assessment practices. The literature has reported such notions as students not adhering to feedback, not picking up feedback, not understanding the language of feedback and many more areas (Sadler, 1983; Hounsell, 1987, 1995; Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2001; Handley & Cox, 2007; Burke, 2009; Bloxham & Campbell, 2010; Fisher et al., 2011). However, such instances are not holistically explored in order to ascertain perhaps the underlying more complex constructs which may be fostering such behaviours. Crucially, this outcome space illuminates how the constructs interact in order to influence the student's propensity to engage in adaptive feedback practices. Further this also explains how the potentially maladaptive behaviours are fostered too.

The outcome space presented in this chapter deviates from the traditional representation of feedback research related data, not least in the fact that the student's emotional and cognitive process are aligned to their behavioural actions in a way that allows one to understand the sometime nuanced differences between groups of students (as depicted by the five categories of description). In this regard a further step within this analysis is needed to discuss the relationships between the categories in order to look at the variation in meaning holistically. As such the following section will present the variation of meaning in a hierarchically inclusive manner. That is, as Åkerlind (2004) argues categories of description need to reference aspects of the phenomenon as relational which indicate that categories may be "ordered along a hierarchy of inclusiveness" (2004, p. 366) where a complex category subsumes the less complex ones. The student's utilisation of the feedback received appears to be the basis on which to form the hierarchy within this outcome space.

5.3 Structure of the variation

The five qualitatively different ways of utilising feedback described previously in this chapter were marked by variation along the following five themes affecting feedback use. These themes served to link and separate the different categories. Throughout chapter four and indeed this chapter I have discussed the differences between grade outcome and therefore this section will continue this distinction. The predisposition theme is reflective of both grade outcome situations and as such is displayed once here. In this regard Tables 3 and 4 (in the following pages) demonstrate the key aspects of the range of variation in student's use of feedback.

The predisposition theme suggests varying focus amongst the categories relation to: High effort equalling an expected good grade alongside a low conception of ability (categories 1 & 2); Low effort equalling an expected poor grade alongside a low conception of ability (category 3); ability viewed as fixed alongside fragile confidence (category 4); and High effort equalling an expected good grade alongside a high conception of ability (category 5). Such a variation represents a

more developed and stable assessment predisposition, beginning with rather unachievable expectant grade outcome due to ability level expanding to more achievable expectant grade outcome alongside rationale ability conceptions.

Structure of the variation - Good Grade

- The emotion theme depicts a variation which reflects continual positive and sustained emotional reactions (categories 1 – 5).
- The reaction theme reflects a constant of increased motivation however suggests a variation which includes a desire to maintain performance (category 1); aim higher next time (categories 2 & 3); disbelief at achievement (category 4); and a desire to increase performance outcome next time (category 5). Such a variation suggests a movement towards more positive next assessment thoughts and adaptive cognitions.
- The feedback cognitions theme reflects a variation linked to the language of feedback not being understood (category 1); language understood but message not retained (categories 2 & 3); grade dominant & written comments useful (category 4); and feedback important, language understood (category 5). Within this theme the variation suggests a movement towards understanding and processing feedback from a beginning reflecting confusion regarding language use and subsequent retention of feedback messages.
- The feedback use theme represents a shift from not utilising the feedback (categories 1 & 2); viewing the feed as only useable in the same module (category 3); and using the feedback on the next assessment (categories 4 & 5). The variation suggested here is that students at the higher end of the hierarchy tend to use the feedback whereas those at the lower end do not. It appears that themes previously discussed seem to be interacting for the categories at the lower end of the hierarchy which results in feedback not being used in the next assessment despite a positive grade outcome.

Structure of the variation - Poor Grade

- The emotion theme depicts a variation which reflects continual negative and sustained emotional reactions (categories 1 – 3); and short term negative emotional reactions (categories 4 & 5). The variation highlights that all categories experience negative emotions however the duration of such reactions are variable.
- The reaction theme reveals attributions towards lecturers for grade outcome which appear maladaptive in nature (categories 1 & 2), maladaptive reactions but acceptance of grade awarded (category 3); adaptive reactions alongside an eventual motivation increase (category 4); and adaptive reactions alongside an increase in motivation (category 5). Such a variation indicates a movement from maladaptive reactions relating to blaming others towards an acceptance of work reflecting the ability of the students and finally towards reactions which rationalise the disappointment of lower than expected achievement and demonstrate adaptive motivational reactions to improve in the next assessment.
- The feedback cognitions reflects a variation linked to the feedback not being understood and clarification not being sought from the lecturer (categories 1 & 2); emotional reactions preventing the processing of feedback and clarification not being sought from the lecturer (category 3); feedback not understood but seeking clarification from the lecturer (category 4); and understanding feedback whilst turning negative feedback into a developmental positive (category 5). The variation suggested here appears to indicate a development from not understanding the feedback and not seeking clarification towards a position of self-regulation and reflective reasoning at the higher end of the hierarchy.
- The feedback use theme represents a shift from not utilising the feedback (categories 1 - 3); and using the feedback on the next assessment (categories 4 & 5). In a similar pattern to the structure of the variation in the good grade scenario it appears that students at the higher end of the hierarchy tend to use the feedback whereas those at the lower end do not. It appears that

themes previously discussed seem to be interacting for the categories at the lower end of the hierarchy which results in feedback not being used in the next assessment. However, for the categories at the higher end of the hierarchy the themes do not appear to have as much of a maladaptive influence upon feedback use age

5.4 Structure of the variation – Good grade

Themes affecting	1	2	3	4	5
Feedback use	Broken relationship	Needy student	Low achiever	Emotionally charged	High achiever
Predisposition	High effort = reward False conception of ability	High effort = reward Low conception of ability	Low effort = poor grade Low conception of ability	Ability fixed Fragile confidence	High effort = reward High conception of ability
Emotion	Positive & sustained	Positive & sustained	Positive & sustained	Positive & sustained	Positive & sustained
Reaction	Maintain performance & motivation increased	Aim higher next time & motivation increased	Aim higher next time & motivation increased	Disbelief at achievement & motivation increased	Increase performance level next time & motivation increased
Feedback cognitions	Language not understood	Language understood but message not retained	Language understood but message not retained	Grade dominant Written comments useful	Feedback important Language understood
Feedback use	Not utilised	Not utilised Not transferable	Utilised only in same module	Used on next assessment	Used on next assessment

Table 3 Relationships between the categories – structure of the variation – Good grade

5.5 Structure of the variation – Poor grade

Themes affecting feedback use	1 Broken relationship	2 Needy student	3 Low achiever	4 Emotionally charged	5 High achiever
Predisposition	High effort = reward False conception of ability	High effort = reward Low conception of ability	Low effort = poor grade Low conception of ability	Ability fixed Fragile confidence	High effort = reward High conception of ability
Emotion	Negative & sustained	Negative & sustained	Negative & sustained	Negative short term	Negative short term
Reaction	Maladaptive -Attributes outcome to lecturer	Maladaptive -Attribute outcome to lecturer	Maladaptive -Accepts decision as fair reflection of work	Adaptive - Motivation increased eventually	Adaptive - Motivation increased
Feedback cognitions	Not understood – do not seek clarification	Not processed – do not seek clarification	Emotions prevent understanding & processing – do not seek clarification	Not understood – seeks clarification	Understood -Negatives turned to positives
Feedback use	Not utilised	Not utilised Not transferable	Not utilised	Used on next assessment	Used on next assessment

Table 4 Relationships between the categories – structure of the variation – Poor grade

5.6 Discussion

The outcome space and structure of the variation displayed within this chapter demonstrate a more developed, integrated and nuanced interpretation of the students' lived experiences than previous chapters within this thesis. In a sense this chapter has moved forward the knowledge base within the feedback field as it has provided a more holistic interpretation of the students' assessment and feedback journey. In particular the chapter has built upon the findings discussed within chapters three and four in order to visually represent, through the five categories of description, the very different experiences of the students interviewed within the thesis. The five categories of description provide some very interesting findings which in many ways are both similar and different from the findings reported in previous feedback literature. The outcome space findings for broken relationship, needy and low achiever students align with previous literature that found that when students are satisfied with the grade they have received they tend to either not read or attend to the feedback messages (Enginarlar, 1993; James, 2000; Goldstein, 2006; Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Vardi, 2009).

However for the high achiever and the emotionally charged they were able to use the feedback despite achieving above their pre-determined grade level. Similar adaptive behaviours can be seen with regards to emotional reaction; in the case of the needy, broken relationship and low achiever categories, the positive emotional reactions that they experienced did not positively affect their utilisation of feedback. Such a finding seems to contradict those of Pekrun et al (2002) and Fredrickson & Cohn (2008) who argued that positive emotions can act to enhance a student's learning and achievement due to their inherent propensity to assist self-regulation and motivation. This did appear to be the case for the high achiever category as the presence of positive feedback enabled them to utilise the feedback in order to improve. Previous research by Dirkx (2001) and Boud & Falchikoiv (2007) seems to corroborate that the student's emotional reactions obstructed their cognitive processing of the feedback. This seems particularly apparent in the categories labelled needy, low achiever and the emotionally charged. However in

the case of the emotionally charged category they do return to the feedback once the emotional reaction has passed suggesting a more developed ability to self-regulate.

When the students received a poor grade it appears that their pre-dispositions are affected by their previous assessment experiences and thus lends support to my contention of viewing feedback as cyclical in nature (in essence the beginning of each section of the cycle). It is apparent that many constructs, such as emotions, grades and motivation are interacting with the student's pre-dispositions in order to affect the subsequent feedback utilisation.

The final area which suggests a dichotomy within the students relates to the students' reaction to negative feedback. In an adaptive sense the high achiever and emotionally charged categories appear to support the notion that negative feedback is seen as motivational (Carver & Scheier, 1981). However, some students did report that negatively phrased feedback appears to cause them, especially those who are already low in confidence, to react in a very negative manner which has been frequently reported in the literature (Rice et al., 1994; Young, 2000; Pitts, 2005; Weaver, 2006; Poulos & Mahony, 2008; Ferguson, 2011). This is especially noticeable with the needy and low achiever categories, which reinforces my earlier argument that such instances serve to influence their subsequent pre-dispositions in the next assessment.

6. Chapter Six: Study Three - The lecturers' interviews

6.1 Introduction

Chapter six reports the findings from a study with academic lecturers who taught within the same faculty as the students used in chapters three and four. In this chapter I outline the studies design, method and analysis of results alongside some preliminary conclusions. I begin the chapter by outlining the design and procedure of the study followed by a discussion of the data collection methods that I used. I then discuss how I analysed the data and present the results from the interviews with the lecturers explaining how the themes were generated and more importantly what they infer. In the final section of the chapter I discuss the results of the study alongside sample quotes from the lecturers.

6.1.1 Participant breakdown

I contacted 35 lecturers (via email) from within the same faculty as the students used in the previous two studies (Science and Social Science). Twelve lecturers responded indicating they would be happy to participate. The interviews were due to take place after teaching had ceased in May 2012. As such the timing of the interviews proved to be a little restrictive and 3 lecturers were unable to commit the time. The 9 lecturers who agreed to be interviewed represented a diverse spectrum of experience and age (M=6, F=3). The female lecturers experience ranged from between 4 and 12 years whereas in the male lecturers experience ranged from between 2 and 25 years. The majority of the lecturers were aged between 30 and 40. Table 3 on the next page illustrates the participant breakdown.

Ethical considerations were made in this study in line with the more detailed explanation I offered in chapter two. Ethical approval for this study was received from the education faculty ethics committee. In brief the lecturers were given an information sheet detailing the nature of the study and were asked to sign an informed consent form (both available on request). All lecturers were reminded at the start of data collection that they could withdraw at any point in time. Further

they were also reminded that the interview would be recorded and pseudonyms would be used to represent their utterances within the thesis.

Gender	Age Group	Experience
Female	30-35	5 Years
Female	30-35	4 years
Female	50-55	12 years
Male	50-55	24 years
Male	60-65	25 years
Male	30-35	5 Years
Male	35-40	8 Years
Male	30-35	2 Years
Male	45-50	15 Years

Table 5 Participant breakdown study three

6.1.2 The Video Activity

In both chapters three and four I discussed the data from the interviews with the students and what struck me during the analysis of this data was that some of the students had experienced some profound situations, which needed to be highlighted and discussed with academic lecturers. Deciding how to achieve this was difficult and a number of ways became apparent. Firstly, I considered describing some student experiences and asking lecturers to give me their opinion. I then considered giving them written case studies to read and asking their impressions. However, I felt both of these methods would not sufficiently articulate the profound impression that the student's experiences had upon me when I initially heard them during the student interviews. I therefore needed to create a way of re-creating my experience for the lecturers. One way in which I felt this could be viewed in an alternative manner was to present academic lecturers with 'virtual' students who had experienced real problems with their feedback. I firstly constructed, using the data from the student interviews four scripts which depicted

four different typical experiences. I gave each script a name and then added emphasis and direction to the scripts in a similar way that a drama production would do. I then approached the drama department at the North-West University to see if it would be possible to utilise student actors. The drama department agreed and I met with four student actors and their lecturer. Together we carried out a script read through followed by a period of suggested modifications based upon their superior acting knowledge. The finalised scripts and accompanying emotional emphasis were then acted out by the actors in front of a video camera. I then edited the videos using iMovie on the Mac platform so that four clips could be viewed sequentially.

My overwhelming concern with this part of the research was to bring the data to life in a form which I had not firstly seen in the literature and secondly, to create an opportunity for the lecturers to visually see first-hand the impact their feedback has upon the students. The goal of this activity was therefore to engage the lecturers in a reflective interview relating not only to the video content but also their own feedback practices. Following each video the lecturers were asked to discuss what they had viewed. I wanted here to allow the lecturers the freedom to make an initial assessment of the content and then to summarise their perceptions. Following this initial dialogue I asked them further questions which related to the content of their first response.

6.1.3 The students in the videos

As indicated in the previous section the four students were shown to the lecturers sequentially. In order to allow the reader to understand where some of the lecturer's reactions to the videos were coming from it is important for me to indicate the exact nature of the student's experience. Constructing the scripts for each student was very challenging. Due to logistical reasons I needed to carry out the interviews with the staff after I had carried out the initial data analysis on the student data. This meant that I had not fully decided upon firstly my themes and also more crucially I had yet to construct the outcome space which I have previously

discussed in chapter five. However the content used in the videos was yet another way to represent the findings from the interview data with the students. The content of the videos was also constructed for a different purpose to stimulate debate and discussion perhaps in a more directly accessible way than the nuanced profiles could. I began constructing the scripts by re-reading the data and looking for instances which really articulated my preliminary analyses. For example the student named Keith in the video reflected one of the students from study two (Mike) experiences of draft work. I felt that this was a particularly interesting situation as it demonstrated to the lecturers the impact that lecturers' comments had upon the student and I was interested in their thoughts in relation to this. It is important to explain here that I needed to create four situations that the lecturers would not only be able to respond to but also situations that would generate further discussions. I was not looking for one direct response and then moving onto the next video. I wanted the videos to stimulate a dialogue between myself and the lecturer. In this case the other three videos depicted experiences which highlighted the student data that reflected experiences relating to the challenges faced when starting university for the first time, low self-confidence and lack of engagement with studies. All of these areas have been discussed frequently within the literature but crucially they have in the main been explored from the student perspective. I was keen to not only expose the lecturers directly to a representation of students' experiences founded in my interview analysis but also to allow them the opportunity to articulate how they would deal with such issues in order to greater understand the mechanics of feedback situations from the lecturers' perspective. In a sense my goal was to demonstrate how lecturers' exposure directly to the student experiences of assessment and feedback could allow us to understand their perceptions of such situations and how they might differ from those of the students interviewed in study two.

The following explains each acted student's background and their particular experience so as to give the reader an impression of what the lecturers viewed in the videos (please see DVD appendix 9 for the videos):

Paul –

Paul would like to think he is a confident young man, but he is always concerned what people think about him which means he's not really that confident when talking about getting poor grades. Paul remembers his school days fondly and like the relationship he had with his teachers. He struggles with the infrequency of contact with university lecturers. Paul really struggles processing negative feedback and also independent work. He liked the fact at school he could submit multiple drafts of the same piece of work and improve each time, he struggles with the fact this isn't possible at university. He is currently failing assessments and questioning why he is at university now.

Jill –

Jill has recently suffered a dip in confidence and she is very worried about her progress. She feels fine when completing her assessments but after submitting them she is worried about the potential outcome. If she gets a bad mark it knocks her confidence for the next assessment. At College Jill didn't need to expend much effort to do well but at university this hasn't helped her situation and she failed some of her initial work.

Keith –

Keith has been doing well at University until he had an issue with one of his lecturers. Keith received some feedback on a piece of work that he had worked really hard on and had submitted two drafts to his lecturer. Keith received a grade of 48 along with the feedback "I can see a lot of effort went into this". Keith is very angry and emotive firstly about the grade but also the comment. He uses lots of hand gestures to emphasis this anger. At times Keith expresses this anger with the words he uses.

Petunia –

Petunia always has a miserable worried expression on her face; she is very nervy, bites her nails and twiddles with her hair. She is not very confident in her own ability and finds it difficult to go and see her lecturer's when she is struggling. She also struggles to understand the feedback she gets from her lecturers and doesn't tend to go and clarify this with them.

Alongside the detailed background information the drama student actors were also given detailed scripts from which to base their representation upon. Below is an example of one of the videos in script format that was given to the actors to act out:

Petunia

Background on Petunia –Petunia always has a miserable worried expression on her face; she is very nervy, bites her nails and twiddles with her hair. At times Petunia found it difficult to talk fluidly and there were breaks in her voice.

Actor Direction - Incorporate these overt actions into character by twiddling hair and using a soft and weak voice which at times breaks subtly.

"My name is Petunia I'm a second year student taking Biology and Sport. I only got average A level grades at school, so I guess that I'm not very confident about my own ability to do this degree. Learning I suppose really means if things are either right or wrong."

"I get scared to see the lecturers because if I go with a piece of work to them and ask them to have a look at it, I just think they are going to say this is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong, and that would really knock back my confidence as

I've always been scared of making mistakes especially with my university work."

"In my first year I failed some lab reports. I tried reading the feedback form my lecturers, but I didn't really understand it and felt scared to ask questions about it in case they think I am stupid sort of thing."

"I didn't go and see them about it as I guess I don't respond very well to constructive criticism. Like because I know they are doing it for my benefit but at the time I'm thinking oh my God, I've really messed up and you know I honestly think that they think really low of you at the time."

