University of Reading

A cross-disciplinary investigation of subject tutor feedback: lessons for the EAP practitioner.

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

Lena Grannell

December 2022

Declaration: I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Lena Grannell

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my two supervisors, Dr Tony Capstick and Professor Clare Furneaux, for their support, guidance and constructive feedback. Their input at all stages of the research and writing process has illustrated just how helpful feedback can be. I would also like to thank the tutors and students who participated in this study and who kindly agreed to share their feedback.

This thesis is dedicated to mum and dad, with my thanks and love.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

Studies have demonstrated that academic disciplines can show considerable variation not just in terms of the language forms and structures used, but also in relation to other disciplinary practices, such as the way in which knowledge claims are made and arguments developed (e.g. Lea & Street 1998; Hyland 2013a). Adopting a critical pragmatic approach (Harwood & Hadley 2004), this study first explores variation in what subject tutors from four different disciplines focus on in their written feedback. The data comprises feedback provided on 54 postgraduate assignments drawn from modules in Creative Industries, Biological Sciences, Child Studies, and Applied Linguistics, as well as interviews with each module convener. MaxQDA qualitative software is used to conduct a content analysis of the data. The software not only assists with the coding and categorization of the data leading to the development of a categorization framework, but also enables a search of specific overlapping codes and a corpus search of lexical items to explore the findings still further.

The second research question sets out to explore feedback from an alternative perspective, that of the learner. Studies investigating students' satisfaction with feedback continue to paint a pessimistic picture (e.g., O'Donovan 2020; Clegg & Bryan 2019), reflecting the relatively low satisfaction rates with feedback and assessment in national student surveys (NSS 2021; PTES 2020). The chosen research design to address this second question draws on the method adopted by Winstone et al., (2016) whereby prior research surveying students' perceptions of feedback is used to generate a list of valued feedback qualities as a methodological point of reference with which to explore the alignment between actual tutor practice and students' views of effective feedback.

The investigation of feedback from these four modules does not represent a sample from which generalisations can be drawn, since commentary provided on students' work comprises just a small part of a complex intervention (Boud & Molloy 2013). However, examining findings through contrast of disciplines can shed additional light on what subject tutors from different faculties value in a text, and therein assist the writing practitioner when identifying priorities of EAP provision across different disciplines. This investigation, for example, reports on differences in the extent and nature of criticality and contestation across disciplines and genres, how the rhetorical value placed on 'clarity' is consistent across all faculties, and how commentary addressing other aspects of student writing, such as register and language, is absent. With respect to the alignment between actual tutor practice and students' views of effective feedback, this study finds that, by and large, tutor commentary does match students' expections in regard to the qualities desired in feedback.

Chapter 1: Introduction

My interest in subject tutor feedback stretches back nearly two decades and stems from taking part in cross-college tutorial support to L1 and L2 students at the participating university in this study. These tutorials were particularly insightful when the central focus was the feedback received from students' subject tutors. As Co-ordinator of academic writing support at this university, my role involved developing both an institutional awareness and an understanding of the prevailing discursive practices within the academy. Research investigating disciplinarity (e.g. Christie & Maton 2011) has shown that different subject areas construct knowledge in distinct ways. According to Hyland (2004 p.3), 'disciplines are defined by their writing', not in terms of *what* is written but *how*. Thus, how an academic writes in one discipline such as law, differs from how another one writes in medicine. This was of particular importance in my coordinator role given the significant range of subject areas offered at this institution. The access tutorials provided to students' assignments and the feedback they received informed my understanding of tutor expectations and disciplinary norms more than any other activity investigating discipline-specificity. However, the teaching provision within the EAP unit I was based, tended towards a more homogeneous academic discourse, viewing academic writing as 'a set of decontextualized skills … transferable across domains and disciplines' contrary to research, for example by Hyland, demonstrating that discourses vary considerably across disciplines (Hyland 2004 p.x). This framework for EAP provision was also not consistent with the consensus among the wider EAP community prevailing at the time or indeed now: that a knowledge of the discursive features of disciplinary discourses and how they vary should be considered 'a crucial tool in the EAP tutor's armoury' (Sharpling 2002 p.87).

This interest in subject tutor feedback led to the start of my research journey, and also coincided with the beginning of an increased salience of feedback within the assessment literature. This greater prominence has been attributed, at least in part, to the shift towards more transparency and regulation in assessment practices within the UK Higher Education sector, and the increased attention paid to assessment and feedback in student satisfaction surveys (Yelland 2011). The National Student Survey (NSS) has consistently reported the broad category 'Assessment and Feedback' as having one of the lowest mean scores, and yet it should be noted that, until 2021, satisfaction rates in this category have shown consistent, albeit small, improvement (NSS 2021). A similar pattern can also be seen in the Postgraduate Taught Education Survey (PTES); the category 'Assessment and Feedback', traditionally reported as one of the weaker-performing areas of student experience, has seen a small positive upward trend since 2014 (PTES 2020).

Findings from prior research investigating the reasons behind the overall lower satisfaction scores for 'Assessment and Feedback' are inconclusive, which O'Donovan, den Outer, Price and Lloyd (2021) attribute to possible variation in terms of both understanding of the feedback process, and contextual situation. Certainly, the move towards interdisciplinary and modular programmes has had a direct impact on curriculum provision (Lea & Stierer 2000), and these changing contextual factors have heightened the complexity of negotiating discipline and context-specific demands surrounding the production of academic texts. Another reason mooted for the low levels of student satisfaction in the feedback literature is the disjuncture between students' and tutors' perceptions of effective feedback. For example, a study by Li and De Luca (2014) reviews 37 empirical studies in the UK and Australia investigating both tutors and undergraduate students' perceptions of feedback practices in various disciplines. They found significant dissonance between students' and educators' perspectives in terms of the effectiveness of comments in feeding forward. Their conclusions find close correspondence with those of another study by Dawson et al., (2019). Their large-scale survey at two Australian universities also found divergence between staff and student perceptions as to what makes feedback effective.

The increased attention paid to students' feedback preferences has also been linked to the introduction of tuition fees towards the end of the last century (Birenbaum 2007). This landscape has given rise to the perception of a service-driven orientation within higher education, with some lecturers believing that tuition fees have encouraged a 'consumerist attitude', with universities now expected to provide 'value for money' (Rolfe 2002 p.178). However, Higgins, Hartley and Skelton (2002 p.59), challenge the assumption that students are merely motivated by marks, suggesting instead that the student has become a 'conscientious consumer', that is to say, one that sets considerable store by feedback, in particular feedback information that facilitates high-quality learning. This view is echoed in a study by Winstone, Nash, Rowntree and Menezes (2016 p.1244) which found that the 'foremost quality' desired of tutors by students was useful feedback input.

Whilst acknowledging that student satisfaction and uptake of feedback are an interplay of many factors, to be explored in the next chapter, the quality of the written feedback artefact itself clearly plays an important part. Yet there are few studies examining actual subject tutor feedback to investigate the valued features of assignments and students' writing across disciplines. Furthermore, key figures within the field (e.g. Wingate & Tribble 2012 p.491) have highlighted the need for teacher-researchers to investigate texts from a wider range of disciplines to gain 'a more nuanced account' of

expectations and practices across the academy. Likewise, Hyland (2004) highlights the need for studies to explore the complex and specific disciplinary contexts which frame the language and writing practices drawn upon within specific discourse communities. It is within this research space that this cross-disciplinary investigation of subject tutor written feedback lies.

The four disciplinary sites investigated for the purpose of this study appear to confirm the status quo identified in the literature of nearly a decade ago, at least in relation to feedback given post-assignment: firstly, that in the majority of academic programmes, written commentary remains the conventional mode of delivery for feedback (Jolly & Boud 2013); secondly, that despite changing conceptions of pedagogic best-practice, and innovations for improving provision and student engagement in the feedback process, feedback practice remains teacher-centric (Molloy & Boud 2013). And while the feedback literature may have provided some insights into the feedback properties desired by students, there are few studies investigating the alignment between students' perceptions as to what constitutes effective feedback and actual subject tutor practices. There are still fewer researchers taking this investigation across different disciplinary research sites.

It is within this higher education landscape that this current research study is situated. This context also provides the impetus for the study's line of inquiry, that of a cross-discipline investigation of subject tutor feedback on postgraduate level writing.

1.1 Aims and Rationale

The objectives of this research are twofold. The first aim is to investigate subject tutor feedback provided on postgraduate students' written work across four different disciplines, in order to explore what tutors focus on in their feedback comments and identify the extent to which there is variation between the four disciplines. To this end, this research involves the study of real-world data, that is to say, the actual feedback artifacts created as a result of subject tutors' normal feedback practice. Brown and Harris (2018), in their recent survey of the methods employed in empirical feedback studies, refer to such artefacts as 'traces left behind in natural processes' and attest to the collection and analysis of this type of data as being a 'well-established tradition in social science research' (2018 p.105). The authors also assert that this data has 'great validity' since it is generated naturally and does not involve researcher input (2018 p.105). By investigating feedback, this study explores one of the main mediums used by tutors to convey expectations to students.

The second aim is to examine the extent to which subject tutor feedback includes the attributes of quality desired by students, for example, comments identifying ways for students to improve future performance (Gibbs & Simpson 2005; Dawson et al., 2019). To achieve this, a review of the literature surveying students' perceptions of feedback is undertaken, specifically to examine which feedback properties are considered useful. Data from the four disciplines are analysed against these valued feedback qualities as a means of exploring the alignment between actual tutor practice and students' perceptions of effective feedback. The inclusion of interviews with each of the four module conveners as an additional source of data provides an insight into the intentions of subject tutors when giving written feedback and adds the subject tutors' perspectives on feedback practices to the study. The aim of employing more than one method of data collection is to gain a fuller understanding of tutor feedback practices and the extent to which these align with students' perceptions of effective feedback. In this study, I therefore seek to address the following research questions:

- RQ1 Feedback focus
  - RQ1a What do tutors in modules on four programmes in different disciplines focus on in their written feedback comments at PGT level?
  - RQ1b How do findings differ across the four disciplines?

- RQ2 Alignment with students' perceptions of effective feedback
  - RQ2a To what extent does subject tutor feedback align with student perceptions of effective feedback as outlined in the literature?
  - RQ2b To what extent does subject tutor feedback differ from student perceptions of effective feedback as outlined in the literature?

For the purpose of this thesis, Boud and Molloy's definition of 'feedback' is adopted:

> Feedback is a process whereby learners obtain information about their work in order to appreciate the similarities and differences between the appropriate standards for any given work, and the qualities of the work itself, in order to generate improved work. (Boud & Molloy 2013 p.6)

Conceptually, this definition is congruent with a more constructivist view of feedback in that it focuses on the learner rather than the feedback provider. Their definition also recognizes feedback as a process rather than a one-off interaction and provides performance-gap information for the learner to utilize in future work. With regard to the object of this study, the term feedback is used in a narrow sense insofar as the information received by learners in this context only applies to tutor-authored written feedback and not other modes of delivery such as oral feedback, nor other sources such as

peer review or self-evaluation. Similarly, although the term feedback can apply to information provided to work in progress, in the present study the term only applies to summative feedback provided post-assignment.

1.2 Data collection: Study 1

This thesis comprises two data collections; herein referred to as Study 1, and Study 2 or the present study. Data collection for Study 1 (Grannell 2017) was completed as part of this author's first-year taught track programme and involved collecting data from postgraduate modules in Creative Industries, and Biological Sciences. For Study 2, the data collection was extended with the inclusion of data from two additional postgraduate modules in Child Studies, and Applied Linguistics (see section 3.5). The circumstances in which these modules served as research sites for data collection were the result of convenience sampling. The module conveners approached to participate in this study were already known to this researcher through my previous role as coordinator of academic writing provision at the participating university. This role involved liaising with module conveners in setting up tailored support for their students. The successful working relationship established in this role provided an ease of access when approaching these conveners to participate in this study.

The data set in Study 1 comprises 12 feedback scripts from each of the two participating departments (n=24). The decision was taken to request assignments only at the taught master's level of study since the research literature (e.g. Evans 2013) reports a lack of studies focusing on postgraduate work. Other researchers in the field have also opted to focus on postgraduate level work rather than undergraduate work on the understanding that this level better exemplifies discipline-specific differences (Whong & Godfrey 2021). As one of the research questions in Study 1 compared the amount of explicit commentary on language issues, purposive sampling was undertaken to enable comparisons to be made. In purposive sampling, 'researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011 p.156). Module conveners were therefore asked to select samples which met two particular characteristics, grade band (pass band 50 – 59%) and students' first language (English as L1 or L2) in order to enable an investigation of the amount of feedback commentating on language issues in discursive humanities fields compared to a hard science area.

1.3 Data Collection: Study 2

While the earlier study investigated disciplinary variation in the amount of subject tutors commentary on language issues provided on both L1 and L2 scripts, the rationale for the present study is to gain a better understanding of what tutors from different faculties value in a text and what it means to write within disciplines. As feedback is one of the main ways tutors convey expectations to students, and as studies based on this naturally occurring data can help enrich the field of feedback research, the decision was taken to broaden the earlier investigation through contrast of two further disciplines. The introduction of GDPR compliance in the interim period between the first and second data collection phases impacted on the data collection for the present study, Study 2, in particular the procedure for seeking student consent and subsequently the ease with which student assignments and accompanying feedback could be obtained (see section 3.6). Consequently, a self-selecting sampling approach was adopted whereby students within the two additional modules responded to an appeal for volunteers. This method of recruiting participants meant that inclusion and exclusion criteria could not be set as with Study 1 which led to a range of band grades and an unequal number of L1 and L2 participants (see Appendix II). This sampling procedure has some disadvantages, one of which being that the respondents are usually those most keen to help or interested in the issue under investigation (Newby 2014). Given the sensitivities surrounding feedback, it could be assumed that a self-selecting procedure would attract only volunteers in receipt of a higher grade band for their work. In fact, the grades of the assignments received cover almost the entire range of grades. Surprisingly, the grade distribution across data sets for both additional modules is also very similar (Table 2).

For Study 2, a further 16 feedback scripts were collected from Child Studies and a further 14 from Applied Linguistics, thus the data set in Study 2 comprises a total of 54 feedback scripts (n=54) (see section 3.5 for final composition of the data collection). While in-text comments were included for Study 1, for the present study, Study 2, the data collection only comprises the summative end-text comments from all four modules. The decision to exclude in-text comments rested on the fact that only 12 of the scripts provided in-text annotations in addition to end-text summary comments. The other 42 sampling units only provided comments at the end of the assignment (see section 3.8). Another difference between both studies is the framework for Study 1 comprised a single set of categories and subcategories, whereas the feedback classification system developed for Study 2 comprises three layers, each with a separate set of codes (see Appendix I). Use of MaxQDA software enables crosstabulations between these different sets of codes, by using a search function to explore overlapping codes to examine the data still further. Therefore, while some of the same data appears

in both studies, a new framework has been employed to analyse the total population sample in Study 2.

1.4 Overview

This study proceeds with the literature review, the starting point for which is the theoretical framework underpinning this research and the methodological approach taken. The chapter then goes on to review the feedback literature according to three broad domains: the effectiveness of feedback and factors mitigating its efficacy; tutor written feedback; and tutors' and students' perceptions of feedback. Chapter three presents the research design and coding framework developed for this study. The institutional context and participants involved in the research are also presented. Chapter four presents the findings and analysis of the feedback data according to each of the three layers of coding and drawing on conveners' comments in interview. Chapter five discusses the key empirical findings to emerge from this study in relation to each research question and the prior literature. The contribution of this research to the wider pool of feedback studies and pedagogical implications will also be discussed. The concluding chapter discusses areas for future research and limitations of this study, before moving on to my final remarks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Two decades ago, Higgins et al., (2002) argued that concerns relating to the provision and student uptake of written feedback remained an under-researched area. Today, this is no longer the case since the existing body of literature investigating written feedback is large and diverse. To ensure this review took account of this extensive body of scholarly literature, key databases indexing the educational-related literature such as ERIC were searched, as well as ejournal collections such as Taylor & Francis Online, and Elsevier, as well as academic search engines such as google scholar.

This chapter will start by discussing the theoretical paradigm informing the approach and methodology adopted for this study. The chapter will then situate the study in the literature. In doing so, the literature is broadly divided into three sections: the first reviews studies exploring the effectiveness of feedback and those factors mitigating its efficacy. The review then moves on to provide a review of the literature exploring teacher-authored written feedback, the focus of the first research question: what do tutors in modules on four programmes in different disciplines focus on in their written feedback comments at PG level? The final section moves on to explore the literature surrounding tutors', and more importantly, students' perceptions of feedback quality and effectiveness, since it is from the literature relating to students' perceptions of effective practice that part of the categorization framework emerges from which to address the second research question: to what extent does subject tutor feedback align with and differ from student perceptions of effective feedback? These three broad domains are divided into a number of subsections between which there is some overlap. This review concludes by identifying an unexplored area of feedback which is the focus of this investigation.

In identifying the research space to be explored in this study, this chapter reviews feedback studies conducted in various contexts (Anglophone and non-Anglophone), and at different educational levels (UG and PG). This chapter also reviews studies exploring feedback written by different providers (EAP tutors and subject specialists), for different recipients (L1 and L2 students). To guide the reader through these various contexts and participants, I include the setting, level of study, discipline(s), and demographic data of the participating students where available. The term 'EAP tutor' is used generically to refer to feedback providers commenting on L2 written work, both in HE and non-HE settings, but typically in the context of presessional courses preparing students for academic study. The term 'subject tutor' is used to refer to subject specialists teaching UG or PG content courses, and

the providers of feedback on assignments written by their course cohort comprising both L1 and L2 students.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This section discusses the theoretical paradigm informing the approach and methodology adopted for this study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) define research paradigms as 'the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (p.105) A paradigm, therefore, not only denotes the researcher's philosophical view regarding the nature of reality and knowledge, but also informs how the researcher seeks to uncover knowledge relating to their particular area of inquiry.

The major paradigms across academic research include positivism, postpositivism, critical realism and constructivism. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) suggest that since the mid-90s there has been a move within the social sciences from positivism, which is premised on an objectivist ontology and epistemology, towards more interpretive paradigms such as constructivism and critical realism. The authors also suggest that some paradigms are 'interbreeding' (2011 p.97), meaning that whereas paradigms were previously regarded as in contention with each other, research by a practitioner of one paradigm inquiry may now also be informed by another theoretical perspective. Whilst some proponents of a particular paradigm may contend a greater legitimacy thus a higher status in the hierarchies of knowledge over other paradigms, Paltridge and Phakiti (2015) rightly challenge this view, arguing instead that research is assessed on the basis of the focus of the investigation, the aims and methodology, and that ultimately the aim of all researchers is to contribute to knowledge and understanding within their particular research inquiry no matter which theoretical perspective is taken.

2.2.1 Constructivist paradigms

Much of the recent feedback literature takes a constructivist perspective (Boud 2000; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006). Within the constructivism paradigm, knowledge is described 'not as truths to be transmitted or discovered, but as emergent, developmental, non-objective, viable constructed explanations by humans engaged in meaning-making in cultural and social communities of discourse' (Fosnot 2005 para 1). While the constructivist paradigm does not provide a theory of teaching as such, it does suggest a different approach to teaching (Fosnot 2005), one in which the learner is repositioned as an active player in the construction of knowledge rather than that of passive participant learning

involved in a one-way teacher-to-student transmission of knowledge. This new approach to teaching which emphasizes learning through students' active participation in authentic learning activities also has implications on feedback. Rather than seeing feedback as a directive one-way flow of information whereby experts make judgements on aspects of performance by novices, the constructivist stance assumes a central and proactive role for the student in the feedback process, encouraging the student to explore understandings and make connections (Askew & Lodge 2000).

While constructivism emphasizes individual experiences in the construction of knowledge, social constructivism, influenced by Vygotsky (1978), places emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge, that is to say the development of knowledge takes place in a social context with other individuals before knowledge is internalized at the individual level and independent learning takes place (Amineh & Asl 2015). As with constructivism, a social constructivist view of learning encompasses an approach to teaching in which students play an active role in the educational enterprise, and the instructor, rather than engaging in a one-way transmission of knowledge, is seen as a facilitator. According to the social constructivist model, however, collaboration with others through social interaction opportunities available in an educational setting such as pair work or group work is fundamental before independent learning takes place. This draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice whereby 'groups of people who share a concern …. deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002 p.4).

Both constructivism and social constructivism have informed new feedback approaches, for example, Esterhazy and Damsa's (2019) study takes a social constructivist perspective as their theoretical point of departure in their study investigating how students co-construct meaning of tutor written feedback commentary through social interaction with their peers and tutors over a period of time. Higgins et al., (2002) also adopt a broad constructivist approach to learning to investigate whether formative feedback helps promote 'deep learning' amongst students, a phrase coined by Biggs (1999). Other scholars adopt a social constructivist stance to frame how socially situated feedback practices involving peer and teacher support help develop students' self-regulation of their own performance. For example, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) conceptual model of self-regulation is consistent with a social-constructivist view of learning. This model is based on seven principles of good feedback practice which help students develop the ability to self-assess their progress, generate their own feedback and thus take more control of their learning.

This shift in theoretical perspectives towards constructivism and social constructivism since the 1990s has informed the feedback literature not just with relation to the content of feedback but also the activity of learners receiving feedback and providing it. However, it is not clear if there has been a similar shift in practice in the two or three decades since. Certainly, the conventional mode of written feedback for each summative written assessment continues to be the prevailing norm in all four participating departments in this study. Indeed Higgins et al., (2002) argue that a greater reliance falls on written feedback due to the increase in student numbers attending university, the resultant increase in tutors' workload, and the expansion of online learning . Given this theory-practice divide, this research takes a pragmatic approach. Whilst not considered a paradigm in the conventional sense (Paltridge & Phakiti 2015), Denzin & Lincoln argue that pragmatism 'is a theoretical position that privileges practice and method over reflection and deliberative action' (2017 part 1).

2.2.2 Pragmatism

A pragmatic philosophical perspective emerged around the 1990s from dissatisfaction with the debate surrounding the merits and legitimacy of competing paradigms and their contrasting ontological and epistemological positions. Cherryholmes (1992) has traced the roots of pragmatism to the writings of the American philosophers Pierce, James and Dewey in the early part of the twentieth century. Fast forward some 50 years and philosophical ideas became embroiled with matters concerning research practice with some scholars, notably Kuhn (1970), even interpreting quantitative and qualitive research as paradigms (Bryman 2008). In addition, Kuhn held the view that paradigms share no common ground in terms of their philosophical beliefs and thus are incompatible. This implied that researchers should not combine quantitative and qualitative research methods in empirical inquiries (Bryman 2008 p.14). In response, proponents of an initial pragmatic paradigm argued that quantitative and qualitative research is indeed compatible in terms of both epistemology and practice and therefore proposed that there were 'no good reasons for educational researchers to fear forging ahead with "what works". (Howe 1988 p.10). In the new millennium, Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2004 p.5) contested this stance arguing that it amounted to an unprincipled 'anything goes' approach liable to produce low quality research. Instead a 'pragmatic alternative' was proposed, with the quality of research practice placed at its centre (2004 p.4).

This view of pragmatism adopts a pluralistic approach to research rather than affiliation to a single paradigm, and consequently draws on both positivism and interpretive ontologies and epistemologies, depending on their suitability and applicability to the research investigation (Cohen

et al., 2011). Another central tenet of pragmatism is the use of methods as necessary – quantitative and/or qualitative – in order to fully address the research questions rather than use of an exclusive quantitative or qualitative methodology. It can therefore be argued that pragmatism underpins mixed methods research (Paltridge & Phakiti 2015).

Proponents of pragmatism do not commit to a single definable paradigm underpinning their research. By utilizing the best of qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain and analyse data, the researcher privileges the need to advance their knowledge of the issue under investigation in order to find answers to the research question, thus the emphasis shifts away from the conceptual debate since 'there are no concepts or beliefs that anchor mixed methods' (Newby 2014 p.48). Pragmatism is therefore oriented to solving a problem, the research question, and employing the most appropriate methodologies in this pursuit whether quantitative or qualitative, thus driven by practice rather than an ideal.

The 'problem' addressed in this study, centres around the specificity of academic discourse to particular disciplines and how these differences are often poorly understood by English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tutors and students alike. Teaching within some EAP support units assumes a homogeneous academic discourse, however studies have demonstrated that academic discourse varies between disciplines (e.g. Flowerdew 2002; Hyland 2004; Hyland 2009). Within the academic faculties, these variations are not made explicit to the student writer, thus not easily identifiable, which makes the teaching of these disciplinary variations somewhat problematic for the EAP practitioner. This problem is therefore a practical issue, one relevant to the teaching of EAP, the student writers, and to the wider academic community.

2.2.3 Pragmatic orientation within EAP

Within the literature for teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the term pragmatic EAP is used to refer to the teaching of 'a set of dominant academic discourse norms' (Harwood & Hadley 2004 p.356). For much of EAP's relatively short history, this pragmatic ideology has underpinned EAP practice, with EAP activity primarily involved in the investigation of these dominant conventions of the academic community in order to help students successfully appropriate them. The rise of critical approaches has challenged pragmatic EAP, condemning what is perceived as its predominantly unquestioning stance toward educational institutions and discourse practices, a position which seeks to help students conform to mainstream academic norms. This standpoint is described as 'accommodationist' by Benesch, (1993 p.706), and even 'vulgar pragmatism' by Cherryholmes (1988

cited in Pennycook 1997 p.256). Harwood and Hadley (2004) critique pragmatic EAP still further, arguing that encouraging students to conform to rhetorical styles of the academy marginalises L2 speakers. The authors suggest that this will reinforce an unjust system since this group of students are disadvantaged compared to first language speakers. However, this argument overlooks the fact that all students need to acquire competence in specific disciplinary discourses since they all are likely to be novices at the outset of their programmes.

Lillis and Scott (2007 p.12) also critique the pragmatic approach arguing that it rests on a number of 'educational myths' (Kress 2007 cited in Lillis & Scott p.3), one being the stability of disciplines on which basis many EAP resources tend to be written, another being 'the unidirectionality of the teacher-student relation' (2007 p.13). Instead, they argue for a transformative ideology 'exploring alternative ways of meaning making in academia, not least by considering the resources that (student) writers bring to the academy as legitimate tools for meaning making' (Lillis & Scott 2007 p.9). The transformative ideology proposed by Lillis and Scott, is essentially that of Critical EAP, both of which espouse to questioning existing educational practices and discourse norms with a view to transforming them. This critical orientation has also been challenged, with some questioning its usefulness to those teachers providing mainstream writing instruction (e.g. Wingate & Tribble 2012). As an alternative to both pragmatic and critical (transformative) approaches, Harwood and Hadley (2004) propose a critical pragmatic pedagogy which combines the questioning stance of critical EAP with pragmatic EAP's emphasis on exposing students to the dominant discourse norms to help access the academy. This balance between the two approaches reflects the position Benesch (2001 p.xvii) argues in favour of: 'to help students perform well in their academic courses while encouraging them to question and shape the education they are being offered'. And it is this middle ground where the present study positions itself.

2.2.4 Basic tenets underpinning this investigation

This study undertakes a pragmatic approach, drawing on critical pragmatic pedagogy. In so doing the following central tenets of pragmatism are adhered to:

1. This study utilizes individual interviews with feedback providers and coding schemes of data which draw on both objective and inferential coding processes thereby drawing on both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This also enables corroboration and triangulation between the different data sources.

2. Intra-coder reliability measures are employed to establish coding reliability, thus keeping a foothold in positivist research but also demonstrating a principled approach to the research.

