

[O15] Headlines from the FAST project – assessment for effective learning

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The central role of feedback is widely acknowledged not only in the literature (see, for example, Gibbs and Simpson, 2005) but also in the time and energy spent in providing it. However, practice has not always been informed by a clear understanding of how feedback can engage students and impact on learning.

The Formative Assessment in Science Teaching (FAST) project has involved science teachers from 17 universities reflecting on how they might modify their assessment practice in order to improve the learning of students. The work has been wide ranging in scope and method but within a common ‘good practice’ framework of 11 conditions that, when met, lead to formative assessment supporting learning. The framework was originally proposed by Gibbs and Simpson (2005) as a means of considering of how assessment promotes learning. It is fully described in several publications (see the FAST Website www.open.ac.uk/science/fdtl for full details).

This presentation will provide a brief overview of the project and will set out the major themes that have emerged within a very disparate set of assessment contexts. The discussion will be illustrated by examples of how the deeper analysis carried out within FAST has forced us to confront major issues in the design of assessment. For example, the role of written feedback has been analysed using a coding tool (previously reported at ISL 2004), to demonstrate that the large majority of such feedback at the Open University and Sheffield Hallam University is focused on justifying marks and is of limited value in guiding future learning. This highlights the gap in discourse

between teacher and learner. There are implications for the design of assignments that invite more effective feedback and the briefing of tutors about giving feedback. This analysis is further described in the poster presentation from this conference, ‘*Written feedback - Is there any point?*’ (Brown and Glover).

REFERENCES

- Gibbs, G. and Simpson, C.** (2005) ‘Does your assessment support your students’ learning?’ *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 1