6.1.4 Bracketing

The interview was very much informed by each lecturer's comments rather than by any predetermined questions I may have wanted to ask. I wanted the interviews to really allow the lecturers' thoughts, opinions and own practice to come out in terms of how they would deal with the students if they had presented themselves in this manner at their office. I therefore was really careful to ensure as much as possible that that I did not ask them any questions which may have been informed by my previous analysis of the student data. I wanted the themes that would be generated from the analysis of the lecturers interviewed to reflect their experiences and more importantly their feedback practices rather than trying to match what the students had reported in the earlier two studies (chapters three and four). I therefore in a sense bracketed my previous experiences and knowledge from the students' studies within my thesis. In some of the interviews I did need to steer the lecturers back towards the content of the videos. It was important that I did this on a number of occasions as the lecturers did begin to go a little off topic and had almost forgotten about what the students were saying in the videos. One lecturer began to quite heatedly discuss the perceived relationship between increases in students' fees and how that has changed students' attitude towards the older generation, which I felt was perhaps steering the conversation away from assessment and feedback and

more towards morality and social conscience. In one interview I actually replayed the video for the lecturer in order to ensure that they were discussing the phenomenon and responding to the video rather than answering direct questions from myself.

As I discussed in chapter two, I needed to also be conscious of ensuring that I bracketed my previous experience within higher education. I therefore was extremely mindful of this during the interview and therefore the decision to carry out the interviews without a set of pre-determined questions really allowed me to keep my own experiences and subjective thoughts away from the interview process. Although a difficult task to achieve, I intentionally remained impartial towards the responses that the lecturers were giving to the student actors in the videos. In the main this was achieved by directing the focus of the interview at all times towards what the student actors had reported and how the lecturers perceived this. I was conscious not to lead the lecturers in anyway and ensured that any further questions that I asked related directly to what they had originally uttered to me. I felt that my previous experience was in fact an asset to this process as I was firstly able to understand what both the lecturers and the students were saying but also I was able to ask suitable further questions of the lecturers as I was aware of the context from which they were drawing from. It is perhaps here where my ability to bracket was put under most strain. In practice I feel that my previous experience did at times influence the further questions that I asked the lecturers. Having analysed the student data and being exposed to the students' emotional stories it was impossible for me not to want to articulate these to the lecturers in order to further probe and therefore by definition further understand the lecturer perceptions of this. In summary these measures allowed me to ensure that the lecturers were able to express their experience of the phenomenon in a fully in-depth manner.

During the data analysis phase (discussed later in this section) again I needed to bracket my experiences in a similar manner. I intentionally remained impartial

towards the lecturers reporting of their experiences of the phenomenon. When analysing the data I bracketed my previous experiences to ensure that this did not affect how the themes were generated. Clearly this is difficult to achieve if one is to consider my previous sustained experience within these situations. However, I ensured that I constantly checked the themes that were emerging through re-reading the interview transcripts so that what I was generating remained consistent with what the lecturers had reported. I carried out the analysis in a very similar manner to that outlined in chapter four as I was keen to maintain a level of consistency in the way I handled interview data post interview. Such measures coupled with my own experience of the phenomenon reflected my efforts to accurately report the lecturer's experience of the phenomenon in the most representative manner possible.

6.1.5 Conducting the interview

The interviews took place in my office and in a few circumstances the lecturer's offices which were all quiet and conducive environments for watching and responding to a video. I utilised an ipad to show the videos so that IT related issues in different rooms did not cause problems. The interview began with a small introduction to the concept of watching a video and then responding. I informed the lecturers that they would watch one video and then I would ask them to comment upon what they had seen and subsequently we would discuss in an interview this video.

This pattern would continue until all four videos were watched and commented upon. The lecturer then watched the first clip and I stopped the video and asked them to firstly simply give me their thoughts in relation to what the actor student had been saying in the video. The interview then proceeded to flow in relation to points that the lecturers raised. The videos allowed the lecturers to visually and audibly experience a representation of what students might go through in their studies and therefore afforded them the opportunities to not only respond but also to reflect upon their own practice.

The interviews were all taped recorded and I transcribed these verbatim. Pseudonyms were assigned to all lecturers so as to preserve their identities. The data was then prepared for phenomenographical analysis.

6.1.6 Thematic Data Analysis

I personally transcribed all of the interviews which allowed me to familiarise myself with the contents. Following transcription I read and re-read all of the transcripts in an iterative manner in order to make sense of the context and meaning of each of the lecturer's experiences. Subsequently I then organised key quotations and utterances that related to the phenomenon under discussion. Following the same method outlined in chapter four I organised the quotations into themes and sub themes which allowed me to analyse and interpret multiple layers of experience across the lecturers interviewed. Subsequently this also allowed me to develop a sense of understanding of the range of experiences to be reported in the results section of this chapter.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 Introduction

In this section of the chapter I discuss findings from the interviews with the lecturers. The nine interviews yielded a large amount of data in which I have classified the lecturers' utterances into themes. In this section I will explain how the themes were derived and how they relate to the lecturers' understanding of the student's experiences of assessment and feedback. Central to the theme construction process was the analysis which I carried out in a phenomenographically inspired manner. Six themes explained the lecturers' perceptions of the students' experiences of assessment and feedback. These were termed; Efficacy cognitions, student autonomy, problems with feedback, effort conceptions, feedback mechanisms and understanding students.

The themes in the main reflect the lecturer's utterances in direct response to the videoed representation of 'students' lived experiences'. However, during the analysis it also became apparent that the lecturer's personal perception of wider issues relating to their own practice of giving feedback was evident and thus is reflected in some of the themes. I feel that this is a particular strength of the analysis and subsequent presentation of the data as it allowed me to elucidate not only responses to the represented lived experience of the students but also the lecturers' own personal lived experiences of giving feedback which in a sense provides a more holistic representation of the lecturer and student dynamic. In order to fully represent the contents of the six themes I have displayed visually a diagram which depicts the second layer of the themes which contain differing numbers of sub themes.

Figure 13 overleaf depicts the themes (represented in the central circles) and their associated sub themes (represented in the smaller outer circles). Figure 13 is a visual representation of the data to aid understanding and as such the colours merely act to identify the different themes. As can be seen by the number of segments in each of the outer circles, there is some variation in the number of sub-themes for each theme. In the following section of this chapter I will discuss the themes and connected sub themes alongside a selection of lecturer utterances which help to further understand their perceptions of the student's experiences of assessment and feedback in higher education. The order in which I present the themes relates to the frequency of responses for each theme in descending order.



Figure 12 Lecturers Perceptions of student's experience of assessment & feedback

6.2.2 Efficacy Cognitions

The efficacy cognitions theme reflected lecturers' utterances which directly related to their perceptions of the student's apparent ability related concerns, self-confidence and current level of achievement. I was very keen here to encompass such utterances under an overarching theme as in study two with the students (chapter 4). It was clear that efficacy cognitions revealed underlying differences between the students interviewed. Through the videos the lecturers were exposed to these differences. I was keen to capture the nuanced student experiences relating to feedback and present these to the lecturers and this theme therefore reflects the lecturers' direct reactions and interpretations of the student's experiences.

In study two the student's reported differing beliefs relating to ability. Some students felt it was fixed and others believed it to be changeable. It was clear that the lecturers in this study also reflected such a dichotomy. Within the efficacy cognitions theme, ability was a sub theme. Connie is a senior lecturer with five years of lecturing experience; reflecting upon student Jill's experience she indicated that her belief was that everyone has natural ability but there are limits to this:

Connie (on Jill) "Obviously I think everyone has got a natural ability and perhaps there are limits to their natural ability but they don't need to know that."

Interestingly Connie indicates that she does not always inform the student that there may be a limit to their potential due to their level of natural ability. Ivor, a principal lecturer with twenty five years' experience suggests that ability perceptions amongst the student cohort can sometimes prove problematic:

Ivor (in general) "Students have got a slightly bizarre idea about degree qualifications and stuff. I don't know if you've found nowadays, a 2.2 is just seen as not a good degree, even

those students who are patently unable to get 2.1s think they should and a lot of students are under the illusion they might get firsts when they're nowhere near that."

Ivor suggests here that some students may have unrealistic ability perceptions and expectations relating to what they can achieve. Comparatively though, Lawrence and Kerry, both lecturers with fewer than five years' experience suggest that student ability perceptions should not affect the student's potential to achieve during their degree:

Lawrence (on Jill) "I think she's particularly frank in admitting a lack of natural ability, which again as a tutor I'd never be inclined to make comments on natural ability to students, especially if it's going to be negative. I would reassure her that she wouldn't have got this far without having the ability to be there and that I would obviously tell her that she can and will do better if she listens to the feedback, implements it, if there is anything she needs clarified to ask I think that's very important."

Kerry (on Petunia) "In order for her to progress I think she really needs to start to speak to her tutors and the misconception that her tutor will think she is silly is really unfortunate because tutors do not think that at all."

Both lecturers here seem to be suggesting that they perceive ability to be changeable. In Lawrence's regard he avoids making comments relating to ability, rather he reinforces the notion that feedback comments from the lecturer can be utilised by the student in order to improve in the future. Whilst discussing Petunia's experience, Kerry identifies that she needs to utilise her tutors and that they won't perceive her as stupid or lacking in ability.

Confidence also featured highly within this theme. In particular the lecturers reflected upon how they would deal with a student who presented themselves as lacking in self-confidence. After watching Petunia's video Lawrence identified the need to be careful not to give feedback in such a way as to undermine the student's confidence level:

Lawrence (on Petunia) "I think if you criticise people it drains away their confidence and I think any criticism should be I suppose disguised in a constructive way because I think she can't cope with it, to the extent that she'll actually avoid submitting work for fear of criticism in getting it wrong."

Here Lawrence is reflecting upon Petunia's apparent lack of self-confidence. He suggests that constructive criticism may be more suitable as Petunia may struggle handling overly negative feedback. Lawrence continues to explain exactly how he would structure the feedback in this particular case:

Lawrence (on Petunia) "I think you need to try and encourage them, especially even on draft work pointing out something that's good, for instance. It's all about I think in that case managing their confidence as best you can. I will try and encourage her and point out certain aspects ... point out where she's going right before obviously pointing out where she's going wrong because from the looks of it she's a fairly average student so I don't think she's a really high achiever. So I'd frame it in terms of encouragement again."

I think it is important here that I highlight the nature of Lawrence's position. It appears to me that he is a supportive and understanding lecturer. This is evidenced by his desire to offer encouragement and sensitivity to Petunia's low self-confidence. However, that is not to say that he is overly supportive to the degree of pandering to the student's needs. What Lawrence appears to be operating here is

an element of sympathy to Petunia's apparent low level of self-confidence, identifying that if he was to provide greatly negative feedback, subsequent assessment performance could have deteriorated. In a sense the feedback here is being tailored to the individual student's needs in order to increase confidence for future assessment performance. Terry, a senior lecturer with twenty four years' experience seems to corroborate Lawrence's approach with regards to confidence building:

Terry (on low confidence students in general) "It's a confidence building thing, "you've got that ability, what you need to do is actually recognise it, you need to take the initial small step, it's not kind of the big giant leaps", and making them realise that it will come through effort and through a process."

In practice Terry highlights the student's previous achievements and things they have done well in order to improve their confidence level:

Terry (on low confidence students in general) "I always say that they're underrating their own capacities and their own abilities. They've actually passed the test of being able to get to university and they've demonstrated that, and really what they need is that self confidence in them, so then to look at their work and say things that they actually did well and to highlight those rather than always focus on the negative things."

Some of the lecturers in this study indicated that they had encountered challenges in relation to getting students to ask questions or indeed answer lecturer directed questions during teaching sessions. Terry believes that this relates to the student's

overall development and addresses the issue of students not engaging in such an activity:

Terry (in general) "I never believe anyone's stupid by asking a question. How the bloody hell do you learn? And I would counsel that student, I'd say "look, quite the reverse, I'd think more of you by asking that question, even if to you it may feel a bit of a dumb question, sometimes a dumb question's an important one, because then it actually leads to an ability to understand other things that you're actually doing in that lecture or indeed that course."

I think this is an important point here to make as the majority of this study reflects feedback on assessment whereas what Terry is discussing here relates to feedback which is given in teachable moments. Getting students to question things they are reading or hearing is part of developing as an undergraduate. Terry's strategy of encouraging those who are less confident to engage in such an activity is I think designed to foster dialogue between the lecturer and the student which will hopefully not only enhance knowledge and understanding but also the student's self-confidence. It appears therefore that the lecturer can enhance a student's self-confidence in situations which are not just within the confines of assessment episodes.

The final sub-theme within this theme referred to achievement level. In study two, (chapter four) I discussed how the students appeared to enter into assessment episodes with a level of grade achievement expectation. I argued that it was this level which at times ultimately affected their decisions relating to what constituted good or poor work. The videos shown to the lecturers clearly articulated this and in the main 'Keith's' experience highlighted this to the lecturers the most. It was apparent to the lecturers that managing a student's reaction to receiving a grade which fell below their level of achievement expectation was very important. Kerry reflected upon her previous experiences of dealing with such situations:

Kerry (on students similar to Keith) "I've had students in the past who have been very disappointed with their mark and when they've come to see me I said look, you've got this mark, I know you're very disappointed with it but you have to look at the bigger picture, this is one assessment in the three year period."

Kerry's approach reflects one which endeavours to soften the blow by attempting to get the student to not see one assessment set-back as the end of their aspirations. Rather, Kerry tries to get them to see that many assessment scores combine to make up their final classification and therefore one poor mark will not significantly affect their performance potential. However within the lecturers I interviewed Kerry's approach seemed to be in the minority. Philip, Stephen and Ivor all take a rather pragmatic approach to giving their feedback which reflects a desire to tell students what they have done wrong:

Philip (in general) "Whenever the difficult things have to be said, then you have to say them. So you have to establish trust, that's important."

Stephen (in general) "I'm quite critical in my feedback. So sometimes students say "you're not saying much positive there", but what I do is I try to pick out everything that they need to work on."

Ivor (in general) "I'm coming over all sentimental about these students but they are adults as well and they are getting a qualification that's meant to be worth something so it's that balance really isn't it."

In a sense I think all three of these lecturers are trying to get the student's to see that they will make mistakes and that if they address the feedback they are being given then this will serve them well the next time. One could argue that this feedback is perhaps rather impersonal and not sensitive to the individual which is reflected within the feedback that Kerry gives for example. However one could also argue that as Ivor points out the students are trying to gain a qualification that is worth something and therefore the lecturer cannot do it for them. It seems therefore that within this cohort of lecturers some appear to be individually sensitive to the student's dispositional presentation and others administer their feedback in an objective manner.

6.2.3 Problems with feedback

Within this study the lecturers talked frequently about giving students feedback. In these utterances I felt a sense at times that feedback was perceived both conceptually and practically as problematic for the lecturers. The problems with feedback theme therefore encompasses the lecturers' experiences of giving feedback to students alongside their perceptions relating to how and why this feedback giving process can at times make it difficult and challenging for them. A number of sub themes were apparent within this theme which provides insight into the exact problems that the lecturers experienced. The first sub theme relates to justification. In this sub theme the lecturers discussed their perception that at times they are writing feedback in order to provide justification for the mark they were awarding. Connie discussing Keith's lower than expected grade suggested that in this situation her feedback would reflect upon justifying why she was awarding this grade:

Connie (on Keith) "I personally would write how he could improve the grade generally but if he's scoring higher in all his other subjects, perhaps more of a justification of why he got that mark for that particular piece of work would be more useful in that case. If it was so different from the grades

that the student would typically get I would focus on justifying the grade for that particular piece of work.”

In a sense, Connie’s approach suggests to me that if she is aware of the student’s previous performance and the student suddenly achieves lower, then her feedback messages change to reflect more of a justification rather than how the student could improve. In contrast, Philip’s account relating to his feedback process reflects a more pragmatic approach to giving feedback. Philip explains that he is almost justifying the fact he has read the work rather than why he has given the mark:

Philip (in general) “I don't know but I wouldn't want to have to justify every single comment I make on an assessment sheet or sorry, a feedback sheet on a piece of assessment. If you think at the end of the year I am module coordinator for three courses, one of which has 80 in it, the other one has 40 and the other one in this year was 40. Sometimes when I'm writing feedback I'm simply writing feedback because I'm expected to write feedback and sometimes a pro forma would work and I'm writing 200 words, I've written the same 200 words on 60 scripts or whatever, I think the idea that the feedback sheet is always going to contain the logos, the word of God that's going to get you through your course is a difficult concept because sometimes you're really just writing feedback to fill feedback, if I'm being honest.”

Philip’s reflection, whilst honest, perhaps reflects an approach to giving feedback which is not very tailored and specific towards the content of the work being marked. I asked Philip to clarify this and he replied:

Researcher “Do you administer feedback in this way because you feel pressurised to do so?”

Philip (in general) "It's the expectation that I think the students have for me as a tutor to give them."

The concept of justification seems to sit at odds with what many of the lecturers interviewed in this study have reported. It appears that in Connie and Philip's cases that pressure and a need to almost justify why the student may have achieved lower than expected are dominating their cognition. It also seems prudent to highlight that Philip's large student numbers and the students' own expectations that feedback is provided to them appear to be promoting arguably feedback which could be construed as 'one size fits all'. Again this is less than congruent with what other lecturers have reported in this study.

The lecturers also discussed that feedback could at times appear to be ineffective. Ivor acknowledged that within the university used in this study the vast majority of lecturers were very diligent about their marking and feedback. However, he reflected a major concern relating to its impact upon students, indicating that the feedback could be construed as ineffective especially if students did not engage with it by picking up the work or meeting with the lecturer to discuss it:

Ivor (in general) "Most tutors here write quite a lot and take their marking quite seriously and make numerous comments but they probably only actually get to deliver those properly to a fraction of the students, and so you've got assignments sitting around in rooms. Even if you did it electronically or emailed students there is no guarantee they'd pick it up."

The categories within chapter five of this thesis offer potential explanations why students may not engage with the feedback. What is apparent to me based upon what many of the lecturers have explained in the interviews is that it is unlikely that lecturers would perhaps think in these terms rather they see students as homogenous rather than as individuals with predispositions. Lawrence's thoughts in

relation to Jill's experience reveal that he feels that regardless of the feedback being provided, students similar to Jill fail to engage or even seek out the feedback and therefore render it ineffective if the purpose was to improve the students' performance:

Lawrence (on Jill) "I do think she fits into a theme of student that we can only help to a great extent because irrespective of what quality of feedback we give to them, I don't think she's the type of student that's going to seek much feedback or make much of an effort to implement it subsequently."