3. The exploratory purpose of this study centres on a problem, that being disciplinary differences are often not well understood by either teachers of EAP or students.

4. EAP is essentially practice-driven, and its provision, certainly with respect to the branch of EAP referred to as English for Specific Academic purposes (ESAP), most interested in investigating the expectations of the academic community. Given that academic discourse differs across disciplines, where possible an effort needs to be made to take this variation into account when developing provision. In taking this standpoint, this research feeds into ESAP rather than English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), since it is contributing to the wider pool of studies investigating 'the specific epistemology, language, and practices of the target discipline and its community of practice' (Flowerdew 2016 p.10).

5. The analysis of subject tutor feedback EAP explores disciplinary differences with the aim of helping tutors, and therein students, acquire a better understanding of writing in disciplinary approved ways. Exploring the extent to which subject tutor feedback aligns with student perceptions of effective feedback, also involves a scrutiny and questioning of the pedagogical soundness of the tutor feedback practices observed. Adopting an approach to EAP similar to that of Benesch (2001), this inquiry is therefore both pragmatic and critical: pragmatic in that it is grounded in the requirements faced by students, but also critical in that it remains receptive to the possibility of challenging or even changing them.

This chapter will now move on to a review of the feedback literature starting with discussion of how ideas about what constitutes feedback have been reframed in response to changing perspectives of how feedback enhances learning.

2.3 Feedback theory in education

According to Molloy and Boud (2013), within the field of eduction, feedback theory was initially only concerned with the input of information, overlooking the volition of the learner in the feedback process. In recent years, definitions have shifted from the more cognitivist perspective viewing student learning as a one-way teacher-to-student transmission of knowledge in which feedback is

given as a single interaction towards a more constructivist perspective focussing on the learner rather than the feedback provider. Feedback now tends to be conceptualised as 'a process extended over time … not a single act of reception of information' (Boud & Molloy 2013 p.7). This view of feedback as a process echoes Nicol (2010 p.503) who conceptualises feedback as 'ongoing and cyclical' and requiring 'coordinated actions by teachers and students to be effective'. Similarly, Laurillard advocates a co-operative view of feedback adhering to 'a form of interaction between teacher and student rather than action on the student' (2002 p.78). As such, the author argues that feedback should be not only discursive, adaptive, and reflective, but also linked to actions relating to task goals.

The idea of the tutor as the single source of feedback has also been challenged (e.g Boud & Molloy 2013). Instead, students have been recast as active agents, seeking additional feedback information not only from peers, but also generating feedback information for themselves through reflection and discussion with others in order to make sense of the feedback information, and to develop their capacity to evaluate their own work (Boud 2007; Sadler 2010). Boud and Molloy go even further to argue that a change in future actions is a necessary condition of feedback and without it, the feedback loop is not closed (2013). This view is echoed by Hughes et al (2015 p.1080) who argue that 'feedback is not feedback unless it produces a future change'.

Evidencing improvement in future work falls outside the purview of this thesis since investigating the action-feedback-learning-new action cycle would require an investigation of feedback exchanges and student performance over consecutive assignment production. Furthermore, as will be discussed later in this chapter, feedback involves a complex interaction of contextual, sociocultural and affective factors, and thus the conditions of any such investigation would need to be clearly circumscribed (Yorke 2003). While much of the recent literature advocates new notions of feedback, as this study will demonstrate, feedback practices on the ground can still rely on tutor written feedback as the sole form of input, a situation which commentators such as Nicol (2010) puts down to a consequence of mass higher education and the resultant academic workload. In such situations, the extent of teacher-student interaction restricted to the written artefact becomes, to all extents and purpose, a monologue.

2.4 The efficacy of feedback

Much of the research on written feedback has, as a starting point, the assumption that feedback is central to student learning (e.g. Gibbs & Simpson 2005; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Carless, 2006; Hyland 2010). For example, Weaver (2006 p.379) postulates that '[i]t is accepted in academic circles that

feedback is an essential component in the learning cycle'. This assumption is supported by a number of seminal studies, in particular a leading meta-analysis by Black and Wiliam (1998). Their systematic review of 578 publications identified and reviewed the research findings of 250 feedback studies. Whilst the majority of data derived from the school sector rather than the university sector, the study by Black and Wiliam confirms a belief underpinning the higher education sector - that where feedback information is used, learning does improve:

> All [classroom] work involves some degree of feedback between those taught and the teacher, and this is entailed in the quality of their interaction which is at the heart of pedagogy. The nature of these interactions between teachers and students, and of students with one another, will be key determinants for the outcomes of any changes. (Black & Wiliam 1998 p.16)

Another leading author in this field, Ramsden (1992) identified an absence of feedback as a contributory cause of student failure on a first year engineering course, and declared: '[i]t is impossible to overstate the role of effective feedback on students' progress in any discussion of effective teaching and assessment' (1992 p.193).

More recently, Hattie and Timperley (2007) provided a synthesis of over 500 meta-analyses and researched the evidence related to the effectiveness of feedback concluding that feedback, combined with effective classroom instruction, can enhance classroom learning. Biber, Nekrasova and Horn (2011) also conducted a review of the literature investigating the effectiveness of feedback, but specifically in relation to students' writing development. The first part of the study reports on a survey of 306 qualitative and quantitative studies relating to both L1 and L2 writing proficiency, with the majority of feedback studies focusing on tertiary level students. In the second part of their project the authors carried out a quantitative meta-analysis of 25 empirical studies deemed suitably robust for inclusion, to analyse gains in writing proficiency in relation to different types of feedback. These studies examined feedback from course instructors rather than writing centre tutors. As a result of this meta-analysis, the authors concluded that overall feedback did indeed result in gains, that is to say within the research domain the present thesis is concerned, subject tutor written feedback.

While such systematic reviews have led most researchers to claim a general consensus across the education literature, this uncritical acceptance is questioned by some. For example, in a small-scale pilot study conducted on an undergraduate degree programme in Australia, Crisp (2007) finds only limited evidence supporting the assumption that feedback leads to improved student performance. Her study examined feedback provided to 51 students on two consecutive similar assignments set six

weeks apart. She found that the marks for both pieces of work were similar for two-thirds of the students, with half of the remaining third showing significant improvement and the other showing significant decline. Both pieces of work were also examined to explore the extent to which problem areas identified in the first task appeared in the subsequent submission, in order to analyse the relationship between the change in the number of problem areas with an increase in the assignment mark. Crisp found limited evidence to indicate that students were acting on the feedback they had received.

The above study is similar to the design of a study by Wingate (2010) who also investigated the impact of formative feedback. Wingate coded in-text tutor commentary on consecutive assignments written by 62 first year undergraduates at a UK university to track uptake of feedback. When comparing grade improvement with uptake, 56% of the students utilizing feedback as intended achieved an improved grade thereby confirming within the scope of this study the effectiveness of feedback. Conversely, those students paying little attention to feedback commentary, failed to improve in the areas previously identified further corroborating this link between enactment of feedback and improvement, or in this case lack of. Seemingly contradictory results from the two studies by Wingate and Crisp demonstrate how various determinants such as student feedback literacy, student motivation as well as the quality of the feedback itself, can impact upon the uptake and use of feedback and consequently the extent to which it is effective. Indeed, follow-up interviews with participants in Wingate's study, identified motivation and students' self-perception of their writing ability as possible reasons behind engagement or non-engagement with the feedback commentary. Consequently, even when similar methods and research designs are employed in separate studies the conclusions reached can still demonstrate a lack of consensus on the efficacy of feedback and factors that influence uptake.

However, a general consensus within the literature appears to be that for feedback to have an impact, it needs to be formative, that is to say, contribute to learning by providing information about current performance (Black & Wiliam 1998; Yorke 2003). A seminal paper by Sadler (1989) argues that to improve and accelerate learning feedback should not only include information about the gap between the learner's present level and the desired standard of performance, but it should also provide information about what action is needed in order to close this gap thereby enabling students to actively utilize the information in subsequent work. Another key premise, identified as necessary by Sadler, is the need for tutors to help learners acquire 'evaluative expertise' so that they can judge the quality of their work independently of the tutor (1989 p.119). Sadler advocates for the use of peer-appraisal activities to assist this endeavour. Boud and Molloy refer to the development of this self-

regulatory capacity as the 'double duty of feedback' (2013 p.3); one act of feedback being to positively impact performance of task both now and in the future, the other being to help students develop self-assessment skills.

With regards to the first of these 'duties', for feedback to be considered effective means, in practice, tutor's comments should not only address areas specific to the task under appraisal, such as those relating to content, but they also need to address those areas that are more general, such as referencing, that have greater potential to influence future learning and therefore feed forward (Knight & Yorke 2003). Various studies provide findings underpinning the view that the most effective feedback comments are those which help students to bridge the gap between their current work and the level of work desired of them in the future (e.g. Lizzio & Wilson 2008; Walker 2009). For example, Price, Handley, Millar and O'Donovan (2010), drawing on findings from a three-year study undertaken in the business schools of three universities in the UK, found near consensus amongst tutors and staff that feedback was considered useful when it can be applied to subsequent work.

Further support for feedforward commentary is provided in a systematic review of the literature by Evans (2013) which focuses specifically on the Higher Education sector and analyses 460 articles published between 2000 and 2012. While conceding a lack of consensus over what type of feedback is most effective, Evans contends that 'the principles of effective feedback practices are clear within the HE literature' (2013 p.78). Thus, Evans provides a list of these key principles supported by the evidence base from the systematic review and presented under six sub-headings, one being that a greater evidence should be placed on feedforward activities rather than feedback (2013 p.81). Although guidelines for effective feedback such as Evans (2013) and Nicol & Mcfarlane Dick (2006) have encouraged tutors and curriculum designers to reconsider assessment and feedback practices, the translating of these guidelines into practice has not been straightforward, with Ferrell (2012 p.2 cited in Barton, Schofield, McAleer & Ajjawi 2016) even referring to the feedback and assessment landscape in the UK Higher Education context as 'stubbornly resistant to change'.

However, recently a number of studies have presented case studies where a programme's assessment and feedback practices were overhauled in line with evidence-based good practice from the feedback literature. For example, Barton et al., (2016) present a case study that demonstrates how a programme at the University of Dundee's Centre for Medical Education redeveloped a programme employing a uni-directional transmission approach to feedback to one which employed action research cycles promoting self-evaluation, feedback engagement and dialogue. While acknowledging that the redesign of such practices presents various challenges, the authors conclude that the

redevelopment of assessment and feedback practices led to positive changes in how both staff and students approached feedback. The authors also suggest that the principles underpinning the action research cycle and the strategies employed to incorporate these processes could be transferable to other contexts.

However, these studies, as is the case with many studies researching the effectiveness of feedback, tend to rely almost solely on participants' responses to surveys enquiring about the value they place on formative feedback. Whilst such evidence points to a positive response, these studies do not confirm a cause and effect relationship between feedback and learning. As Yorke (2003) argues, to be certain of this relationship, research investigating the action-feedback-learning-new action cycle needs to be tightly controlled and the conditions clearly circumscribed or extraneous factors may impact on findings.

2.5 Factors mitigating the efficacy of feedback

There are a number of factors influencing the effective provision and utility of feedback comments, and these will be discussed separately under the following headings: contextual, socio-cultural, and affective factors, as well as tutors' use of language in feedback commentary.

2.5.1 Contextual constraints

One of the key dimensions influencing feedback is the wider institutional contextual constraints. The issue of amount and quality of feedback is complicated by the realities facing academics working within Higher Education today. These realities include the increase in student numbers and class sizes and the consequent pressure on teaching resources. A study by Henderson, Ryan and Phillips (2019) analysed responses of 281 HE staff to an online survey conducted at two universities in Australia. In addressing the question 'What do you consider to be the greatest challenge to creating effective feedback and why?' (2019 p.1239), contextual constraints, in particular the challenge of providing effective feedback within a limited time period, appeared to be a salient issue amongst the staff and mentioned more than any other issue in the survey. Another theme related to institutional constraints to emerge from staff responses was scalability, that is the difficulty of providing effective feedback in large classes. Unsurprisingly, time constraints are also identified as impacting on feedback effectiveness in surveys carried out in UK university contexts as well (e.g. Price et al., 2010).

The drive over the last couple of decades towards modularization and semesterisation, resulting in assessments being squeezed into a more compressed timetable, may also restrict the potential for

students to implement and therefore benefit from tutor feedback. Studies exploring such factors as these include Hughes, Smith and Creese (2015) who investigate whether the self-contained, discrete nature of modularised programmes has a negative impact on feedback practices. The move towards interdisciplinary and modular programmes, prompted by the Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997), intended to offer greater flexibility in choice of courses (Watson 1996). Hughes et al.'s (2015) study investigated whether the design of programmes as a series of self-contained modules with specific assessment criteria, potentially limited feed forward practices, especially on programmes with a single assessment and feedback cycle per module. The authors hypothesized that modularisation may lead tutors to focus more on content-specific feedback addressing criteria for specific modules at the expense of providing commentary that feeds forward addressing broader longer-term developmental goals at programme-level. Given that a large body of research attests to students perceiving feed forward as useful, the restriction of feed forward commentary may be a contributing factor in the uptake of feedback.

To investigate, Hughes et al.'s (2015) developed a feedback profiling tool to analyse formative and summative written feedback on five postgraduate programmes: Professional Education, Primary PGCE, Health and Development, Research, and Psychology. Although the data is drawn from a range of disciplines, the study took place within a UK Higher Education Institute specialising in the field of education, and therefore a social science context. The study found that much of the feedback in the corpus addressed the current assignment, with limited commentary feeding forward from one module to the next or addressing more holistic programme level aims. The authors coded tutor written feedback on 63 student draft assignments and 154 final assignments on a number of discrete modules, with a view to comparing the amount of formative feedback provided on each. The authors conclude that commentary relating to 'higher order learning attributes' such as critical evaluation of the literature, may be lost in a modularised system as tutors tend to 'construct feedback in the immediate context of a modular assignment' (Hughes et al., 2015 p.1092). Whilst these factors are often outside the sphere of influence of the tutor and student, they are barriers to the effective provision and uptake of feedback comments nonetheless.

2.5.2 Sociocultural factors

The contextual factors aside, even when tutors are able to provide students with valid judgements about their work, it is recognised that improvement in students' performance does not necessarily follow. Sociocultural factors also influence feedback provision and student responses to them. As with all forms of communication, feedback:

> ‘occurs in particular cultural, institutional, and interpersonal contexts, between people enacting and negotiating particular social identities and relationships and is mediated by various types of delivery. The fact that participants respond differently to these factors means that variations are almost inevitable.’ (Hyland & Hyland 2019 p.12).

In the UK context, these sociocultural factors have become particularly pertinent since the 1990s, when the higher education system underwent considerable change as a result of a number of education policies, often referred to by the umbrella term ‘Widening Participation’ (Lillis & Tuck 2016 p.40). These policies significantly increased the undergraduate population and by so doing, opened up access to university, particularly to students from underrepresented social groups (Lillis & Tuck 2016). The internationalisation of higher education increased the cultural, educational, and ethno-linguistic diversity of the student and tutor population still further. However, the existing support practices for helping this more diverse student population with the literacy requirements expected at university was essentially remedial in nature, thereby framing the diversity in language and literacy as a problem (Wingate & Tribble 2012).

The two dominant research areas responding to this increased linguistic and cultural diversity of students and educators, include Academic Literacies and English for Academic Purposes, both of which are concerned with academic writing. Academic Literacies includes a theoretical position which sees writing as a social practice, that is to say, the way students and teachers interact affects the nature of the literacy being learnt. Relatively few empirical studies to date have examined feedback through a social practice lens. Taking an Academic Literacies ethnographically informed approach, Tuck (2012) investigated the writing practices of 14 HE academic tutors from a range of disciplines and UK universities. The study focuses predominantly on data deriving from tutor interviews discussing their everyday practices in connection with undergraduate students’ writing. One of the main findings to emerge was that while tutors understood the need for standard institutional feedback practices such as anonymous marking, they felt some of these procedures, for example the requirement to write feedback in the third person, constrained their desire to ‘build fruitful pedagogic relationships’ with the feedback recipients (2012 p.218). Findings in studies taking an academic literacies approach such as the above, highlight the need for higher education practices to adapt to the diverse student population, new to the university context.

An article by Lillis and Turner (2001) discusses the difficulties faced by students entering university as a result of the widening participation policies, specifically how these ‘non-traditional’ students often

have difficulty interpreting the terms used to refer to the conventions of academic discourse such as 'argument' and 'structure' (2001 p.57). The authors argue that these terms may be considered straightforward for tutors familiar with academic discourse, but students unfamiliar with such terms could find themselves excluded from effective participation within the academy. Lillis and Turner argue that 'socio-rhetorical norms' such as the structure of an academic introduction, or conventions governing when to cite are often assumed to be self-evident by educators (2001 p.65). Furthermore, when students' attempts at such academic conventions do not tally with disciplinary expectations, the student-writers' language is identified as the 'problem' rather than the lack of discussion on language use within HE.

A study by Winstone, Nash, Rowntree, and Parker (2017 p.2029) investigating barriers to implementing feedback, conducted a study using 'activity-oriented' focus groups each comprising of 2 - 4 students, 31 participants in total. The study took place at a single UK HEI with British psychology undergraduates as participants. The first activity involved discussing written extracts taken from authentic feedback scripts. The second activity involved ranking 10 interventions drawn from a systematic review of the literature, for example 'discussing feedback with teachers' (2017 p.2030). Collectively, students were asked to rank the interventions according to how useful they were and how likely they were to engage with this intervention in practice. One of the main themes to emerge from analysis of the transcript was students' difficulty in interpreting tutor feedback. Students referred to the use of academic jargon contained within feedback and how as a consequence this limited their ability to implement it. One of the extracts used in the first activity read:

> Your overall structure is clear but you need to work on your paragraph transitions. In many places, your argument can be difficult to follow because you move between different topics without clear signposting to the reader. (2017 p.2029)

This comment is not only reflective of feedback commentary encountered across university departments but the references to *overall structure*, *paragraph transitions*, *argument*, and *signposting* are also indicative of the 'socio-rhetorical norms' referred to above (Lillis & Turner 2001 p.65). As Winstone, et al., (2017) argue, students need to be able to decode such commentary before they can implement it, and this requires investment from both tutor and student.

A few studies within the body of Academic Literacies research adopt a critical discourse analysis framework to investigate institutional language, perhaps most notably Lea and Street (1998). This approach examines data from a critical stance, which is to say focuses on a social issue, in this case,

investigating the unequal distribution of power between tutor and student. In the context of a feedback study, this involves exploring the way in which students and teachers interact and how this determines linguistic choices which in turn affects how the text is received. Lea and Street's research, carried out at two UK universities, critically analyses tutors' academic discourse in written commentaries provided in response to undergraduate student writing. The study includes a number of semi-structured interviews conducted with staff and students as well as a linguistically-based examination of a sample of student texts. The study found that tutor feedback often uses categorical modality, that is to say 'imperatives and assertions, with little mitigation or qualification' and that in doing so:

> the tutor clearly and firmly takes authority, assumes the right to criticise directly and categorically on the basis of an assumed 'correct' view of what should have been written and how. (Lea & Street 1998 p.169)

This leads the authors to conclude that written feedback does not simply facilitate learning across all content areas but also involves relationships of authority 'as a marker of difference and a sustainer of boundaries' (1998 p.169).

There are some limitations with this study. The sample size of the textual material is not made clear and, as Mutch (2003 p.27) points out, the repeated use of the word 'frequently' is not quantified. However, this article is seminal in considering the institutional context in which feedback practices take place and the nature of the relationship between the feedback provider and receiver. Assessment and feedback, more than any other educational process, embodies power relations with the tutor as expert writer, custodian of the rules and practices of the institution, and the student as novice writer.

Another study by Kang and Dykema (2017) also draws on critical discourse analysis to examine how power and identity shape feedback practices, in this case from the students' standpoint. The authors research analyses comments written by 21 students to their tutor, responding to the formative feedback provided on a draft assignment in a first-year composition course at a large North American university. Kang and Dykema's study draws on Fairclough's (2001) critical discourse analysis framework to examine the structural, interactional and interdiscursive features of the students discourse in these texts in order to learn more about students' perceptions of tutor feedback and how their linguistic choices enable the students to position themselves in the student-tutor relationship. The study found that while most students used a range of linguistic strategies to demonstrate the value they placed on tutors' comments and acceptance of the tutors' suggestions, other students

exerted their agency, not only by questioning the validity of the tutor comments but also by resisting the suggested revisions. The authors assert that this process of engaging students in reflective and dialogic feedback practices, allowing students to make the final decision on whether to implement the suggested revisions or not, empowers students and promotes socialization into the academic community. This student empowerment, that Kang and Dykema argue arises from participation in such practices as encouraging student responses, aligns with academic literacies transformative agenda in its promotion of more equitable feedback practices.

2.5.3 Affective factors

A body of feedback literature has also investigated affective factors and the impact emotions can have on the learning process, both as a stimulus and inhibitor of new learning (e.g. Ilgen & Davis 2000; Falchikov & Boud 2007). Molloy, Borrell-Carrió and Epstein (2013 p.51) refer to receiving feedback as an 'intrinsically emotional business' particularly when there is dissonance between 'external feedback', notably teacher-authored written feedback, and 'internal feedback' a label referring to students' self-perceptions and beliefs regarding the quality of their performance. The gap between these two, is referred to as the 'judgement gap' (Molloy et al., 2013 p.56). As the authors point out, while there is much discussion within the literature relating to the performance gap, that is to say the gap between the students' current level and the desired standard, there is far less written about the gap in judgement.

Guidelines listing espoused principles of best practice in the feedback literature tend to include reference to the importance of trying to mitigate the negative impact of affective factors. Much attention is paid to the tone of commentary (see section 2.5.4), with some even going so far as to argue that tone is the most import aspect when it comes to students' emotional reaction to feedback (e.g. Lipnevich, Berg & Smith 2016). Both Evans (2013) and Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006) advocate feedback should 'encourage positive motivational beliefs, self-esteem and trust' (Evans 2013 p.82). These guiding principles also advocate practices focusing on improving students' capacity to make self-evaluative judgements thereby helping students to recalibrate and address potential judgement dissonance. Within this sub-set of feedback literature, a number of terms are used to connote the development of self-assessment skills and its role in enabling students to take control of their own learning. The term self-regulation, for example, is defined as 'an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition' (Pintrich & Zusho 2002 p.250). Winstone et al., (2017 p.17) use the term 'proactive recipience' to refer to the act of 'engaging actively with feedback processes, thus emphasizing the fundamental

contribution and responsibility of the learner.' Feedback literacy, a notion first espoused by Sutton (2012) but later taken up and expanded on (e.g. Carless & Boud 2018; Molloy, Boud & Henderson 2020), is used to refer to the students' ability to make sense of feedback information and apply it to improve subsequent assignments and to develop the ability to make academic judgments.

Within the literature, it can be seen how the issue of individual capacity is increasingly viewed as a necessary condition for effective feedback. And while some learners may continue to privilege feedback providing explicit instruction (e.g. Sutton 2012; Winstone et al., 2017), there is general consensus within the literature that educators should challenge this view of feedback as a directive one-way flow of information and instead encourage students engagement with self-regulation practices (e.g. Winstone et al., 2017). A number of practices to help facilitate students' development of self-assessment skills, and thereby a shift towards students taking a more proactive role in the feedback process, are highlighted in the literature. Among them are the use of exemplars for promoting students' understanding of academic standards (eg. Sadler 1989; Sambell & Graham 2020), and the inclusion of references to the marking criteria within the artefact itself (see section 3.14.1). These practices could not only help further students' understanding of the marking criteria, but may also result in a greater consistency between markers.

While some scholars have oriented their research to exploring the issue of feedback from the point of view of developing students' feedback literacy, other studies have explored feedback in terms of the role the educator as feedback provider can play. The language used by tutors when writing feedback, for example, is potentially another factor limiting students' use of feedback and which is explored in the following section.

2.5.4 Linguistic choices in feedback commentaries

As discussed above in section 2.5.2, some studies have explored the use of academic jargon and how this taken-for-granted discourse can be incomprehensible to some students and consequently a barrier to the use of feedback. Higgins et al., (2002) suggests that another reason why the language used by feedback providers is often difficult to interpret is because tutors' assessment of work includes qualitative judgments which are frequently:

> abstract constructs which have no absolute meaning independent of particular contexts. Consequently, teachers may recognize a good performance, yet struggle to articulate exactly what they are looking for because conceptions of quality usually take the form of tacit knowledge (2002 p.56)

The concept of tacit knowledge, that is to say informal understanding as distinct from explicit or formal knowledge, is identified within the literature as a necessary prerequisite, not only to be able to make sense of feedback messages, but also to help develop the capacity to make self-judgements about one's own work. (Sadler 1989; Carless & Boud 2018). However, as Higgins et al., (2002) point out, this tacit knowledge is often more difficult to communicate.

In the broader literature there is also acknowledgment that although a social process, tutor-authored feedback comprises 'asymmetrical power relations' between provider and receiver and this can compound the impact negative commentary can have on a student and how that commentary is received (Carless 2006 p.229). Consequently, the tone of feedback is considered crucial to student engagement (Lipnevich et al., 2016). In a study investigating the uptake of formative feedback provided on undergraduate written work at a UK university, Wingate (2010) noticed a difference in style and tone of feedback comments: not only did tutors employ a greater number of hedging devices when commenting on work by high achieving students compared to that of weaker students, but also higher-achieving work generally received more positive comments than other work. Whilst Wingate's study points to the negative impact such findings are likely to have on lower-achieving students, other studies by contrast report positively on the amount of attention paid by tutors to the wording and tone of feedback in an attempt to mitigate any adverse reaction to their feedback commentary.

Hyland and Hyland (2001), for example, analyse how mitigation strategies such as the use of paired praise-criticism patterns and hedges are used to assuage the impact of negative criticism, and thus potentially enhance relationships between tutor and feedback receiver. Their study, drawing on Holmes' categorisation framework based on the different functions of speech which language serves (1988, 2013), takes a pragmatic perspective in their analysis of the functions of praise, criticism and suggestions. Hyland and Hyland's research examined the final summary comments provided on the assignments of six predominantly East Asian students studying on an EAP course in preparation for undergraduate or post-graduate entry to a university in New Zealand. Data collection also included interviews with both the participating tutors and students, class observations and verbal reports. The authors concluded that while the EAP tutors combined various praise-criticism-suggestion patterns in an attempt to mitigate the negative force of their comments, the result was often that the comments become less clear to the students.

Other studies have also cast doubt on the effectiveness of such rhetorical devices. Molloy (2010) for example discusses the feedback sandwich model which wedges the negative comment between two positive comments in an attempt to mitigate the criticism in the middle and make it more palatable. She suggests that such models reinforce the positioning of the educators' role as the expert and students' as that of the novice, since it presents the student as not able to take or make sense of constructive performance information and that, as a result, student uptake of the message is less likely. Molloy et al., (2013) also suggest that students are wise to the linguistic rituals attempting to make comments more palatable for the receiver and that, consequently, there may be a need for the upskilling of both educators and students if feedback is to be effective.

Woodward-Kron (2004) adopted a systemic functional linguistics (SFL) approach to conduct a fine-grained linguistic analysis investigating the nature of disciplinary discourses. The study examined which of the lexical and grammatical choices in students' writing the tutor attends to and how the tutors' responses attempt to socialize students into the discursive writing practices of the discipline. The data for her study included marker feedback on 44 undergraduate student essays and interview data with seven of those students. The students were enrolled on a primary teacher education course at an Australian university. No demographic data of the participating students was available, however, according to the author, from the lexicogrammatical choices in the assignments it could be inferred that the students taking part were all fluent speakers. The analysis of the data was informed by Halliday's (1994) metafunctional model of language which distinguishes between three areas of meaning: experiential, interpersonal and textual. A central premise of this view of language is that these functions closely interact, therefore when a tutor provides feedback on student work, the interpersonal relationship between the tutor and student influences the choice of language used.