I think that Lawrence's thoughts are perhaps reflective of the growing frustration that some academics seem to be increasingly voicing. The literature frequently attests to the fact that many students, despite the feedback being made available, do not engage with this. I asked Lawrence to provide a potential explanation for this apparent lack of willingness by some students to engage with the feedback:

Lawrence (on students like Jill) "I think as tutors, the extent to which we can push a student like this particular one is limited because I think irrespective of what we say or do, they're at that stage of their lives, it's not inherent in their personality or the character, it's just a product of being the age they are where they just float along and future isn't this huge thing on the horizon to a great deal, it's just enjoying the present. So I actually think, and it may be something of a depressing conclusion, that there is a limit to what we can do for students like this."

Lawrence's thoughts relating to personality and character may well be a potential reason why some students don't engage with the feedback. However, the categories

of description in chapter five of this thesis have indicated that other constructs are interacting to influence the student's feedback utilisation.

The question relating to the transferability of feedback was voiced by the lecturers. Not transferable was a sub-theme in this theme. This sub-theme relates to the lecturers' perception that the feedback they give on one assessment is not transferable to another differing assessment. Stephen reported that he felt that as the student progresses into their second and third year the feedback he writes become very specific to that assessment and therefore it is not transferable to another different assessment:

Stephen (in general) "They have examinations, they have reflective, there's all sorts of different assessments they do, so feedback on one assessment, you may not have an assessment of the same type for another year, by which time you've probably forgotten what feedback you've got. When it gets to level two, level three it does become more specific to a particular assignment, and then sometimes you give feedback and you know they'll never do another assignment like that again. Well it's obviously to explain where they've gone wrong and why they've got the mark they've got, but in terms of their development, I think as you go through it becomes less useful because you comment on very specific pieces of work. So once they've got the ability to write an essay or a report, once they've got the ability to generate their argument and to support their argument, then once it becomes very specific, the feedback becomes I think less useful. Well there's a bit they can take away from it, but not a lot."

Stephen's point on the surface does seem plausible and at times reliant upon the student perhaps being able to make links themselves between the feedback they

are getting on one assessment to another. However, what Stephen is suggesting here is that he feels that his feedback only really relates to the current assessment and this is particularly the case if the student is not going to do that piece of work again. He does concede that it could be marginally helpful but as I have previously mentioned it appears that it's up to the student to make the links. This does seem a troublesome stance if we are to consider that the feedback given appears to in essence be justifying why the mark was given and is not written with developmental goals in mind. It therefore suggests that such an approach disagrees with the approach of Sadler (1989) for example whereby students are inducted into the 'guild of knowledge' with the feedback process designed in such a way as to serve the student well developmentally. The concept of summative feedback fostering a feed-forward function appears therefore to not be operating within this approach. In a similar vein Philip concurs with Stephen's sentiment relating to feedback only curing the specific ills of the current piece of work. However Philip goes a little further than Stephen by suggesting that students can learn from it or as he also suggest deduce from it:

Philip (in general) "Feedback can only cure the specific ills of that piece of work. You can learn general lessons from that feedback which will feed into other pieces of work but feedback is fundamentally feedback I think on that piece of work from which general lessons can be learned or deduced."

The inference that students need to deduce from the feedback perhaps reveals a further issue relating to a perception that feedback is not transferable. One could argue that the student's success in being able to deduce from the feedback is wholly dependent upon their ability to firstly be able to understand the feedback language and secondly identify how this feedback relates to their other assessments in the future. Many students are not able to do this and thus one could argue that the feedback becomes ineffective and non-transferable due to the student's emotional

reactions relating to being able to successfully execute this. This seems very apparent within the categories of description I put forward in chapter five

It is perhaps also worth considering here Stephen's remarks relating to his perceptions of what students want from feedback, which was another sub-theme within this theme. Stephen argues that he perceives that students do not want to be over-whelmed by the feedback and thus he does not correct everything. Rather he maintains a balance in terms of quantity:

Stephen (in general) "Some people think you should mark everything and you should criticise everything, but I don't think it's useful. If you give too much feedback then they don't know what to focus on. They just end up in a mess. They think everything's wrong. If you correct every single sentence, every single spelling mistake, every single minor error on everything throughout the whole script, not only will it take you 10 times longer but the student will be overwhelmed."

Stephen's remarks relating to what students want could explain a further reason why the feedback they receive causes a problem. If we consider the points I have made earlier in this theme in conjunction with a student faced with a large amount of feedback it seems plausible to concede that the student may feel overwhelmed and unable to process or delineate what is needed to be done in order to improve their performance next time. However if one is to consider the findings presented within chapter five of this thesis the categories of description seem to suggest that for some student's their emotional reaction and lack of ability to self-regulate these emotions affects their ability to utilise the feedback received. This is particularly the case for the needy student. It does therefore appear that the lecturers within this study and their comments in relation to this theme are not arguing that feedback itself is a problem; rather they are suggesting that giving feedback and the student's subsequent utilisation are directly related and therefore at times this causes

feedback to be perceived as a problematic area. That is they appear to be suggesting that for some students who have a low ability to be able to process and make direct linkages between the feedback, received on multiple assessments, are the students who cause feedback to be viewed as problematic. I think Connie's utterance within the sub-theme of Improvement desired perhaps reflect the sentiment of the lecturers interviewed within this study:

Connie (in general) "It's difficult because in your feedback you want to be directive and you want to give them feedback. I try personally rather than telling them what they've done wrong or right with that assignment, thinking about how they could move forward and how that maps onto other assessments. I would always focus on improvements that could be made, whatever that level would be, because we don't want to be ever giving feedback that says you can't improve because of course they can across the board. I think too often people write feedback or staff write feedback to justify the mark they've given and I don't know whether that's for the head of department or for the external examiner, I don't know why, but the sole purpose for feedback in my mind is to help the student to develop their potential."

Connie's view of the purpose of her feedback does reflect the overwhelming majority of lecturers whom I interviewed during this study. The lecturers did have the student's best interest at heart and were writing their feedback to try and get the students to improve. However it does appear that their perceptions of feedback are somewhat negatively affected by their experiences of certain types of student (those who do not engage with it in the main). It is due to this fact that I would argue that perhaps this is why at times their utterances reflect a negative tone and may come across as not wanting to improve every student. One must remember

here that the lecturers themselves have a responsibility to provide feedback but one must also be mindful that at certain times there is an element of student responsibility relating to engage with such feedback and attempting to utilise it. It appears from what the lecturers are suggesting here in relation to Jill's experience for example, that whilst they understand her feelings relating to not performing as well as she would like, they feel she did need to engage in the feedback process more so in order to improve in future assessments.

6.2.4 Feedback mechanisms

In study two, (chapter four) the students discussed their pragmatic utilisation of feedback messages which I categorised as feedback cognitions. The students also talked about how they receive their feedback through 'draft work' and 'grades'. The lecturers in this study were therefore shown, via the videos, students talking about their use of the feedback received. With this in mind I have categorised the lecturers' responses to these student comments as feedback mechanisms. I have grouped the lecturer's utterances which relate directly to their perceptions of feedback related interactions they have with students which essentially relate to their opportunity to convey feedback messages through varying mechanisms. The sub-themes within this theme perhaps reveal the mechanisms themselves more so; 1-2-1 meetings, draft work and grades. In essence this theme reflects the lecturers' perceptions relating to how these feedback mechanisms operate in practice and how their pragmatic use of such mechanisms occurs.

In study two the students discussed their experiences of 1-2-1 meetings with their lecturers. It was apparent that the students had mixed feelings relating to the effectiveness of such interactions. The lecturers' utterances however reflected a more positive perception and as such I conclude they are very much in favour of such interactions. Lawrence reflected upon his recent adoption of 1-2-1 meetings for feedback with his students explaining that:

Lawrence (in general) "For the last year I've been giving one to one which great, because you can have a conversation again and anything you say that needs clarification you can give it then but verbally I would always say, refer to mistakes as just a couple of minor issues, just an area you need to look at, just frame it in a very ... not trying to downplay it as such but not putting it in such a way as the student construes it as criticism or a critique of their ability."

Lawrence's approach suggests that 1-2-1 meetings allow him to confirm firstly that the important elements of the feedback he has written have been highlighted but also that he is able to almost instigate a personal element which enables him to ensure the student interprets the feedback in a more positive manner, even if it is written in perhaps a negatively phrased manner. Sandra's thoughts on this seem to concur with Lawrence's as she identifies the opportunity to clarify the feedback and make sure the student has understood its message, attempting to avoid any misconceptions they may have:

Researcher (in relation to 1-2-1 feedback) "Do you find that the students respond to that feedback quite well?"

Sandra "I think they respond better if you sit them down and you talk about it. I will write little notes on things, but I have the need to explain it to them because past experience, they'll look at a little note you've written and still not understood it, so I can go on a bit and make sure they've understood it."

Ivor explained that he prefers to use 1-2-1 meetings with his students even if what he is saying in the meetings becomes repetitive:

Ivor (in general) "it's kind of better to have the piece of work and talk to the student, even if it gets hideously repetitive with one student after another."

It appears that clarification and lessening the potential for misconceptions on the part of the student is an approach that many of the lecturers identified as the primary aim of 1-2-1 meetings. However other lectures also allude to the opportunity to engage emotionally with the students. Kerry talked about feeling she could engage emotionally with the student to make sure that her feedback messages were not only understood and processed but also that she could represent the comments in a more personal and human manner rather than just words on a piece of paper:

Kerry (in general) "sometimes I'll underline things or put them in capital letters but if they don't access the feedback they won't see it, but I think a personal conversation between a tutor and a student will do much, much more than a piece of paper that's got no emotion in it or no ... like she may not be able to feel my sense of encouragement from a piece of paper so I do prefer to just speak to them and say look, I think you've done really well."

Kerry's approach is one which seems to be very student focused and empathetic. In one respect she is writing feedback comments on student scripts but in another she is also delivering these messages in a personal manner and as such this affords her the opportunity to explain the comments in an emotionally sensitive manner. This approach could mitigate what Lawrence has identified as a potential issue with written comments alone:

Lawrence (in general) "I've been told that my written feedback comes across as being a bit critical at times. On the

one to one, I'm definitely a much softer presence and always, always, always try and keep it as light-hearted as possible."

In a reflective and honest assessment Lawrence identifies his potential flaws and therefore by utilising 1-2-1 meetings he attempts to overcome his rather critical feedback comments. He alludes to the fact he keeps meetings rather light hearted and delivers the feedback in a softer manner. The approaches identified here perhaps may attempt to overcome some of the issues the students identified in the primary study where they talked about feeling that the lecturer was too busy and would perceive the student coming to see them as wasting their time. It appears from what the lecturers are saying here that they actively encourage 1-2-1 interactions with the student's and view them as helpful to the student.

Keith's experience in video three instigated a multitude of responses relating to draft work as a viable means to provide feedback to students. Therefore Draft Work was a sub-theme in this theme. Many of the lecturers firstly chose to discuss the purpose of draft work itself rather than reflect upon Keith's experience. Connie discussed the positive and negatives of draft work:

Connie (in general) "If it's to give some direction on how they can then go on and improve and reflect on the work themselves then it's a good idea. I think if it's used and then boiled down to a checklist of what they can do to get a particular grade then not so much."

Connie's position seems to reflect not so much upon her personal view of the usability of draft work but rather it seems to suggest that it is how the student interprets and utilises the feedback from a draft piece of work which affects its success in prompting improvement. Keith's video reflected a view more akin to what Connie referred to as a 'checklist'. In a sense Keith was arguing he had made corrections which the lecturer had suggested and therefore he should have seen

improvement. However, Connie argues that perhaps the feedback on draft work should not be seen as a direct signpost towards what the student needs to do in order to improve their grade. The draft work is there to guide the student and provoke a more reflective appraisal of their current level of performance. To address this Terry suggests that the student should almost submit their writing journey which demonstrates how they have changed their writing based upon the draft feedback they have received:

Terry (in general) "One of the things I would expect though is, if the students are actually sending me drafts, I would expect them when they submit the final piece of work to have those drafts pinned to it, so I can see the progress that they've actually made."

Terry's approach seems to reflect that draft work is a developmental stage in the writing process for an assessment task. By getting the students to show how they have progressed from the original draft feedback this could have two outcomes. Firstly, the student is demonstrating their level of understanding of the original feedback received and thus how they have addressed such feedback. Secondly, the student is then able to reflect upon how they have progressed and can clearly see this in their final piece of work prior to submission. In essence, developmentally, such an approach may foster assessment strategies within the student which may allow them in future to become more critical and reflective about their own work. In a sense such changes may reflect the ideas of Sadler (1989) whereby the student is engaged in understanding what constitutes 'good' work far more readily at an individual level rather than as Connie alludes to a 'checklist' of what they need to do born out of prescriptive feedback received from their lecturer.

The lecturers did however make some utterances which reflected their observed problems with draft work. As previously alluded to in this theme, Connie goes further in explaining her issue with how draft work promotes at times instrumental behaviour in some student's:

Connie (in general) "She's told me these three things so if I change them then it will be excellent, rather than them going on and doing other things that they need to do on a piece of work."

Lawrence commenting upon Keith's video seems to corroborate Connie's experience of instrumental students:

Lawrence (on Keith) "He seemed very dependent on the responses to draft work that he'd got."

The lecturers clearly offer reasons why for some students draft work could be an issue. Attempting to take this argument further and in an effort to perhaps almost provide an explanation for why the situation between Keith and his lecturer occurred in the first place, Philip presented this contention:

Philip (on Keith) "To be honest, I don't think students really recognise the time frames that academics work within. So I might read Keith's first draft, which is 1,000 words and it'll take me, what, four minutes and I'll be looking for the key concepts and I'll just scan it because I can read 1,000 words in next to no time. Keith thinks that I must spend as much time as he did reading it and suggesting it and annotating it and saying, then you get the second draft. When I read the second draft, the circumstances in which I read this are entirely changed because I might have been reading a different set of things the night before or might have something in my head, I might be listening to Radio 4 and something has popped up on the way in and I'm looking for different key concepts, but of course he thinks I've had

another half an hour read through it but then he doesn't see that he's one of 80 students and if I do that for all these students, that means I would have to work 120 hours a week in assessment. So the understanding of what drafting is and what drafting is about and the headspace within which academics work isn't understood by the students."

Philip's explanation is rather complex and perhaps reflects a certain degree of cynicism towards Keith's experiences. That said I think it is worth deconstructing Philip's contention as it reveals an insight into the cognitions of a lecturer during the draft work feedback construction process. It appears here that Philip's perception of the purpose of draft work is different to that of Keith's and for the large part other lecturers in this study (Connie and Lawrence for example). Philip's apparent difference in perception relates to the fact that he does not have enough time in which to read extensively draft work. Further he feels that when looking at the draft a second time he may well be psychologically in a different head space and therefore the criteria by which he marks the work may differ. What Philip is alluding to here is a very clear phenomenon of human difference where marking is concerned. The subjective nature of academic marking is conceivably responsible for such a viewpoint to exist.

Finally in relation to draft work the lecturers identified the issue of the language used as an important consideration for them in their practice. Kerry with some trepidation explained that the language she uses when giving draft work feedback can present potential problems:

Kerry (in general) "I think giving feedback on draft work can be quite difficult because if you say it's quite a good piece of work, you're frightened that the student then expects a very good mark. I'm very frightened that if I say it's a good piece of work they expect a good mark and that may not necessarily happen because you don't actually know what

they're going to do with that piece of work, once you've given them the feedback and they've taken it out of your office."

The cautious tone in which Kerry explains the issue surrounding language used perhaps reflects a changing dynamic in the lecturer- student relationship. In one respect she wants to give the student useable feedback but she alludes to the fact that she is frightened not to use language which might reveal potential success indications to the student, for fear of them developing an expectation. Arguably this could particularly be the case if she is giving feedback on draft work which is for example incomplete. Connie gives examples where students seem to associate a potential grade with certain words used by the lecturer:

Connie (in general) "I'm always very wary of not using adjectives like good because in a student's mind good means a B when you might mean actually this is good, passable good, I definitely avoid questions or statements like, you need to read these two journal articles because like I say, then they'll think they do and they're going to get an excellent. I suppose that's more from a protective mechanism, because the words that we use are so tied up with grades, like I say you don't want to be saying to a student, this is an excellent start because then they think, 70 is the minimum I'm going to get, I've seen situations where that's come back to bite lecturers when they've said things like that on draft work and then it's been a problem later down the line when the student doesn't get the mark they expect. I avoid it at all costs if I can."

It does appear that some of the lecturers are fearful of the potential for students developing performance expectations based upon the language they use in the draft work feedback. The feedback in practice that they are giving therefore appears to be

grade neutral. That is to say the lecturer actively seeks to give feedback which does not disclose potential grade outcomes to the student. Such utterances by the lecturers lead me to question not only the purpose of feedback on draft work but also the degree to which such feedback can assist the student's future performance. It seems that in order to progress the student does need to understand their current level of performance in order to attempt to bridge the gap to their desired level of performance. If the lecturer's feedback is grade neutral then how are they to ascertain this level? One explanation for such a difference between lecturers and students with regards to this area could potentially be seen within the issue of grades. As in chapter four, where I discussed the issue of grades from the student perspective, here in this theme of feedback mechanisms the lecturers discussed their perceptions of the role of 'grades'.

Ivor explained that the students he teaches are very grade focused and that he would like them to be more concerned with the feedback he is giving:

Ivor (in general) "I just think if somehow we could make feedback seem more important to students, because they are pretty obsessed with their marks but ideally if we could actually have timetabled hours."

Sandra also explained her frustration at the apparent focus students have upon their grade outcome:

Sandra (in general) "I get frustrated by the 'I only need to know the mark' culture."

Both Ivor and Sandra's comments reflect all of the lecturers interviewed in this study. They all agreed that students presently are very grade focused. What Ivor suggests could be a potential strategy to overcome this issue but the nature of how this is put into practice would determine its success. When discussing this Ivor added:

Ivor (in general) "Because as you know, a lot of students just don't bother to come and get feedback if you offer that, so how you can do that meaningfully with large groups and I don't know the size of those groups but some of our third year classes next year and second year have got 50 students in them."

Ivor is clear that a barrier to instigating 1-2-1 feedback discussion with students is the number of students with whom they are faced with. Practically therefore it appears that he feels this may be too difficult to achieve. However what Ivor is also suggesting is that making feedback more important to students is a goal which he and other lecturers wish to achieve. Ivor's suggestion that a lot of students just don't come and collect feedback seems a little simplistic. For example the categories of description in chapter five suggest that for some students there are more complex reasons which explain why they may not engage in the feedback process. For example the broken relationship student does not engage in the process due to events that occurred with their lecturer in the past. In the case of the needy student, regardless of grade outcome, they fail to utilise the feedback due to overriding emotional reactions preventing such engagement. It is therefore perhaps a more complex set of interactions between constructs identified within this thesis which explain why some students do not come and get feedback.