Woodward-Kron found that the tutors made comments relating to each of the three types of meaning and that much of this commentary contained a socialising dimension. For example, in relation to interpersonal meanings, the study found that tutors suggested students modify some of the absolute claims in their writing. The use of hedging is a linguistic device employed by academic writers to qualify their commitment to a proposition and to accommodate alternative voices in their work, and consequently the author concludes that by attending to these features in their commentary, the tutor is attempting to socialise the student to the disciplinary writing practices of the mature discourse community. However, the participant interviews also suggested that the students lack a tangible sense of what those valued disciplinary writing practices are.

More recently, Austen (2016) analysed summative written feedback drawn from four undergraduate social science programmes at a single UK Higher Institution. Austen developed two distinct frameworks as part of the same investigation to explore the characteristics of evaluative language used in written feedback. The first framework was generated through coding of the data according to the pragmatic functions of praise, criticism and suggestion, thereby drawing on the framework developed by Hyland and Hyland (2001). In the second phase of data analysis, comments were coded applying Martin and White's (2005) SFL appraisal framework to explore evaluative discourse in written tutor feedback. This appraisal framework comprises the generalized systems of attitude, engagement and graduation to explore the linguistic variations in written feedback as a signifier of interpersonal relationship between student writing and feedback provider. Using these analytical frameworks enabled Austen to focus on the subjective, underlying element of evaluative writing from which she was able to observe a competing agenda within tutors' linguistic choices.

According to Austen (2016), analysis of tutor written discourse demonstrated both the desire to use language to build and maintain an interpersonal relationship with the student-writer, as demonstrated for example by *praise* being the dominant comment type, whilst at the same time the use of direct language to adopt a more authorial voice for gate-keeping academic conventions, which in this study predominantly related to academic referencing. Adopting a SFL approach provided not only an effective tool for identifying patterns of language use not easily observable, but also enabled Austen to consider the context for specific instances of language use and the possible motivation behind tutors' linguistic choices. Studies such as the above demonstrate that tutors are very much aware of the extent to which the framing of feedback comments can impact on how the comments are received and thus used. Perhaps, as O'Donovan (2020) suggests, academics can relate to affective issues since they are often on the receiving end of feedback for their own work.

2.6 Written feedback on L2 writing

A fairly extensive literature exists on the role of feedback in teaching second-language writing. Much of the early research in the 1980s and 1990s takes place within the L2 classroom and investigates the role played by written corrective feedback on linguistic error, specifically its efficacy in facilitating learning. For example, in the US, Zamel (1985) investigated tutor responses to L2 student writing and found that tutors attended primarily to language-related problems at sentence level, often at the expense of more holistic concerns such as meaning-related issues within larger units of discourse. Zamel suggested tutors of L2 writing should try to respond to student work as an interested reader rather than as an evaluator concerned only with localised errors.

In a series of papers, Truscott (e.g. 1996, 1999) also levelled arguments against written corrective feedback claiming that responding to error did not lead to improved accuracy in L2 student writing. Truscott (1999 p.116) even went as far as advising tutors to take a 'correction-free approach' in their L2 classrooms. Hyland and Hyland (2006) suggest that writing tutors in L2 teaching contexts have tended to ignore this advice, knowing the importance placed on accuracy in academic and professional contexts, and the expectation L2 students often have for EAP tutors to attend to error correction. Interestingly, while research investigating tutor feedback provided on L2 writing courses consistently reports students' preference for commentary on written errors (e.g. Leki 1991; Hyland 1998), in feedback studies surveying participants including both L1 and L2 students, attention to grammatical error correction in feedback is generally perceived as less important than other aspects of feedback (e.g. Ferguson 2011; Winstone et al., 2016). It would be interesting to compare L1 and L2 student responses in these studies to see if L2 students have a greater preference for focus on error correction than L1 students.

In response to Truscott's claims, Ferris (e.g. 2010) presented a number of counter-arguments. In doing so, she draws attention to other writing studies which, she argues, take a more suitably rigorous methodological approach. These studies provide:

> consistent and compelling evidence that written [corrective feedback], under the right conditions, can facilitate L2 development and help students improve the accuracy of their writing, at least for the particular features under consideration. (Ferris 2010 p.186)

In considering an explanation for some of the divergent findings amongst the research investigating the efficacy of written corrective feedback on language issues, Ferris (2010) distinguishes between two bodies of work; those studies designed by SLA researchers such as Truscott (1999), and those by L2 writing researchers such as Ferris (2010) herself. The former, she argues, investigate whether corrective feedback facilitates the acquisition of particular linguistic features such as definite and indefinite articles, whereas the latter looks at whether corrective feedback improves the overall effectiveness of the texts and consequently whether the authors develop as more successful writers. Having these two very different starting points for the research may well account for the conflicting findings and conclusions in written corrective feedback research. With respect to writing on university content courses, assessment of written work tends to include a catch-all criteria, such as

'presentation' against which the language of written work is assessed. This assessment tends to be at a more holistic level therefore more closely in line with L2 writing research.

Another line of research within the L2 feedback literature suggested by Ferris (2010) as a possible contributing factor behind divergent results, is the distinction between *direct* feedback comments, which provide the correction, and *indirect* comments, which highlight the error but do not provide the correction. While Ferris (2010) argues the latter is more effective in improving students' writing, other studies (e.g. Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima 2008; Bitchener & Knoch 2009) conclude students respond better to direct feedback. Employment of these corrective techniques will depend on various factors such as the intention of the feedback provider and the ease of attributing faulty grammar to a particular linguistic error. Thus, L2 writing practitioners may well vary employment of both.

Biber et al.'s (2011) review of previous research on the effectiveness of feedback is particularly interesting since the review includes research pertaining to both L1 and L2 students. An examination of the mean effect sizes of the different language groups shows that L2 speakers make larger gains in terms of the impact of feedback on writing development than L1 speakers. The authors suggest that the use of different outcome measures for each language group can partly account for this result. For the L1 writers, improvement tends to be measured in terms of content and a more holistic assessment of writing, whilst for L2 speakers, improvement in writing quality is often measured in terms of improvement in language accuracy. The difference in terms of improvement could also relate to proficiency level since L1 writers are likely to have a higher proficiency than L2 students, and lower proficiency groups tend to make larger gains in writing proficiency since there is more to learn. Certainly, an important question to consider is whether feedback on surface level errors leads to greater gains in students writing development than more holistically focused feedback on text content, organisation or audience / purpose.

Over the last two decades, as findings from empirical studies have tended to confirm that corrective feedback can indeed lead to improvement in students' writing, the focus has shifted to the issue of why and how it is effective, how students should utilize corrective feedback, and investigation of factors, such as motivation, that may account for why some students engage with written corrective feedback more than others (Ferris & Kurzer 2019). With regard to this last area of research Han & Hyland's (2019) study, for example, takes a sociocognitive perspective to explore the area of learner engagement, specifically, why students engage with written corrective feedback differently. Their research is a case study of two Chinese students from the same Chinese university and draws on

empirical data including written text, tutor feedback, and semi-structured interviews. The authors found that the students' engagement with written corrective feedback was a dynamic entity which varied according to their individual learning context. For example, it was found that both students' perspective of feedback became more aligned with their tutors' as a result of increased familiarity with their tutor and their written correction feedback practices.

Research investigating feedback on L2 student writing has moved on from what Hyland and Hyland (2006 p.96) refer to as a 'narrow obsession' with written corrective feedback, and the debate surrounding its effectiveness, to explore a broader range of issues such as student feedback preferences and the role of socio-contextual factors on feedback. For example, in a study undertaken in a Hong Kong secondary school context, Lee (2008) investigates the reasons accounting for a disjuncture between English language teachers' responses on L2 student written work and feedback guidelines set out by the education authority in Hong Kong, guidelines which, according to Lee, align with the feedback research literature. Lee found that a myriad of factors including students' and parents' expectations of feedback as well as the cultural and institutional context, often frustrated teachers' autonomy to adhere to these feedback guidelines. Aside perhaps from parental expectations, these factors are reflective of those influencing the effective provision and utility of feedback comments within the HE context discussed above.

2.7 Written feedback on L2 writing in English speaking HE settings.

Research investigating L2 writers in Anglophone HE settings or in non-Anglophone HE settings using English as the medium of instruction tend to occur in the context of courses preparing students for academic study in English rather than content courses (e.g. Hyland 2001; Hyland & Hyland 2001; Hyland & Hyland 2006; Bitchener & Knoch 2009). These studies have therefore looked at feedback responses provided by EAP tutors rather than subject tutors. For example, a study by Fiona Hyland (2001) explores the perspectives of EAP tutors and second language students on the feedback offered on a distance course at the Open University of Hong Kong. Hyland designed a framework that not only investigates the focus of feedback on L2 written work, but also includes a further set of categories to focus on the learning process, for example encouragement and strategies to improve learning. When concluding, Hyland questions the limited amount of feedback focussing on learning strategies particularly given the distance-learning mode of the course.

A few studies (e.g. Leki 2006; Carless 2006; Hyland 2013a) explore feedback provided to L2 writers in the context of content courses. In an interview and text-based study, Leki (2006) investigated feedback provided by disciplinary faculty on L2 post-graduate work at a U.S. university. One of the aims of the study was to gain insight into the extent and variety of written commentary provided by faculty staff. A content analysis was conducted on the written tutor comments on 14 submitted student papers and the comments were grouped into nine nonexclusive categories. The highest frequency comments were on language and writing. Leki's study provides demographic data, however this does not include any indication of the English language level of the participants in this research other than to say that the L2 graduate students had enrolled in writing classes. The L2 students were Master level and PhD students from across a range of disciplines but the study does not mention whether the students' first degree was in their L1 or L2. The fact that these students were attending a writing class would suggest that the students were in need of additional support which in turn might account for, at least in part, the high percentage of language and writing comments on their work. This factor is not considered in the study and yet it impacts significantly on the findings of the content analysis which are clearly not representative of L2 student feedback across the university as a whole.

Other studies explore feedback in the context of content courses but in non-Anglo educational settings where English is the medium of instruction. For example, a study by Carless (2006) used a large-scale questionnaire distributed to both Hong Kong Chinese staff and students from eight different universities in Hong Kong. This was followed up by a small-scale survey of 52 students and interviews with groups of both students and staff, in order to investigate some of the emerging themes more closely. The study set out to explore how the feedback process is perceived by learners and how these perceptions differ from those of tutors. One difference to emerge was that tutors' perceptions of the feedback they provided were more positive than those of the students receiving it, particularly with regard to the amount of detail and its usefulness. Many of the students spoke of the difficulty trying to use the feedback to guide improvements in subsequent assignments, which Carless attributes to lack of alignment between assignment tasks. Student frustration stemming from this inability to use feedback due to its lack of applicability to future tasks is a theme which also emerges in studies conducted in Anglo educational settings such as that by Winstone et al., (2017). Their study uses focus groups with undergraduate Psychology students at a UK university to explore barriers limiting students' effective use of feedback (e.g. Winstone et al., 2017). These authors also identified student frustration relating to the perceived lack of applicability to future work as a factor in student engagement with assessment feedback, and one of the main barriers to students' recipience. While both the above studies by Carless (2006) and Winstone et al., (2017) emphasise the exploratory nature

of their studies and avoid advancing universal claims, it is interesting to observe how similar findings emerge from very different higher education settings.

A study by Hyland (2013a) was also conducted at a Hong Kong university where English is the medium of instruction. Two sets of interviews were held with 24 first- and second-year undergraduates drawn evenly from faculties in Business, Science, Engineering and Arts. The students were predominantly Cantonese first language speakers, two students had Putonghua as a first language. The study set out to explore the messages students take from feedback surrounding the importance of language, writing and feedback. Regarding language, where the subject tutors ignored errors, students took this to signal that errors are tolerated so long as they do not impede comprehension. In my experience, this view accords with the position taken by most subject tutors when providing feedback but it will be interesting to see the extent to which language issues are commented on within the feedback data for this present study.

Investigating the message feedback conveys to undergraduate students about disciplinary writing, Hyland (2013a) found an absence of commentary explicitly addressing writing conventions, leading students to perceive disciplinary writing as an unproblematic extension of their pre-university writing experience. As Hyland argues, this instils the message that academic conventions can be acquired and do not need to be explicitly taught. This perceived reluctance of subject tutors to engage in what Hughes et al., (2015 p.1082) refer to as 'higher order disciplinary skills', such as the ability to critically evaluate the literature or to construct an argument, means that students are 'rarely provided with feedback that helps them to conceptualize the varied epistemological frameworks of the academy' and that consequently, 'students are often unable to see how these relate to disciplinary communication' (Hyland 2019 p.281). One of the findings from academic literacies research (Lea & Street 1998; Lillis & Scott 2007) is that academics find it hard to address this higher order learning or articulate advice in how to become more proficient in disciplinary writing. It will be interesting to see the extent to which reference is made to these 'higher order' attributes within the feedback data for this present study.

2.8 The focus of subject tutor feedback

Having looked at studies focusing on the academic discourse upon which the language of feedback is often based (section 2.5.4), this sub-section focuses on an alternative line of inquiry: examining written commentaries according to their referential foci, that is to say, whether the comments address content issues or textual features for example. Over two decades ago, Atkins asked '[h]ow many

departments […] routinely analyse the written comments on students' work to see the extent to which lecturers are engaging with the substance of the intellectual argument presented or simply commenting on presentation and format?' (Atkins 1995 p.27). Since then, there have been a handful of studies investigating the content of feedback commentaries. Whilst these have predominantly taken place in Anglo HE contexts, an earlier study by Hyland (2013a) conducted at a Hong Kong university, therefore a non-Anglo context, is discussed here due to the paper's focus on categorising written commentaries according to their area of concern.

As all the studies in this subsection are set in Higher Education contexts, they explore feedback written by subject tutors on content courses provided to a cohort of both L1 and L2 students. While some of the studies draw data from a single discipline, others present data from different disciplines. Therefore, collectively if not individually, these studies shed light on what tutors from different faculties value in a text through contrast of disciplines.

As part of a study looking at tutors' practices in L2 undergraduate disciplinary writing, Hyland coded 100 feedback texts according to the focus of the feedback. Some confusion reigns over the coding framework as the categories are initially identified as 'content, language, academic conventions, format' (2013a p.243), but later tabulated as 'content, language, argument, format, style' (2013a p.245). Unfortunately, the paper does not include detailed descriptors nor examples of coding units for these categories other than to define content as the 'concepts, procedures, theories and understandings of a discipline' (2013a p.245).

When comparing the focus of subject tutor comments across different disciplines, results showed that the more discursive disciplines such as History offered more explicit commentary relating to language issues and argument than disciplines within the hard sciences such as Biology. In the hard sciences a higher proportion of comments related to content. This corroborated the views expressed in interviews with the feedback providers in the main part of the study. Subject tutors within the Humanities faculty emphasized the importance of evaluating and making connections between ideas whilst in the hard sciences there was an emphasis on demonstrating an understanding of key concepts and using experimental results as evidence to support conclusions. Notably, while subject tutors express their desire for students to write in appropriate disciplinary ways, the study's findings reveal that across the participating faculties, subject tutor feedback infrequently provides support to help students achieve this goal.

This study therefore provides important insights into subject tutor expectations across different disciplines but also highlights a concern that feedback may not always sufficiently support students as they try to write themselves into their particular discipline community. This study was conducted in an English medium university in Hong Kong and therefore concerned the feedback practices provided to L2 student-writers. But to what extent is this the case with feedback practices across the entire student body, not just to L2 students?

Two research articles that help address this question are by East, Bitchener and Basturkmen (2012), and Basturkmen, East and Bitchener (2014). These articles conducted by the same three authors report on separate studies across six universities in New Zealand. Both studies include L1 and L2 masters and doctoral students across three contrasting disciplinary areas; humanities, commerce and science mathematics. East et al., (2012) adopt a mixed methods approach to investigate what students from these disciplines perceive as effective feedback and the types of written feedback the students receive. Interestingly, on the latter point, the authors conclude that there was 'little difference in the types of feedback provided in the different discipline areas' (2012 p.15). The study includes samples of feedback written in response to student writing from each disciplinary area, however the authors do not detail how the feedback samples were analysed. Questionnaires and interviews were used as the principal sources of data to explore disciplinary differences, thus these conclusions are based on feedback that students 'report' as receiving rather than an investigation of disciplinary differences in the artefacts themselves.

In the second of these studies, Basturkmen et al., (2014) investigated in-text comments provided on five draft dissertation scripts from each of three disciplinary areas, thus 15 scripts in total. The descriptive framework to emerge from the coding process comprised a four-part classification: *requirements* include comments concerning genre expectations, academic conventions, formatting and referencing; *cohesion & coherence*; *linguistic accuracy & appropriateness,* and *content* for all comments relating to 'information, arguments, and claims' (2014 p.436). As with their earlier study, the authors found little variation across the three disciplines, thereby contrasting with Hyland's (2013a) findings which revealed differences between the focus of comments in the discursive disciplines and hard sciences. Basturkmen et al., (2014) found that tutors tended to focus on similar areas of concern, predominantly *content*, and *linguistic accuracy & appropriateness*, concluding that this demonstrates 'some similarity in practices norms and values in these disciplines' (p.441). However, the scope of the category *content* is considerable and perhaps breaking this down into sub-

categories to enable more fine-grained analysis may have unveiled differences between the disciplines.

Interestingly, the authors found that very few comments addressed issues concerned with *cohesion and coherence*. The authors attribute this to the difficulty of commenting on incoherent text since this involves deconstructing the text and deciphering how the different elements and ideas within the student work interrelate. Given these are draft dissertations, it seems surprising that supervisors would leave incoherent sections of student work without commenting upon them.

Within the UK context, an earlier study by Mutch (2003) conducted a textual analysis of tutor comments on 122 feedback scripts provided to undergraduate students on a business programme. The first level of analysis categorized the commentaries according to their referential foci. The study found the majority of comments related to issues of knowledge and understanding and not to issues of language such as grammar, as frequently indicated in studies but which Mutch argues, is simply 'sweeping generalisations of the advice literature' (2003 p.30). This finding was reflected in Study 1 (Grannell 2017) which found that two thirds of comments within the entire sample population related to content.

Hyatt (2005) conducted a corpus-based analysis of feedback provided to postgraduates within the field of Education in order to investigate disciplinary practices. The study investigated 60 feedback scripts looking for systematic patterns of language usage within the data set, from which a framework comprising seven functional categories emerged: phatic, development, structural, stylistic, content, methodological, and admin. One interesting finding in this study, was that the subject tutor comments assigned a positive qualitative assessment did not 'remain invisible' but were expounded on as to why the performance was deemed praiseworthy (2005 p.350), thus demonstrating a level of depth as averred by Brown and Glover (2006).

Brown and Glover (2006) analysed in-text feedback comments on 112 undergraduate assignments completed as part of a biological science and a physical science module at a single UK HEI. Subject tutor comments were coded according to five main categories: *content, skills, further learning, motivational comments* (positive judgements) and *de-motivational comments* (negative judgements). Comments concerned with the science content accounted for the majority of script interventions. This category was broken down still further into four categories: *omissions, errors, clarification* and *irrelevance* (2006 p.5), thereby focusing on the type of weakness rather than the aspect of the student

work the comments related to. In follow-up interviews, although most students found content-focused commentary the most valuable, they admitted to not acting on it as they felt the comments were not applicable to future assignments. In contrast, students stated that the *skills* category, which included comments addressing presentational issues as well as use of language and diagrams, was useful to future work, however, within the sample there were far fewer coding units tagged under this category.

The framework used by Brown and Glover also employed a three-tier system to investigate the level of depth the feedback commentary provided. The first level acknowledges an issue (performance gap), the second provides correction (information needed to help reduce this gap), and the third provides an explanation (details why the correction is preferable). This three-tier system informed part of the design of the present study (see section 3.11).

Walker (2009) draws on the same coding scheme as Brown and Glover (2006) to analyse written feedback comments on assignments completed as part of three UG Technology modules at a UK university. Walker's findings were consistent with the patterns observed in Brown and Glovers' study, with comments relating to *content* the most common, followed by *motivating comments* and *skills development*. Follow up students' interviews, when matched against comment types, showed that students find *skills development* comments the most usable in future work, and comments that include some explanation more usable for identifying gaps retrospectively in a previously submitted assignment. Walker therefore relates these conclusions to the conditions Sadler (1989 p.121) identified as being necessary for students to benefit from feedback, that is to say the importance of feedback comments being usable to bridge the gap 'between actual and reference levels.'

Walker's study is, in turn, replicated by Fernández-Toro, Truman, and Walker (2013), but this time the samples of written feedback were provided on assignments completed as part of two UG Modern Language modules. By following the methodological approach of Walker's study, Fernández-Toro et al., (2013) were able to draw on the findings of both studies to present a comparative analysis investigating the extent to which tutors' approaches to written feedback in Technology and Modern Languages are comparable. However, while the original categories were preserved, substantial differences in how the categories were interpreted in each study arose, in particular the nature of the distinction between the *content* and *skills* categories. In Fernández-Toro et al.'s (2013) study, student performance within Modern Language disciplines is conceptually mapped as two broad categories. The first groups all aspects of performance relating to the language in question, in this case Spanish, as one category, and the second categorises all other areas of performance, for example critical

evaluation and structuring an argument, under *content*. The authors compare this dichotomy with the categorization employed in the Technology module, the disciplinary site for Walker's (2009) study, in which structuring an argument is categorized under *skills*. This study, therefore, highlights the difficulty of demarcating discrete categories such as *content* and *skills* across disciplines.

When comparing the findings from the two subject areas, the authors found a number of striking differences. For example, a greater proportion of comments focusing on *skills development* and in particular language accuracy were evident in the Modern Languages study compared to Technology where most feedback comments related to *content*. Fernández-Toro el al., suggest that the greater emphasis on language accuracy was likely to be the result of students on the Modern Languages module not writing in their first language. Also, in terms of students' responses to feedback comments, 42% of students in the Modern Languages study found feedback comments related to *content* useful compared to only 16% in the Technology study. An interesting similarity to emerge from the data was that students in both subject areas reported a preference for deeper level comments, that is to say comments providing explanations for a particular strength or weakness in an assignment.

From a review of the relevant literature, it would appear that not only are there just a handful of comparative studies looking at the referential foci of written feedback across different disciplines, there do not appear to be studies conducted in the UK looking at written commentary provided at post-graduate level, other than that conducted in Study 1 (Grannell 2017). Furthermore, from the existing studies looking at the focus of feedback it would appear that developing a coding system which applies equally well across different disciplinary contexts is a difficult task. This review has also highlighted the challenge of creating meaningful categories through coding, in particular, the difficulty of trying to group subsidiary constructs and features contained within the largest category *content*.

2.9 Evaluative writing in review genres

Other evaluative genres have received little attention in comparison to the tutor feedback genre, but nevertheless have been the focus of one or two notable studies. Hyland (2004) for example conducted an analysis of published book reviews across eight different disciplines to explore how reviewers employ praise and criticism to negotiate interpersonal relationships. As Hyland points out, this genre has similarities to that of tutor feedback commentary: both academic texts reflect discipline-specific

knowledge, both are predominantly evaluative, and both tread a delicate path in terms of the interpersonal relationship between the writer and reader. In the case of book reviews this relationship is particularly high stakes since the reviewer's evaluation is public and carries significant consequences for the author of the book under review. In his study, Hyland initially quantifies the evaluations in the reviews by searching for positive and negative judgements using definitions of praise and criticism informed by Holmes's (1988) functions of speech. This leads to a broad categorisation framework within which Hyland then codes the evaluations according to their referential foci. The author follows this with an in-depth investigation of the rhetorical patterns and structures employed such as the use of praise-criticism pairs and hedging to mitigate evaluative commentary. Interestingly, Hyland found that most positive observations relate to generic content issues, whilst negative commentary usually address more specific aspects of the text.

Turner (2018) conducts a study similar to that of Hyland, also analysing the review genre, but this time taking book reviews that appeared in the *Times Higher Education* magazine in 2010 as its data source. Rather than investigating linguistic features of evaluative writing, Turner's study takes a sociolinguistic perspective exploring evaluative commentary on, and attitudes towards, 'writtenness', that is to say comments on the writing itself or style, not what the writing is about, and the extent to which this operates as a 'socio-academic criterion' within the reviews (2018 p.62). Of the 271 reviews contained with the sample, 133 contained commentary relating to 'writtenness', indicating that in just under half of the sample, the property of 'writtenness' was used as one of the criterion on which the overall evaluation of the book was based. These 133 reviews were from a range of disciplines and included a number of interdisciplinary works under review. Having identified all commentary relating to both positive and negative evaluations of the writing or style in the 133 reviews, these were then categorised according to the characteristic of the writing commented on, for instance those valuing concision e.g. 'the author's pithy account' (2018 p.75), or those referencing readability e.g. 'the book is thoroughly readable' (2018 p.83). Rather than coding all of the text within the sampling units, Turner extracts data from the reviews and employs inductive categorising of emerging themes. Turner concludes that:

> [W]rittenness is a significant socio-academic criterion, operating independently of what is written about. As such, it is part of the social landscape of academic evaluation, but an aspect that is not readily assumed or explicitly adverted to. (2018 p.62)

There are echoes here of the invisible socio-rhetorical norms within the academy (Lillis & Turner 2001). In both contexts, understanding in relation to certain aspects of writing is taken as a given, but not transparent or drawn attention to, making it problematic for the writer new to the academic context.

2.10 Perceptions of feedback quality and effectiveness

When reviewing the feedback literature, it is notable that many studies mark a shift over the past couple of decades in both researchers' and experts' understandings of feedback. Sadler (2010), for example, refers to a move away from the focus of feedback being on 'telling the students about the quality of their work (disclosure) and towards having them see and understand the reasons for quality (visibility)' (2010 p.546). Even earlier studies such as Higgins et al., (2002 p.53) argue that feedback needs to encourage students to take a 'deep' approach to their subject by helping them develop independent thinking. Carless, Salter, Yang, and Lam (2011) call for a reframing of the feedback process so that more focus is paid to the development of student self-regulation, that is to say having students set and monitor their own learning goals thereby taking a more central role in the feedback process. Likewise, Molloy and Boud (2013 p.22) argue for the re-conceptualisation of feedback as a process which 'not only has the potential to positively impact subsequent attempts at an activity or task, but also plays a key role in helping learners to develop informed judgement.' The prominent theme to emerge from this recent literature is the need for the student to become an active player within the feedback process. This re-conceptualisation therefore moves from a cognitivist perspective of viewing student learning as a one-way teacher-to-student transmission of knowledge, towards a more constructivist perspective with an emphasis on nurturing student agency. However, it is unclear whether tutors and students are aware of this shift in thinking, or indeed share a similar revised view of the process. A number of recent studies set out to address this issue by exploring staff and students' views on both the purpose of feedback and the properties believed to constitute quality feedback information.

2.10.1 Tutor Perspectives

A common view within the feedback literature is that much of the existing research relates to the student experience and that by comparison there are few studies investigating the tutor experience (e.g. Bailey & Garner 2010). This view is confirmed in a systematic review by Evans (2013) which found that nearly two thirds of studies explore feedback through the lens of the student experience. More recently, a number of studies have surveyed both staff and student perspectives (e.g. Dawson et al., 2019; Price et al., 2010).

Dawson et al., (2019) administered a large-scale survey at two universities in Australia in 2016-17. For the purpose of the study, Dawson et al., selected a sample of 200 students from each university that represented the overall student population in that institution 'in terms of gender, international/domestic enrolment, online/on-campus enrolment and faculty' along with a comparable number of responses from teaching staff (2019 p.27). No mention is made in the study of whether the students are L1 or L2, nor whether the students are undergraduate or postgraduate and it would be interesting to see the extent to which there is alignment between student responses across different degree levels and between L1 and L2 writers.

Although the findings of this study are analysed in the light of the more recent understandings of feedback, they reveal that the majority of both students and teachers still consider the main purpose of feedback is to facilitate improvement in students' work, understanding and learning strategies. Staff and student perceptions as to what makes feedback effective, however, differed. The former were more likely to refer to design matters such as the timing of feedback, and the alignment of follow up tasks providing students with the opportunity to enact feedback from one task to the next. Students, on the other hand, identified the quality of comments as the single most important element of effective feedback. In particular, students desired comments that were 'usable, detailed, considerate of affect and personalized to the student's own work' (Dawson et al., 2019 p.25).

Bailey and Garner (2010) interviewed 48 academic staff members from a cross-section of disciplines within a single UK university to explore their perceptions of writing assessment feedback. Among the variety of tutor beliefs revealed in the study is the finding that tutors conceptualise feedback as serving multiple functions including motivational, developmental as well as evaluative. Many of the respondents also acknowledge that feedback is not written exclusively for the student but with the wider audience of internal and external quality assurance practices in mind. Another interesting finding is tutor awareness of the potential discrepancy between what is meant in feedback and what is understood by the student, and how some tutors consequently try to modify their language accordingly to bridge this 'linguistic comprehension gap' (2010 p.193).

In Australia, Orrell (2006) conducted three separate studies using a grounded theory approach to investigate the degree of congruence between academic actual practice and the same academics espoused theories and beliefs about feedback. The author found little congruence between behaviour and beliefs regarding the use of feedback to motivate students or in relation to the importance of

responding to students. A possible reason to help explain this dissonance would be the tension that exists between the teachers' role of supporting and facilitating students' learning according to a constructivist paradigm with that of assessing students' achievement.

In a recent study, Gillway (2020) explores the relationship between subject tutors' belief systems and feedback practices through use of observations and think-aloud protocols. The study investigated the beliefs of academics from three different disciplines, Education, Chemistry, and Cellular and Molecular Medicine, working at a single UK Higher Education Institution. The think-aloud process involved recording the verbalized thoughts of the subject tutors as they provided written commentary on their students' work at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Unlike other studies exploring disciplinary differences (e.g. East et al., 2012; Basturkmen et al., 2014), Gillway found significant variance between the subject tutors' belief systems: for example, the subject tutor from the hard sciences saw the role of teaching and learning, and specifically feedback, as 'developing intellectual curiosity', whereas the applied scientist viewed it as 'preparing students for life and work' (2020 p.76). Another interesting finding related to the use of think-aloud reports and the high number of verbalized comments which did not transition to the actual written comments on student scripts, particularly in the case of two of the subject tutors. Whilst acknowledging potential limitations of the think-aloud technique, the researcher attributes the absence of verbalized comments in the student scripts to the different underlying beliefs of the subject tutors. For example, the subject tutor whose verbalized thoughts most frequently translated into a comment on the students' scripts, also spoke of her belief in a transparent relationship with her students. In making this connection between tutors' beliefs and practices, Gillway's study draws a different conclusion from that of Orrell (2006) above. However, as other feedback studies explored in this chapter have shown, differences in research design, methods of data collection and analysis, such as those between Gillway and Orrell, frequently lead to divergent results and conclusions.

2.10.2 Undergraduate student perspectives

Lizzio and Wilson (2008) conducted a two-part study at an Australian university exploring student perceptions of assessment feedback. The first study involved 57 psychology, law and arts students first, second and third year undergraduate students. The students were asked to consider whether the types of written comments provided were effective, useful or helpful, or alternatively, not effective or helpful. The study found that: '[w]hile all feedback dimensions were positively correlated with ratings of effectiveness, developmental feedback was most strongly associated with students' evaluations of effective assessment feedback.' (2008 p.263). Findings also indicated that students

considered effective feedback to be where tutors demonstrated a deeper engagement with the work under appraisal. In the second part of the study, 277 students from a number of different disciplines including psychology and engineering were asked to rate their perceptions of the effectiveness of the feedback received. Importantly, Lizzio and Wilson (2008) concluded that students were 'readily able to describe the qualities of assessment feedback that they do and do not value' (p.273), which is pertinent to this current work since students' perceptions of effective practice inform part of the categorization framework which addresses the second research question: to what extent does subject tutor feedback align with student perceptions of effective feedback.

A study by Poulos and Mahony (2008), also carried out in Australia, involved four focus groups of undergraduates. Students from each year of a degree courses in Health Science participated, however the exact number of students taking part is not specified. A thematic analysis of the transcripts was conducted from which a number of themes and subthemes emerged. One of the key findings to emerge from student discussions on the meaning and role of feedback was the particular importance placed on feedback by first year students, not just in terms of the information on how to improve performance, but also the information helping students integrate into the academy.

Huxham (2007) surveyed a cohort of undergraduate students studying health sciences at a UK university to investigate students' experience of receiving two different types of feedback: a model answer, and individual feedback. Although the majority of students stated a preference to receive both forms, the second highest preference was for personal feedback, that is to say comments specific to the students' own work rather than generic feedback information provided to the entire cohort. Interestingly, when concluding, Huxham questions whether students are best placed 'to judge what is educationally preferable' (2007 p.609). However, as Winstone et al., (2016) point out in their own large-scale study, academic consensus on what constitutes good feedback is more likely to be useful if that view is shared by the students.

The study conducted by Winstone et al., (2016) referred to above, surveyed 93 'UK-based' undergraduates from various degree subjects and found that students identified 'good feedback information' as the single most important quality desired from lecturers (p.1237). A list of ten unranked feedback qualities from a review of the relevant literature was generated. These qualities related to comments providing information on the following: what skills the students need to improve for future work; where advice or support can be found; justification for the mark; the extent to which learning objectives have been met; praise for work done well; the students' understanding of the subject; commentary on writing style; commentary on grammar; comments inviting the student to a

tutorial to discuss the essay and lastly, commentary on how the student work compared to others within the cohort. The first nine of these qualities relate to commentary encountered by this author, either in my role as feedback provider or as feedback receiver in my capacity as postgraduate student. However, the final quality in this list does not, thus is somewhat surprising. Furthermore, there are no comments within the present study comparing student work to others in the cohort.

When analysing results, Winstone et al., (2016) found that the most common perceived necessity of feedback for students was that it should highlight skills needed to improve subsequent work. Those qualities identified as desirable but not essential by the highest number of students were those relating to grammar and, surprisingly, understanding of the subject. The authors quite reasonably suggest that this may be due to the modularization of programmes and the fact that comments relating to skills needed to improve future work are more useful compared to those comments relating to the understanding of a subject that may not be assessed in a future assignment. This view echoes that of Hughes et al., (2015) who also found that modularisation impacts on feed forward practices (see section 2.5.1).

Another key study exploring the attributes of effective feedback from the student perspective is by O'Donovan et al., (2021). This study interviewed 32 undergraduates from two contrasting disciplines, Business and Biological Science, and two UK universities, one a post-92 HEI the other a member of the Russell group. In the interviews, participants discussed two pieces of feedback they had received on either a written or oral assessment. One of the artifacts had been selected by the participant on the basis that it represented a good piece of feedback, the other not useful. Students' perceptions of why one was perceived useful while the other not, were then discussed via semi-structured interviews. Findings from the study found that students looked more favourably on feedback which demonstrated specific engagement with the students' work. Many of the students' comments related to the context in which the feedback takes place rather than the feedback itself, for example students' perceptions of the assessment design and the extent to which students are 'assessment literate' (O'Donovan et al., 2021 p.319). This finding suggests that the quality of the feedback itself only comprises one part of what is considered good feedback. However, in the large-scale study by Dawson et al. (2019), when both tutors and students were asked what makes for effective feedback, while a majority of tutors mentioned design, for example the importance of designing engaging tasks, by contrast this was mentioned by relatively few students. As the authors themselves note, one likely explanation for this disjuncture is that tutors are much more aware of and involved in issues relating to the design of tasks.

The final study reviewed in this section, Brown (2007), is so positioned since it surveys students at both UG and PG academic levels, thereby straddling both this section and the next. Brown's study interviews 20 accounting students at a single UK university to investigate their views relating to the usefulness of feedback. In his study, Brown makes an interesting distinction between those disciplines comprising discrete modules, and those such as accounting that he refers to as a 'cumulative discipline' and defined as disciplines 'where skills and knowledge amassed in one module may become pre-requisites for another.' (2007 p.45). Given their cumulative nature, Brown suggests performance standards in such disciplines become harder to maintain or improve upon as the course progresses, thus elevating the need for feedback in later modules. On another interesting note, the post-graduate students surveyed saw themselves as demanding in terms of the amount of feedback they desired. There was also a consensus amongst this cohort that they sought more feedback at postgraduate level compared to undergraduate level. This view, whilst based on a narrow sample, aligns with my own experience as a feedback recipient at UG and PG level.

2.10.3 Postgraduate student perspectives

Whilst the above studies investigate opinions of undergraduates, other studies explore postgraduates' perceptions of what constitutes good feedback. Research by Getzlaf, Perry, Toffner, Lamarche, and Edwards (2009), for example, surveyed 30 students completing an on-line Master courses in Nursing and Health studies. As in the study by Winstone et al., (2016), the investigators produced a list of feedback qualities from the relevant literature which was subsequently narrowed down to comprise 20 items prioritized by the faculty teaching staff. Students were then asked to indicate the extent they agreed with each statement using a 6-response Likert scale. The survey included some items with positive and negative framing on the same theme to act as a check for consistency and reliability of responses. For example, students were asked the extent to which they agree with the statement: feedback should '[n]ot increase my level of knowledge about the topic' followed by the extent feedback should '[h]elp me build new knowledge about the topic' another. (Getzlaf et al., 2009 p.21). These items are mutually exclusive observations from each other and therefore students disagreeing with the first statement should also be agreeing with the second. One of the main findings to emerge from this study was that to be perceived as useful, students not only required feedback to identify strengths and weaknesses in the work under appraisal, but they also required the feedback to be future oriented, that is to say applicable to future assignments.

A similar study investigating students' perceptions of what constitutes effective feedback, was conducted by Ferguson (2011). While this study surveyed both postgraduates and undergraduates

enrolled on teacher education programmes at an Australian university, over four times as many postgraduates participated (approximately 450) compared to undergraduates (just over 100). The authors found a high level of consistency in student responses across the sample despite the diverse student body, difference in academic level, and the fact that the postgraduates had pre-existing degrees across all disciplinary areas (Ferguson 2011). Students stated a preference for feedback which addressed the specific work, in particular comments providing information to assist their understanding and those having the potential to inform future work. Less personalized comments such as those referring to marking criteria were considered less useful. Students also stated a preference for comments addressing more macro features such as the overall structure or content of the work rather than on details such as grammar and referencing.

Reviewing this literature, it is clear that the range of preferences regarding feedback information is considerable and that students' perceptions of what constitutes effective feedback is not homogenous. However, it is also possible to observe a recurring mention of a number of feedback properties considered valuable by students such as the requirement for feedback to be applicable to future assignments.

2.11 Conclusion

The purpose of this review has been to discuss some of the relevant approaches present within the feedback literature in order to situate the current research within the field of feedback on student writing. This chapter started out by reviewing studies investigating the effectiveness of feedback and factors mitigating its efficacy. Contradictory findings from studies employing similar research designs have highlighted how feedback involves a complex interaction of contextual and sociocultural factors, as well as the academic discourse through which feedback is delivered, and that these factors often constrain students from acting upon their feedback.

This chapter has also explored two different strands represented in the feedback literature; the first relating to the referential foci of the feedback commentary and the other relating to student perspectives of feedback quality and effectiveness. This review of the relevant scholarly literature, resulting from a search across the main subject database and indexes as well as the academic periodical literature, has found relatively few studies exploring subject tutor-authored written feedback, that is to say, written by disciplinary experts rather than language experts, and a particular lack of work analysing written feedback delivered as part of postgraduate programmes across various disciplines as research sites.

The final section of this chapter has explored students' perceptions of feedback quality and effectiveness. Students' views on feedback have been studied mostly by means of participants' responses to questionnaires and interview data. Consequently, this present study adopts an approach similar to that employed by Getzlaf et al., (2009) and Winstone et al., (2016), and generates a list of feedback qualities drawn from this review which then provides the basis for part of a categorization framework. The next chapter will discuss how this framework has been used to explore whether educators' actual feedback practice is congruent with the values advocated as useful by students surveyed in the literature. An analysis of written commentaries and interviews with academic tutors can shed light on tutors' commenting practices and hopefully provide a better understanding of what tutors value in a text, the discipline specificity of the academic contexts, and the extent to which subject tutor feedback aligns with and differs from student perceptions of effective feedback.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In keeping with a central tenet of pragmatism as discussed in the previous chapter (see 2.2.2), this study adopts a mixed methods approach in order to address the research questions fully and gain a richer understanding of subject tutor feedback than would otherwise be provided by either an exclusive quantitative or qualitative approach (Cohen et al., 2011).

As well as underpinning the theoretical perspective of this research, the adoption of a mixed methods approach also applies to different stages of this research study, including the data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. In relation to data collection, different data types investigate the research questions including the empirical data of feedback scripts, interviews with module conveners, and the findings from a comprehensive review of the literature surveying students' perceptions of what constitutes effective feedback. Different approaches are employed in analysis of the mixed data, including a qualitative content analysis of the feedback data and a quantitative corpus-based analysis of the feedback scripts. Furthermore, the methods employed in analysising the data employ both deductive and inductive approaches by drawing on prior research to inform the coding and categorisation process as well as insights yielded by the data itself. This results in the development of a framework comprising three tiers of coding: the first according to the referential foci of the comments, the second according to the qualitative assessment attributed to the comment, and the third according to whether the commentary in the coding unit aligns with a quality identified as valuable by students surveyed in the feedback literature.

Reaching decisions relating to design issues and data analysis were driven by both the research questions but also by the guiding principle 'fitness for purpose' and in this pursuit, the most appropriate quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed thus according with the pragmatic roots of a mixed methods study as discussed in the previous chapter (see 2.2.2).

This chapter starts by providing a rational for the research questions and research design before moving on to discuss other key decisions taken relating to the methodological approach underpinning this study.

In this study, I address the following research questions:

- RQ1 Feedback focus
  - RQ1a What do tutors in modules on four programmes in different disciplines focus on in their written feedback comments at PGT level?
  - RQ1b How do findings differ across the four disciplines?

- RQ2 Alignment with students' perceptions of effective feedback
  - RQ2a To what extent does subject tutor feedback align with student perceptions of effective feedback as outlined in the literature?
  - RQ2b To what extent does subject tutor feedback differ to student perceptions of effective feedback as outlined in the literature?

3.2 Research questions rationale

The aim of the first research question is to examine the referential foci of the feedback commentary. This was also the focus of Study 1 (Grannell 2017) (see section 1.2), however the research question has been adjusted to take account of the inclusion of data from two additional disciplines in the total population sample, and the range of grades awarded to the Applied Linguistics and Child Studies sampling units. The rationale for this research question lies in the desire as an EAP writing practitioner to gain further understanding of disciplinary writing, in particular the writing practices valued by subject tutors. The analysis of authentic examples of feedback can provide the evidence base for investigating the particular aspects of academic writing students have difficulty with, which in turn can help inform both EAP writing practitioners and classroom practice. As well as the empirical data provided by the feedback artefacts (i.e. feedback comments), interviews with the module conveners provide an additional source of data by addressing not only questions relating to the feedback itself, but also in relation to the process and practices of which it is a part. Furthermore, analysis of the feedback artefact will help concretise actual feedback practices since, as some scholars have argued (e.g. Molloy 2009), these may differ from the practices identified in self-report methodology such as interviews.

Research question two sets out to explore feedback from an alternative perspective, that of the learner. By doing so, the research focus aligns with continued concern over the relatively low satisfaction rates with feedback and assessment in national student surveys (NSS 2021; PTES 2020) as well as the increasingly consumerist university context since the introduction of student fees (O'Donovan 2020). Importantly, however, this perspective provides the opportunity to examine educators actual feedback for the values advocated as useful by students, and to see the extent to

which written feedback and perceived usefulness are congruent. As Winstone et al., (2016) point out, feedback is more likely to be effective if students' perceptions of useful feedback are shared with tutors.

Each research question will also explore how the findings differ across the four distinct disciplines. Feedback that is more pertinent to a specific discipline than another can provide a focal point for the development of disciplinary writing practices. Hyland (2017) points out that investigating disciplinary variations from an analysis of subject tutor feedback is an under-researched area of L2 writing, since until now the focus has tended to be on the expectations and practices of those that teach writing and not on those within the academic faculties for whom the writing is undertaken. I would argue that this is true of both L1 and L2 writing since as Ferguson (2007) argues, all students need to acquire competence in specific disciplinary discourse and thus, in this regard, at the outset of their programmes both start as novices.

3.3 Research design and rationale

Tutor responses to students' written work are one of the principal ways in which tutors' expectations of student writing are communicated to their learners, and therefore contain meaning relative to the particular context and academic discourse in which they are written. Consequently, an approach to textual analysis concerned simply with word or phrase counts would not suffice. Instead, an approach was needed which recognizes that texts are created to be 'read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings' and thus analyses texts with these uses in mind (Krippendorp 2013 p.xii). Content analysis was the method of inquiry for the original study, and the set of techniques used throughout the data analysis process for the present study closely mirrors the systematized methods involved in the original study.

Krippendorp (2013 p.24) defines content analysis as 'a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use.' Although content analysis originated as a quantitative approach investigating word or phrase occurrence in texts, contemporary content analysis has become more qualitative with themes identified and assessed by the researcher in terms of their meaning (Newby 2014). Much of the literature now recognises Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) as a distinct method of inquiry (e.g. Mayring 2004), and indeed, some researchers even identify distinct approaches within QCA (e.g. Hsieh & Shannon 2005).

A strength of content analysis as a methodological approach is that where written text is the main source of data, data collection can take place with or without interaction between the researcher and participants and therefore is an unobtrusive method (Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson 2002). Furthermore, as the data comprise written feedback scripts, they are in a permanent form which allows for the possibility of verification by another researcher through a re-analysis and replication of the coding and categorisation process. For research to be reliable, it needs to be replicable, and in this study a permanent form of data allows for a second researcher to use the same methods with the same sample to determine the extent to which consistent results are obtained. Furthermore, as the data set also includes students' written assignments, the researcher can use this alternative resource to help review and verify the soundness of some of the more difficult decisions taken, for example, where coding units appear to fall between two categories.

The data for the present study is drawn from 'real-world' contexts as opposed to an artificial setting. Samples of naturally-occurring feedback scripts were gathered, that is to say feedback produced regardless of this study, thereby ensuring the scripts were representative of the situation being examined, in this case, the feedback practices of four HEI departments. Furthermore, the feedback providers wrote their comments without prior knowledge of their use as the subject of this study thus avoiding compromising external validity. A particular issue around validity is the potential to influence the behaviour of the subject or the research environment, often referred to as the Hawthorne effect (Newby 2014). In this context, this means making sure that the feedback providers have not written their feedback with this study in mind since this could give rise to what Newby (2014 p.127) refers to as 'an intervention effect' whereby knowing participants affect the feedback artefacts in some way.

3.3.1 Inductive or deductive coding

Two further analytic choices informed the research design for this study. The first concerned the use of inductive or deductive coding. Content analysis can draw on either approach to the coding and analysis of the data, however more conventional content analysis approaches tend to adhere to more inductive processes since theory emerges from the analysis of the data (Cohen et al., 2011). The process for inductive coding comprises a bottom-up approach whereby the starting point for the researcher is what is found in the data itself. Codes are derived from a sifting of this data, extracting information through repeated close readings of the text thus avoiding the use of preconceived categories. Inductive coding is therefore a precursor to theorisation. By contrast, deductive coding adheres to a more top-down approach, whereby existing theory or prior research provide the researcher with a foundation for exploring the data and seeing relationships between codes (Braun,

Clarke & Terry 2015). In this study, prior research informs the initial coding and categorisation process, and helps determine the coding framework, thus adhering to a deductive approach.

The choice between these two approaches can determine when a review of the literature is undertaken. Glaser and Strauss (1967), advised researchers to delay reading the related literature until after the data collection and coding process since this 'might contaminate, stifle or otherwise impede the researcher's effort to generate categories' (Glaser 1992 p.31). Other researchers within the field countenance the idea of coders undertaking preliminary reading to get an idea of general themes since more themes and categories will emerge during their own data analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994). More recently Thistoll, Hooper and Pauleen (2016 p.620) have advocated a 'grounded preliminary literature review' in order to develop the researchers' ability to interpret and assign meaning to the data. Their approach proposes building up 'a repertoire of theoretical codes' derived from a review of the relevant literature for use in their own data analysis. These more pragmatic approaches acknowledge that data cannot be analysed as an isolated process and that the researcher 'must come laden with baggage, which, for some, is conceptually and philosophically heavier than for others' (Newby 2014 p.497).

Given a review of the relevant literature and prior frameworks for coding feedback took place for Study 1 (Grannell 2017), and given the two-year period between the start and end date of the data collection for this present study, this approach of delaying or limiting reading to a preliminary review is nonviable. Consequently, coding of the feedback data in this study has been guided by other coding schemes to investigate what tutors focus on in their written feedback (e.g. Brown & Glover 2006; Hyland 2013a; Hughes et al., 2015). This is not to say the codes were pre-determined. Rather, as researcher involved in an earlier study involving the coding of written feedback, and having undertaken reviews of similar feedback studies, it is a recognition that this background knowledge and understanding is likely to inform how this data is seen and how the categories are constructed. As Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, and Braun (2017 p.22) argue, 'the researcher is never a blank slate and inevitably brings their own social position and theoretical lens to the analysis'. The starting point for the analysis of data in this study, is therefore a more 'top down' process (Terry et al., 2017 p.22), one in which the researcher is bringing their existing understanding of the literature and theoretical concepts to bear on the analysis, and it is through this lens that the researcher sees and then interprets the data.

3.3.2 Manifest or Latent coding

A second analytic choice and rationale for adopting a qualitative content analysis methodology is that the analysis can focus on both the manifest and latent content of text (Cho & Lee 2014). The manifest content involves the analysis of the directly observable content of the data, while the latent content refers to the interpretation of the implicit meanings within the text (Graneheim & Lundman 2004). A presumption underlying this research is that text involves multiple meanings and consequently there is some degree of interpretation when analyzing a text and undertaking a coding process which requires the researcher to analyse the data beyond the manifest content.

In this study, the coding was at times descriptive, that is to say re-expressing what the commentary was saying. For example (1) below, could be read at face value, that is, the work would have benefitted from the inclusion of visuals, consequently the codes assigned to this coding unit included *Formatting & Visuals,* and *How the work could have been improved*. Where this occurred the coding process operated at, or close to, the surface of the data (Newby 2014), thereby focusing on manifest content.

1. The essay would have been improved with the use of illustrative figures to assist some of the descriptions [BS-1] [F-C-IMP]

At other times classification of the data required more interpretation of the data. For example, assigning a category to coding unit (2) below requires closer scrutiny to determine whether the tutor is crediting the student with making an important observation or making this observation herself.

2. In relation to health care as a legal right, an important observation that access to (basic) healthcare is a fundamental right that should not depend on immigration or other status and of the need for agreement on what the floor should be for universal access to healthcare. [CS-5] [A-P]

Since the meaning of the feedback comment is not explicit, this example operates at a deeper level of analysis and is therefore indicative of latent coding. In this instance, reference was made to the actual student assignment to which the feedback is responding. The relevant extract is provided below:

> *In context of its legal discussion, it would've served the authors well to make clear that health care is a basic human right and that legal discussions questioning whether any particular population has this right is fundamentally flawed. Still the article makes clear*

the dire necessity for a global reconsideration of what services are made available to undocumented populations. [sic]

Extract taken from student assignment [CS-5]

Scrutinising the relevant section of the student submission [CS-5] helps clarify that the tutor is acknowledging that this is a pertinent point and that it is indeed the student that makes it.

To summarise, this section has discussed the analytic decisions surrounding the adoption of content analysis as the research design for this study. Firstly, content analysis allows for both qualitative and quantitative steps of analysis to explore aspects of text that relate to specified research questions. Furthermore, this approach involves a systematic set of procedures with which to examine the contents of written data, both in terms of meaning of the message communicated by markers on the artefacts, but also in terms of disciplinary difference when comparing the frequency of the same codes across sampling units. This approach also accommodates the practicalities of data collection within this specific research site, in particular the restricted access to participants and compressed time-frame for data collection. While codes were not entirely decided in advance, familiarisation with prior frameworks for coding written feedback and existing ideas in the feedback literature provided the basis for the coding categories and helped inform the development of the coding frame. Finally, some codes in this study capture explicit meaning whilst others capture more implicit interpretation of the data, the latter requiring a deeper level of analysis by the researcher. Therefore, this study required a methodological approach that employs both manifest and latent coding.

3.4 Use of qualitative software MaxQDA

One way in which the content analysis method is evolving is in the use of qualitative software to assist the research process. MaxQDA is a software analysis tool for both qualitative and mixed methods data analysis. As with other software analysis programmes such as NVivo, MaxQDA facilitates the classifying and assigning of codes for large amounts of data. All the individual feedback scripts from a single module, (referred to as sampling units), were imported onto MaxQDA as a single document, and separated into individual feedback points (referred to as coding units). Individual sampling units were identified under subheadings in each of the four documents, for example CS Sample 15 in Figure 1 below, enabling each coding unit to be tagged according to both module and sampling unit, in this case [CS-15]. Code colours in addition to codes help differentiate between the different coding layers in the document browser.