The final area for consideration within the grades sub-theme relates to the grades and comments from the lecturer matching. In the main the lecturers' responses were in relation to Keith's experience. Keith had received a comment of "I can see a lot of effort went into this" accompanied by a mark of 48. Keith was disappointed by this as he felt the comments did not match the grade awarded. The lecturers gave their opinions on this matter. Ivor agreeing with the student perspective, identified by Keith, explained why it is important for the comments to match the grade awarded:

Ivor (on Keith's experience) "I think it is very important that our comments match our marks though because you get some people who write really quite positive comments and then put 40 which is ridiculous. You've got to have some match between the comment you make on your feedback and the marks otherwise it's nonsense really."

Attempting to provide some balance to this argument Marcus explained that he could identify with what the lecturer was trying to achieve by this comment but felt he would not use this phrase himself as the sentiment did not entirely match with the grade awarded.

Marcus (on Keith's Lecturer) "I'm not saying there is nothing wrong with it, I can see what they're trying to achieve by using that but I personally wouldn't use that, no I couldn't because I think it just adds fuel, it's potentially ... yes, it's like you're saying okay I see you've worked hard here but I'm not going to give you a high mark, that's what it can be misconstrued as."

In a sense what Marcus is arguing here is that the mismatch between the comments and the grade awarded have caused this issue to present itself. In a practical sense though Marcus explains that perhaps the lecturer found it hard to give the feedback and was trying to write something positive as he was aware that Keith was usually a higher achiever. Marcus explains the difficulty with giving feedback in this situation:

Marcus (on giving feedback to Keith) "it's difficult, it's a challenging one, how do you cushion the blow as it is, because these people, people that get these marks, generally they're high achievers, they're not used to failing, it's a new area for them to be in and how to deal with that."

Keith's previous performances and the lecturers' desire to soften the blow seem to be at the heart of this situation. The difficulty with softening the blow that Marcus alludes to is perhaps due to the fact that the lecturer in this situation was aware of Keith's previous performance. The categories of description in chapter five of this thesis however reveal more adaptive behaviours to negative feedback than perhaps the lecturers in this study appreciate. For example the high achiever student, although disappointed and frustrated by performing poorly, actually responds in a positive manner by increasing effort and motivation to succeed next time. Further they interpret the negative feedback as enabling them to improve next time thus reflecting high level of self-regulation.

Some would argue that knowledge of the student's previous performance may have contributed to the problems between Keith and his lecturer. Not knowing the previous grades perhaps would have meant that the comment would not have been written in the first place. Some of the lecturers suggested that they do not take into consideration a student's previous performance levels when marking their work:

Stephen (in general) "I know some tutors do look at their marks to see whether they're a consistent A or a consistent B or whatever, but I prefer to mark a student just on that piece of work without knowing their previous history. I might never have marked any of his work, and I do prefer to mark blind actually. I don't like to know my students' histories."

Kerry (in general) "It doesn't impact the feedback that I give the student on that particular piece of work because I give feedback based on that piece of work."

Stephen and Kerry both explain that they mark the work based upon its merits. It seems that this approach would perhaps avoid issues relating to the lecturer consciously attempting to soften the blow if the work being marked fell below the

student's previous performance level. However, one issue that may present itself is the notion of the student being able to deal with the disappointment of such a drop in grade performance. In this regard it seems plausible that the lecturer involved in Keith's situation was trying to deal with the potential for disappointment. What is apparent though from this situation is that the feedback after that comment was ignored by Keith and thus perhaps dealing with the student in a 1-2-1 situation and explaining why the comment was made may well have mitigated Keith's subsequent reaction.

6.2.5 Understanding students

The lecturers understanding students theme was a moderately large theme within this study. The data from the interviews with the lecturers really conveyed the importance they attached to engaging with the students in order to understand their experiences. I felt the lecturer's utterances were significant in this regard and therefore a theme which encompassed their attempts to understand the student's experiences directly warranted highlighting. Within this theme sub-themes such as relationships with students, empathy and emotions all featured.

In the first sub-theme the lecturers explained the positives of relationships with students. Sandra explained how when she teaches masters students, she sees them frequently and due to the low numbers of students means that she knows them all:

Sandra (on masters students) "With the Masters students there are 20 odd of them and I know them all very, very well, because there's time for that building of that relationship."

It is important to note here that Sandra is talking about Masters teaching which is inherently different to her undergraduate teaching. What Sandra is describing here is that because of small numbers relationships are easier to build. Earlier in this chapter in the student autonomy theme under the sub-theme school versus university Ivor suggested that it was difficult at university to develop relationships as

lecturers did not see students frequently enough and numbers were high. It therefore appears that due to the smaller numbers and increased frequency of interaction Sandra agrees relationships are easier to form. However Connie comments that she has managed to achieve relationships with students in her undergraduate teaching:

Connie (in general) "As soon as you've broken down that barrier of it being you at the front and them in the massive room, then it seems to work then it's those students that then would come to you in the year after and the year after, it seems to be the same faces popping up over and over."

Connie indicates that only a proportion of students regularly come to see her. This suggests that for some students the barriers are not surmountable and thus the relationships she builds with students are in some part determined by their ability to overcome the barrier. In this regard in the second sub-theme barriers to relationships, Connie indicates the quandary of the situation when students do not come to see her:

Connie (in general) "it's difficult to build up a relationship with someone who won't approach you in the first place, so you're kind of stuck in a conundrum before you even start."

Ivor offers an explanation as to why the relationships may not currently form between students and lecturers:

Ivor (in general) "On the one hand we're going on about knowing the students, which is really important, but on the other hand, all this stuff about research informed teaching and they have one hour lectures just delivered by experts, presumably would mean even more fragmentation for

students, they'd have lectures which have no interaction with the student, I'm not sure."

Ivor's utterances seem to suggest that the university wants the lecturers to know their students but he argues that the set-up of the teaching; with short teaching slots and many different lecturers teaching the same cohort make it difficult to develop the relationships.

Within this theme the lecturers responded to some of the students who appeared rather upset on the videos. In particular the student Petunia explained in a rather emotional way her experiences. I labelled utterances within this theme where lecturers responded in an understanding manner as empathy. This sub-theme highlighted how some of the lecturers reflected upon their own practice, experiences when they were students and the student's experiences. Kerry in particular empathised with Jill's experience of fear of failure when beginning university:

Kerry (on Petunia) "Particularly for level C students [first year], I completely empathise with her fear of attending university because I remember that fear and I remember that fear of failing because it's a massive jump from going to secondary school to going to university, everything is different. So I feel sad for her that she's ... you can see it in her demeanour, she's very nervous and very, very under-confident. "

Kerry's empathy appears to be having an effect upon her own feedback practices as she is far more aware of the student's situation and indicates how the transition and pressure impacts upon them. In a sense Kerry is appearing to be sensitive to Petunia's demeanour and when I asked her how she would deal with this type of student she replied:

Researcher "How would you deal with this type of student?"

Kerry (on Petunia) "if you were her personal tutor, I certainly would bring her in to speak to me because I think she's actually got the stage where she's so under-confident that I don't think she thinks she can use the feedback."

Both Ivor and Marcus echo Kerry's empathetic sentiments and reflect that a greater engagement with the students who present themselves like Petunia is needed:

Ivor (in general) "I just think it makes you realise ... I've maybe been around too long, we're not really aware of the nerves some students feel and the panic they feel, not just young students, also mature students, perhaps even more so how important it is when they get their first piece of paper and how made up they are with the marks."

Marcus (on Petunia) "It would be easy sometimes for the classic academic maybe to make the mistake of totally and utterly destroying her confidence even further rather than picking up on what needs to be required here. So there is an issue in terms of that, so it's important that she's sees the right tutor, that's really important."

It does appear here that the lecturers are very empathetic towards students who are low in confidence, nervous and generally struggling with the transition from school to university. The categories of description within chapter five perhaps go some way to articulate the concerns that the lecturers are voicing here in this study. For example the needy, emotionally charged and low achiever students all highlight the emotionally fragile states which students experience in particular when they receive poor grades. However, one could argue that seeing the student's reactions

and demeanour first hand are vital in order for the lecturer to deal with such instances. In this sense the final sub-theme was labelled emotions. This sub-theme incorporated utterances where lecturers made reference to students' emotional reactions to feedback and how they deal with such reactions. Lawrence explained that his approach was to attempt to manage students' emotional reactions by trying to talk to them as a peer rather than as a lecturer to student:

Lawrence (in general) "I'm always careful to be sensitive to the way they're going to react and trying to manage that. Just keep it like a conversation between peers, do not patronise them, condescend them, and try and manage how they feel when they're leaving the room."

As Lawrence explained earlier in this chapter his recent approach to giving feedback has been to conduct 1-2-1 meetings, where the students come to get their feedback. In this regard his approach appears to allow him to attempt to manage the student's emotional reaction. He is able to read what they are feeling as he is able to directly see their initial thoughts and feelings in the room at the time of receiving the feedback. Kerry gave an example where she has seen a student's emotional reaction and how she subsequently dealt with it:

Kerry (in general) "If a student is in distress it's difficult as a tutor because you have to sit there and think, okay right, how am I going to deal with this. I guess you take a softer approach if the student is in tears, obviously you have to be gentler and spend a longer period of time with the student, but at the same time you still have to try and tell them how they can improve and where they went wrong. So when they come in to you and they're in tears, I think it's in tears about a lot of things, not just the mark but obviously you try and give them support and advice but ultimately you are there to try and help them improve the next time. You try and help

them deal with the personal issues but a lot of the time those issues are completely out of your control. So you have to still deal with the assessment that's sitting in front of you."

Kerry's experience indicates a real engagement with trying to firstly understand the student's emotional reaction and secondly how to manage it so the student can take on board the feedback. I think it is particularly enlightening that Kerry identifies that many times the emotional reaction is not always about the assessment and that personal issues may be getting in the way too. In the primary study with the students some of them discussed how the mark they got affects their emotional reaction but no students indicated that personal issues affected their reaction. In fact quite the opposite, some students explained how the emotional reaction to their poor grades transcended into their personal lives and subsequently affected those elements. It seems therefore that based upon Kerry's thoughts the lecturers may be trying to interpret the emotional reactions to grades and feedback as perhaps being more complicated and layered than in fact the students are considering them. That said operationally Kerry does allude to the fact that despite the students' emotional reaction and her attempts to manage such reactions she still is duty bound to deal with the assessment in front of her. Kerry indicates that the feedback is the same regardless but perhaps is just administered in a more emotionally sensitive manner.

Lawrence and Kerry both discussed how they deal with students' emotional reactions when they are giving them feedback. Dealing with these situations was enabled by physically seeing the students to give them the feedback. Stephen explained that he gave students their grades via the normal means, the student information portal:

Stephen (in general) "I had a mature student in a few weeks ago, and she said she was in tears for hours after giving her, her grade, because normally she was getting firsts and she

got a 2:2, and she was absolutely really, really upset, and I didn't realise, because you don't."

Stephen's experience really highlights the potential issues that can arise with regards to students' emotional reactions. Many of the students at this university received their grades via the internet student portal. As such, the student only has the mark to go on and then needs to come and see the lecturer for the feedback. The time delay could be large and thus as with Stephens's experience this student had a negative emotional reaction to the grade and he wasn't aware until much later. Stephen further explained how he feels this may affect the student's future performance:

Stephen (in general) "You mark the stuff, get it to the student, the student gets the feedback if they bother picking it up which frequently they don't. We never actually see what impact that has on the student and their thinking. It could have a disastrous consequence. It could make them want to give up completely, or it could make them want to try harder and succeed."

I think that Stephens's thoughts relating to never seeing the impact the feedback has upon the student is an important matter to consider. Within this sub-theme Lawrence and Kerry both articulated a desire to engage with students on a 1-2-1 basis in order to manage emotional reactions to feedback. What Stephen is referring to here appears to not consider 1-2-1 situations in order to present marks and feedback and perhaps this is why he was unaware of their emotional involvement. That said what this sub-theme does indicate is that the lecturers I interviewed were aware at least of the impact the students' assessment outcomes and subsequent feedback have upon them emotionally.

6.2.6 Student Autonomy

In the videos the actor students discussed issues relating to their experiences which frequently the lecturers identified as being related to student autonomy. That is to say the lecturers discussed the students' experiences and remarked that some of the experiences occurred due to issues relating to autonomy. As such this theme had four sub-themes which ranged from issues surrounding student responsibility, external commitments and time management to the differences between school and university.

The school versus university sub theme in the main related to the lecturers' perceptions of Paul's experience. Paul discussed how he struggled with the transition from school to university. The majority of the lecturers had an opinion in relation to this issue and many talked about direct experiences where they had encountered similar students to Paul. Philip reflected generally about students who were similar to Paul:

Philip (in general) "A lot of students that I see coming directly from school, [particular out of A level programmes, where there is kind of second or third or fourth chance to it right approach to drafting assessments, submitting assessments, redrafting assessments and the coursework element, and what that I think does is maybe two or three things. I can see how it might happen, where students do kind of get lost, that where once Miss Jones or Mr Jones would have said, Paul, how is it going, do you want to come into the homework club at dinnertime, or the sociology club or the sports club, because most secondary schools, good secondary schools like my daughter is going to next year have a tremendous infrastructure socially. When you come to university, it's easy to fall through the cracks because even in a small university

that I teach at, we don't have that kind of infrastructure because universities don't have those kinds of infrastructure."

Philip described the nature of school education within the UK and how its delivery is fundamentally different to that of the ways things operate at university. This description really highlights the issue that many lecturers encounter when faced with new undergraduates. For the students, adapting to the new environment is a challenge; equally it is a challenge for the lecturer to enable this transition to occur.

In related points both Ivor and Lawrence suggest that one major difference between school and university is the relationship that students have with their lecturers:

Ivor (in general) "I think the thing is, presumably at A levels, A levels and being in sixth forms, you have your teacher five hours a week, probably see them four days a week for odd lessons and you might have a class of 30 or so and you'd be with them, it is a different sort of environment, especially with our university now."

Lawrence (on Paul) "He can't expect to have the same relationship with his tutors at university as he has with teachers in school because it's a different set of expectations all together and when he goes into the world of work it will be a different set of expectations and means of communication again."

Both Ivor and Lawrence suggest that the student needs to adapt to the transition very quickly and identify that Paul really has struggled with this. The concept of expectation is apparent here and it does appear that Paul's expectations about university have perhaps never been realised and to a certain degree one could argue that he did not understand what was expected of him as a student at university. I

think this sub-theme does reveal the challenges that lecturers face in terms of transition and managing expectations.

The sub-theme labelled student responsibility revealed further the lecturers' perceptions relating to the need for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Lawrence had differing opinions in relation to two of the student's experiences. In the case of Keith, Lawrence responded in the following manner:

Lawrence (on Keith) "I feel sympathy insofar as he seems to have got mixed messages or construed the feedback as mixed messages but at the same time he annoyed me a little bit, to be quite honest. He seemed a bit needy and he seemed to be very inclined to blame his tutors again first and foremost, he seemed very dependent on the responses to draft work that he'd got. He's in his final years so understanding and interpreting questions and answering them correctly because he also implies that he's got feedback all the way up along, should be something he's able to do at this stage. So though the mixed messages would lead to a little bit of sympathy, he annoyed me to be quite honest, he really did because he's very disinclined to blame himself or to admit that the result or the grade was anything to do with him."

However for Jill, he responded in the following manner:

Lawrence (on Jill) "I'm also a little bit more sympathetic to her in the first case because she's actually quite honest and frank about it, she's not inclined to blame tutors."

It would appear that Lawrence felt that although Keith did experience a difficult situation he failed to take responsibility for the eventual low grade. Indeed

Lawrence appears especially emotive in relation to students blaming lecturers and not taking responsibility for the outcome themselves. Lawrence's position is more sympathetic to Jill's experience as she appears to take responsibility for her grade outcome and does not blame the tutor. I think this reaction is understandable and the defensive tone in which Lawrence protects in a sense his profession is laudable. That said it may well be the case that such a situation may not have occurred in the real world. I am extremely aware that providing the lecturers with such videos clips is somewhat artificial. Keith's original reaction after all, was not addressed directly to the lecturer who gave him the original feedback, as it was given during the interview with me. However what Lawrence's reactions to the student videos do reveal is that the lecturers feel that students taking responsibility for their grade outcomes are important. The needy and broken relationship students in chapter five both attribute their assessment failure to the lecturers which seems to confirm Lawrence's notion of this occurring with his students. Stephen succinctly describes what the lecturers generally expected of the students in terms of developing responsibility for their learning:

Stephen (on Keith) "They've developed bad habits basically and they've not been taught to think independently, to try themselves first, fail and then be helped. He's not really taking responsibility for himself, because there are other ways, office hours, so there are things, avenues that he can explore. So it is trying to throw it back to them about taking some ownership, you know this idea that just being in class they're going to understand something through osmosis or remotely from Moodle."

Time management for students was also referred to within this theme. Kerry articulated that she needs to constantly remind students about the need to make sure they complete their work in advance of hand-in dates so as to avoid leaving it to the last minute:

Kerry (in general) "Sometimes I feel like I'm speaking to a brick wall but I will continue as soon as they come in in the first year to say please don't leave it until the last minute, if you're not sure what you're doing come and speak to me, and I'll do it in the second year and I'll do it in the third year."

Philip explained how if the students do leave it to the last minute then they probably shouldn't expect to perform well:

Philip (in general) "It's self-evident that if you let work builds up around you and you give less time to do more work, that's going to have an effect on the grade."

However Kerry and Philip's viewpoints are not entirely representative of all of the lecturers that I interviewed. Stephen, for example, admits that he sometimes too struggles with time management:

Stephen (on Jill) "You're quite sympathetic. I can understand it. I think we're all the same. I don't know about you, but I let work pile up and I do things sometimes at the last minute, not just the students."

I think this sub-theme really reveals a lot about working practices and the perceptions that some lecturers hold. In one respect the messages that Kerry and Philip are expressing seem logical and perhaps with the benefit of insight they are trying to help the students. However as Stephen points out lecturers too are sometimes guilty of not managing their time efficiently. I included time management as a sub-theme within this theme as I felt it important to highlight that although the majority of lecturers will expect student autonomy to reflect elements of good time management in practice many do understand that students may struggle with this. I think the important point here is that as Philip alludes to, if you

do leave things to the last minute then at times expectations may have to be lowered perhaps.