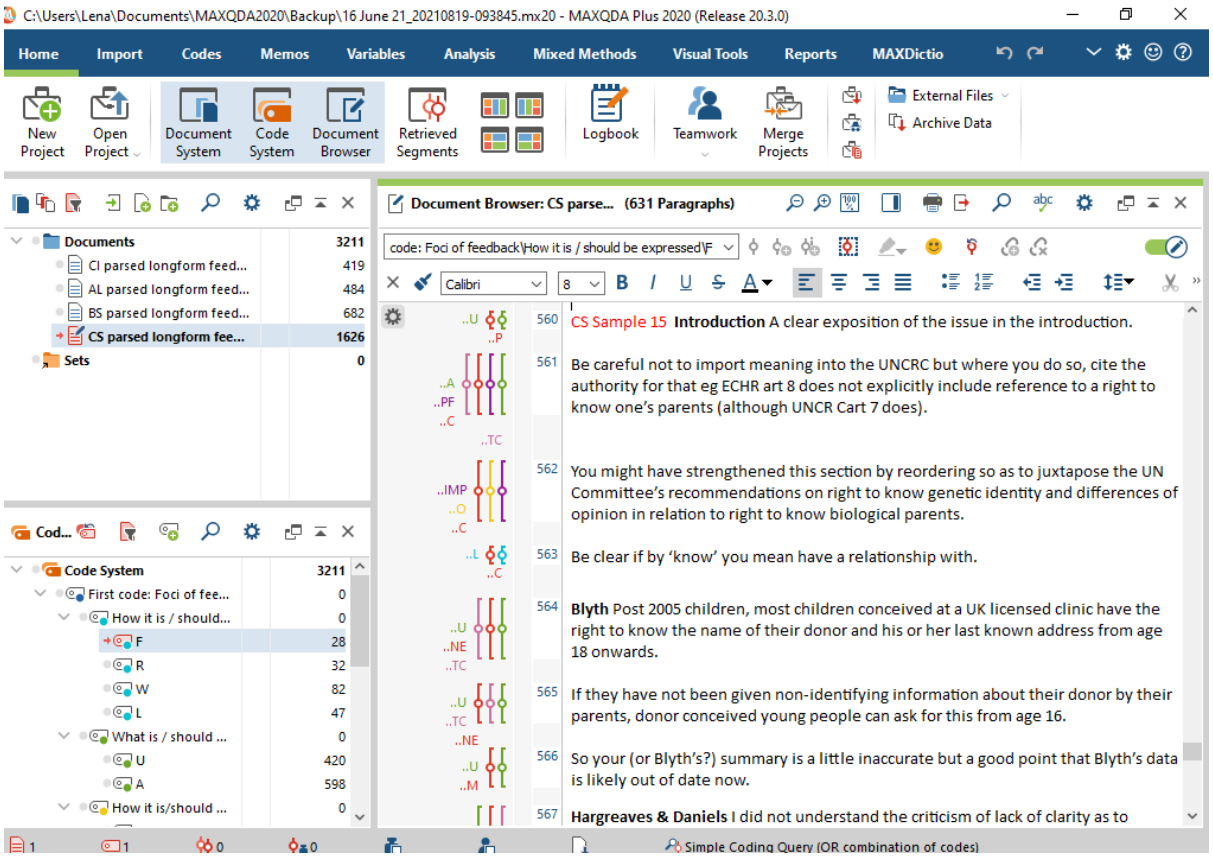


Figure 1: Screenshot of MaxQDA showing part of the code system (left), coding units (right) & assigned codes.

While it is possible to add each sampling unit as an individual document, and add variables to each of the documents, for example whether the sampling units were written in response to L1 or L2 scripts, it was decided to include all sampling units for each module as a single document, since this enabled a more straight-forward comparison of findings across the four modules.

The software also enables the user to retrieve all the data within a single category across all sampling units and compare the text within these coding units (Figure 2). This comparison of data across data sets helps the researcher check during the research process whether the coding units belong in a specific category.

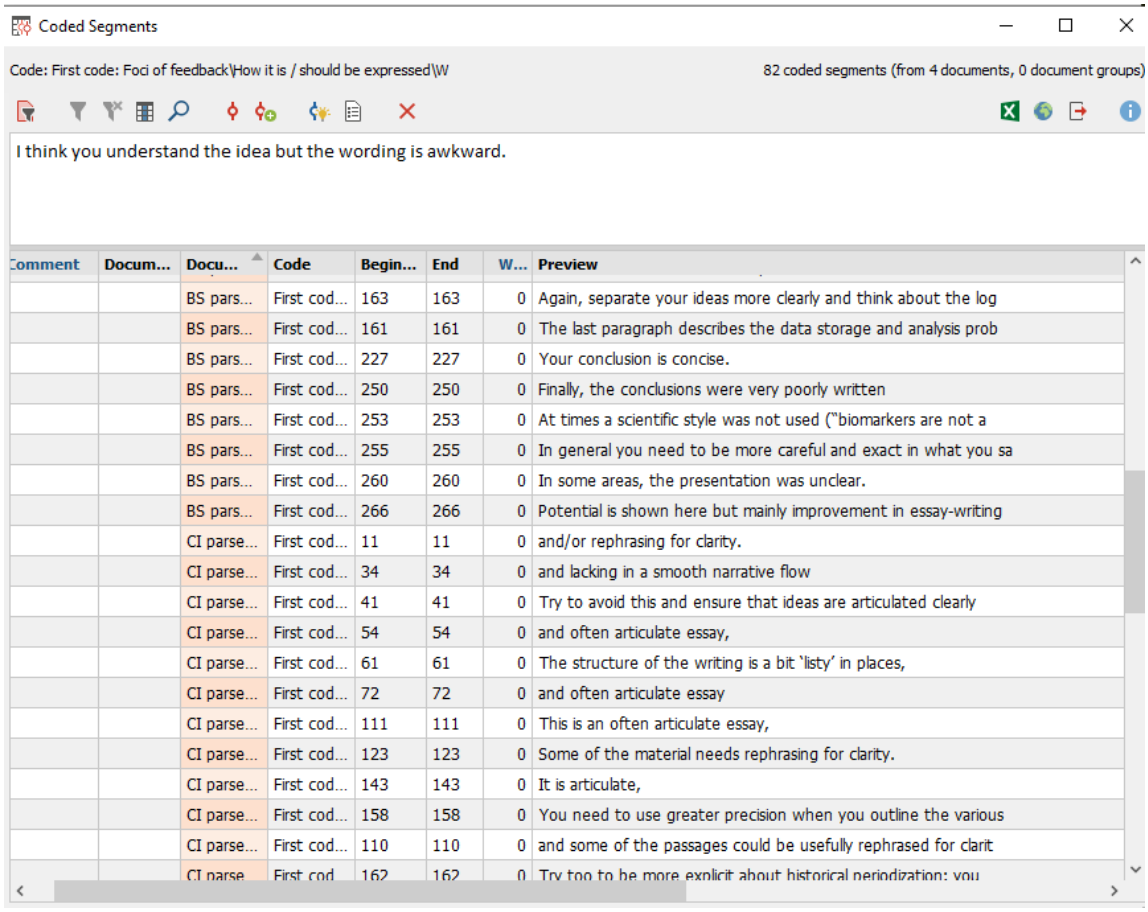
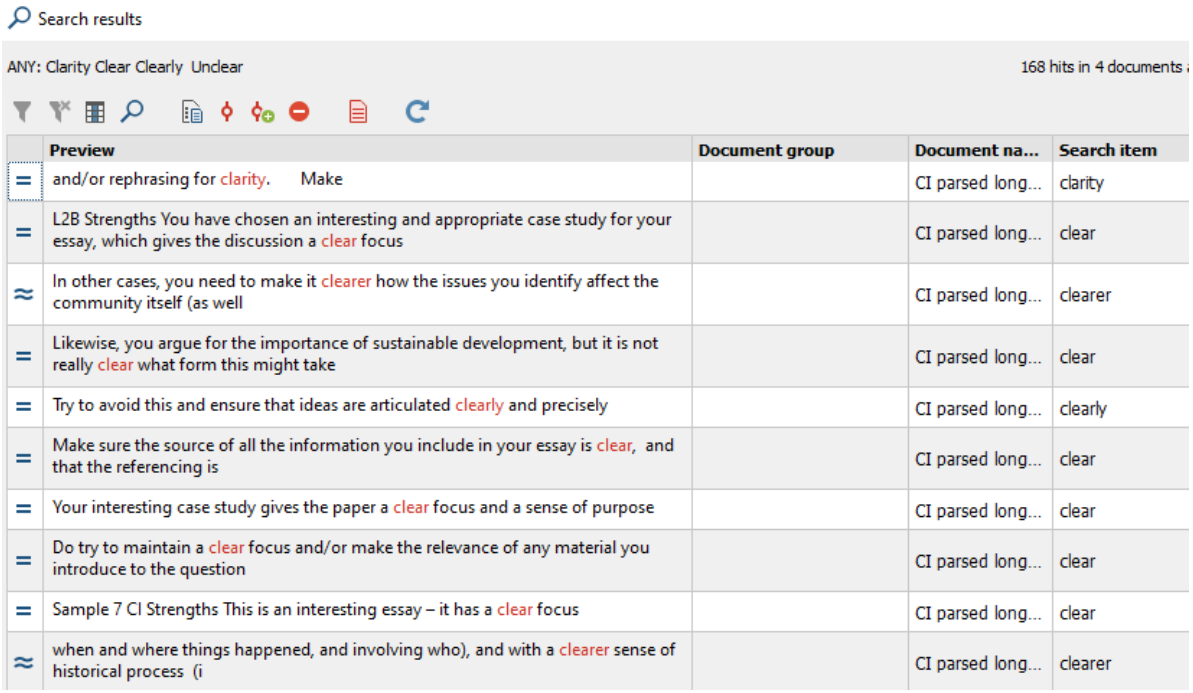


Figure 2: Screenshot of MaxQDA showing coding units (right), activated module (left), & code (top).

For more complex queries, for example, if interested in overlapping codes, these correlations can be displayed with the Complex Coding Query or Visual Tools option which enables the researcher to compare code frequencies and distributions across the data. Furthermore, a search function within the retrieved segment window enables the researcher to look at the frequency of specific language items and provide quantitative information about the corpus. For example, in section 4.2.2.2 lexical search of the item 'clear' including all lemmatised forms clearly, clarity and unclear was undertaken (Figure 3). The preview window displays each of the coding units containing the searched item highlighted in red.



	Preview	Document group	Document na...	Search item
=	and/or rephrasing for clarity. Make		CI parsed long...	clarity
=	L2B Strengths You have chosen an interesting and appropriate case study for your essay, which gives the discussion a clear focus		CI parsed long...	clear
≈	In other cases, you need to make it clearer how the issues you identify affect the community itself (as well		CI parsed long...	clearer
=	Likewise, you argue for the importance of sustainable development, but it is not really clear what form this might take		CI parsed long...	clear
=	Try to avoid this and ensure that ideas are articulated clearly and precisely		CI parsed long...	clearly
=	Make sure the source of all the information you include in your essay is clear, and that the referencing is		CI parsed long...	clear
=	Your interesting case study gives the paper a clear focus and a sense of purpose		CI parsed long...	clear
=	Do try to maintain a clear focus and/or make the relevance of any material you introduce to the question		CI parsed long...	clear
=	Sample 7 CI Strengths This is an interesting essay – it has a clear focus		CI parsed long...	clear
≈	when and where things happened, and involving who), and with a clearer sense of historical process (i		CI parsed long...	clearer

Figure 3: Screenshot of MaxQDA showing lexical search results for items: 'Clear', 'Clarity', 'Clearly', & 'Unclear'.

3.4.1 Lexical search of corpus

Use of the software MaxQDA enables the researcher to look at the frequency of specific language items and provide further quantitative information about the corpus. Since early investigations in the 1980s and early 1990s exploring the lexical, grammatical, or lexico-grammatical patterning in written and spoken discourse, corpus-based research has widened to encompass the exploration of genre-based corpora (Flowerdew 2002). Perhaps the most seminal of the investigations exploring academic discourse has been Swales' (1990) work investigating the research article. Findings from these genre-based investigations and other corpus-based studies have been useful in informing both EAP and ESAP pedagogy. For example, Tribble's (2002) work has explored how corpus-based research can help students develop academic writing skills within specific academic domains.

Corpus-based research investigating how discourse varies between disciplines tends to investigate distribution patterns of grammatical structures and lexical preferences, and thus, according to Hood (2010 p.4), 'readily present generalized descriptions of difference in academic genres across disciplinary sites'. For example, Hyland (1999) identifies how the preference for certain rhetorical structures varies between disciplines. In another study, Hyatt (2005) conducted a corpus-based analysis of feedback commentaries and argues that corpus analysis provides not only an effective tool for identifying patterns of language use not easily observable, but also considers the context for

specific instances of language use and the possible motivation behind tutors' linguistic choices. This research, therefore, can not only provide insight into the various ways disciplines represent themselves but also provide an understanding accounting for those differences, such as from Hyland's conclusion that 'the greater use of reporting verbs in the soft fields also reflects the more discursive character of these disciplines' (1999 p.359). Thus, as Turner (2018 p.59) argues, undertaking a corpus-based search can add a 'rich seam' to research investigating disciplinary discourse. Consequently, whilst a corpus analysis of the feedback data was not the aim of this present study, this investigation has employed the MaxQDA lexical search function to undertake a number of corpus searches, thereby adding another empirical layer to the research.

3.5 Context and Population

The data for the present study, Study 2, has been collected from a single Higher Education Institution (HEI) located in London. The HEI in question offers post-graduate courses covering the arts, humanities, social sciences (including education, teaching and international affairs) and the sciences (including biomedical sciences and psychology). The four post-graduate taught courses participating in this study are: MA Creative Industries; MSc Biological Sciences, MA Child Studies, and MA Applied Linguistics. All four programmes are 1 year full-time and 2 years part-time. The names of the four modules have been modified slightly to help preserve anonymity of the participating departments and university. The acronyms for these modules in assigned codes are: Creative Industries (CI), Biological Sciences (BS) Applied Linguistics (AL) and Child Studies (CS).

The department of Creative Industries (CI) sits within the Faculty of Arts & Humanities. Much of the research conducted by the department is rooted in the social sciences and therefore, according to the CI webpages, its work is described as inter-disciplinary. The module convener for CI is a departmental senior tutor and has convened on the MA core module since 2003. In July 2017 at the time of the interview, the MA had an intake of approximately 150 students and included a high number of L2 students.

The MSc in Biological Sciences (BS) is a taught postgraduate programme offered by a department located within the faculty of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience. As with CI, the department describes its research as interdisciplinary with programmes encompassing Genetics, Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroimaging. The module convener for MSc BS has taught at the HEI since 2007. At

the time of data collection for Study 1 (Grannell 2017), August 2017, the MSc had an intake of approximately 20 students.

The MA Child Studies (CS) is a taught programme offered by a department located in the Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy. CS is also a multi-disciplinary course, examining issues affecting childhood globally. In 2019, the course had an intake of approximately 15 full-time and 10 part-time students. This programme is a core module, examining relevant law and policy surrounding the concepts of children's rights. Prior to starting work at the HEI in 2005, the module convener practiced as a Family Law barrister for over a decade.

The MA Applied Linguistics (AL) also sits within a department located in the Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy. The programme is designed for experienced language teachers and includes both theory-oriented and practice-oriented modules. All full-time AL students are required to take specific modules including Principles and Practice in second/foreign language teaching, Second/Additional Language Acquisition, and Sociolinguistics. In 2019, the course had an intake of approximately 40 full-time and 20 part-time students. The module convener joined the HEI in 1999.

Marking of summative assignments across all four departments is done anonymously, negating the possibility of reiterative feedback. However, when interviewed the module convener of Applied Linguistics acknowledged that, given the tutors background of working with international students, it was quite easy to recognise students in small multi-lingual classes, particularly in those assignments where students make reference to their overseas teaching contexts.

> *It's quite hard to anonymize assignments when you have smallish classes.*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 188-189

For Study 1 (Grannell 2017), the researcher requested 12 feedback scripts from each of the two participating departments (CI and BS) and scripts which had received a mark in the pass band (50 – 59%). As one of the research questions examined the amount of explicit commentary on language issues provided to a discipline within the humanities field to that of a hard science area, six of the feedback scripts responded to assignments written by L1 students and six by L2 students. Initially, the present study aimed for an equal number of written assignments and accompanying feedback scripts from each of the four disciplines. However, as a result of changes to the way data was collected prior

to the introduction of GDPR (see section 3.6), it was not possible to request a specific number of sampling units, or request assignments receiving a specific grade from either CS or AL.

Within the CI and CS data sets, the module convener is the feedback provider for each sampling unit. Within the AL and BS data set, feedback is provided by a number of different markers including the module convener (see Table 1 below). The difference in number of markers for each data set arises from the necessity to adopt different sampling methods for each study and therein in each data set. For example, the purposive sampling methods adopted for Study 1 (see section 1.2) as well as the small size of the student cohort and therein tutors delivering provision for the Creative Industries module meant that the scripts drawn from this module had a single marker, the module convener. In contrast, the self-selecting sampling approach adopted for Study 2 (see section 1.3) resulted in the Applied Linguistics data set comprising 14 feedback scripts written by seven different markers. The final composition of the data collection is shown in Table 1 below. A full list of assignment titles, module titles, students' first language, grades awarded, and number of markers involved in the provision of feedback for the sampling units from each of the four modules can be found in Appendix II.

Table 1: Academic Year (AY), number of sampling units, word count, number of coding units & markers per module.

Module	AY of data collection	Sampling units	Word count of summative comments	Average words per script (approx)	Number of coding units	Number of feedback providers	Module Convener (MC)[1]
MA CI	2016-17	12	3,280	275	166	1	All
MSc BS	2016-17	12	4,621	385	266	6	2, 3, 9
MA CS	2018-19	16	12,472	780	631	1	All
MA AL	2019-20	14	3,670	262	207	7	1 - 4
Total		54	24,043		1,270		

[1] This column indicates in which sampling units the module convener (MC) is the feedback provider

Looking at the average words per script, we can see that the module convener for MA CS, the sole marker of these sampling units, provided considerably more feedback than that provided by the markers in the other three modules. The assignment for this module is an annotated bibliography (see section 3.7) and when providing feedback for these 16 sampling scripts, the convener wrote long-form comments after each of the six annotations as well as after the introduction and conclusion in each. Furthermore, at the end of each sampling unit, the convener provided comments under the headings *Understanding*, *Depth of knowledge*, *Structure and clarity*, and *General*, in line with the specific assessment criteria as outlined in the CS module handbook (Appendix IV)

All 54 feedback scripts were accompanied by a grade. While module conveners for CI and BS were able to provide sampling units awarded a grade within the pass band (50-59%), due to the different collection process outlined above, there is a spread of provisional grades awarded to the sampling units drawn from CS and AL (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Distribution & number of assignments in each grade band per module.

	40-49% Fail	50-59% Pass	60-69% Meria	70-79% Distinction	80-89%	Total
MA CI		12				12
MSc BS		12				12
MA CS	1	5	7	3		16
MA AL	1	5	4	3	1	14

Self-selecting sampling methods adopted for Study 2 also led to an unequal number of L1 and L2 scripts (see Table 3 below). In contrast, purposive sampling, undertaken for Study 1 to address the first research question investigating the amount of explicit commentary on language issues, resulted in equal number of scripts written by L1 and L2 students. Likewise, the data sets comprise only scripts receiving a pass grade (50-59%) in order to negate difference in grade as a possible reason for variation in the amount of commentary relating to language issues. The decision to include only scripts awarded 50-59% was taken since it was expected that the lowest pass grade would receive the most commentary relating to all issues. Of the 54 students participating in this study, 29 have English as a first language and 25 have English as a second or additional language (Table 3). The English language entry requirement for students whose first language is not English is IELTS 7.0 overall with a minimum of 6.5 in each skill or equivalent for each programme. Study 1 found that, even at pass level, language issues receive comparatively little attention in feedback commentary and furthermore results indicated little difference in the frequency of comments provided to L2 scripts compared to L1 scripts in term of language issues. It was therefore anticipated that the effect of having an unequal number of L1 and L2 English speakers in the two additional disciplines would have minimal impact across the data set.

Table 3: Number of sampling units written by L1 & L2 students per module.

	L1 students	L2 students
MA CI	6	6
MSc BS	6	6
MA CS	13	3
MA AL	4	10
Total	29	25

All of the 54 student assignments to which the feedback scripts respond were included as part of the data collection. Examples of module handbooks were also collected from each of the four conveners. The handbooks provide the aims of the module, outlines how the module is assessed, essay titles, core and wider reading lists. The handbooks also include the marking criteria specific to the module (Appendix IV). These are used in conjunction with the participating university's generic taught Master's marking criteria (Appendix VIII).

3.6 Ethical procedures

Research necessitates obtaining informed consent of the participants taking part in the study, in this case the institution, module conveners and students. Diener and Crandall (1978 p.57) define informed consent as 'the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions'. For the present study, ethical approval was first sought from University of Reading's Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics Ethics Committee. An Ethics Committee Project Submission Cover Sheet, Consent Form, project description and separate information sheet for module conveners, feedback providers and student writers were submitted. On receiving ethical approval, an external research application was submitted to the HEI from which the recruitment of participants was taking place. The application included: permission from the relevant Heads of Department, rationale for recruiting staff and students, details of the intended recruitment method, description of the study, participant information sheets and consent forms, and documentation confirming the study had ethical approval from the University of Reading.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) entered into force in 2018. Article 6 GDPR stipulates that consent must be specific, informed, unambiguous and freely given through a clear affirmative act (Mondschein & Monda 2019 p.62). The introduction of GDPR had a significant impact on the data collection stage in the research endeavour for the present study, in particular how student consent was sought and consequently the ease with which student assignments and accompanying feedback were obtained. For the original study, CI and BS module conveners selected scripts meeting certain inclusion criteria from a pool of assignments with a ticked box on the generic departmental cover sheet indicating students' consent for use of assignment, feedback and grade awarded (Appendix III). For the present study, an e-mail with a description of the study, participant information sheets and consent forms were circulated to the student cohort, and students interested in participating had to respond directly to the researcher. With few students coming forward, the researcher subsequently

sought additional participants through direct appeal at a CS lecture. In July 2020, with face-to-face teaching suspended due to Covid 19, the researcher delivered an online workshop to AL students. These restrictions also meant a typed signature was accepted by the AL module convener as confirmation of informed consent from AL students.

The sample of student scripts from CS and AL was consequently determined by those students volunteering to participate rather than those meeting set inclusion criteria. As an inherently evaluative genre, there are naturally many sensitivities surrounding the provision and receipt of feedback (Molloy 2009) and it follows that there is an unwillingness amongst many students to share feedback with others, particularly if the evaluation is perceived to be negative.

3.7 Genres of assignments

Nesi and Gardner's (2018) classification of genres is grounded in a corpus analysis, compiled of almost 3,000 samples of cross-disciplinary university summative writing, at levels of study ranging from first year UG level to taught masters. Their analysis led to the identification of thirteen genre families and these provide a useful account of the nature of assessed academic writing across disciplines. Their study established that not only was the range of genres that students write greater than presumed, but also that students' writing varies across both genre and discipline. For both Study 1 and 2 extended pieces of writing of approximately 3,000 words in length were requested without specifying genre.

The nomenclature used by the departments for the assignments within this data collection are 'essay', 'annotated bibliography' and 'case study'. Gardner and Nesi's (2013) taxonomy of written genres in higher education identifies the essay as one of the 13 genre families. The educational purpose is stated as 'to demonstrate / develop the ability to construct a coherent argument and employ critical thinking skills', the generic structure as 'Introduction, series of arguments, conclusion' and example genres provided include 'exposition' and 'discussion' (Gardner & Nesi 2013 p.42). The 'essay' is used as a form of assessment in each of the four departments taking part in this study, thereby supporting the view that the essay is the most common genre that students need to write (Gardner & Nesi 2013). Johns (2008), however, points out the difficulties of labelling the essay as a genre since, although broadly applied across disciplines, the structure, argumentation and register can vary.

Whilst the Biological Sciences module convener refers to the assignment as an 'essay' in interview, the assignment titles tend to align more closely with the purpose of the Explanation genre, another of the genre families identified by Nesi and Gardner (2012). Although this genre can be found across all

disciplinary groups, according to the authors it is more typical within the Life Sciences disciplines. The purpose of this genre 'is not for students to develop individual arguments but rather to demonstrate an understanding of shared knowledge', specifically 'the current state of knowledge and how it was acquired' (Gardner & Nesi 2013 pp.34-35). For example, one of the Biological Sciences assignment titles focusses on the aim of genetic studies 'to predict who may be at increased risk of developing [psychiatric disorders]' and requires the student-writer 'to describe the progress we have made towards this aim through genome-wide association studies and polygenic prediction' (see Appendix II). Similarly, indicators to the nature of the genre are also to be found in the grade criteria relating to content for this assignment which stipulates 'factual content' and 'evidence of research and originality' (see Appendix VI) which also aligns more closely with the defining features of the Explanation genre which is 'to offer a more neutral explanation' compared to that expected for example of the critique (Gardner & Nesi 2013 p.35).

The 'Literature Survey' is identified as another of the 'genre family' categories, within which the annotated bibliography is one of the example genres. The purpose of this genre is described as 'to demonstrate/develop familiarity with literature relevant to the focus of study', and the structure as including a 'summary of literature relevant to the focus of study and varying degrees of critical evaluation' (2013 p.39). This description tallies closely with requirements for the annotated bibliography as set out in the MA CS module handbook which stipulates that 'the annotation of each source … will comprise i) a concise summary of the sources and ii) some assessment of its value or relevance.' (Appendix IV). It also tallies with the description provided by the CS module convener:

> *the idea is they do a short summary of the key points of the article and then they go on to do a short critical analysis of the contribution of the article … to the field… and any strengths… weaknesses of it*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 331-333

Interestingly, when interviewed, the CS module convener viewed the annotated bibliography, set as the first summative assignment in CS, as a way to help students build up progressively towards writing an essay:

> *it's hard to expect them* [students] *to launch into an essay straight off… we chose it* [annotated bibliography] *for the first assignment because I think there are a number of things that it does that [are] really helpful…*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 318-322

Expounding on this idea, the CS module convener points out that the annotated bibliography requires students to consider seminal authors in this particular field to demonstrate whether they have understood these articles and whether they can distil the key points from them.

The 'case study' is also identified as a distinct genre family within Gardner and Nesi's (2013) taxonomy. The educational purpose of this genre is defined as 'description of a particular case, often multi-faceted, with recommendations or suggestions for future action' (2013 p.37). Another characteristic of this genre identified by the authors is the correspondence to professional practice. This is demonstrated in the assignment briefs set on the Applied Linguistics module which, for example, requires the students to provide 'a case study of a language learner looking at one or possibly two of the individual differences (ID) studied in the SLA course' (Appendix II). This assignment therefore requires the student to mediate between theory and practice by drawing on aspects of second language learning theory in the analysis of data from an interview with a language learner, and by following this up with a consideration of the pedagogical implications these findings have for teachers of L2 learners of English. The onus on integration of theory and practice is emphasised in the Applied Linguistics module handbook as is the inclusion of recommendations identified by Gardner and Nesi as another defining feature of this genre:

> There should be clear connections between theory and practice … [and] where appropriate, suggestions for adapting the materials so that there is a greater match with the needs of the students and teachers in the chosen context.
>
> Applied Linguistics Module Handbook (Appendix VII)

The Creative Industries handbook also refers to the set assignment as an 'essay' even though the assignment centres around use of a case study (see Appendix V). By analysing a single exemplar, we can see how the the assignment shares some of the defining features of the Case Study genre. This is further evidenced in some of the students' titles. For instance in sampling unit [CI-4] the student adds the specific case explored to address the question in the assignment title:

> Does visitor access to heritage sites ultimately aid or threaten their preservation? The Skellig Michael case.
>
> Creative Industries Assignment title (Appendix II)

To determine the nature of this genre, the introduction of the assignment written in response to the questions were analysed, since this is one of the methods employed to help classify this genre by

Gardner and Nesi (2013). In the introduction of the assignment above, the student sets out the way in which they will develop their argument to address the question:

> It will study the damages caused by visitors' access to Skellig Michael. Then it will highlight the positive contributions … Finally this will paper will try to give an answer proper to this particular study and try to think about solutions to minimise the threats to allow everyone to enjoy heritage sites. [sic]
>
> Extract taken from Creative Industries Assignment [CI-4] (Appendix IX)

The purpose of the assignment, to construct a coherent argument, along with assignment instruction to critically discuss the selected question (Appendix V), adhere to the defining features of the essay genre as identified by Gardner and Nesi's (2013).

It is well-documented in the literature that certain genres and genre families occur with greater frequency within specific disciplines (e.g. Bhatia 2002; Gardner & Nesi 2013). These genres are not only employed to fulfil objectives and norms of enquiry associated with the discipline, but many also reflect professional practices. For example in many science-based subjects, students are tasked with writing lab reports, while in Business studies disciplines such as Marketing, students will often be tasked with writing case studies to demonstrate the application of marketing theories to professional contexts. It is also well-documented that genres can not only vary across disciplines (e.g. Samraj 2002; Bhatia 2002; Nesi & Gardner 2012), but also that generic activity can cut across disciplines, for example, the pattern of moves in introductions of research articles which overlap disciplines (Swales 1990). Given the need for students to be able to perform the different writing tasks associated with each discipline in order to meet tutors' expectations and to become 'a fully-fledged member of the discipline' (Flowerdew & Costley 2016 p.4), it is incumbent on writing practitioners to be familiar with the genres students need to produce within their target contexts. Since it is anticipated that the genre to which the student writes informs tutor commentary, for example in more frequent reference to the amount of criticality in the student writing in those genres requiring greater demonstration of criticality such as the essay , it will be interesting to explore the extent to which genre activitiy is in fact reflected in the feedback commentary collected for the present study.

3.8 Units of analysis

Two units of analysis are used throughout this study. Sampling units, defined by Krippendorff (2013 p.99) as 'units that are distinguished for selective inclusion in an analysis', refer to the feedback provided to a unique student script. There are therefore 54 sampling units comprising the corpus for the present study. The data within the 54 sampling units were divided into units of analysis referred to as coding units, which are the smallest portions of data to be coded and tagged (Cohen et al., 2011).

The study's data set comprises a total of 54 sampling units, 12 from both CI and BS, 14 from AL, and 16 from CS (Table 1). As outlined in section 1.3 in-text comments were excluded from the data collection for the present study as only 12 of the 54 scripts provided in-text annotations in addition to end-text summary comments. There was also an apparent difference in weighting between in-text comments and the substantive long-form comments. For instance, the majority of the in-text comments were stand-alone single word comments such as 'good', or interrogatives highlighting the need for a surface level correction such as 'spelling?'. The remaining in-text annotations were made using mark-up tools such as QuickMark. These are reusable comments, designed for high frequency annotations such as comments relating to referencing, and can be dragged directly onto the document being appraised. A rationale for use of QuickMarks, as the name suggests, is to speed up the process of annotating, thus endorsing the view that the weighting placed on in-text comments is not comparable to that placed on end-text summary comments. Furthermore, whilst some feedback studies cited in the previous chapter's review of the literature make no reference to the composition of the data set with regards to in-text or end-text comments (e.g. Hyland 2013a), others acknowledge analysis of the feedback comments took place without recourse to the student scripts and therein the in-text annotations (e.g. Mutch 2003). Therefore, for the present study, the decision was taken to examine only end-text summary comments and not to include in-text annotations, thus forming a modified sample comprising only summative remarks, a decision similar to that taken in other studies investigating written feedback (e.g. Austen 2016).

All summative comments within the data collection were tabulated and parsed into separate units of analysis, referred to as coding units. As a point of departure, the sentence was taken as the default structural unit for analysis except in cases where the sentence contained clauses addressing different 'feedback points', in which case these were coded as separate units. Feedback points are identified as a discrete written intervention communicating a response to a particular aspect or quality of the student's text (Hyland & Hyland 2001 p.190). Consequently, the smallest unit of analysis comprises a

noun phrase presented as a stand-alone phrase (1). Sentences containing different feedback points are parsed separately and assigned separate codes since they address different qualities (2 & 3)

1. A topical and important issue. [CS-1] [U-P]
2. Demonstration of high levels of competence in précis [CS-1] [U-P]
3. and excellent drawing out of common themes and contradiction across sources. [CS-1] [A-P]

Sentences containing a mitigating paired act pattern but addressing the same feedback point (section 3.13.3) are also tagged as one unit (4). Consequently, the example below is parsed as a single coding unit and tagged *Understanding* [U] and *Mitigating paired act patterns* [M].

4. While the challenges cover a number of problems facing the field, how these issues cause a problem specifically for prediction is not well explained. [BS-1] [U-M]

3.9 Coding Process

Having parsed all 54 sampling units into coding units, the process of ascribing codes took place. The first tier of codes identifies the aspect of performance the coding unit relates to. Within this tier, the first broad grouping relates to *How the work is or should be expressed* and the subcategories are: *Formatting [F]*, *Referencing* [R] *Writtenness* [W] and *Language* [L]. The second broad grouping relates to *What is or should be included in the work* and the subcategories are: *Understanding* [U] and *Argument* [A]. The third broad grouping relates to *How the work is or should be organised* and comprises the single category *Organisation* [O]. Coding units falling outside these broad groupings are coded *Non-specific focus* [NS].

The second tier of codes ascribes the qualitative assessment imbued in the comment. Within this tier, the subcategories are *Praise* [P], *Critique* [C], *Mitigating paired act patterns* [M] and *Non-evaluative* [NE]. Finally, the third tier of codes is assigned according to whether the comment aligns with a quality identified by students as being characteristic of effective feedback. Within this tier, the subcategories are *Criteria-referenced [CR], How the work could have been improved [IMP], Pointers to take Forward [PF], Tutor Clarification [TC], Asking questions about the work/student [Q], Applicability to real-world settings [RW], Encouragement about performance [E],* and *Direction to additional support [S]*. A summary of the coding frame developed from this process can be seen in Table 4 below.

Coding units presented in this study are first identified according to the module and sampling unit number, followed by the codes they have been ascribed during the coding process. For example, in (1) below, the first tag identifies the coding unit as deriving from sampling unit six of the Applied Linguistics data set, and the second tag identifies the coding unit as having been ascribed with two codes *Argument* [A] and *Praise* [P]. In (2) below, the first tag identifies the coding unit as deriving from sampling unit two of the Biological Sciences data set, and the second tag identifies the three codes ascribed to the coding unit: *Formatting* [F], *Critique* [C], and *Points to take forward* [PF].

1. You also provide a good level of critical analysis of both your experience and the existing literature. [AL-6] [A-P]
2. Gene names should always be italicized. [BS-2] [F-C-PF]

In addition to the overview of the coding framework and codes in Table 4, a more detailed account with operational descriptions and exemplars for each category are presented in tabular form in Appendix I.

The coding was a recursive process with repeated reviewing of the data. The emergent categories were derived through identifying recurring key words, concepts, and themes within the data but also through alignment with categories and existing ideas within the relevant literature. The coding process for this study therefore adopts the approach taken by that in Han and Hyland's study whereby 'codes were iteratively revised, both informed by the previous literature and grounded on the empirical data.' (2019 p.251)

Running notes were kept throughout the coding process. These notes were an ongoing record of ideas and observations relating to the interrelationships between codes and the assemblance of themes. The notes also included practical matters relating to the use of MaxQDA software as well as potential new directions that the research could take. A summary of the coding frame developed from this process can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Coding frame & definitive list of codes.

	First tier of coding framework: Focus of feedback *Exhaustive*	Second tier of coding framework: Qualitative assessment *Exhaustive*	Third tier of coding framework: Qualities perceived as valuable by students
How the work is or should be expressed	Formatting [F] Referencing [R] Writtenness [W] Language [L]	Praise [P] Critique [C] Mitigating paired act pattern [M] Non-evaluative [NE]	Criteria-referenced [CR] How the work could have been improved [IMP] Pointers to take Forward [PF] Tutor Clarification [TC] Asking questions about the work / student [Q] Applicability to real-world settings [RW] Encouragement about performance [E] Directing to additional support [S]
What is or should be included in the work	Understanding [U] Argument [A]		
How the work is or should be organised	Organisation [O]		
	Non-specific focus [NS]		

To limit potential overlap as much as possible, detailed descriptors to distinguish between certain categories were compiled. These comprised a detailed account and operational description of each category, exemplars, and in the case of third layer of coding, identifying the linguistic features that often mark these comments since these help with the demarcating of coding units. These descriptors along with exemplars are provided in tabular form in Appendix II. Sections 3.12–3.14 provide a detailed account, description and exemplars for each of the sub-categories and the studies that have guided each layer of coding in the development of the final coding frame.

3.10 Reliability

There are several issues that the coder has to be mindful of when considering the reliability of coding qualitative data. Coding of text may be inconsistent either as a result of human error, ambiguity surrounding the demarcating of coding units, or variability within or between coders (Cohen et al., 2011). Coding can also be subjective in the sense that the units of analysis may have different connotations and nuanced meanings leading to inconsistent classification on each read through by a coder. Segmentation rules and category descriptors have to be explicit and non-ambiguous so that they can be applied consistently, striving for as little variation in interpretation as possible. Not only

is this a matter for the initial coder but it would also be a matter for a second coder who would need to interpret the descriptors in the same way in order to come to similar results.

Both quantitative and qualitative researchers use inter-rater (between coders) and intra-rater (within-coder) reliability to improve analytic rigor in the analysis of coding written materials. Specifically, tests of reliability are commonly employed by quantitative researchers undertaking content analyses and by qualitative researchers analysing interview transcripts (Given 2008). However, there is some scepticism surrounding the value of testing for coding reliability as a measure for determining and improving the level of agreement between independent coders. For example, Terry et al., (2017) question the use of inter-rater reliability arguing that 'at best, inter-rater reliability can only show that two coders have been trained to code the data in some way, not that the coding is somehow accurate.' (2017 p.20). For the present study, as there is only a single rater, a check was made for intra-rater reliability, not to focus on coding 'accuracy', but to determine whether codes assigned to the text are done so in a consistent manner (Given 2008).

At the end of the recursive data coding process, a framework and a definitive list of codes was produced (see Appendix I) at which point intra-rater reliability was undertaken based on percentage of agreement. Intra-rater reliability was measured by re-coding nine out of the 54 sampling units, approximately 15% of the dataset. Within the nine sampling units there were a total of 214 coding units with each unit assigned between two and four codes, providing a total of 565 individual codes (see Table 1). Calculating the percentage according to individual codes rather than coding units, provides an even closer correspondence with an intra-coder reliability score of 97%. When measuring the degree of agreement between coders, according to Cohen et al., (2011 p.474), researchers should strive for a minimum of 90%. If applying the same formula to measure intra-reliability, this suggests there is a high level of consistency in the assignment of codes within the data set.

In the section that follows, a detailed account, description and examples will be provided for each of the sub-categories. The section also highlights coding frames in studies that have guided each layer of coding in the development of the final coding frame.

3.11 Coding Framework

A number of frameworks exist within the scholarly and research literature for the analysis of feedback (Hyland 2001; Hyatt 2005; Brown & Glover 2006; Hughes et al., 2015). Various theories and analytical tools have been drawn on to categorise and explore the genre of written feedback within higher education research. While some studies draw on existing framework (Stewart 2015; Hughes et al.,),

other studies develop their own framework (e.g. Hyatt 2005). Researchers also develop frameworks informed by the perspective to which the data is being examined. While some researchers design taxonomies for categorising feedback to investigate the pragmatic intention of the written commentary (e.g. Hyland & Hyland 2001), others adopt a SFL framework to provide a fine-grained linguistic analysis to investigate which of the lexical and grammatical choices in students' writing the tutor attends to (e.g. Woodward-Kron 2004). However, for the present study a framework was needed that not only could be used to investigate the focus of feedback on written work to address the first research question, but one which could also support a further set of categories to explore the second research question: the extent to which the feedback data contained qualities perceived by students as valuable. While other studies providing two sets of observations develop a second, separate framework (e.g. Holbrook, Bourke, Fairbairn & Lovat 2014; Basturkmen et al., 2014; Austen 2016), in developing a taxonomy for categorising feedback in the present study, it was decided to have a single framework but comprising a number of tiers with a different set of codes in each (see sections 3.12, 3.13 and 3.14).

The development of the coding framework for this study has also drawn on existing frameworks (e.g. Brown & Glover 2006; Hyland 2013a; Hughes et al., 2015). In particular, the first tier of coding draws on Hyland's (2013a) paper, which focuses on categorizing written commentaries according to their area of concern. The second tier of coding draws on Hyland and Hyland's (2001) framework, developed to investigate the pragmatic functions of praise and criticism. A similar set of categories is employed in the present study to categorise the feedback data according to the qualitative assessment carried by the comments. For the third set of codes, the chosen research design draws on the approach adopted by Winstone et al., (2016) whereby a list of feedback qualities was generated from the relevant literature (see section 3.14), against which the data was categorised to determine the extent to which alignment takes place. This approach, drawing on previous literature to inform the analysis of the empirical data, can be seen in other research studies investigating tutor feedback. For example, Han and Hyland (2019) adopt this approach when conducting a data analysis of interview transcripts and verbal reports in their study investigating how learners engage with tutor written feedback.

The framework developed for the present study comprises three tiers. The first tier includes a set of categories investigating the feedback data according to what aspect of the student work the coding units comment on. This first tier, therefore, addresses the first research question: what do tutors in modules on four programmes in different disciplines focus on in their written feedback comments at

PGT level, and how do findings differ across the four disciplines? The second and third tier of the framework address the second research question: to what extent does subject tutor feedback differ to and align with student perceptions of effective feedback. The second tier of the framework comprises a set of codes looking at praise and criticism as semantic units. Coding units are categorised according to the qualitative assessment of the performance, that is to say whether the coding unit is marked by a positive evaluation praising achievement, or a negative evaluation critiquing students' performance. The third tier of the framework includes a set of codes assigned to comments according to whether they address one of the qualities perceived as valuable by students surveyed in the literature.

Each tier of the coding framework, and the categories and subcategories within each, will now be discussed.

3.12 First tier of coding framework: focus of feedback

The first level of analysis was to assign codes to coding units according to their referential foci, that is to say, whether for example the comments address issues relating to content or structure, thereby addressing the first research question investigating what tutors focus on in their written feedback. The point of departure in the coding process drew on Hyland's (2013a) paper, which focuses on categorizing written commentaries according to their area of concern. Whilst this study was conducted at a Hong Kong university, a non-Anglo context, the written commentaries are provided by subject tutors and not writing practitioners. Hyland (2013a p.246) identified that in providing written commentary to students, the participating subject tutors from four different disciplines emphasised 'how it should be expressed' 'what should be included' and 'where it should be in the assignment' (2013a p.246). Thus, these broad groupings form the basis for the first tier in the categorization framework, although adapted slightly to reflect that comments report on what *is* in the work as well as what *should* be.

To ensure content validity, coding within the first tier of this framework was both exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Cohen et al., 2011). In other words, the categories represent all the data, with all coding units in the corpus coded, and no coding unit represented by more than one distinct category.

3.12.1 How the work is or should be expressed

Categories falling within the broad grouping *How the work is or should be expressed* were straightforward to settle upon. Most frameworks investigating written feedback include separate categories relating to *Language* and *Referencing*, albeit under different labels (e.g. Brown & Glover 2006). Given the infrequency of coding units referring to formatting or visuals, these were merged to form one category labelled *Formatting*, as in (1) and (2) below:

1. Gene names should always be italicised. [BS-2] [F-C-PF]
2. Your essay would benefit from a few figures either to summarise or present each method or a summary table for all the methods mentioned. [BS-2] [F-C-IMP]

Labelling of the third subcategory, *Writtenness,* draws on the work of Turner (2018). Writtenness is, as Turner herself acknowledges, an 'unwonted' term, the use of which is intended to emphasise a distinct focus beyond that encapsulated by the term 'writing', since writtenness also focuses on how a text is written, the expectations surrounding the writing, and thus its reception. These expectations include 'not only the prototypical expectations of correctness, but also of style and ease of reading.' (2018 p.7) This term therefore seems more pertinent to the present investigation given academic tutors provide commentry on these issues. Turner's book includes an investigation of academic book reviews for which, she argues, writtenness is an important criterion in the assessment of the work. The same can also be said of the academic writing genre and in this regard, Turner argues, writtenness is transdisciplinary since it is a criterion across all disciplines.

3.12.1.1 Formatting

Coding units within this category refer to the use of diagrams, tables or illustrative figures (1), as well as comments relating to font, margins and preferred sub-heading titles.

1. Very good use of a figure. [BS-3] [F-P]

3.12.1.2 Writtenness

Coding units within this subcategory relate to comments on writtenness (Turner 2018), that is, to the writing itself, not what the writing is about. These units frequently contain adjectives associated with the description of writing such as, clear, fluent, succinct, wordy, articulate. Comments tagged within

this category also highlight the need for integral citation (2), coherence, unnecessary or overuse use of acronyms, and register (3).

2. You are supposed to build on work by previous scholars so better to say "Skehan (2005) argues that … Ellis 2014 emphases …. [AL-4] [W-C-PF-TC]
3. Writing is somewhat vague / non-scientific in places (eg. From the 1st paragraph: 'or so far the theory goes', 'does not seem suitable', 'Most of the time, GWAS..') [BS-1] [W-C-TC]

3.12.1.3 Language

Coding units assigned to this sub-category comment on accurate or inaccurate use of language or word choice (4), faulty sentence structure, proof-reading, and spelling.

4. I think you just mean 'counter' not 'counterfeit' (which means to fake). [CS-15] [L-C]

3.12.1.4 Referencing

These comments refer to whether citations and reference lists adhere to academic conventions and to coding units highlighting either a missing citation or where it is unclear whether the statement is attributable to the student writer or another author (5).

5. It isn't clear if the final sentence represents your views or those of the authors [CS-2] [R-C]

3.12.2 What is or should be included in the work

The most challenging aspect of the coding process was trying to create meaningful categories through coding, in particular, identifying and grouping subsidiary constructs within the largest category *What is or should be included in the work.* Interestingly, Hyland (2013a) pinpoints the difficulty of separating content from categories relating to how these ideas are rhetorically presented, since '[t]he way a student expresses his or her ideas is inseparable from, the ideas themselves' (2013a p.245). Whilst not disputing this, identifying segments which fell within the subcategory *How it should be expressed* was relatively straightforward during the coding process compared to demarcating segments falling under *Argument* or *Understanding,* two categories also present in Hyland's coding scheme. For example, in (1) below, it is difficult to know whether the section is deemed 'good' because of the level

of understanding demonstrated on the topic or because of the convincing argument presented with regards to the current state of findings.

1. Good section on the current state of GWAS findings in psychiatric disorders.

The framework for Study 1 (Grannell 2017) comprised four main categories *Content* (understanding, coverage, support, accuracy), *Sources* (range, use, selection), *Structure,* and *Language.* The study found that nearly two thirds of all comments in the data set related to content, reflecting the findings of similar studies (Brown & Glover 2006; Walker 2009). Furthermore, sub-categories 'understanding' and 'coverage' tended to contain inferential commentaries and therefore had the greatest potential to overlap during the coding process despite having clear category descriptors. When considering the descriptive framework for the present study, Study 2, it was therefore important to explore different themes within this broad content category, not only to avoid ambiguity surrounding the demarcating of units but also to enable a more granular investigation when investigating how findings vary across the four modules in this study.

The difficulty in demarcating between certain features of academic text is reflected in the overlap of criteria descriptors set out in the generic College marking scheme of the participating HEI in this study (Appendix VIII). These provide guidance on the overall standards at different grade bands expected across faculties and therefore pertinent to all four modules taking part in this study. On the Taught Postgraduate Generic Marking Criteria at level 7 under pass band, the descriptor under the criteria *Understanding* includes 'evidence of ability to reflect critically' and yet the descriptor under a separate criteria *Depth of knowledge* includes the descriptor 'some evidence of critical approach to key issues and ability to evaluate arguments' (Appendix VIII)

Some frameworks developed in previous studies have retained this broad content grouping, and assign all coding units relating to information, arguments and claims within this category (e.g. Basturkmen et al*.,* 2014). Other frameworks demarcate between content and argument (e.g. Hyland 2013a) although these studies generally tend to lack detailed descriptors of these subcategories or examples of coding units to shed light on exactly how they are demarcated. In Brown and Glover's (2006) study, the content category is broken down into a number of subcategories, most of which relate to a weakness in the work, for example 'misconception', 'omission' or 'irrelevance'.

Consequently, during this stage of the coding process identification of key themes within the data provided the basis for demarcating between the subcategories *Understanding* and *Argument*, with

the former category associated with ideas, concepts and theories (see 3.12.2.1), and the latter associated with students' ability to evaluate arguments as well as provide convincing support of their own (see 3.12.2.2). Whilst acknowledging that there is an artificial divide between these two subcategories, these groupings help bring to the fore disciplinary differences within the broader content category.

3.12.2.1 Understanding

Within the subcategory *Understanding,* a [P] code is assigned to comments that are imbued with a positive attribution, crediting the student, or the students' work with understanding of main ideas, concept or theories (1). Other positive comments in this category credit students' ability to define key terms, summarise main arguments, and include relevant material.

1. The essay contained a number of the important points relevant to the title and showed some good understanding of the topic. [BS-12] [U-P]

Where coding units within this sub-category are imbued with a negative attribution [C], the comments relate to missing content (2), lack of detail, focus or depth (3), misunderstandings, inaccurate or irrelevant information.

2. You explain what bisulfite conversion is, however I could not find a paragraph explaining affinity enrichment [BS-3] [U-M]
3. I think that the information about the historical and political context could also have been usefully expanded upon. [CI-9] [U-C-IMP]

3.12.2.2 Argument

Positive coding units within this sub-category are identified as those which either credit students' critical evaluation of others' arguments, or credit students with providing convincing, balanced support of their own (4). This category therefore includes positive comments relating to use of evidence or examples, students' ability to cross-reference between sources, the appropriate selection and rationale for sources, and identification of limitations or flaws in an argument. Comments may also credit demonstration of wider reading (5), the links to the question being addressed, and students' suggestions (6).

4. Some of your arguments are well made and appropriately substantiated, and there are a number of insightful observations. [CI-12] [A-P]
5. You also make a good use of existing literature to explain and analyze your own thoughts when learning a language [AL-6] [A-P]
6. Your suggestion for adapting TBLT is a good one although you could have provided more detail. [AL-4] [A-M]

Coding units within this subcategory imbued with a negative ascription, highlight the need for further analysis, cross-referencing, use of sources, linking back to the question (7) or relate to segments where the tutor disagrees with the students' ideas (8).

7. Evaluation, where attempted is often irrelevant or highly contentious and not evidenced [CS-13] [A-C]
8. I don't think we can conclude from arts 20-23 that foster care is preferred over adoption by the UNCRC: reference to states that recognize/permit adoption was included to acknowledge that Islamic states do not do so. [CS-7] [A-C-TC]

3.12.3 How the work is or should be organised

This final broad grouping *How the work is or should be organised* comprises the single category *Organisation* [O]. Coding units within this category refer to the organisation of sections at whole text level, as well as organisation at paragraph level. Comments referring to the structure of the writing could also be classified under *Writtenness* since examples extracted from Turner's data as pertaining to *writtenness* include comments such as 'flows impressively' and 'elegantly structured' (2018 p.68 & 70). However, Turner's study does not focus on the referential foci but on whether the comments address the text itself, whether the judgement is of the author, and the impact on the reader. Prior frameworks looking at the aspect of performance that tutor comments focus on either have structure grouped with argument (e.g. Mutch 2003) or have comments relating to structure grouped as a separate category (e.g. Hyatt 2005). Hyatt (2005) developed a framework in which structural comments were grouped as a separate category and divided into the subcategories 'discourse level' and 'sentence level' (2005 p.345). The former refers to comments considering how the constituent sections are organized at whole-text level, and also include comments relating to the rhetorical moves expected, for example, in the introduction. Particular deliberation surrounded the coding of units which address signposting issues. The uncertainty surrounding the placing of these comments is reflected in prior frameworks since some group these comments separately under cohesion and coherence (Basturkmen et al., 2014) whilst others categorise commentary relating to the

improvement of cohesion under argument development (Bitchener, Basturkmen & East 2010). For the purpose of this study, comments referring to signposting are categorized under *Argument* (section 3.12.2.2) since it was decided the focus of the comments predominantly address the development of the argument and not the organisation of the work.

Within this category coding units comment on the organization of the information or suggested improvements to the organization at whole text level (1) as well as the organization at paragraph level (2).

1. Could you have ordered the articles and structured your annotations in such a way as to achieve a greater sense of flow between each? [CS-5] [O-C-Q]
2. It's confusing if you include other ideas in the same paragraph [AL-12] [O-C-PF]

3.12.4 Non-specific focus

Coding units tagged *Non-specific focus* fall outside the three broad groupings since they do not address a specific aspect of the students' work. Instead, these comments refer to the work as a whole (1) or encourage students to seek further support (2).

1. This was a pleasure to mark – thank you [CS-8] [NS-P-E]
2. Do bring an essay plan to the next meeting for us to discuss [CS-10] [NS-NE-S]

3.13 Second tier of coding framework: qualitative assessment

The second code is assigned to coding units according to the qualitative assessment of the performance, that is to say whether the coding unit carries a positive assessment praising achievement, or a negative assessment critiquing students' performance. If the coding unit carries neither a positive nor negative assessment, the coding unit is assigned a *Non-evaluative* [NE] code. Given feedback is an evaluative genre (Hyland & Hyland 2001), it is unsurprising that the majority of coding units carry a qualitative assessment of students' performance. This qualitative assessment can help clarify how the current work relates to the expected standard or alternatively how the student's work is below the expected standard, thereby shedding light on the gap between current and desired performance (Sadler 1989).

Other frameworks also assign codes according to their positive or negative ascription (e.g. Hyatt 2005; Hyland & Hyland 2001). Brown and Glover (2006) label these comments as 'motivational' and 'de-motivational', thereby aligning their terminology with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) list of principles of good feedback practice, specifically the principle that feedback should encourage 'positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem' (2006 p.205). Brown and Glover (2006) subdivide the 'motivational' category into 'praise' and 'encouragement about performance', however, in this present study, the latter is one of the categories in the third tier of coding, since this is one of the qualities valued by students.

There have been a few studies showing how positive affective comments can influence student performance (e.g. Lu & Law 2012), and therefore it is perhaps unsurprising that students surveyed in studies such as Dawson's et al., (2019) value comments that are considerate of affect. The affective features identified as desirable are comments which are 'nice, positive or constructive, or supportive, encouraging or motivating' (2019 p.32). These findings appear congruent with those presented in the study by Getzlaf et al., (2009 p.12) where students reported the need for feedback to be positively constructive with negative comments presented in 'manageable chunks'. This echoes other student surveys which call for a balance between supportive, positive comments and negative, critical comments (Weaver 2006; Ferguson 2011). Findings in large-scale studies by Carless (2006) and Henderson, et al., (2019) demonstrate that students are cognizant of the emotional impact feedback can have on a learner but also that students expect effective feedback to comment on poor performance without adversely affecting students' self-esteem.

Within the broader feedback literature, much attention is paid to the tone of commentary and the impact affective language can have on students. For example, Lipnevich et al., (2016) argue that tone is the most import aspect when it comes to students' emotional reaction to feedback. There is also broad acknowledgment of the amount of attention paid to the wording and tone of feedback by many tutors in an attempt to mitigate any adverse reaction to their feedback commentary (e.g. Wingate 2010; Sadler 2010). Studies also show that tutors employ a range of mitigating strategies such as the use of paired praise-criticism patterns and hedges to assuage the impact of negative criticism (e.g. Hyland & Hyland 2001) demonstrating that tutors are aware of the impact affective comments can have.

Within the categorisation framework for this study, positive and negative units therefore are categorised separately to explore the balance of comments. Furthermore, praise-criticism pairs are

also ascribed to this category as examples of affective language used to mitigate criticism. In this respect the coding framework draws on Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study. Some comments are ascribed as being non-evaluative, a category that also appears in similar frameworks to that developed for this present study (e.g. Hyatt 2005). As with the first tier of coding, the second tier is also both exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Cohen et al., 2011).