In a further related sub theme to time management many of the lecturers commented in relation to student's external commitments. This sub-theme reflected differing opinions in relation to the impact that student's external commitments had upon their experience in HE. Kerry reflected upon her own experience at university and how her experience differed to that of the students she presently teaches:

Kerry (on her experience) "I worked really hard at university and I found it difficult to understand why the student I teach didn't seem to put in as much effort as what I did when I attended university and it took me at least a year and a half to go look, they've got part time jobs."

Kerry identifies that many students have part-time jobs and this is something which is increasingly the case especially with the new increased fee regime. However Lawrence does not reflect such a level of sympathy when reacting to Jill's experience:

Lawrence (on Jill) "I'd get the feeling I wouldn't get that much opportunity to give Jill much feedback because she appears not to have engaged a great deal over the years. The subtext to this interview is a fairly busy social life, I would imagine, and partial engagement at university at best, no great idea of how the submission, feedback and then taking that feedback on board and then implementing it for future work."

Lawrence is of the opinion that Jill's external commitments are her social activities rather than a part-time job. This does appear to be without grounds as at no point in

the video did Jill mention social activities. However it appears that after I asked Lawrence to clarify how he would help a student like Jill he said:

Researcher "Jill talks about being disappointed at not doing as well as she would have liked, how do you try and help Jill or a student like Jill in that situation?"

Lawrence (on Jill) "I would try and hammer home the message to them that ... I can imagine myself having a relatively light-hearted conversation with her, like I have with many students who fit into her theme where I end up saying to them, look it's time to give either the drinking or the volleyball or the Gaelic football a rest for a couple of months and knuckle down to your work. Unfortunately hardly any of those students listen to that advice."

Lawrence does appear to have an overwhelming opinion that certain students are at university to have a good time and despite his best efforts to try and get them to change their ways it falls upon deaf ears. Sandra however, in part disagrees with Lawrence suggesting that social interaction is important at university:

Sandra (on Jill) "I think she's being very hard on herself. I mean part of the experience of coming into higher education at that age is about the holistic thing isn't it? It's about being away from home, it's about the social thing; it's all of that."

What is clear from the lecturers' utterances within this sub theme is that they all do want the students to engage with their feedback but they all identify that at times external commitments do conflict with their learning related commitments.

6.2.7 Effort conceptions

In study two the theme effort reflected utterances whereby the students were directly discussing exertion levels and how these either directly related to their expected grade outcome or their actual grade outcome. Through the videos the lecturers were exposed to the actor students' various reflections relating to effort. The lecturer's utterances in response to the student's experiences of effort deployment were categorised as effort conceptions. In the main this theme reflected the lecturers' thoughts in relation to how effort deployment resulted in potential success or failure. The first sub theme discussed low effort deployment. In relation to Jill both Marcus and Ivor agreed that low effort deployment was the root cause of her lack of success during her studies:

Marcus (on Jill) "She's almost admitting that she hasn't had a work ethic, she said I could have done well but I didn't, it's me to blame, I didn't really work hard."

Ivor (on Jill) "I think you've got to do the work. You've got to show a knowledge of something, you've got to have a knowledge and understanding, it's not just a flair for writing or cooking things up, there is a certain amount of spadework has to be done to get a decent mark in any kind of ... maybe not so much in an exam but in any kind of formal assessment. I think she's just saying she should have done a bit more; she'd done enough to get by. She's probably like a lot of students; they just do enough to get by."

It is interesting here that both Marcus and Ivor suggest that Jill may have improved her marks had she deployed more effort. I followed up Ivor's comments and asked him if he agreed that 'you get out what you put in', he replied:

Researcher "So you get out what you put in then?"

Ivor (on Jill) "I think it's right, I think she acknowledges that. If she'd done a bit more she might have got a few more marks."

This is an interesting comment and suggests that some lecturers agree with the students in the primary study who articulated the same belief. Such utterances were frequent within the lecturers and the second sub-theme in this theme, effort equals success revealed this. Kerry reflecting upon Jill's comments relating to ability and skill seems to conclusively suggest that her feedback tends to move away from ability related comments and centres upon trying to get students such as Jill to increase effort deployment to promote future improvement:

Kerry (on Jill) "so she said she has natural ability which is great that as a student she recognises that she has that skill, but like everything in life I guess, the harder you work the better you achieve. I think again it's just saying look Jill, you have got skills, you're good at writing or you're good at reading or you're good at putting an argument together, but in the feedback I will give her, again it's just putting more effort into it "

In support of this approach Terry argues that academic success is dependent upon effort deployment:

Terry (in general) "It's down to effort and engagement, and I think sometimes we don't actually identify what that challenge is for them. If you're willing to put the effort in, you'll actually get a decent reward for that effort. If you're going to be lazy, well don't expect miracles."

Terry does concede that the lecturers themselves at times perhaps need to understand how challenging the assessments can be, but he contends that in order to overcome such challenges one must increase effort deployment otherwise one cannot expect to do well. Stephen however, suggests that effort deployment does need to be high but this perhaps is not enough and the student also needs to utilise the help and support that is available through the feedback given in order to succeed. Stephen suggests that if students do this a 2:1 is very achievable.

Stephen (in general) "In my experience if people put the effort in, given the feedback that we give them, and given the experience that we give them and the tuition we give them and the advice we give them, given the fact that they've got this far, I think every student should be able to get a 2:1 or above if they really put the work in."

In this theme so far it appears the lecturers are dismissive of the ability conceptions which were outlined earlier in this chapter and are suggesting that effort deployment is perhaps a more important consideration and to a certain degree a predictor of potential academic success.

The final sub-theme within this theme was labelled does not equal success. This sub theme reflects some of the lecturer's beliefs that the high deployment of effort does not always equal success for the student. Philip, referring to Keith's expectation that he put in effort and therefore should have been rewarded, indicates this as being in direct opposition to his own effort related beliefs:

Philip (on Keith) "There is loads of work in it but it's not right, and sometimes I think people with limited life experience, can I say, think that if you put the work, you're going to get out, but sometimes you can work for hours, years, days on something and it's not as good as the last thing you did which

took next to no time. The idea of time and reward sometimes aren't directly correlative."

Philip indicates that although some people believe you get out what you put in, this does not always translate. He argues that what is more important to consider is the quality of the effort. That is he is suggesting that the students need to make sure the effort is being deployed in the correct manner, in this case, that what Keith is saying is right. Philip's argument does seem logical if one is to consider that in order to be successful in an assessment one must ensure we are for example addressing the question and assessment criteria. It is not enough to simply 'try hard', if ones effort is not in the right direction a favourable outcome cannot always be guaranteed. Such a contention is supported by Marcus' thoughts:

Marcus (in general) "You get out what you put in, I do believe in hard work, however ... and I was guilty of this as well as a student, sometimes the hard work isn't enough because there is no plan underpinning the hard work."

Marcus concedes in perhaps a more reflective and honest manner than that of student Keith, that he was guilty of failing to plan when he was a student. Marcus suggests that having in place a suitable assessment strategy such as a plan might allow the student to underpin the effort deployment and arguably mitigate the potential for it to be deployed in the wrong direction.

6.3 Discussion

In this chapter I have reported the findings from the interviews with the lecturers. This chapter builds upon the previous chapters as it directly utilised some of the data from study two in particular in order to give the lecturers an opportunity to respond to the students experiences. Many interesting and illuminating utterances have been discussed and it appears that firstly the lecturers interviewed are very

engaged and sympathetic towards the students. Of course one must appreciate that they might have been portraying themselves as such to me because I was a lecturer within the same faculty. In a sense they suggest that the student is at the heart of the learning experience. That said there does appear to be a number of operational issues which are preventing the lecturer's feedback message from being utilised by the students. Several of the lecturers suggested that they like to utilise 1-2-1 meetings with students in order to clarify feedback and build relationships with the students. However such methods do appear to be re-enforcing the transmission model of feedback and as such the students are not required to engage in much dialogue. The lecturers too seemed to articulate a desire to engage in 1-2-1 meetings but these were again viewed as opportunities to alleviate students' not understanding their feedback comments and thus them not being able to utilise them. In this regard such a finding seems to support many other researchers work relating to this (Jenkins, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Sommers, 1992; Leki, 1995; Plum, 1998; Lea & Street, 2000, Hattie & Timperley, 2007, Price et al., 2010). Certainly in terms of increasing the students ability to self-regulate, this practice is hindering rather than fostering such behaviour. The findings more generally within my thesis seem to suggest that the 'better performing' students are often the ones capable of self-regulating and therefore able to make the best use of the feedback available to them which supports previous literature in this area (Covic & Jones, 2008; Fisher et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2011). The findings reported in this chapter further suggest that the lecturers confirm this understanding when they indicated that the better performing same students often came to see them before and after submission in order to make the best use of the feedback available.

The lecturers reported within this chapter a concern about the apparent focus the students have upon the grades they receive and in a sense sometimes their propensity to justify why they have given the marks they have seemed to suggest that they too are grade focused. This has been suggested in the literature frequently and to the degree whereby students focus upon the grade and not the improvement related feedback which causes lecturers much frustration

(MacDonald 1991; Mutch 2003; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling 2005; Carless 2006; Weaver 2006). The lecturers in this chapter articulated such a viewpoint many times suggesting that they try to move them away from focusing upon their grade outcome which aligns with the findings of Carless et al (2011). One apparent observation I can make about the lecturers is that some of them perhaps did not understand the extent to which students' emotional engagement affects their emotional reactions to the grades and feedback they receive (Dirkx, 2001). Therefore having experienced this research process it appears many of the lecturers have become more reflective as a consequence of being exposed to these emotional reactions via the videos. In relation to this Stephen reflected upon the effort related comments that Keith received and indicated this made him realise the impact such comments had upon the student:

Stephen (on Keith) "I'm just quite surprised actually, yeah. I probably will think about doing it differently, because I didn't realise that they would see it that way. I thought they would see it as a positive."

7. Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The thesis thus far has provided an account of the research question, the research context, the research approach and methodology in light of the substantive literature to which it relates. In turn, it has presented the findings of the three studies. In studies one and three this has reflected thematic themes. In study two the data is represented by the phenomenographical outcome space. In this chapter I discuss the key findings and how they relate to the relevant literature. This will be presented as a combined understanding relating to assessment and feedback in HE. It will reflect the student and lecturer experiences, reflecting similarities and difference where apparent. Following this I indicate key knowledge contributions of the thesis alongside, limitations of the thesis and implications for future research.

7.2 Discussion of Key findings

The primary aim of the research reported in this thesis was to explore how students appraise, comprehend and subsequently utilise feedback received from lecturers during their undergraduate degree. A secondary aim of this thesis was to explore how academic lecturers responded to the students' experiences of assessment and feedback. In order to address these aims I have presented data in chapters three, four, five and six which describe the student and lecturer's assessment and feedback experiences in great detail. I have highlighted specific constructs which appear to be inter-related and as such affect the way that students utilise the feedback they receive. Similarly I have reported how the lecturers interpreted specific student experiences they were shown in the videos and also their wider feedback practice. I will now discuss the findings in relation to existing literature within the field and where the findings contribute to new knowledge.

Students' focus on grades dominated all of the interviews I carried out with the lecturers. It was clear from the outset of many of the interviews with the students

that they were operating some form of pre-determined grade expectation for each assessment episode. This was a rather surprising notion at first in study one but as the interviews progressed it became apparent that it was this expectation which affected subsequent emotions, behaviours and feedback utilisation. In essence the grade outcome mediated the student's subsequent reactions and actions in not only the present feedback situation but also in terms of their future assessment. The lecturers reflected utterances that confirmed that students were very grade focused and this dominated their pre and post assessment thoughts. I would also argue that the lecturers themselves were grade focused too as on numerous occasions they explained that if they were giving a grade to a student which they knew was below their normal level the feedback they gave was extra explicit in explaining why this grade was awarded. This suggests, not surprisingly, that the lecturer is aware of the student's focus upon grades and expects issues to arise when they do not achieve their pre-determined level. Students regarded a good grade as one which met their expectation or exceeded it; a poor grade was one which fell below their expected level.

As I have explained in chapters three, four, five and six, and in the various figures and explanations of conceptual understanding, grades were an extremely important construct in attempting to understand how students utilise the feedback they receive. Students frequently articulated a desire to receive the grade first and then as a secondary concern the feedback. In some instances they suggested that when they were doing well the grade was the only thing that mattered. This has been suggested in the literature frequently and to the degree whereby students focus upon the grade and not the improvement related feedback which causes lecturers much frustration (MacDonald 1991; Mutch 2003; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling 2005; Carless 2006; Weaver 2006). Researchers have argued that grades are counterproductive to learning and that they divert the student's attention away from the judgemental and helpful comments that lecturers write (Sadler, 1989). The lecturers in chapter six articulated such a viewpoint many times suggesting that they try to move them away from focusing upon their grade outcome which aligns

with the findings of Carless et al (2011). Within study two some students suggested that the feedback confirmed that at least the lecturer had read their work and marked it fairly, which has previously been suggested within research in Australia by Jackson (1995). Further, students interviewed within this thesis also articulated that they felt some of the feedback justified why the mark had been given which both Carless (2006) and Chetwyn & Dobbyn (2011) also found. The lecturers I interviewed seemed to confirm this notion when they discussed why they give feedback. However what was also interesting here was that some of the students reported that at times the grade and comments did not match up which caused them great frustration and negatively affected their feedback utilisation. Previous literature does not appear to report such findings and therefore this adds to new knowledge in this area. The broken relationship category suggested in chapter five really highlights the effect that such an instance can have upon the student's utilisation of feedback. To my knowledge the literature has yet to explore the impact that grade and comment mismatches have upon a student's feedback utilisation. In particular my findings suggest that when the student receives a poor grade alongside negative feedback which appears to not match with the grade awarded (in their opinion) maladaptive feedback behaviours can be seen. Again this appears to be new knowledge.

When the students reflected upon times that they achieved good grades many of them suggested that the feedback is a secondary focus as they felt they could not change this as the assessment opportunity had passed and therefore the grade counted more, as it went towards their final classification. This supports the many researchers who have found that when the students are satisfied with the grade they have received they tend to either not read or attend to the feedback messages (Enginarlar, 1993; James, 2000; Goldstein, 2006; Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Vardi, 2009). It appeared that in the categories of the broken relationship, needy and low achiever that when receiving a good grade they seemed to ignore the feedback and therefore are almost stating that they have reached their ceiling level. However in the categories of the high achiever and the emotionally charged they were able to use the feedback despite achieving above

their pre-determined grade level. This finding does support those of Orsmond & Merry (2011) but suggests more than previous literature has indicated. The data in study two in particular identifies that such students are able to self-regulate their emotional reactions and conclude that achievement is beyond their predetermined level but that they can use the feedback in order to maintain or improve this level next time. Such a finding adds new knowledge to the existing understanding within this field. One could further argue that similarities with Fredrickson & Cohn's (2008) suggestion that positive emotions enhance the student's propensity to self-regulate are also apparent within my findings. It is perhaps these students who are able to identify with the higher levels of learning and indeed make the necessary changes to their work in subsequent assessment situations in order to achieve higher marks.

It appears therefore that for some of the students I interviewed, experiencing positive emotional reactions enhanced their self-regulatory behaviour in periods of adversity in future assessments. This appeared to be the case for the category named high achiever. However what was also clear from some of the students' reactions was that positive emotions did appear to be ephemeral which supports what Beard et al, (2014) found. In the case of the; needy, broken relationship and low achiever categories the positive emotional reactions that they experienced did not positively affect the utilisation of feedback. This suggests that their emotional reaction, although positive, did not increase their propensity to adopt the feedback in the next assessment. This finding contradicts those of Pekrun et al (2002) and Fredrickson & Cohn (2008) who argued that positive emotions can act to enhance a student's learning and achievement due to their inherent propensity to assist self-regulation and motivation. In this regard such findings appear to contribute to new knowledge. Further contribution to new knowledge can be suggested by the findings that appear to conflict with previous literature that has suggested that positive emotions produce more resilient students (Werner & Smith, 2001; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002; Rowe, et al, 2013; Beard et al, 2014). However in the case of the high achiever category the presence of positive feedback enabled them to utilise the feedback in order to improve. Indeed these students also alluded to the

fact that they drew upon times where they had received positive feedback when they were experiencing drops in performance or a poor grade in a subsequent assessment. Such viewpoints seem to align with both Seligman (2006) and Gilbert (2009) who suggested that positive emotions are said to help develop a student's resilience and coping strategies in the future. Further, aligning with the findings of Fredrickson & Cohn, (2008) what also seemed to be operational in my thesis was that the high achiever category members cognitive processing became positive and thus they did appear to be more likely to adopt the feedback messages due to the presence of positive feedback.

The student's grade outcome resulted in three distinctly different emotional reactions becoming apparent. Firstly when the student received a grade which they viewed as good then their emotional reaction was positive. Such positive emotions reflected feelings of happiness, joy and euphoria. In this regard, the findings seem to concur with Rowe's (2011) suggestions that within feedback situations students can experience appreciation, gratitude, happiness and even pride when receiving a positive outcome. Although the students did not articulate feelings of gratitude or pride, similar positive emotions of happiness and joy were apparent. Perhaps what was clearer from the student's reactions was the fact that they appeared to be very animated when describing positive situations and the associated feedback which would concur with the findings of Jacobs (1974).

Corroborating with previous findings from Dirx (2001) some of the lecturers I interviewed reflected upon times when they had seen emotional reactions in the flesh and how they had allowed the students the opportunity to express these emotions so they could overcome them and process the feedback being offered. Such findings support those of Crossman (2007) and Falchikov & Boud (2007). However many of the lecturers were surprised when they viewed the videos as these demonstrated the emotional attachment the students made to their assessments. Many lecturers commented that they had not seen this before and that it had made them emotionally more aware because of the experience. This implies they will consider the students' potential emotional reaction the next time

they are delivering feedback. This finding suggests that if given the opportunity many of the lecturers would have attempted to control and manage the emotions but clearly this is dependent upon the student engaging in the 1-2-1 meeting in the first place. Such a finding adds new knowledge to the research literature in this area as lecturers to my knowledge have not been given the opportunity to see first-hand via videos the impact that their feedback has upon their students. In a sense the method I used in study three challenged the lecturers to reflect upon their practice in a way that the literature has not reported before.