3.13.1 Praise

Coding units ascribed *Praise* may refer to overall work or a specific aspect of the work under appraisal. The units contain a positive evaluation realized by use of a positive adjective, either attributive (occurring before the noun) (1) or predicative (occurring after a noun) (2), for example the adjective 'good' below:

1. Good definition of genomics. [BS-7] [U-P]
2. it is good that you note the paper's influence. [CS-2] [A-P]

The ascription *praise* is also assigned where the feedback provider expresses agreement with the student (3) and where the commentary acknowledges the student or work has demonstrated an expected standard (4)

3. From a brief review of this article, I have to agree with your puzzlement over the comparison of South Africa and the US and indeed the inclusion of a range of other countries in passing. [CS-1] [A-P]
4. You have demonstrated a good understanding of the underlying aims of each stage of the lesson and how it fits together. [AL-9] [U-P]

In many cases, statements of praise are qualified to signal part achievement of an expected statement, for example with the use of the quantifier 'some' (5)

5. This essay summarises some of the most relevant literature well. [BS-8] [U-P]

Coding units may be tagged *Praise* where there is no explicit positive evaluation, however as in (6) the fact that the student has met all the criteria, the positive evaluation can be inferred.

6. *Understanding*. Meets all the objectives of the assignment criteria [CS-8] [U-P-CR]

3.13.2 Critique

All feedback points ascribed under the category C*ritique* comment on how the work falls short of the expected standards or criteria. These coding units are frequently expressed as a negative statement or realized by use of an adjective with a negative connotation within the set context (1). Comments identify what is weak, absent, incorrect, unnecessary or wrong in the work. Unlike Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study, which categorised suggestions as a separate category, in the present study units expressed in terms of how the work could be improved are also tagged 'critique' since these units also refer to how the current work falls short of desired performance (2).

1. Clarity of expression is variable. [CS-6] [W-C]
2. Ideally, this section would have been more explicit about the connections and differences between non-native (i.e. ELF) and native (i.e. regional) varieties. [AL-11] [A-C-IMP]

This category also applies to units where the feedback provider voices disagreement with the students' viewpoint (3).

3. I do not understand your claim that the 'paper does not fully persuade how abortion is a risk to the life of the infant' as the procedure is intended to result in the death of the foetus. [CS-13] [A-C-TC]

3.13.3 Mitigating paired act patterns

Mitigating paired act patterns [M] are identified in the literature as a strategy to assuage the impact of negative criticism (Hyland & Hyland 2001 p.194) and, as such, identified as examples of affective language. Each paired act pattern is parsed and coded as a single unit to avoid being tagged twice. At least one of the clauses within the paired act pattern contain a positive or negative evaluative comment, as in (1).

1. Although the student did provide an answer to progression of risk prediction through polygenic risk scoring, the student demonstrated some misunderstanding of PRS analysis e.g suggesting PRS increase the effect size, increase the number of SNP risk markers etc. [BS-11] [U-M-TC]

Occasionally, mitigating paired act patterns do not contain a positive or negative evaluative comment, as in (2). In this case the subordinate clause comprises a concession, restating what is in the work

rather than an explicit criticism. This is followed by the second clause which is also non-evaluative, but which seeks more information from the student. Since the adjacency of these two clauses results in a softening of the implied negativity, these clauses are tagged as a mitigating paired act.

2. In terms of contribution, although you state Myers lacks the 'benefit of recent changes in the rights-based perspective', to what extent does this text help to make those possible? [CS-3] [A-M-Q]

Compound sentences comprising an adjacency of a positive and a negative evaluation relating to the student's performance are also coded as a mitigating paired act pattern (3). Compound sentences which do not comprise this adjacency, are not identified as a mitigating paired act as in (4).

3. Your discussion of the digital and heritage is admirably ambitious and wide ranging, but some of it seems to be a little tangential to the subject of the essay. [CI-6] [U-M]
4. Children may well be cheap labour but how does Kumar demonstrate this arises from globalisation? [CS-10] [U-C-Q]

Coding units are only tagged paired act patterns if the mitigation occurs within the sentence, not across sentences, for example with a sentence connector such as 'However'. In this instance each sentence is a separate coding unit, as in the consecutive extracts (5) and (6) below:

5. Your essay is nicely written and it is easy to follow from one point to the next. [BS-2] [W-P]
6. However, the essay was too short and the topic wasn't covered in enough depth. [BS-2] [U-C]

Hedges are another mitigation strategy, however given that a high frequency of these weakening devices also appear in mitigating paired act patterns, for example 'rather' in (7), they are not assigned an additional tag, since to do so would result in a disproportionate amount of coding units falling within this category.

7. Although your arguments really come alive once you introduce some illustrative case studies, these are rather brief and come only after quite a long, and rather abstract and generalizing review of the literature. [CI-3] [A-M]

3.13.4 Non-evaluative

These coding units are also specific to the work in question, however, unlike *Praise*, or *Critique*, they do not carry a qualitative assessment of student's performance. The units tend to provide clarification (1) or restate what is in the work either in terms of what the student has written, or what cited authors have written (2).

1. Lengthier works are more difficult to summarise and evaluate in a very short word count, too. [CS-2] [A-NE-TC]
2. Some of Williams' concerns, such as the inappropriateness of a group of men determining issues which are unique to women are thankfully no longer a problem at least in the UK. [CS-11] [U-NE-TC]

3.14 Third tier of coding framework: qualities perceived as valuable by students

The third tier of coding is assigned to comments according to whether they address one of the qualities perceived as valuable by students surveyed in the literature. Students' views on feedback have been studied to a large extent by means of participants' responses to questionnaires and interview data. Consequently, this study adopts an approach employed by Getzlaf et al., (2009) and Winestone et al., (2016), which generate a list of feedback qualities from a review of the relevant literature. As outlined in section 2.9.3, Getzlaf et al.'s exploratory study initially identified one hundred terms and phrases associated with feedback provision from conducting a search of the literature and research. This was subsequently halved by analysing which were the most frequent and then narrowed further when ranked in order of importance by the four faculty members of the research team. These terms and phrases were ultimately used to create the list of 20 items included on the questionnaire. Few details relating to the approach taken to generate a list of feedback qualities appear in the Winestone et al., study, other than to state it was 'informed by key papers on this topic' (2016 p.1245).

In addition to mining the studies cited by Getzlaf et al., and Winstone et al., the present study conducted a search of the key databases, ejournals, and academic web search engines to develop a list of feedback qualities in publications reporting findings of surveys, focus groups and interviews investigating students' perceptions of effective feedback. Specifically, the search investigated those studies surveying students' beliefs regarding the attributes they consider as valuable in written feedback. The search investigated qualities relating to the feedback artefact itself and not design

matters or context lying beyond the commentary, such as the timing of feedback. Studies from which the list of qualities are drawn include those surveying UG and/or PG students as well as students studying a range of disciplines. Although there were no date limits applied to the search, as outlined in Section 2.9 many studies have marked a shift over the past couple of decades in both researchers' and experts' understandings of feedback, prompting Dawson et al., (2019) to highlight the need to investigate perceptions of feedback since this shift. Furthermore, over the last two decades changes have taken place within the higher education system with the introduction of student fees and the growing perception of students as consumers. Thus, this search focuses on studies since the early 2010s.

This search identified a total of 37 key publications and the final list generated as a result of this search, along with the studies from which these qualities emerge, can be found in Appendix XXII. These feedback qualities form the categories in the third tier of the coding framework. The developed framework also draws on non-empirical papers within the scholarly literature which do not present original collection of data but are nonetheless seminal papers in discussing the principles of good feedback practice. It is these categories which are then used to address the research question investigating the extent to which subject tutor feedback aligns with student perceptions of effective feedback.

It should be noted that the generated list also includes those features of feedback identified in the literature as less or not important. For example, in Ferguson's study, spelling and grammar was considered less important (Ferguson 2011). By incorporating these properties into the categorization framework, it is therefore possible to explore the frequency that comments relating to these areas have within the data and whether their weighting corresponds to the lack or priority afforded to these areas by the students. This means that in the case of spelling and grammar, a low frequency percentage would align with students' feedback preferences. Given spelling and grammar relates to an aspect tutors focus on in their written feedback, comments addressing these issues are coded *Language* under the first level of coding.

Before looking at the different qualities to emerge from reviewing this literature some consideration should be given to the language used by the authors of these studies. This research explores students' views on which properties constitute quality feedback and in so doing, a number of terms synonymous with 'good' are employed. This language includes 'useful' (e.g. Brown 2007; Ferguson 2011; Winstone et al., 2017), 'helpful' (e.g. Weaver 2006), 'effective' (Getzlaf et al., 2009; Dawson et al., 2019),

'desirable' (Sadler 2010), and 'good' (O'Donovan et al., 2021) to list just a few. Students' responses to these terms differ in relation to their preferences. For example, to participants in Poulos and Mahony's (2008) study, the word 'effective' in the context of feedback includes commentary that facilitates integration into the academy. On the other hand, to participants in Weaver's study, effective feedback refers to an appropriate balance between positive and negative feedback. The point to make here is that, while students do not hold a homogeneous view of what constitutes 'good' feedback, the adjectives used to refer to 'good' are applied interchangeably both within the literature and in the present study. This view is demonstrated by adjective choice in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the National Student Survey (NSS). In the PTE, the set of survey items exploring assessment and feedback asks students the extent to which feedback (written or oral) was 'useful' (PTES 2020) whereas in the NSS, the adjective of choice is 'helpful' (NSS 2021).

While it can be inferred there is a shared understanding of the synonymity of terms referring to 'good' by authors in the literature, this cannot be inferred in the case of other descriptions. For example, in an exploratory focus group for one study, students were asked about their understanding of the term *personalised* and the majority felt this referred to comments demonstrating 'the assessor had actually read their work and was making comments *specifically* about it – as opposed to receiving generic feedback information' (Dawson el al., 2019 p.32) (my italics). Yet in another study, pointing out the interconnection between some feedback elements, Getzlaf et al., (2009 p.9) give the example of 'student involvement/individualisation' which the authors argue involve 'both the process of giving feedback (in this case, providing feedback in a *personalized* manner) and the content of feedback (in this case, feedback that is *specific* to the student)' (my italics). The authors therefore distinguish between these two terms by associating one with the process of providing feedback and the other with the content of feedback. In another study, Pelgrim, Kramer, Mokkink, and Van der Vleuten (2012) investigate the written feedback provided in a mini-clinical evaluation setting and apply a broader definition, rating comments *specific* 'when it was clear to which part of the consultation they related, what did and did not go well and/or why it did or did not go well.' (2012 p.3, my italics). Therefore, when setting out the categories below, clarification of these terms as well as the overlap of some of these properties will be discussed.

To assist the coding process, the linguistic features that often mark these comments were also noted. Summarising linguistic features as part of the method section is therefore in contrast to studies where undertaking a grammatical analysis of evaluative text is the focus of the investigation. For example, in studies exploring the differing functions of language or how evaluative language is deployed in

written feedback, linguistic features are discussed in the results section (e.g. Fortanet 2008; Starfield et al., 2017).

The resulting list of eight qualities perceived as valuable by students includes the following attributes: Criteria-referenced [CR], How the work could have been improved [IMP], Pointers to take forward [PF], Tutor Clarification [TC]; Asking questions of the work/student [Q]; Applicability to real-world settings [RW]; Encouragement about performance [E]; Direction to additional support [S]. Identification of these qualities emerged from a number of key studies (e.g. Ferguson 2011; Getzlaf et al., 2009; Li & De Luca 2014; Winstone et al*.,* 2016, Dawson et al., 2019). These categories will now be discussed in turn along with the studies in which these qualities were identified.

3.14.1 Criteria-referenced

Justifying the grade and making reference to marking criteria is a quality of effective feedback to emerge from the literature. Li & De Luca (2014) conducted a review of 37 empirical studies investigating assessment feedback and found that reference to criteria was one of the most common expectations of feedback input identified by students. One of ten feedback qualities generated as a result of a review of the relevant literature by Winstone et al., (2016 p.1246) was that feedback should 'explain why the mark was appropriate with reference to the grade descriptors'. Interestingly, when put to the participating students only about 12% considered this a necessary quality of 'ideal' feedback. The authors suggest this finding may indicate that students are more interested in the actual grade than the justification for it.

A number of other studies found that students valued reference to assessment criteria and marking schemes, and in particular those comments which identified the extent to which criteria had been met. In a qualitative study by Weaver (2006), one of four main themes to emerge from the responses of 44 Business and Art & Design undergraduates studying at a UK HEI, was the lack of reference to assessment criteria as context for the mark awarded. From this, Weaver surmises that students desire information relating to which aspects of the work meets the criteria and which do not, a view which accords with the findings of Poulos and Mahony (2008). Likewise, research by O'Donovan et al., (2021) found that examples of authentic feedback labelled by undergraduate students as 'good', often contained a justification of the mark. As the authors acknowledge, however, students' evaluation of whether feedback is good or bad may be influenced by the wider context, that is to say students may be more likely to perceive feedback as 'good' if it is received within a course where criteria and assessment requirements have been made clear. This view is endorsed by students participating in a

survey carried out by Ferguson (2011). In his study, the students reported finding criteria a useful reference point for feedback but only when the criteria was made clear.

Whilst the majority of studies report reference to marking criteria as a quality of effective feedback, findings emerging from Dawson et al.'s (2019) survey of nearly 5000 participants at two Australian universities suggest this is not always so clear cut. Although students identified justification of grades as one of four main purposes of feedback, very few students identified standards or criteria as a valuable feature of effective feedback. More concerning is the fact that Dawson et al., found that few members of the teaching staff surveyed made reference to the marking criteria as an effective feature either. Students' engagement with assessment criteria is often linked within the literature to the development of students' own evaluative judgement (e.g. Sadler 2010). As a result, there are some voices within the feedback literature emphasizing the need for educators to reference the criteria in feedback since this supports students' ability to self-regulate their own work (e.g. Tai, Ajjawi, Boud, Dawson & Panadero 2017; Thumser, Bailey & Trinder 2020).

Coding units tagged under this sub-category refer to meeting marking criteria or justifying the assigned grade (1).

1. This would have demonstrated your understanding of the approach more clearly and pushed this essay up to distinction level. [AL-9] [U-C-IMP-CR]

3.14.2 How the work could have been improved

A number of studies cite suggestions for improvement as a desirable property of feedback. There is, for example, majority agreement from students that the overall message should highlight areas of good performance, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvements in Ferguson's study (2011). Other studies report student frustration with comments lacking suggestions on what and how to improve (e.g. Higgins et al*.,* 2002; Weaver 2006). Dawson et al., (2019) found students desire for feedback relating to the specific work under appraisal was one of the most prevalent themes to emerge, and in particular, comments communicating specific advice on areas that need improving was deemed 'the most common active ingredient in effective feedback' (2019 p.32). While some studies report on students desire for comments focussing on improvement in skills or study strategies (e.g. Winstone et al*.,* 2016), others report students' desire for comments focusing on how to improve content (e.g. Getzlaf et al., 2009). Furthermore, in other studies the participants express a wish for direction in how to improve in both areas (e.g. Dawson et al., 2019). It will be interesting to see if there is a balance

of comments covering improvement in skills and content within the feedback commentary collected for this study (see section 5.5.2).

The sub-category *How the work could have been improved* is assigned to coding units where the feedback commentary focuses on what is needed to improve performance in the specific work. These units are frequently marked by the use of weak modality (should / could) (1), often in conjunction with the third conditional (might have been, could have been) and second person *you* (2). Another less frequent marker, is use of the first person singular pronoun 'I' (3) when the feedback provider intrudes directly in the commentary to voice a personal desire relating to the work.

1. You could describe these methods in more depth [BS-2] [U-C-IMP]
2. A little unclear as to the retrospective methodology of the research and you might have been explicit about the 'no-win' situation. [CS-5] [U-C-IMP]
3. I'd have liked to see more commentary on common themes and contradictions across sources and the current state of the knowledge base. [CS-12] [A-C-IMP]

3.14.3 Pointers to take forward

Comments within this category (and 3.14.6 *Applicability to real-world settings*) communicate forward-looking information that can potentially be used to improve future assignments and future learning. The meaning therefore also encompasses the term 'useable' often found within the literature (e.g. Dawson et al., 2019). Sutton (2012 p.34) employs the phrase 'feedback for knowing' to refer to commentary which offers guidance on how to improve performance and therefore formative in nature, as distinct from 'feedback on knowing' which relates to tutor commentary on the quality of work presented, thus the 'summative dimension of feedback'. Another synonymous term frequently found in the literature is 'feedforward' which according to Hill and West (2020 p.84) is feedback which 'either impacts upon an upcoming assignment or is given post-assignment with specific direction on how it can be applied to future assignments' (Hill & West 2020 p.84). This echoes the view espoused by Sadler (2010) that feedback should not only have a retrospective orientation commenting on the work under appraisal but also a prospective one, helping to inform future work and thereby helping to close the gap between actual and expected student performance.

Future orientation was one of five major themes to emerge in a study by Getzlaf et al., (2009) exploring post-graduate students' perceptions of what elements of feedback content they considered useful. Students in this study desired feedback that could be used to help improve future work and highlight

strategies for future action and learning. A study by O'Donovan et al., (2021) found that those participants who had received a lower than expected mark, had more positive feelings regarding their feedback if the student felt that they were able to use the feedback information and apply it to subsequent assignments. The theme of future orientation also emerged in large-scale studies by Ferguson (2011), Henderson et al., (2019) and Dawson et al*.,* (2019). In the latter study the vast majority of participating students identified comments that could be used in future work as the most important feature of effective feedback.

Comments within this category do not necessarily apply to the specific work *per se* but do have a wider applicability which can pertain to future work and future learning. Comments such as (1) relate to the work under scrutiny but also give advice beyond the present task. The comments communicate forward-looking information that can potentially be used to improve future assignments. Frequently these units are marked by use of the imperative indicating that these points need to be acted on (2). The comments may also be marked by use of weak modality such as should (1).

1. Gene names should always be italicised. [BS-2] [F-C-PF]
2. Try to be a bit more judicious in your use of quotes, use them when the author has something really original or significant to say, or you really could not have said it better yourself. [CI-2] [A-C-PF-TC]

3.14.4 Tutor Clarification

Comments tagged within this sub-category indicate where an additional level of depth is provided either in the form of an example or explanation. Tutor clarification was identified within the literature as an element of feedback content considered useful by students. For example, Ferguson (2011 p.56) reported that students found unexplained responses, 'of no value at all'. Likewise, O'Donovan et al., (2021) found that feedback identified as 'good' by participating students contained a greater prevalence of comments providing an explanation.

In their coding framework, Brown and Glover (2006) developed a three-tier classification to explore the level of depth the feedback commentary provided. These levels reflect the essential elements contained within Ramaprasad's (1983) seminal definition of formative feedback. The first level acknowledges an issue, thereby providing information about the students' current understanding or 'actual level' (1983 p.4). The second level of depth, according to Brown and Glover, is providing a correction which aligns with what Ramaprasad calls the 'reference level', that is the level by which the

students' performance is gauged and towards which students strive to achieve (1983 p.4). The third level provides explanation of why the correction is preferable thereby shedding light on the gap between the actual performance and reference level, and the way in which a student can reduce or close that gap. As Walker (2009) argues, feedback that includes this third level of depth is more likely to be usable by the students than commentary that fails to provide any explanation.

A similar three-tier framework was developed in a study by Holbrook et al., (2014), which investigated the nature or pattern of formative commentary on PhD examiner reports. The categorising descriptors employed in this study identify formative commentary as always containing three elements: 'identification of the concern or problem, engagement with the material pertinent to it, and direction or ideas for improvement (Holbrook et al., 2014 p.990). Likewise, Walker (2009) ascribes codes according to these levels of depth in her framework but also applies them to positive comments: the first level identifies an element of the students' performance as praiseworthy; for levels 2 and 3 this is followed up with some level of detail and explanation as to why this performance is good, thereby helping students to recognise aspects associated with high quality. The present study explores the extent to which levels of depth occur within the data in section 4.3.3.4.

Tutor clarification within these coding units is frequently provided in the form of an example or explanation and signalled linguistically as in (1) by the use of 'such as' or 'as'. The clarification can either occur in the same coding unit where the issue is identified as in (1) or presented as a separate coding unit as in the consecutive coding units (2) and (3)

1. There is some really thoughtful and well-made analysis in the paper, such as how the neon signs can be interpreted according to various different definitions and interpretations of popular culture. [CI-5] [A-P-TC]
2. Some of the findings cited in the essay were not appropriately discussed. [BS-10] [A-C]
3. For example, the discussion of serotonin and oxytocin was speculative and somewhat tenuously linked to the actual findings reported. [BS-10] [A-C-TC]

3.14.5 Asking questions of the work / student

The use of the interrogative by feedback providers does not appear to receive much attention in the literature surveying students' perceptions of what constitutes effective feedback. For example, no reference is made to the use of questions in the list of feedback qualities generated in the study by Winstone et al., (2016) to investigate the properties of feedback prioritized by students. However, as

Hughes et al., (2015) found in their study, the use of the interrogative form is prevalent in the data. Hyatt's (2005) study includes the subcategory '*reflective questions'* for coding units which pose questions requiring the student to think about their work more deeply. Similarly, Hughes et al*.,* categorise comments that raise questions about the work under '*Clarification requests or queries'* and suggest that the use of questions not only provokes students to consider their work more deeply but also help 'initiate dialogue' between the tutor and student since they are being expressed in such a way as if to elicit a response from the recipient (2015 p.1083). Winstone et al., (2017) suggest that although students tend to desire feedback that provides explicit instruction, telling the student exactly what needs to be done, feedback providers have a duty to challenge this expectation and encourage students to be an active recipient of feedback rather than a passive one. Consequently, in the framework for this study, coding units which ask questions of the work or student are considered to have a self-regulatory focus and not just simply transmitting information, and recognized as a separate category.

A number of practices to help facilitate students in taking a more active role in the feedback process are highlighted in the literature, among them the use of formative feedback on draft work, the timing of assessments to enable students to act upon their feedback, and use of exemplars for promoting students' understanding of academic standards (e.g. Sadler 2009; Baughan 2020). These are activities that relate to practices surrounding feedback that can be embedded within the curriculum. Interventions focusing on the feedback artefact itself include the need for ensuring clarity of feedback communication (Price et al., 2010), and students understanding of common academic terminology (Winstone et al., 2017). Other strategies associated with promoting feedback literacy include enhancing learner self-confidence and the need for students to understand marking criteria by ensuring greater consistency between markers and the inclusion of reference to marking criteria within the artefact itself. These strategies overlap with other categories discussed in this chapter e.g. *Criteria-Referenced* (see section 3.14.1).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are fewer references to the concept of self-regulation or feedback literacy when reviewing studies investigating students' perceptions of quality feedback. Higgins et al., (2002) report that many of the students in their study value feedback which encourages them to engage with their subject area at a deeper level. Rowe and Wood (2008) found that while one group of students indicated a preference for direct instruction which explicitly set out what they needed to do, another group indicated a preference for feedback which encouraged deeper thinking about their subject and student-teacher dialogue, leading the authors to suggest this preference may be reflective of a self-regulated approach to learning. According to Rowe and Wood (2008 p.82), these two groups

reflect the 'deep' and 'surface learner' approaches conceptualised by Biggs (1999) and conclude that students' approach to learning can shape feedback preferences and the extent to which the student acts on feedback input, a view echoed by Evans (2013). Winstone et al., (2017) adopt different terminology, referring to types of learners as either pro-active or re-active receivers of feedback. Their survey of undergraduates reports that while a large number of the participants acknowledge the need to be proactive and engage with their feedback, most students indicate a preference for being a re-active learner, suggesting a more teacher-dependent approach to learning.

Whilst much of the work for developing feedback literacy lies beyond the feedback artifact itself, Carless, Salter, Yang and Lam (2011), in their paper discussing sustainable feedback practices, suggest question-raising as an activity along with encouraging students to find out answers for themselves, as ways to develop self-directed learning and the students' ability to appraise their performance independently of the tutor. Brown and Glover (2006 p.84) include a similar category in their framework, labelled 'Comments that encourage further learning' on the basis that it promotes an ongoing dialogue between student and teacher about feedback. Encouraging dialogue between provider and recipient of feedback is also one of the seven principles of good feedback practice as set out in a paper by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) exploring how formative assessment and feedback can be used to develop learner self-regulation.

The use of the interrogative by the feedback provider can be used to challenge claims or request further details or explanation (1), while others encourage the student to reflect on their work (2). Hyland and Hyland (2001) also argue that the interrogative form can be employed to mitigate criticism. For example, in (2) below, reference to the contradiction is not expressed categorically but posed in the form of a question thereby softening the criticism.

1. Could you have said a little more about the selection of texts from what is an extensive literature? [CS-7] [A-C-Q]
2. Does your final point potentially contradict identification of the need for cultural sensitivity though? [CS-9] [A-C-Q]

3.14.6 Applicability to real-world settings

In their study, Getzlaf et al., (2009) found that future-looking orientation not only referred to students' desire for direction in improving future work but also related to the desire for feedback that could be applied to their future professional practice, a finding also echoed in a study by Poulos and Mahony (2008). The desire for feedback to be applicable to real-world professional settings is perhaps to be

expected given that many of the students in the Getzlaf et al*.,* (2009) study, were practicing health professionals enrolled on health-related programmes and therefore no doubt interested in being able to apply theory to a practical or clinical setting. Comments within this category, therefore, not only have a future orientation but also apply to students' future professional practice (1).

1. Overall you provide a nice conclusion with appropriate reflection on how this assignment might help your own future teaching. [AL-6] [A-P-RW]

3.14.7 Encouragement about performance

As discussed earlier, studies have shown that comments which are encouraging or motivating can help improve student performance (see section 2.5.3). Comments within this sub-category tend to be holistic, relating to overall performance, highlighting general features rather than specific issues about the work under appraisal. These comments provide encouraging remarks about the students' general skills beyond the assignment in question and may relate to how these skills will serve the student well going forward (1). Categorisation of these comments also takes place in Hyatt's (2005 p.344) coding framework under the label *phatic comments* since they also serve to establish and maintain a good pedagogic relationship between the feedback provider and recipient. These comments therefore share some similarities with *Praise* and *Pointers to take forward*. The organization of the feedback artifacts, however, can assist the coding process here. Feedback commentary for the Child Studies sample units is provided under a subheading for each of the six authors selected in the annotated bibliography as well as under the headings: introduction, conclusion, understanding, depth of knowledge, structure and clarity, and general. Comments within the last four sections tend to concern general matters and therefore help direct the coder to where units potentially tagged *Encouragement about performance* may be located. Other comments in this category relate to the feedback providers' response to the work as the reader, thus the tutor intrudes on the message in a different capacity to that of assessor (2).

1. A fluent and accurate writing style which will support your academic development well. [CS-11] [W-P-E]
2. An enjoyable read [CS-6] [NS-P-E]

3.14.8 Directing to additional support

Coding units assigned to this category point to resources providing additional support and learning such as tutorials (1) or cross-college EAP support. These comments therefore align with the literature reporting students' desire for feedback commentary which is supportive and provides guidance on how their performance can be improved (e.g. Getzlaf 2009; Dawson et al., 2019).

1. Do bring an essay plan to the next meeting for us to discuss. [CS-10] [NS-NE-S]

3.15 Interviews

While the feedback data is the principal source of empirical data in this study, it is supplemented by interview data conducted with all four module conveners. The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about the conveners' individual feedback practices when providing written commentary, and also to see the extent the views expressed in the interviews corroborated practices exhibited in their actual feedback commentaries. The interviews therefore provide triangulation between the analysis of feedback artefacts and what module conveners say about their own commenting practices. Other feedback studies have also used interviews with academic teaching staff as an additional source of data (Bailey & Garner 2010, Price et al., 2010; Hyland 2013a). The use of more than one method of data collection can help the researcher explore human behaviour, in this case feedback practices, more fully by analysing it from more than one standpoint. By using interviews as well as the feedback coding framework developed from both objective and inferential coding processes, this study draws upon both quantitative and qualitative research methods and enables triangulation between the different data sources to corroborate findings. In so doing, this study adheres to one of the central tenets of pragmatism underpinning this study.