Negative emotions were articulated by the students in this research frequently and related to when the student received a grade outcome they regarded as poor. When some students received poor grades alongside negative feedback, negative emotions such as disappointment, annoyance, frustration, upset, tearfulness, fear and feeling demoralised were expressed. This supports findings by Jacobs, (1974); Rowe, (2011, 2013) and Beard et al, (2014). Fredrickson & Cohn (2008) argued that fear can initiate avoidance, suggesting a student may not engage with the feedback process. This did appear to be the case for some of the students such as those within the categories of low achiever and needy. Such students were often fearful of engaging with the lecturer in a 1-2-1 situation for example. They felt that they could not interact and discuss their feedback with them. This finding seems to be in direct contrast to those of Pekrun et al (2002) who suggested that negative emotions foster an over reliance upon lecturers. The students within the low achiever category in fact tended to not seek help when experiencing negative emotions rather they chose to ignore the feedback. This finding therefore contributes to new knowledge within the field. It could therefore be argued that the student's emotional reaction hindered their engagement with the feedback in these cases. The lecturers reflected upon these views in their interviews and argued that they always suggest students come and see them to discuss feedback. However, such feedback seemed to as Juwah et al (2004) highlights alluded only to correctional feedback which identified strengths and weaknesses. Such a method

perhaps can be viewed as transmission of feedback rather than active dialogue between lecturer and student.

When students reported achieving poor grades their subsequent reactions were interesting. In one sense some students really struggled with this and as such it means they demonstrated maladaptive cognitions, emotions and behaviours. This supports what Hounsell (1987) found that when receiving a poor grade sometimes the feedback is not even read. Further previous research by Dirkx (2001) and Boud & Falchikoiv (2007) seems to corroborate that the student's emotional reactions obstructed their cognitive processing of the feedback. This seems particularly apparent in the categories labelled needy, low achiever and the emotionally charged. However in the case of the emotionally charged category they do return to the feedback once the emotional reaction has passed suggesting a more developed ability to self-regulate. The needy and low achiever categories articulated that a poor grade indicated to them that they were perhaps not 'cut out' for university or that they did not possess the ability to succeed. This finding supports Knight and Yorke's (2003) contention that when students receive poor grades then they can view this as reflecting their low ability. In a sense what the students are reflecting here is that are unable to engage with and utilise the feedback in subsequent assessments due to their low ability level. However, my research findings suggest that this is more complex and multifaceted than this. It appears that the student's pre-dispositions are affected by their previous assessment experiences and thus lends support to my contention of viewing feedback as cyclical in nature (in essence the beginning of each). Within such a cycle other constructs such as emotions seem to interact with the students pre-dispositions in order to affect the subsequent feedback utilisation. In this regard such findings contribute to new knowledge within this field.

In a related sense ability conceptions were an important predisposition that the students held when entering an assessment opportunity. Some students that I interviewed felt their ability level was fixed and therefore they were unable to do anything about it, other students believed their ability level was measured by what

they knew and understood and therefore this was within their control to alter, which supports what Dweck, (1986) found. The majority of the students in my research felt that their ability level was fixed. The lecturers, however, offered differing views upon this. Some of the lecturers felt this was the case and all students had a level they could get to, but the majority of them felt students could improve if they attended to the feedback given and engaged more with the university. This finding provides an interesting conundrum if one is to consider the potential impact any feedback may have upon the student irrespective of the grade outcome received. If a student perceives their ability level to not be changeable then feedback which attempts to close the gap between actual and desired (Sadler, 1989, 2010) or even to exceed the current performance level, may be ineffectual. In this regard entity theory (Butler, 2000) does appear to offer some suggestions as to why certain students hold such a belief. Students holding the entity viewpoint believe ability is stable and unchangeable. Therefore if a student achieves a low grade then a prevention focus may be initiated and they would strive to protect their self-image (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). In essence therefore entity theorists suggest that students raise their ability inference when receiving negative feedback, that is, the task they were completing was perhaps too hard for their ability level. This was certainly the case for many students in my research who at times stated that for them for example exams were very hard and that is why they performed badly on those compared to other subjects. In a sense the students were almost suggesting that their ability level on a certain assessment meant they would not achieve and therefore any feedback received would be ineffectual as their ability level could not change.

Nicol (2009) has argued that students all enter with the ability to self-regulate and thus lecturers should develop this capacity rather than give feedback. If one is to support this view then my findings appear to suggest that despite the lecturers' efforts to provide feedback on students' work their ability conceptions seem to be hindering any potential change in assessment behaviour as a result of such feedback. This does appear to be particularly the case for the categories labelled as

low achiever needy. This does suggest therefore that feedback in this regard is ineffectual and one could argue that other ways of engaging students in self-reflection need to be explored. Indeed the methods operated at the university where the lecturers and students come from appeared to not operate a great deal of dialogic feedback. In this regard the contentions of Carless et al (2011) that only a minority of lecturers have the skill and motivation to engage in this type of feedback seem to be supported by my research findings. In fact only one lecturer reflected upon consistent 1-2-1 meetings to 'discuss' feedback. One lecturer did allude to the students demonstrating how their writing has changed from formative work to summative which did have undertones of Sadler's (1989, 2010) contentions. However such an operation appeared to be isolated and indeed dependent upon the student initiating draft work submission rather than actual changes to pedagogic practice in the classroom by the lecturer.

Many of the students discussed how much they like 1-2-1 meetings with their lecturers, which is congruent with findings within the established literature (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Hyland, 2000; Drew, 2001; Thomas, 2002; Pitts, 2005; Crozier et al. 2008; Rea & Cochrane, 2008; Duers and Brown, 2009; Pokorny and Pickford, 2010; Reid, 2010; Blair & McGinty 2012). Reasons for this ranged from discussing their work, receiving the grade or clarifying feedback comments which they did not understand. Such viewpoints seem to concur with Brockbank & McGill (1998) who reported that students like to have the opportunity to engage personally with the marker to discuss the feedback rather than just receive written comments. This appears to be a reasonable wish, however I would argue from my research findings that the term 'discuss' is clearly a debateable term. Many of the students explained that their experiences of interactions of this kind involved them sitting down with the lecturer whilst the lecturer explained the comments to them and at times clarified the student's misconceptions (Lea and Street, 2000). This is clearly not a discussion but rather an oral presentation of the feedback comments in the presence of the marker. My findings concurred with those of Higgins et al (2001) that both the students and lecturers understood the principle of feedback to be how the student understands and subsequently uses this

and as such the 1-2-1 meeting with the lecturer facilitated this. However, the nature of this interaction is the problematic issue, as the transmission model which appears to be operating here inherently does not allow for meaningful dialogue to occur. Indeed the lecturers too seemed to articulate a desire to engage in 1-2-1 meetings but these were again viewed as opportunities to alleviate students' not understanding their feedback comments and thus them not being able to utilise them. In this regard such a finding seems to support many other researchers work relating to this (Jenkins, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Sommers, 1992; Leki, 1995; Plum, 1998; Lea & Street, 2000, Hattie & Timperley, 2007, Price et al., 2010). Therefore one could suggest from my findings that for both students and lecturers 1-2-1 meetings are important as they allow clarification of misconceptions and understanding alongside fostering feedback utilisation to occur. This finding seems to be in direct contrast to the recent developments within feedback literature and the suggestion that more dialogic feedback should be utilised (Nicol, 2010).

In a sense what my findings are suggesting is that whilst the literature is awash with research suggesting 'dialogue' should increase, operationally in the university where my research was carried out this is being interpreted in a different manner. It does seem apparent that dialogue with lecturers was a missing feature within this cohort of students who took part in the research. It also appears from the interviews that lecturers were in fact, as Sadler (2010) argues, telling students what they did wrong in the hope that their work will improve the next time. In a sense the lecturers were, as Nicol and Mcfarlane –Dick (2006) emphasise, in control of the quantity and delivery of feedback. If one is to follow the line of logic that proponents of dialogic feedback articulate, then it does not appear surprising than only a small proportion of students (high achievers) demonstrated self-regulatory behaviour within my research. Within dialogic feedback, students are encouraged to engage in self-judgement and self-regulation (Sadler 1989; Handley et al., 2008; Hounsell, 2007; Hounsell et al. 2008; Nicol, 2008, 2009, 2010; Black & McCormick, 2010; Carless et al., 2011; Blair and McGinty 2012). The over whelming majority of students in my research failed to demonstrate self-regulatory behaviour when

receiving a poor grade and negative feedback and thus did not utilise the feedback. This did appear to be the case for example in the categories labelled low achiever, needy and broken relationship.

Both Hounsell (2007) and Nicol (2010) have argued if students are to learn from feedback, dialogue and opportunities to act upon the feedback received must be afforded to them (Hounsell, 2007; Nicol 2010; Carless et al. 2011; Price, Handley, and Millar 2011). The premise of dialogic feedback is fundamentally different to the learning environment experienced by the students interviewed in my research. Many of the lecturers talked about the lack of time they have to mark the many submissions they receive. Arguably as the proponents of dialogic feedback suggest; peer learning and increased involvement of students in self-regulatory practice could in fact reduce this burden for the lecturer (Nicol, 2010). One would agree that changing to this method of feedback practice will take time and as such the postulates of Carless et al (2011) that students need time to develop skills alongside multiple opportunities in which to engage with this seem prudent. However, it does appear that some of the literature especially, Yang & Carless (2013) suggest that students who engage in dialogue will become better equipped to self-regulate. However my findings suggest that for many students, such as those in the categories of needy and low achiever, this could be a step too far in the short term as their pre-dispositions coupled with their emotional instability mean they are not in the position to self-regulate presently. It therefore follows that further research in relation to how students engage with dialogic feedback is needed. In particular this research needs to investigate low achieving students who at present seem unable to self-regulate at the level needed for dialogic feedback to be successful.

Some of the students in this current research did indicate low confidence going into certain assessment situations (such as exams) due to always receiving poor grades on those assessments. This would align with Black and William's (1998) findings that if a student receives a number of bad grades or scores over a period of time, this may initiate negative behavioral adaptations such as lowering confidence levels and capacity to learn. It does appear that for some of the students who I interviewed

(that reflected such utterances) certain assessment types meant their confidence level was low and therefore their positive adaptations to feedback were negatively affected. However, one important finding in this research relating to grade outcome has not been reported within the literature. This is the finding that students who interpret the poor grade as negative and thus consequential to their potential final degree classification actually self-regulated that the negative feedback can in fact be turned into a positive as it gives them the opportunity to act upon this feedback and almost make up for the poor grade in the next assessment. This appears therefore to reflect new knowledge within the field. This is not to say that the students do not encounter increased pressure to perform next time as they quite clearly do. However such students seem to be able to disassociate themselves from the negative connotations relating to this poor grade and strive to utilise the feedback in the next assessment. The categories in chapter five are indicative of this finding and as such push the understanding forward within the literature. The high achiever category is indicative of students who have the ability to self-regulate their emotions and reactions in this regard and can therefore utilise the feedback despite achieving a poor grade. However in the categories such as the needy and low achiever they are unable to self-regulate their emotions and reactions and therefore the feedback is not utilised

It seems apparent that the influence that the grade has over the student can foster both adaptive and maladaptive assessment related behaviours. However, the findings in this thesis seem to suggest that there is no simple cause and effect in any given singular construct. The central argument here is that my findings and interpretations have suggested a complex contextualised situation rather than the one alluded to in some of the research literature as straightforward. As indicated by the five categories of description and subsequent explanations of the variance in chapter five, the constructs seem to inter-relate in differing ways. What does appear to be fundamental to the improvement of students is as Carless et al (2011) suggest a movement away from such a focus upon grade outcome and towards feedback situations which are more frequent, higher in quality and reflective of a

supportive environment. In this regard what Carless et al (2011) are suggesting is that students will appreciate the purpose of feedback and how it can improve their work and by inference their performance outcome. However an inherent issue which presents itself when trying to move students away from a focus upon grades is the fact that as Hughes (2014) indicates assessment outcomes are competitive situations in which students can rank themselves against each other. Many of the students that I interviewed articulated a desire to make interpersonal comparisons and that these made them feel motivated to perform and engage with their studies. Such students seemed to hold performance goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) and were therefore more likely to make interpersonal comparisons when performing well but avoid them when doing poorly. The debilitating nature of interpersonal comparison was apparent in the needy category especially when they received a poor grade. Such students attempt to avoid interpersonal comparison in order to minimise its debilitating nature. In this regard, previous achievement motivation research suggesting that operating a performance goal whilst receiving negative feedback results in maladaptive behaviours; appear to be supported by my findings (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1989; Ames, 1992). This certainly does seem to be the case for the category referred to as needy category within study two. However, for the high achiever category operating a performance goal whilst receiving negative feedback does not appear to negatively affect their utilisation of the feedback received thus conflicting with previous literature (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1989; Ames, 1992). The findings within this thesis seem to support the adaptive elements of mastery goals which are operated within the categories of high achiever and emotionally charged (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Ames, 1992; Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). When the students were trying to improve their performance, relative to their own previous performance in terms of their understanding of subject matter, this orientation helped them to maintain their self-efficacy in the face of failure and increase their cognitive capacity, thus allowing for more cognitive engagement with the feedback received (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Ames, 1992; Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). However, my findings suggest that adopting a performance orientation and thus a focus upon trying to be the best in the class and achieving higher grades than significant others, promotes the

chance that concern about others will distract from cognitions relating to the task and therefore reduce cognitive capacity and performance (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1989). In this regard such findings do seem to address Kluger & DeNisi (1996) and Senko & Harackiewicz (2005) suggestions that how achievement goals influence feedback processing appear to be an area where researchers are not clear. What my findings do suggest is that the high achievers are more adaptive and therefore are able to in a sense self-regulate their achievement goal.

Motivation was discussed frequently by the students and reflected in the main instances where their achievement outcome (grade) and their feedback affected their subsequent motivational status. Indeed at times the grade on its own affected their motivation as did the feedback. The students frequently alluded to the notion of negative feedback and how this could be motivational at times. This reaction is rather adaptive and reflects the findings of Carver & Scheier (1981) whereby failure (in this case achieving lower than expected) results in increased motivation. The high achiever and emotionally charged categories appear to support this notion. Further one could also argue that the students who experience increases in motivation when faced with an adverse outcome as demonstrating adaptive behaviours such as persistence which supports Dweck & Leggett's (1988) contentions. It also seems apparent that such students are able to put the grade outcome disappointment aside and as, Weaver (2006), reports become more motivated to improve when constructive criticism is present. In essence, what my findings are suggesting is that at least some of the students are interpreting the negative feedback as developmental and constructive. For example, they seemed to appreciate that feedback comments are designed to close the gap between actual and desired performance and so for these students they feel motivated to act upon these comments in the next assessment.

Conversely, some students did report that they found negative feedback alongside a poor grade negatively affected their motivation level. It must be highlighted that the students in the main articulated this point in relation to grade disappointment

primarily and utterances relating to negative feedback were a secondary concern. In this regard the work of Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) in relation to Performance-avoidance which is focused upon evading critical competence judgements seems to be corroborated here. In an applied sense it is suggested that the mastery and performance approach goals will promote mastery patterns of achievement such as excitement, engagement and learning. The performance avoidance orientation however is predicted to encourage more maladaptive behaviour such as anxiety, distraction and lower levels of motivation to perform the task (Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996). The findings within both study one and two seem to suggest those students who reported that negatively phrased feedback appears to cause them, especially those who are already low in confidence, to react in a very negative manner are operating performance avoidance orientations. In related literature the maladaptive effect this orientation has upon the student has also been frequently reported in the literature (Rice et al., 1994; Young, 2000; Pitts, 2005; Weaver, 2006; Poulos & Mahony, 2008; Ferguson, 2011). This is especially noticeable with the needy and low achiever categories, which reinforces my earlier argument that such instances serve to influence their subsequent pre-dispositions in the next assessment. In this regard the feedback re-affirms their confidence beliefs and is not utilised to improve in the next assessment. The confidence level of many of the students was negatively affected by the poor grade received and as such these contentions seem applicable. These students appeared very performance outcome focused, primarily concerned with how well they are doing in relation to their pre-determined grade expectation. These findings suggest that as Dweck & Leggett (1988) have argued, focusing upon performance goals have the greatest potential for maladaptive behavioural consequences when negative feedback is received. Further, it is also within this orientation that errors in understanding and private evaluations of such errors are common place (Patrick et al. 2001; Meece, Anderman, and Anderman 2006). Kaplan & Maehr (1999) have argued that students choose a mastery orientation when they are aware that they will be assessed on their progress towards individualised goals, participation and their strategy use. It is perhaps important here to make the association between such a concept and that of the premise of formative feedback. Anderman, Austin &

Johnson (2002) have demonstrated that students within the mastery orientation tend to demonstrate more developed relational skills of prior learning and make use of deeper cognitive strategies. The categories of emotionally charged and high achiever within study two appear to reflect these students. From a motivational perspective it is these students whom demonstrate persistence when faced with tasks or situation they feel challenge them (Meece, et al, 2006).

The students also reported times when their motivation was positively affected by receiving a good grade and positive feedback. In these situations students felt that their previous concerns relating to their ability were eradicated due to performing well. The student's subsequent behavioural response was to feel more motivated for the next assessment. Such findings seem to concur with Phillips et al (1996) who argued that that students try harder and raise their goals after success. Similarly, as Lizzio et al, (2003) suggest the positive comments (those which offer encouragement) seemed to reinforce positive reactions in the students. In this regard many researchers have argued that positive feedback is central to fostering student learning (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Beason, 1993; Hyland, 1998; Spinks, 1998). However, such a simplistic link was not fully apparent within my findings. For example even when receiving a good grade and associated positive feedback the needy and low achiever categories pre-dispositions were not positively influenced as they viewed the situation in isolation and as such viewed the feedback as non-transferable. In a sense the feedback was not utilised in the next assessment due to their negative ability conceptions, low confidence, emotional reactions and ability to transfer feedback to other assessments. Therefore this suggest a far more complex set of interactions between constructs than the literature has articulated in the past and as such contributes to new knowledge in the field.

The findings within my thesis seem to suggest that the 'better performing' students are often the ones capable of self-regulating and therefore able to make the best use of the feedback available to them which does support previous literature in this area (Covic & Jones, 2008; Fisher et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2011). The lecturers in

study three seemed to confirm this understanding when they indicated that the same students often came to see them before and after submission in order to make the best use of the feedback available. This did appear to be the case for the high achiever category that were able to overcome the issues previously described in this chapter when receiving a poor grade and more importantly still attend to feedback despite performing poorly. The findings in my thesis suggest that the low achiever category struggle with self-assessment skills and are unable to regulate their learning by using the feedback provided which supports what Orsmond & Merry (2012) reported. The lecturers I interviewed, however, offered an alternative explanation for this occurrence suggesting that some lecturers write too much feedback and this means the low achievers struggle to understand the most important parts to act upon next time. This seems to resonate with the findings of Hartley and Skelton (2001) who argue that in order for a student to regulate their learning they need to be able to understand and process feedback comments from lecturers first.

7.3 Key Contributions to knowledge

The thesis has contributed to the existing body of knowledge by firstly suggesting how a student's assessment pre-dispositions interact with their pre-determined grade expectations to determine how a student perceives their grade outcome. Following from this outcome how their emotional reactions determine their subsequent reactions and feedback utilisation in the subsequent assessment opportunities. Previous research in this field has at times view students' use of feedback in a singular fashion. What I have achieved here is to present the students' assessment journey incorporating outcome decisions alongside emotional and behavioural adaptations and how these interact with their feedback usage. In essence the thesis has provided a more holistic representation of what occurs when the student receives their grade outcome and feedback. This is particularly apparent within the outcome space in chapter five. The five categories of description alongside the structure of the variation really encapsulate the different experiences of the students interviewed.

The thesis has also demonstrated the adaptive nature of high achieving students to adversity and the maladaptive nature of lower achieving students to adversity and prosperity in terms of feedback utilisation. Previous literature has considered such students before but in the main has only reported that they did or did not attend to feedback. This thesis has presented further reasons as to why this occurs in relation to emotions, efficacy and motivation in an inter-related manner.

Finally the thesis has also suggested that current conceptual understanding of feedback within the literature which relates to dialogic feedback practice does not appear to be clearly/consistently understood and more research needs to be carried out. Thus the thesis has suggested some reasons why this may have not been applied in relation to student and lecturer understanding of the concept.

7.4 Limitations of the thesis

The journey I have experienced during this thesis has been long and winding, as such the research can be categorised as organic in nature. By this I mean that I had a clear aim which I wanted to address, but at times I was unsure about how best to serve this. Reflecting upon the process of carrying out my research some limitations appear to exist. Firstly, I carried out the research in one institution. This is not necessarily an inherently terrible thing; however, I fully appreciate that my findings could be potentially somewhat different if the research had been carried out across multiple institutions. To more clearly contextualise my findings I described the distinctive characteristics of the institution and the demographics of its student body in chapter two. However, as I have explained throughout the thesis, one strength of the research is the fact that I was an insider (bracketed) with excellent levels of access to lecturers and students which may not have been the case if I had of chosen other institutions. In chapter two I discuss the nature of bracketing and how at times this was difficult to achieve, not least from the perspective of data analysis. Although a potential methodological flaw was that that I detracted from the purest form of phenomenography I would argue that one can never truly, fully

bracket their experiences especially when they are so closely linked to the subject matter being studied. It is for this reason that I concede that bracketing was never fully achieved as my positionality and previous experience at times made this impossible to bracket. Further the range of subjects studied and taught by the participants was limited to science and social science. This could be perceived as a limitation due to the fact that subjects aligned to humanities have not been covered. Finally, the chosen methodological approach of phenomenography could arguably be a limitation. The nature of phenomenography requires in-depth and fully immersive data collection. Therefore a smaller number of participants in a more concentrated setting are characteristic of such research. I could have chosen an alternative methodology which enabled me to carry out widespread data collection through a questionnaire across many subjects and many institutions. Whilst I appreciate that this could have been a limitation, I would argue that the depth of experience, I was able to expose outweighed this limitation.

7.5 Implications for Practice

The findings reported within this thesis suggest that current feedback practices do appear to be working for those students who are able to self-regulate their emotions, motivational state and subsequent behavioural actions. It is apparent such students reflect high achievers and as such many are able to utilise the feedback they are given. However for students who are less able to self-regulate (typically but not exclusively lower achievers) the current monologic transmission model of feedback does not appear to be working. In this sense I would recommend that students be gradually introduced to more dialogic forms of feedback. This could include elements of peer learning and draft formative submissions alongside exemplars of what constitutes work awarded at the various grade point intervals (see work of Beaumont et al 2011). Such practices would clearly require a cultural shift at not only modular level but also at the institutional level. It is apparent that not only the students who are less able to self-regulate but also those who are able to self-regulate would benefit from such practice. As this thesis has indicated, even the higher achievers sometimes think they have reached a ceiling when they

achieve a high grade, yet at times the submission could still have been improved beyond that. The key seems to be that in order for students to really understand, appreciate and utilise feedback, a movement away from such a heavy focus upon grade outcome needs to be achieved so that students are engaged in the discourse surrounding academic work far earlier prior to the summative submission.

7.6 Implications for future research

The research findings within my thesis contribute to new knowledge in many ways however further research does need to be carried out in a number of areas. Firstly the area of dialogic feedback has been discussed frequently within the literature in recent times. However much of the discussion is at a conceptual level. My research findings have suggested that low achieving students at present seem unable to self-regulate at the level needed for dialogic feedback to be successful. Therefore further research is needed in order to understand why this is occurring. Further, research which operationalises and evaluates ways of engaging students in dialogic feedback is needed in order to push the body of knowledge from conceptual to theoretical.

The multifaceted nature of my research findings suggest that many constructs interact in order to affect the way students engage with their feedback. These findings are limited to one institution and one faculty of grouped subjects. It therefore follows that further research, which replicates my research within other institutions and other subject areas is needed. This will allow us to understand potential similarities and differences between the ways students utilise feedback in relation to the subjects they study.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Study One: Sample interview transcript

Student - Joseph

Researcher: Good Work - Summary of Feedback

Feedback for an exam – Final assessment – Received a high grade. Good introduction but some points could have been more explicit. Sound grasp of the subject, good use of evidence to support arguments, maybe a little more detail is needed in parts.

Researcher: How did the feedback you received make you feel?

Joseph: good I mean yeah I am quite pleased. I mean I know I can be a little bit descriptive at times so it's good to know and get that reinforced. It's pleasing to know that the lecturer has identified that I have a good grasp of the subject and that's promising considering I am going to do a masters next year. Its good motivation to know that I can write quite well, even at exam level, which in the past has been my weakness.

Researcher: So does that affirm the progress that you have made in the last 3 years

Joseph: I try to structure exam answers a little better. It's some that I have definitely worked on in the last 3 years. Its good news to know that it has improved and that I have made positive changes to my style of writing in that I have gained better marks.

Researcher: How did you react to the feedback?

Joseph: I was pleased, as it doesn't matter how much you know it's whether you can do it on the day. As I said before exams are something I have struggled with in the past so I am really pleased with the feedback as well as the mark

Researcher: So do you feel motivated by this?

Joseph: yeah as I said this was one of my weaknesses and although I am at the end of my undergraduate degree it's spurred me on for my masters

Researcher: With the previous feedback in mind for the next piece of assessment what did you do?

Joseph: I would probably keep the style the same in terms of structure, I mean make sure it has a structure and keep using evidence to support my claims. Again I would probably try with the feedback from the old piece saying I was too descriptive I would try and avoid this and be a little more critical in places. Also check over the work and see where I have been descriptive.

Researcher: So do you think it's important that you get pointers even if you are getting high 80's?

Joseph: yes definitely, well yes because it's a continual cycle of improvement doing stuff like this and getting feedback. Even doing so well you still want to know where you have gone wrong

Researcher: Bad Work - Summary of Feedback

Joseph: Physiology presentation – Level H – For this I completely misunderstood how I was supposed to go about it and only realised half way through doing the actual presentation that I had done it wrong. I spoke to the lecturer afterwards and the feedback was that I was unprepared for the assessment. I do tend to be a little under prepared for presentations and tend to think that I can pad it out through general knowledge, but this was a presentation where I wasn't able to do that. I also didn't go for help like I normally do.

Researcher: How did the feedback you received make you feel?

Joseph: I was gutted as I knew that I was on for a first at the time and getting a mark and the feedback I thought I had messed it all up and it was like well the mark was obviously a shock as that was the lowest mark I had ever received since I had been here and when you get a mark like that you think that your life is over for that initial after math. But having spoken to the lecturers about it afterwards it re-motivated me as they reminded me that I am not stupid and it was just one of those things that happens to students, so again I mean with the right feedback, which is what I got, it re-motivated me to do well

Researcher: How did you react to the feedback?

Joseph: Strangely I was made up as the lecturer was very friendly about it and he recognised that it was a mistake more than an actual assessment of my ability in the actual subject. So I was glad to get the feedback as I was worried about how i had approached it, so the feedback made me realise my weakness but also the fact that with the right preparation I could do it right.

Researcher: Did it help the fact that you were able to have a one-on-one with the lecturer?

Joseph: yes I mean i asked lots of questions relating to the best way to prepare for the assessment and they told me I should have gone to see them beforehand. Discussing my weaknesses with the staff made me realise how I was meant to go about it. It also put me at ease given that the mark was so bad. So really the feedback helped me come to terms with that disappointment. So it helped me re-define in my head if I were to have to do it again.

Researcher: So motivationally did this alter the way you looked at your studies?

Joseph: yeah I mean if I had done badly and the feedback had not been as constructive then it probably wouldn't have motivated me a s much. So speaking to

the lecturer in that way he was very approachable. I mean I have been to another university and they would have written you off, even if in the past you had done well, if you made a mistake they would have written you off. He was very friendly and forthcoming with advice so it was really helpful.

Researcher: With the previous feedback in mind for the next piece of assessment what did you do?

Joseph: I made sure i was prepared that was the biggest thing. I have got a habit of leaving things to the last minute so that taught me a lesson and made me prepare a little different for the next assessment which was the exam. Unfortunately again it wasn't a brilliant mark but I was more prepared than i would have been if i hadn't of had that feedback.

Researcher: So did that feedback spur you on to want to improve?

Joseph: yeah well personally and obviously for the lecturers as they had taken such a keen interest in what I was doing and why I hadn't done as well as I could have done, that helped a lot and showed me that lectures do care about students, where in the past that has not been the case at other institutions. That feedback and that reaction to how I had done was a big factor in me wanting to do better.

9.2 Appendix 2 – Study One: Sample Data

Theme - Motivation

Raw Data Theme	1 st Order Theme	2 nd Order Theme	Broad Dimension
Initially I was like disappointed and disheartened so my motivation wasn't all that high (SK).	Disappointment	Negative feedback de-motivating	Motivation
It doesn't motivate me to want to well in the next piece of work; I think they're not going to help me anyway so why should I bother doing it (CT).	Reduces motivation for next assessment		
When I was told that my work last year was a lot better than the standard of my first essay, that was a bit disheartening (WK). I felt sometimes disheartened by some of the things (WK). You feel really disheartened when you get a bad mark (WK). It does definitely knock me back unfortunately (JB). If someone gave me a negative feedback I would take it to heart a bit (SG).	Negative feedback disheartening		
I was gutted as I knew that I was on for a first at the time and getting a mark and the feedback I thought I had messed it all up (JK). When you get a mark like that you think that your life is over for that initial after math (JK).	Cognitions relating to fear of failure		
Not very well, I tend to shut off that subject to be honest (CT). I've got no motivation at all (CT). If I get back bad feedback I'm not motivated to do any work for that subject on what I've had the bad feedback on (CT).	Negative feedback Reduces motivation		
If I see a negative comment I blank it out of my mind instead of maybe looking over it and going right, that's what I needed to actually do (JB). Try and block them, yeah, instead of looking at them and go right, that's getting sorted, that's getting	Negative feedback		

<p>sorted, that's getting improved (JB).</p> <p>If I don't get good feedback then my work does tend to suffer which it shouldn't (CT).</p> <p>If I've done bad on it I don't tend to look at what I've done wrong type of thing, it's like I think I've done awful and then I'm a bit downhearted (CT).</p> <p>I sometimes do have a problem with understanding negative feedback because I'm too frustrated and upset about the result (JB).</p>	<p>ignored and not acted upon</p>		
<p>Having spoken to the lecturers about it afterwards it re-motivated me (JK).</p> <p>With the right feedback, which is what I got, it re-motivated me to do well (JK).</p> <p>If I had done badly & the feedback had not been as constructive then it probably wouldn't have motivated me as much (JK).</p> <p>He was very friendly and forthcoming with advice so it was really helpful (JK).</p> <p>Once I had taken time to reflect and then went to see the lecturer as soon as I left the office my motivation was gradually increasing (SK).</p>	<p>Careful feedback from lecturer motivational</p>	<p>Lecturers role in feedback</p>	
<p>It's pleasing to know that the lecturer has identified that I have a good grasp of the subject (JK).</p> <p>They could tell you that you have potential and that you need to put the work in order to succeed (KP).</p> <p>They should try and raise any good points too (LC).</p> <p>It was nice to see that he knew I could do better (SG).</p> <p>If someone thinks I can do something it does make me feel confident I'm doing it and I feel like I can do it myself (SG).</p> <p>'Cause it motivates you to do even better next time, 'cause you want to please them as much as possible (LMc).</p>	<p>Motivated by lecturers belief in his ability</p>		
<p>Saying I didn't do so well makes me feel bad and spurs me onto wanting to get a better mark next time (KP).</p> <p>Yeah, because then you want to improve for next time (LMc).</p> <p>I'm motivated when I get critical feedback because I want to know why I haven't done that, how can I improve that (MO).</p> <p>I know by me anyway it definitely does because it motivates you so much to want to get better (JB).</p> <p>The feedback that I got to some degree was better than the feedback from a good piece of work as it</p>	<p>Increased motivation to improve next time</p>	<p>Negative</p>	

<p>made me more determined to do a good piece of work in the next two pieces of assessment (SK). If you get a bad mark you just primarily focus with the next one (KM). If I do get it back I know then what I'm doing wrong so therefore I need to improve on it, therefore it improves my motivation (WK).</p>		Feedback motivationa 	
<p>It made me work harder on other assessments definitely (SG). I did want to try harder as I knew that I had lowered my overall mark down (KP). I looked at it and thought 'right, if I carry on like this I'm not going to come out with a good grade at the end of university, I need to put the work in (SG). I think the early ones with the bad marks made me think 'right, I need to buck my ideas up and do some work' (SG). Getting negative feedback has motivated me a lot more to take a lot more time on work (WK).</p>	Increased amount of work put in		
<p>You feel good, especially when it's a hard piece of work as well (CT). To get off to a great start was brilliant and I kind of pushed on from there then and I was really, really happy (KM).</p>	Positive feelings	Positive feedback	
<p>Its good motivation to know that I can write quite well (JK). It boosted my motivation a lot because, like I said, I didn't really think I could do it (JL). I'm highly motivated when I get good feedback (MO). My motivation is I'm very keen to do it because they've said it's good (MO). Because I had positive feedback so it's given me a bit of a willing to do it (SG). It helps improve my motivation (MO).</p>	Improves motivation	motivationa 	
<p>Good. It makes you want to do well again (EB). From then it gave me a lot of motivation to do well in the last assignment we had for him (JB). This was one of my weaknesses and although I am at the end of my undergraduate degree it's spurred me on for my masters (JK). That feedback and that reaction to how I had done was a big factor in me wanting to do better (JK). I need to keep doing what I did in this one for the next one (KP). Just to improve and try better for next time (LMc). cause it was good so I wanted to do just as well on the next one (LMc). I want to do well in every piece of work so I think you gave me as much feedback as you can to keep to the</p>	Positive feedback increases desire to succeed		

standard that I wanted to work at (LMc). If you get a good pat on the back it's like brilliant, you're doing well, go out and do some more (MO).			
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9.3 Appendix 3 – Study Two: Sample part of transcript

Student - Ellen

Researcher: Interview with EF Sport and History, Level H. Right thanks for coming Emma and sort of getting involved in the drawing exercises that we have done. We will come to this in a few moments but I just want to start off with sort of just talking about your global sort of approach to assessment whilst you have been here at Hope, what you sort of understand by assessment and what is.

Ellen: In terms of each individual assessment.

Researcher: Well just generally everything, how you approach assessment here at Hope.

Ellen: If it's an assignment definitely start. In first year, I will be honest I did not start weeks in advance I would always end up leaving it until last minute but in terms of second and third year I would definitely prepare in advance and then something structured. But then in terms of exams and everything and revision, I always find it really difficult to get into it, to revising. Depending on the subject, on the area I will, I do struggle more so with History.

Researcher: Really?

Ellen: Than I would with Sport and I think that is just because my general interest is probably more towards Sport now.

Researcher: OK.

Ellen: Than it would of been. But in terms of other things like presentations, I sort of love presentations, I don't mind them at all. But I think individual presentations

are easier than team presentations because I think if you are in a group it's hard sometimes to get everybody together.

Researcher: Yeah.

Ellen: At the same time because everyone has other commitments. So I definitely prefer individual presentations.

Researcher: And this approach to assessment you say changed from first year to now. Why is that then?

Ellen: From sixth form I was always, everything was done in advance, everything. Then you get into first year and the idea of university being all the fun side and everyone goes out and everything. And I think also the fact that people turned around and said it does not count towards your degree.

Researcher: Right.

Ellen: As soon as somebody says that to you.

Researcher: Does it have a big effect?

Ellen: Yeah, it did on me definitely. Cos erm, although I always wanted to do the best on my assignments, behind in the back of my mind was it's not going to count. And it was like well even if I do really really well, it's not going towards my degree.

Researcher: So you just, you just didn't.

Ellen: Definitely did not like. I remember going back to sixth form and over the summer, teachers were just shocked when I told them that I had obviously not prepared in advance with assignments and everything and they did not believe me. And I was honest and said no I didn't and I'll be surprised if I do really well this year

but it went all right. But like if it goes towards your degree I think it would change. I think a lot of people would say that second and third year changed them.

Researcher: So how now do you approach assessments then?

Ellen: Oh well in advance, well in advance. I will look at it, when we have got assignments this year I worked out which ones were in before Christmas and especially the Psychology one I've had, I started it four or five weeks ago. And things like that. I still find though now that I will still have bits where I am rushing, still find that. But even when I have done them weeks in advance.

Researcher: OK and what do you typically do when you are starting it, what's the process of it?

Ellen: Starting it, oh I do, I look into it and analyse the areas that they are wanting, what aspects they want me to look at and then I will do either a spider diagram. I used to do those more so at A level, now I don't use them as much, more so now bullet points. And then I expand on them and my plans aren't usually all that small. My plan will probably take up a good three or four pages.

9.4 Appendix 4 -Study Two: Sample Data Analysis Table

Theme: Draft Work

Part	Raw Data Theme	1 st Order Theme	2 nd Order Theme	Broad Dimension
AT	If they never had that draft, to be honest I'd go and see a tutor I'd be disappointed because I'd think if you're just handing in an essay and you don't know how it's going to go, I think that will play on your mind a lot more whereas if I've been to a tutor and I've got draft copies when it comes to handing in, I feel a lot more confident knowing that it's been looked at already	Draft work improves confidence for submission	Draft work improves confidence	Draft work
EW	A lot more comfortable and you think you are going to do a bit better if they are like reassuring you that you know that you have put in the right kind of things, you have addressed the right areas	Draft work improves confidence for submission		
AT	I'd feel a lot worse if I couldn't hand in a draft first.	Draft work improves confidence for submission		

AT	It can be drastic changes but because you've got that week in advance before you hand in your essay, it's never a worry because you've got that time while just handing in just thinking how's this going to go?	Draft work reduces anxiety over quality of essay		
AT	I'd say it reduces the stress for me personally as a student being able to hand in a draft piece of work and get the mark definitely reduces the stress.	Draft work reduces anxiety over quality of essay		
SR	Good, really good. And not only did she set up a session she also said like if people aren't quite ready then just go to her in her office hours and she is more than happy to look over anything, which is really comforting.	Lecturer looking at draft work is comforting		
EW	It makes you feel a little bit easy like knowing the fact you are on the right way, like you are doing the right thing it makes you feel a little bit better, it does help the fact that people are guiding you	Draft work reduces anxiety over quality of essay		
CT	It wasn't what they were looking for and I didn't get told that it weren't.	Mismatch between staff comments on draft work and final grade		

TD	Well it was because I'd gone to see them beforehand and I thought I was clear of what I was doing but obviously I wasn't because I went wrong.	Mismatch between staff comments on draft work and final grade	Mismatch between staff comments on draft work and final grade	
JK	One of my tutors last year I remember, I showed her a piece of work, it were a lit review, and she said oh yeah she like looked through it and she said oh yeah you are doing well you are on right lines, cos I had never done a lit review before, she said yeah yeah you have done that OK. But I'd only got half way through it and she said yeah you are on the right lines, finished it off showed it her again she went through it again and she said oh yeah that's at least a C more than likely a B you know you have down well if you are happy with a B, it's going to be a B. Got it back and it were an E, someone else marked it like the Head of Geography marked it, Duncan Light, so she'd told me I'd done well and it came back and I'd got an E!	Disappointment relating to draft work feedback not matching final grade outcome		
SH	Well he was saying I was on the right lines cos I still had two weeks whatever to like work on it so it was not last minute or anything. But I was feeling really good and like yeah I can do this cos I need a really good grade cos it's like 50% of that module and the other part of it was presentation and I am really bad so I was feeling good and then the result just knocked me and kind of like my confidence, well not my	Draft feedback inconsistency leads to break down of relationship with lecturer		

	confidence but my kind of bit of trust in him was kind of like oh maybe I am not going to go see him again.			
SH	I was like he said I was going on the right lines I thought I would of done better but it turns out, no.	Draft feedback inconsistent with final grade		
CT	But I went to see him about it cos he'd said it was good. He said he did not remember seeing me.	Staff not remembering giving feedback on draft work		
CT	It wasn't written in a bad way it was what obviously they thought but it was the feedback I'd got on the first draft of it that, how can you say something's good and then rip it to shreds!	Staff not remembering giving feedback on draft work		
CT	Wrote an essay the other week and I got told it was good off one member of staff and then he marked it and I got told it was bad, so I was a bit.	Mismatch between staff comments on draft work and final		

		grade		
CT	Being told it was good and then it weren't what they were looking for	Mismatch between staff comments on draft work and final grade		
CT	I only got told I had a couple of changes to make and then I handed it in two weeks later with a couple of changes and I didn't even pass it.	Mismatch between staff comments on draft work and final grade		
CT	Just that I'd put a lot of effort in and it was going good. I just needed a couple of changes cos I'd mixed things up a bit.	Mismatch between staff comments on draft work and final grade		
MM	It's just when you bring work to the tutor to start with and they point out what you have done in the first place, it did not change much from altogether that much from when I handed it in first and when I handed in the main copy, so how can you say to me that a lot of effort went into it you know. Maybe they meant that because I took	Student rationalising why staff would make an inappropriate		

	it to them a few times and they just wanted to, you know on a personal level maybe that kind that's why they wrote that	comment on work		
EW	Yeah and I just think like I think everybody should be marked within the same, that you should either be able to or not be able to because I just don't think it's fair the fact that some people are saying oh include this and then other people are just, you don't know whether.	Equality for all students for draft work comments		
EW	But I just think it's just, I just think it should all be the same because obviously that is going to affect other people's marks, so I don't think they take into consideration.	Equality for all students for draft work comments		
SM	Obviously like it helps you like cos obviously they are telling you what you need to and whatever. But like sometimes like they are like no do not hand it in in draft it's just whatever you do and you are like oh God.	Draft work not always offered	Draft work not offered	
SR	Yeah cos you do feel like I said before, just lost like well you feel like you have got no guidance for it. It's just guesswork and when you hand it in you've no idea whether you are on the right track, you have answered the question, how you think you should of, but there was no guidance from the tutor so.	If draft work is not offered negative feelings fostered		

SR	It doesn't affect like my other work it just frustrates me because and I'll always leave that piece of work till last.	If no draft is offered feelings of frustration fostered and work left to last minute		
SH	Sometimes, like there's lecturers that are really helpful and like you go and see but then there's others that are just like no	Not all staff offer draft work		
SM	But like sometimes like they are like no do not hand it in in draft it's just whatever you do and you are like oh God.	Draft work not offered to students		

9.5 Appendix 5 - Study Three: Sample part of transcript

Sample - Ivor

Researcher - That was Paul, what are your initial reactions?

Ivor - A little bit depressing really. I suppose it's the difference between university and school sixth form education and you think by the time you'd got to the third year maybe you'd come to terms with that but on the other hand, he's articulating a real concern. I think the thing is, presumably at A levels, A levels and being in sixth forms, you have your teacher five hours a week, probably see them four days a week for odd lessons and you might have a class of 30 or so and you'd be with them, it is a different sort of environment, especially with our university now. On the one hand we're going on about knowing the students, which is really important, but on the other hand, all this stuff about research and form teaching and they have one hour lectures just delivered by experts, presumably would mean even more fragmentation for students, they'd have lectures which have no interaction with the student, I'm not sure. The thing about feeling stupid was interesting but I think again that's probably a little bit ... in a sixth form college you see your teacher right through school, they do tend to assume university lecturers are a bit special, apart from the mature students who actually treat us like servants, but the younger ones do tend to be rather in awe. I don't know that group but I could imagine in some groups you do get a few mature students who are more confident, who will dominate the discussion, who will come and get feedback and the younger ones on the edge kind of think, they're answering all the questions, they're taking up the tutor's time, we'll have a chat about possible solutions later. I think

somehow we've got to build in more structured feedback somehow, we've got to have time for that though.

Researcher - Paul talks about the relationship, you mentioned about school, that he hasn't got that with his lecturers because he perhaps doesn't see them as often as he'd like. What are your thoughts on that then?

Ivor - We're a little bit hamstrung because if you're doing a degree, by the time you get to your third year you're probably doing options or doing more specialist things and so the tutors are only going to see students for maybe one, two hours a week, apart from maybe the dissertation tutor. I think that's a shame, that's obviously going to affect the relationship. I just think if somehow we could make feedback seem more important to students, because they are pretty obsessed with their marks but ideally if we could actually have timetabled hours, because as you know, Ed, a lot of students just don't bother to come and get feedback if you offer that, so how you can do that meaningfully with large groups and I don't know the size of those groups but some of our third year classes next year and second year have got 50 students in them. If you see 50 students for two hours a week it's difficult, and the other six hours ... the other four hours they might be doing another subject [inaudible 3.51] so that student is only doing four hours in one subject, possibly two hours a week, one person two hours with another, if he's lucky, because you might have different people coming in. It's just a different experience. Although I'm not convinced about it, maybe this new first year is a way of starting things off better so they get a relationship right at the beginning, we'll have to see how that pans out.

Researcher - He did mention, aside from the relationship, he talked about learning being all left down to him. Is that something that you promote in your students?

Ivor - Well, that is one of the ideas, that students become more self-regulated or whatever, that's the whole idea isn't it really, primary school you have everything given to you and then sixth form you do a bit more on your own, university, first year is a bit more closeted but it's how you manage that in the classroom and I think we've really got to look at the numbers for teaching in the second and third years, make that work. It's very difficult to manage groups of the size I mentioned in two hours and actually give them anything helpful.

9.6 Appendix 6 - Study three: Sample Data Analysis table

Theme: Efficacy Conceptions

Part	Raw Data Theme	1st Order Theme	2nd Order Theme	3rd Order Dimension	Broad Dimension
W	We don't want to say to a student when they first come to uni, you're upper level is a 50 and that's what you're going to achieve.	Achievement level is not predetermined	Ability is not Fixed		Efficacy Conceptions
O'C	I think she's particularly frank in admitting a lack of natural ability, which again as a tutor I'd never be inclined to make comments on natural ability to students, especially if it's going to be negative	Lecturer avoids discussing natural ability			
H	I do think with Jill, I don't think it's a problem but I think she has an issue with self-confidence that she doesn't think she has the base level of intelligence of the brightest people in her year and I think that's wrong	Lecturer believes ability is not fixed			
	In order for her to progress I think she really needs to start to speak to her tutors and the misconception that her tutor will think she is silly is	Lecturers do not think students			

M	really unfortunate because tutors do not think that at all	are silly			
O'C	I would reassure her that she wouldn't have got this far without having the ability to be there and that I would obviously tell her that she can and will do better if she listens to the feedback, implements it, if there is anything she needs clarified to ask I think that's very important	Lecturers do not think students are silly			
W	If you're told, as many girls are, "you're rubbish at maths", you perceive that as a negative comment, but then you replicate and generalise it to other comments, and so when somebody gives you some critical feedback, the word critical is misunderstood, and I think that's when they see it as being told off in some way	Negative comments can change students long term ability perception			
W	You hear it in exam boards sometimes. "There's nothing going on there", and I'm no saint. I may have said that myself, but it's not something that I'd be very proud about, do you know what I mean?	Some lecturers dismissive of student ability			
W	Obviously I think everyone has got a natural ability and perhaps there are limits to their natural ability but they don't need to know that.	Ability is limited for some students	Ability is Fixed	Ability	

M	2.2 is just seen as not a good degree, even those students who are patently unable to get 2.1s think they should and a lot of students are under the illusion they might get firsts when they're nowhere near that.	Ability is limited for some students			
W	It sounds as though she doesn't genuinely believe in her ability	Student has a negative conception of ability	Negative conception of ability		
W	It sounds as though she didn't expect to ever be doing university study and doesn't believe that's she's on a level that would warrant that	Student has a negative conception of ability			
D	It's their perception that they don't have the ability	Student has a negative conception of ability			
	I can understand what she's saying, and she sort of puts the excuse that some people seem to have natural ability, so she's sort of saying "well	Student has a negative			

D	hang on, I haven't got natural ability, so I've sort of arrived at a point because I haven't done the work essentially".	conception of ability			
F	I think if she actually understands, well it is attainable, this is the way to attain it, she'll soon realise that she can actually do that.	Student has a negative conception of ability			
M	She's lacking confidence, academic confidence, in what she does. She seems to be clearly thinking that any academic piece of work that she does its rubbish and she's almost frightened to get the grades, sorry, get the results.	Students low confidence affecting approach to work	Students low in confidence affects approach to work	Confidence	
W	It sounds like she's having a bit of a confidence crisis so it might be that she's actually capable of a lot higher than she's getting	Students low confidence affecting approach to work			
M	It's difficult because that's the sort of student who won't come running for feedback, that's why I think we've got to have some proper	Low confidence students don't come for			

	mechanism for giving that girl feedback.	feedback			
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9.7 Appendix 7 – Ethical Approval

LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

Research Ethics Clearance Form

SECTION 1. YOUR DETAILS

Name:	Edd Pitt
Faculty:	Education
Degree for which this research is being conducted or staff position at Hope	PhD Education
Supervisor or Project Leader/Principal Researcher	Professor Lin Norton
Period during which research will be conducted	November 2010 – July 2011
Any specific external professional codes of practice that pertain to the kind of research proposed	
Your Signature	

SECTION 2. DETAILS OF RESEARCH STUDY

<p>Full title of the research study</p>	<p>Feedback in Higher Education: Exploring students' appraisal, comprehension and utilisation.</p>
<p>Aims and objectives of the research study</p>	<p>Aim - To explore how students appraise, comprehend and subsequently utilise feedback received from lecturers.</p> <p>Objectives – Carry out in depth one-to-one interviews exploring students experiences of the feedback process and subsequent utilisation of such feedback in future assessments</p>
<p>Brief outline of the research study in non-technical language (approx 300 words)</p>	<p>By its very nature feedback is evaluative and provides a student with knowledge of their performance in a given task (Hounsell, 1987). Within Higher Education programmes feedback is often given by teaching staff to facilitate a student's improvement (Hester, 2001). The effect that feedback has upon a particular student is unpredictable in terms of enhancing a student's motivation, self-confidence and subsequent effort deployment in future assessments (Young, 2000). In order for University lecturers to improve the quality of teaching and associated quality of learning, a greater understanding of the relationship between the feedback that is offered and its</p>

	<p>subsequent utilisation by students seems logical.</p> <p>The literature relating to feedback has seen many shifts in supported conceptual and theoretical understanding in recent years. In particular, there are current debates relating to what the exact purpose of feedback is. The present study seeks to understanding student's appraisal, perceptions and subsequent behavioural adaptations to feedback within a Higher Education context.</p> <p>Central to the study is an exploration of the emotions involved when a student receives feedback In particular the study is concerned with the affect such emotions have upon the students attempts to appraise, comprehend and utilise the feedback received. This seems a prudent area warranting further enquiry if we consider that the effect of emotional engagement is of great consideration to university lecturers, considering that potentially emotions could last for a sustained period of time.</p> <p>Understanding this cause and effect relationship is crucial to further the understanding of higher education feedback. This research is framed around questioning the established mechanism of simply giving student's feedback and expecting them to attend and adjust.</p>
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Where will the study take place and in what setting?	Liverpool Hope University, One-to-one interviews in Researchers office (glass windowed)
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SECTION 3. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

How will the participants in the study be selected, approached and recruited?	Approached by researcher to participate. Students that researcher does not teach
How many participants will be recruited and of what age group?	25 Undergraduate Students

SECTION 4. CONSENT

Is written consent to be obtained?

Yes

Please use STANDARD CONSENT FORM

If no written consent is to be obtained EXPLAIN WHY

Have any special arrangements been made for participants for whom English is not a first language

If **yes**, give details


Are the participants in one of the following vulnerable groups?

Children under 16 No

People with learning difficulties No

Other vulnerable groups e.g. mental illness, dementia
No

If **yes**, give details i.e. What special arrangements have been made to deal with the issues of consent e.g. is parental or guardian agreement to be obtained, and if so in what form?



Every participant must be given a written information sheet giving details about the research, separate from the consent form.

PLEASE ATTACH A COPY.

SECTION 5. RISKS AND ETHICAL PROCEDURE

Are there any potential hazards to participants

(physical and/or psychological)?

No

If **yes**, give details and give the likelihood and details of precautions taken to meet them, and arrangements to deal with adverse events:

Is this study likely to cause discomfort or distress to participants?

No

If **yes**, estimate the degree and likelihood of discomfort or distress entailed:

SECTION 6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Will the study data be held on a computer?

Yes

If **yes**, will the relevant Data Protection Regulations be observed? (e.g. will data be kept under secure conditions so that it will not be accessible, interpretable, and used by

individuals outside the project?). Give details of the steps you will undertake to ensure data security:

Pseudonyms will be used to protect participant identities

All data will be held on a password protected PC and within a password protected file on such a PC

Have any additional steps been taken to safeguard confidentiality of personal records?

Yes

If **yes**, give details:

Pseudonyms will be used to protect participant identities

c) Will the study include the use of any of the following?

Audio/video recording

Yes

Observation of participants

No

If **yes** to either, how are confidentiality and anonymity to be ensured? What arrangements have been made to obtain consent? Please state how audio/video recording will be destroyed/neutralised at the end of the study:

All Audio Data will be destroyed once the study has been completed. Participants will be encouraged to participate in member checking of data once transcribed and analysed to ensure accuracy of transcription and data analysis.

9.8 Appendix 8 – Participant information sheet

Research Project Title: Feedback in Higher Education: Exploring students' appraisal, comprehension and utilisation.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the Research?

By its very nature feedback is evaluative and provides a student with knowledge of their performance in a given task (Hounsell, 1987). Within Higher Education programmes feedback is often given by teaching staff to facilitate a student's improvement (Hester, 2001). The effect that feedback has upon a particular student is unpredictable in terms of enhancing a student's motivation, self-confidence and subsequent effort deployment in future assessments (Young, 2000). In order for University lecturers to improve the quality of teaching and associated quality of learning, a greater understanding of the relationship between the feedback that is offered and its subsequent utilisation by students seems logical.

Research Aim - To explore how students appraise, comprehend and subsequently utilise feedback received from lecturers.

Timeframe – The research will be carried out between November 2010 and June 2011

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as the research is particularly interested in Level H students studying within the Science & Social Science Faculty at Liverpool Hope University. There will be many other students in a similar position to you who have also been approached to become participants.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research project is entirely voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will participate in a 45minute interview relating to your experiences of assessment and feedback during your time at Liverpool Hope University. As part of this interview the researcher will ask you to participate in a small activity requiring you to pictorially depict your emotional reaction to feedback received. This is not an assessment of your artistic capability, rather a means to prompt discussion of your experiences. Within the interview details of the drawing activity will be fully explained and an opportunity to participate in a warm-up activity will be available to you.

Benefits of Participation

Your participation in this research can result in a number of benefits which include:

For staff:

- Improved understanding of the ways in which students utilise Feedback.
- Improved understanding of how students approach assessment tasks.

For students:

- Greater understanding of your assessment journey whilst at Liverpool Hope.
- Critical reflection on your use of feedback received from Lecturers.

You need to be aware that:

Information from this study may be used for publication and disseminated at conferences.

There will be consultation between the researcher and supervisory team regarding the data, which may be shared with colleagues within the University.

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time during the study.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.

Data will be kept secure and any form of publication, including the Internet, will not directly or indirectly lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity.

You will have access to any reports/findings should you wish.

Contact for further information

Mr Edd Pitt

Science & Social Science Faculty

Liverpool Hope University

Taggart Avenue

Liverpool

L16 9JD

Tel: 01512912150

Email: pitte@hope.a.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this & Participating in the Research

9.9 Appendix 9 - DVD