3.15.1 Interview participants

Separate interviews were held with each convener of the four modules from which the feedback scripts were drawn. The Child Studies and Creative Industries module conveners were authors of all of the sampling units from their respective modules. The Biological Sciences convener authored three of the sampling units from the module data set, whilst the Applied Linguistics convener authored four from their respective module data set. The other sampling units were written by academic staff teaching on the module (see Appendix II). All of the interviewees have convened and taught on core

modules in their respective programmes between 16 to 22 years at this participating HEI. Furthermore, all four of the module conveners supervise dissertations and doctoral theses. Analysis of the themes to emerge from these interviews are therefore grounded in the views of experienced academics.

3.15.2 Interview structure

The interviews took place after collection of the feedback sampling units had been completed from each of their respective departments. Face-to-face interviews with the Creative Industries and Biological Sciences module leaders took place in 2017 and recorded using Voice Recorder. The interviews with the conveners of Child Studies and Applied Linguistics took place in 2020 on Microsoft Teams since Covid-19 prevented these from taking place in person. The hour-long interviews were semi-structured, thus focused on the same pre-determined set of questions for each interview to introduce the generic themes but were followed up with unscripted questions to explore the module conveners' viewpoints in more depth (Newby 2014). This semi-structured format has the potential to generate more insightful data than one where only a rigid set of questions are asked (Brenner 2006). This format also allowed the interviewees to reflect on their own commenting practices as well as the departmental or institutional feedback practices they engage with. The sequence and working of these questions were decided during the interview as some questions were addressed in the course of answering another. Occasionally, interview responses opened up other avenues beyond the questions decided on in advance. For example, the Creative Industries module convener reported crediting students with additional marks if the student chose an original topic or chose to answer a question in an unusual way. This was consequently put to the other conveners to see if original topic selection was credited within, for example, the biological sciences.

When conducting the interviews, the presence of the interviewer may inadvertently influence the responses of the interviewee. For example, an interviewee may provide answers which they believe are the expected responses or which provide a positive self-description of, in this context, their feedback practices. This phenomenon is known as 'socially desirable responding' (Brown & Harris 2018 p.103). To minimize this potential interviewer effect, careful attention was paid to presenting myself in the role of external researcher rather than that of applied linguist or experienced writing practitioner. To this end, I avoided feedback-related terms such as feed forward or feedback literacy unless first used by the interviewee.

3.15.3 Interview questions

The questions were piloted ahead of the first interview in 2017, with a senior lecturer for Master's level students studying Media Practice at another UK university. As a result of the pilot, some of the questions were revised to rephrase use of some terminology to ensure the questions were fully comprehensible to interviewees. The questions were informed by questionnaires and interviews conducted in other studies (e.g. Hyland 2013a; Dawson et al., 2019) but tailored to address the research questions guiding this study. Respondents were asked both closed and open-ended questions and, for the most part, tutors provided full responses to both. Where this did not happen, a follow up question was asked. For example, the question *Do you consider your own language when providing feedback*? was followed up with *How?* (See Appendix X). While closed questions can prescribe the range of responses provided, open-ended questions can elicit more detailed and elaborate responses. Open-ended questions can also be deemed more appropriate for collecting information relating to respondents' perceptions and attitudes since they afford the interviewees greater freedom in how they choose to answer the question. Whilst unstructured responses are more difficult to code, it was considered important to allow respondents to state for themselves their own personal beliefs and ideas fully. Careful consideration was also given to the wording of the questions to avoid leading questions and underlying assumptions.

Background questions were asked initially to elicit information relating to the length of time they had worked at the institution and in their current role. These were then followed by questions introducing each theme, for example, *What do you think constitutes effective feedback?* Figure 4 below shows an extract taken from the interview with the Applied Linguistics convener in which this question is asked. This is then followed up with an unscripted question, and then a repeat of the original question to enable the respondent the opportunity to add to their initial response.

The set of interview questions are provided in Appendix X and an extract of an interview transcript with a convener in Appendix XI.

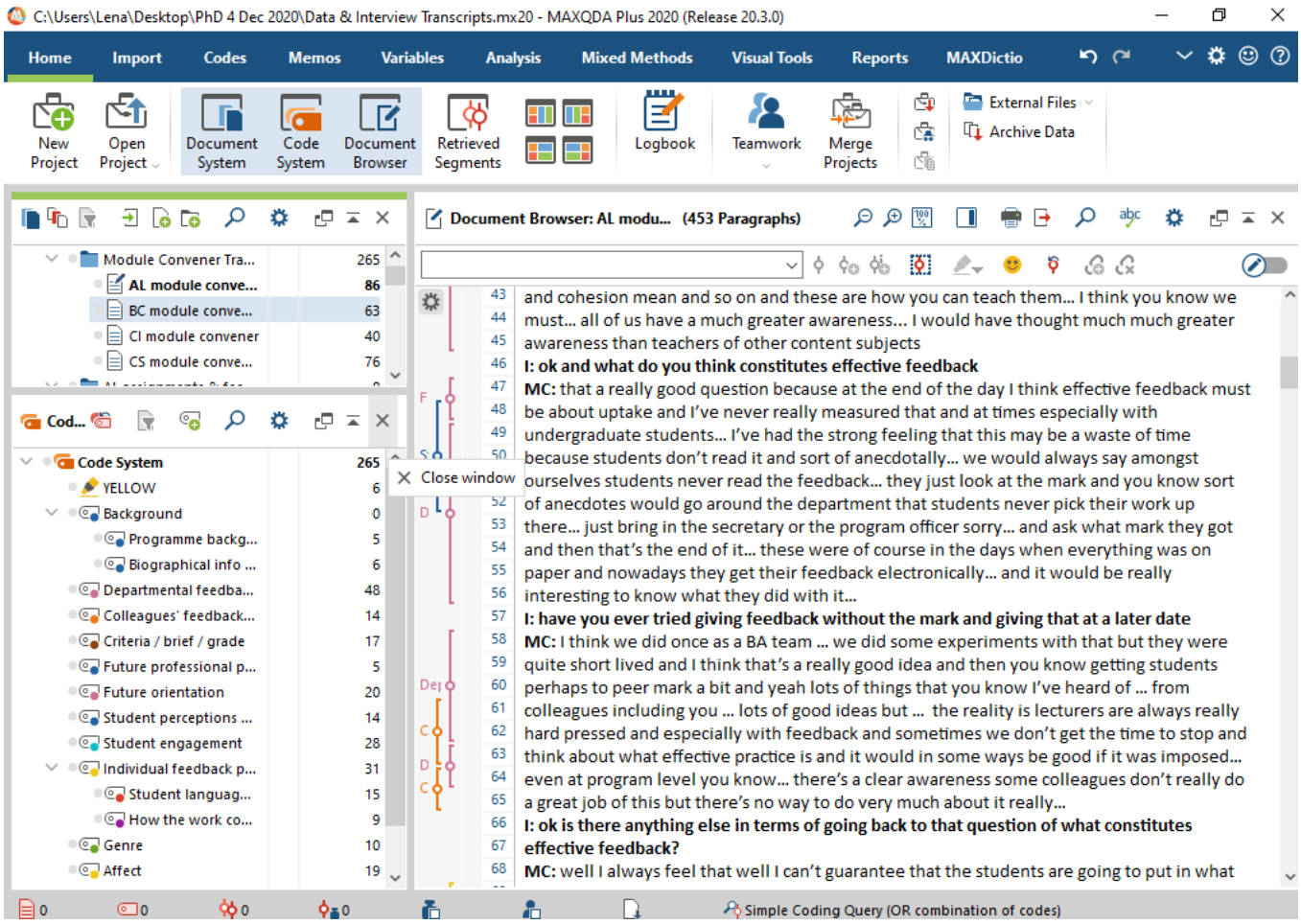


Figure 4: Screenshot of MaxQDA showing a transcript extract from the interview with the Applied Linguistics convener.

3.15.4 Interview data-analysis

When reviewing the literature on the various qualitative research methods that can be used for analysing interview transcripts, thematic analysis and qualitative or quantitative content analysis emerge as two of the most commonly used approaches. However, there appears to be a gap in the literature exploring the boundaries between these two approaches, and at times one approach is even used interchangeably with the other (Terry et al., 2017). There are also similarities in the terminology employed during the process of data analysis for each approach. For example, 'theme' is often considered equivalent to terms associated with a content analysis approach such as unit of analysis and category (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013). According to Vaismoradi et al., (2013), some studies undertake an approach to data analysis which is essentially thematic but not identified as such, instead presenting the approach as another, such as content analysis, or not identifying one at all.

This can be seen within the feedback literature, for example in a study by Dunworth and Sanchez (2016). In their study investigating lecture and student perceptions of quality in written feedback, the authors employ a process of identifying key words and chunks of text to pinpoint *themes* yet only present their approach to data analysis as 'a continuous process that involved descriptive and interpretative phases' (2016 p.580). Likewise, in core texts such as Peter Newby's (2014) *Research Methods for Education*, thematic analysis does not appear as a named independent approach for analysing data and yet the process of identifying common or overarching themes is set out clearly as part of the process for coding and tagging data. The literature therefore generally suggests that thematic analysis is either not seen as an independent approach within the field of qualitative research or not clearly specified as an approach distinct from content analysis.

However, the literature related to thematic analysis tends to be in agreement that the processes of both approaches share many similarities. Both adhere to a systematic process of data collection and data analysis which involves breaking down a text into small fragments. Both approaches involve a recursive process, with repeated reviewing of the data. Completion of categorisation allows for the analysis of the data to take place, looking for patterns in the data. Consequently, as Vaismoradi et al., (2013) argue, research analysing and classifying textual data to understand the phenomenon under study could potentially use either approach to address the same research questions.

When identifying where the main differences between content analysis and thematic analysis lie, some authors refer to the quantification of data in the former approach and how the frequency of the same codes in the text is considered important in the development of different categories within the data. According to Joffe and Yardley (2004 p.56) for example, whereas most content analysis 'results in a numerical description of features of a given text', thematic analysis 'pays greater attention to the qualitative aspects of the material analysed.' Although content analysis originated as a quantitative approach investigating word or phrase occurrence in texts, contemporary content analysis has become more qualitative resulting in much of the literature now recognising a variation with the title Qualitative Content Analysis as a method of inquiry. While it is possible to conduct both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data using this approach, Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as an approach providing a solely qualitative account of the data.

Each of the interviews with the four module conveners were transcribed, and during repeated read throughs, extracts of the transcript were coded according to the themes emerging from the data. However, the interview responses often covered themes not addressed in the feedback data, such as

information relating to the length of time the conveners had worked at the institution and in their current role. The themes emerging from the interviews therefore did not always directly correspond with the codes assigned to coding units, but nonetheless provided information to be incorporated in this study. Since coding of the interviews frequently did not take place at the phrase or sentence level but often captured themes over a much larger chunk of text and at a broader more abstract level, it was decided to employ a thematic analysis to identify, analyse, and interpret themes emerging from the data.

While Braun and Clarke (2006), describe thematic analysis as an approach which considers both manifest and latent content, Vaismoradi et al., (2013) argue that Thematic Analysis researchers need to capture and identify more abstract themes which would suggest the involvement of more latent coding. In most extracts drawn from the present study's interview data, the content is directly observable - to coders working within this area of research certainly – and therefore much of the coding will capture manifest aspects. For example, in the extract below not only is there mention of who the interviewee is discussing (*colleagues*), but it also contains negative evaluative comments *(a little bit harsh and personal / they're critical without necessarily being constructive*):

> *but I think the tone of some colleagues feedback could be moderated because sometimes the students feel that that the comments are a little bit harsh and personal and not as constructive as they they're critical without necessarily being constructive*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 34-36

Occasionally however, there are excerpts with the interview transcripts where a deeper level of interpretation is required. For example, in the extract below there is no explicit mention of who the interviewee is referring to (*someone else*) and there is a reporting of students' comments relating to the feedback they have received (*you often get students saying*), rather than the interviewing explicitly providing their own views of the colleagues' feedback.

> *I will always try and give specific examples because I think... you know you often get students saying… you know they'll come to me with someone else's feedback and say well it says there's not enough critical analysis but I don't understand what they mean or how I can increase critical analysis so I will always try and give an example*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 194-199

Since much of the interviewees' talk is in direct response to interview questions, it is perhaps not surprising that the content lends itself to manifest coding since certain themes are likely to emerge if

asking, for example, the module conveners' views on what constitutes effective feedback. However, on occasion, the interviewee diverges from the question at which point analysis may focus on the latent content of the data as the themes are not explicit.

It is also noted, even where the focus is on the manifest theme, there is still a level of interpretative analysis taking place, albeit to a lesser degree, since as Sandelowski (2010 p.79) notes, all qualitative research requires the researcher 'to make something of the data' that is to say, no matter how transparent the data may be perceived to be, analysis still entails an interpretative component.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the content analysis. Having coded the data in MaxQDA, the coded segments were analysed by activating the relevant documents and codes which were then displayed in the retrieved segment window. For more complex queries, for example exploring overlapping codes, these correlations can be displayed using the complex coding query option. In relation to the present study, this enables the researcher to explore, for instance, the number of coding units within the subcategory *Language* that have also been assigned a *Positive* or *Critique* code. MaxQDA also has a lexical search function within the retrieved segment window which enables the user to look at the frequency of specific language items thus providing further quantitative information about the corpus. The search can include not only the interested search term, but also its word forms from lemma lists. This function is particularly useful when looking at coding segments that fall under *What is or should be included* since this is the largest broad grouping. Thus, the lexical search function serves as an additional tool with which to further analyse these large sub-categories without recourse to an additional layer of coding. Consequently, two approaches are used to identify the focus of comments by feedback providers. First, the frequency of coding units within each of the sub-categories is considered, that is the percentage of coding units relative to the total number of interventions, thereby indicating the emphasis accorded to each category. Secondly, the frequency of certain lexical items for each sub-category across all four modules to identify some of the key themes within each sub-category.

In the following sections, data within each sub-category is analysed and discussed in turn alongside examples of coding units, numbered and indented, to illustrate the findings relating to each subcategory. As outlined above (section 3.9), each coding unit is accompanied by two codes: the first identifying the module [BS, CI, CS, AL] and the sampling unit number eg [CS-2], the second identifying the codes assigned to the coding unit, for example [A-C-PF]. Table 4 listing all codes is presented again below for ease of reference.

Discussion of feedback data is complemented with relevant extracts drawn from transcripts of the interviews with the module conveners as well as excerpts taken from module handbooks, and generic or assignment specific criteria. The aim of triangulating data from multiple sources, participants, and research techniques, is to gain a more thorough understanding of the matter being investigated

(Paltridge & Phakiti 2015). In discussing the findings, this study moves from description to inference, positing some explanation for key themes to emerge across the four different disciplinary areas, whilst at the same time cross-referencing with findings from a review of the literature base. The frequency counts for each sub-category are also tabulated and presented in Appendix XII.

Table 4: Coding frame and definitive list of codes

	First tier of coding framework: Focus of feedback *Exhaustive*	Second tier of coding framework: Qualitative assessment *Exhaustive*	Third tier of coding framework: Qualities perceived as valuable by students
How the work is or should be expressed	Formatting [F] Referencing [R] Writtenness [W] Language [L]	Praise [P] Critique [C] Mitigating paired act pattern [M] Non-evaluative [NE]	Criteria-referenced [CR] How the work could have been improved [IMP] Pointers to take Forward [PF] Tutor Clarification [TC] Asking questions about the work / student [Q] Applicability to real-world settings [RW] Encouragement about performance [E] Directing to additional support [S]
What is or should be included in the work	Understanding [U] Argument [A]		
How the work is or should be organised	Organisation [O]		
	Non-specific focus [NS]		

4.2 Research Question 1

4.2.1 Introduction

This section presents the analysis of the first set of codes to investigate the first research question: what tutors, across four participating disciplines, focus on in their written feedback comments at PGT level. In doing so, this section will also address how findings differ and align across the four modules. To address these research questions, a content analysis was conducted during which process coding units were tagged the first code. This first code was assigned according to three broad groupings, under which almost 99% of coding units fell: *how the work is or should be expressed, what is or should be included in the work,* and *how the work is or should be organised* (see section 3.12) This first tier of coding was exhaustive, consequently the few units not falling under one of the three groupings,

just over 1% of the coding units, were categorized under *non-specific focus*. Figure 5 shows the distribution of coding units, according to foci, as a percentage relative to the total number of coding units in each module. This clearly shows the majority of comments address issues relating to *What is included in the work*, that is to say content, compared to issues relating to how the work is expressed or organized. This main finding reflects the results of other feedback studies which investigate the focus of tutor feedback commentary, using similar categorization frameworks (e.g. Brown & Glover 2006; Walker 2009; Hyland 2013a). Brown and Glover (2006), for example, report approximately 60% of comments relating to content; likewise in Walker's study, content-focused comments account for the largest proportion of coding units. The present study identifies an even greater proportion, with just under 80% of comments tagged under *What is included in the work*.

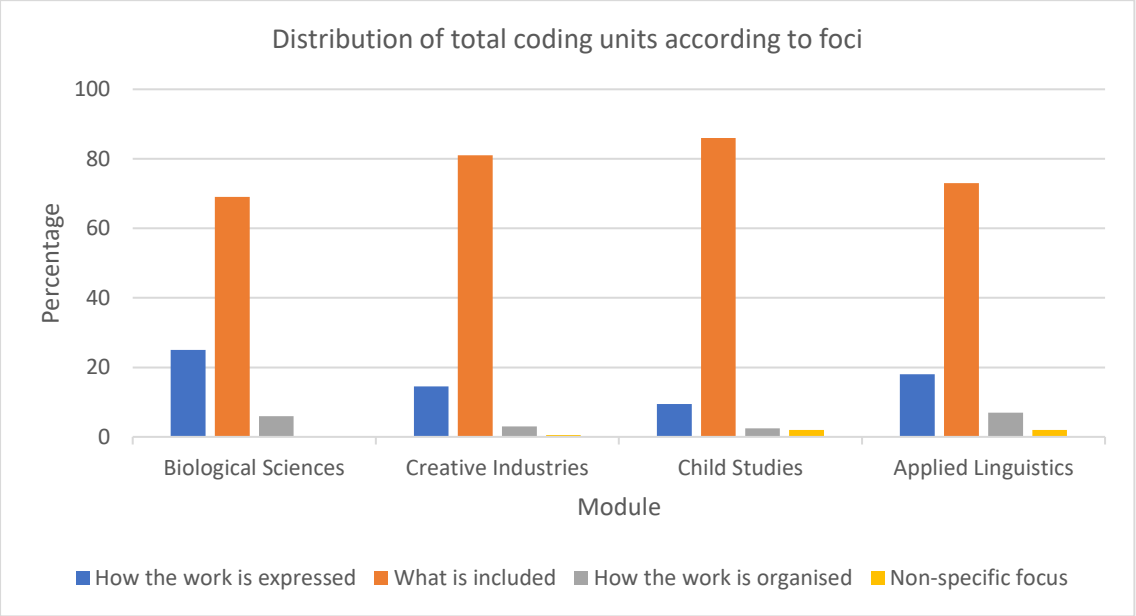


Figure 5: Percentage of coding units according to foci for all four modules

4.2.2 How the work is or should be expressed

In the broader grouping *How the work is or should be expressed*, the four sub-categories *Formatting, Referencing, Writtenness* and *Language* account for just under 15% of all coding units. In Figure 6 below, the distribution of coding units within this grouping can be seen, relative to the number of coding units in the sampling units. For example, Biological Sciences has a total of 67 coding units tagged within this first grouping, 19 of which fall under *Formatting*. Consequently, this is represented in the chart as just under 29%.

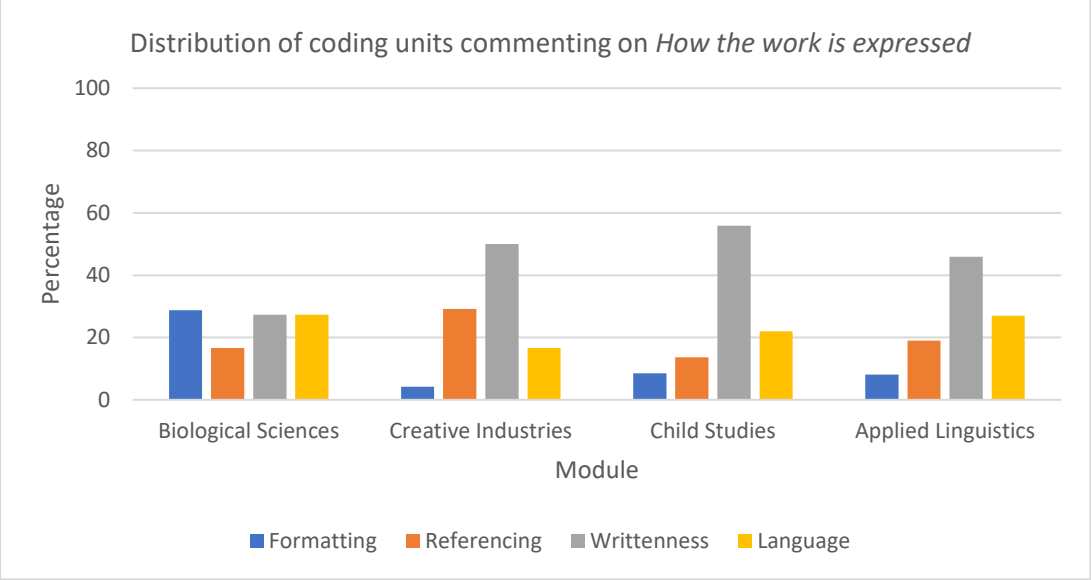


Figure 6: Distribution of coding units, in percentage, of comments relating to 'How the work is expressed' within each module.

4.2.2.1 Formatting

Although accounting for just over two percent of all coding units in the data, the distribution of segments assigned this code is more disparate within this category than any other. Most of the coding units occur within the Biological Sciences sampling units, and of those, with the exception of one, all are coded *Critique*. Most of these coding units refer to the use of illustrative figures or diagrams to assist with conveying more complex ideas as in (1&2):

1. Addition of some figures or a summary table would also improve the clarity of your essay, as it would nicely complement the text. [BS-9] [F-C-PF-TC]
2. Use of diagrams, charts, tables and pictures can help demonstrate difficult concepts and break up the narrative. [BS-7] [F-C-PF-TC]

Other coded segments in this category advise on lack of adherence to formatting practices, for example relating to gene names, specifically that full gene names should be provided upon first usage and an acronym for subsequent use, or to the tutor expectation for gene names to be italicised.

The priority placed on use of graphs and diagrams within the Biological Sciences compared to the other modules is reflected by the separate criterion accorded to *Use of visuals* in the specific Biological Sciences module marking criteria & feedback sheet. Furthermore, whilst similar feedback studies to the present study tend not to include a separate *Use of visuals* category, a study by Glover and Brown

(2006) at a UK university analysing written feedback in Biological, and Physical Science undergraduate modules, employs a framework with a separate category *Presentation of graphs/diagrams.* Their findings showed commentary relating to visuals only accounted for 1% of the total feedback interventions, compared to 2.2% in the present study. Thus, although a distinctive characteristic of writing within the biological sciences, the use of diagrams and graphs in student work does not appear to necessitate a great deal of tutor feedback commentary.

4.2.2.2 Writtenness

Within the broad grouping *How the work is / should be expressed*, there were more than double the number of coding units tagged under *Writtenness* than any of the other three sub-categories, yet this still only constitutes 6.5% of the total coding units in the data set. In Figure 6 above, it can be seen that a lower proportion of comments within this broad grouping, relate to writtenness in the Biological Sciences sampling units than the other three modules. However, how the work is written is a criterion for evaluating work across all four modules as evidenced in the assignment-specific criteria for each assignment. For example, the marking criteria for the Biological Sciences assignment includes the requirement 'Writing style: clear and readily understood; flowing and coherent narrative' (see Appendix VI). Similarly, in the module handbook for Child Studies, under the criterion 'structure and clarity of presentation', it states 'key points are made succinctly and clearly' (see Appendix IV). This is congruent with Turner's (2018) assertion that commentary relating to the quality of writing acts as a criterion when evaluating work.

The value placed on the writing itself is reinforced by feedback comments within the Child Studies sampling units suggesting writtenness as a pre-requisite for a student being able to express complex ideas (1 & 2).

1. An accurate and fluent writing style, capable of supporting complex arguments [CS-9] [W-P]
2. A clear writing style that should help you develop your analysis of more complex issues. [CS-13] [W-P]

This view is also expressed by remarks made in interview with the module convener for Applied Linguistics. In the following extract, the convener suggests that language impedes not only the readers' comprehension but also the ability of the student-writer to demonstrate the necessary practices and strategies to present a convincing argument:

> *The language can get in the way of clarity of ideas yes but also the language can get in the way of being able to express ideas and show your knowledge especially … if you're trying to show the relationship between ideas…unless they can write and connect ideas and signpost and link … they're not showing that they've understood … they're really only showing that they've you know they've read and can describe what they've read in some relevant sources*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 22-27

These comments echo Hyland's (2013a) assertion that the language as well as the writing style, that a student employs to convey his or her ideas, are inextricably linked to the actual ideas themselves.

An interesting observation in the present study is that comments within the broad grouping *How the work is / should be expressed*, predominantly address writtenness in the Social Science and Humanities modules while relatively few address formatting issues (see Figure 6). In contrast, there is a more even distribution of coding units across the four subcategories within the Biological Sciences module. The greater emphasis placed on writtennes within the Social Science and Humanities modules could arguably reflect claims made by scholars attempting to map out some fundamental distinctions between the hard and soft disciplines (e.g. Becher 1989). For example, when discussing the implicit requirements of students studying within the soft pure disciplines, Neumann, Parry and Becher (2002 p.413) refer to the premium placed on students 'who can express themselves with fluency'. Similarly, Hyland (2017) drawing on the results of a series of studies investigating the corpus of research articles and journals, asserts that 'scientists rely on the persuasive force of lab procedures rather than the force of their writing' (2017 p.28). Again, this view finds support within the data in the present study with tutors in the Biological Sciences directing students to use diagrams to demonstrate difficult concepts (see previous subsection), while tutors in the social science modules emphasize the importance of writing style to convey complex ideas as in (1&2) above. This may account for, at least in part, differences in the proportion of coding units commenting on use of diagrams under *Formatting*, compared to those commenting on *Writtenness* across the four modules.

Certain values of writtenness appear across the data set, their presence in the feedback identifying the writing qualities tutors favour as well as disapprove of. Many of these rhetorical values correspond with those found in Turner's (2018 p.66) study investigating the qualities favoured by reviewers of academic books, referred to by the author as 'evaluative tropes'. For example, one of the recurring values to appear in her study was that of clarity. Within the data for this study, 'clarity' and derivatives

of the same word class appear with higher frequency than other words evaluating the writtenness of the text (Table 5).

Table 5: Frequency & fraction (occurrence per number of coding units) of lexical items relating to 'Clarity' per module

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
Nº of lexical items relating to Clarity	266	166	632	207	1270
clear, clearly, clarity, clearer, unclear	21	15	104	28	168
	1 in 12.7	1 in 11.1	1 in 6.1	1 in 7.4	1 in 7.6

A lexical search and frequency count of the adverb 'clearly', the noun 'clarity' and the adjective 'clear', along with the negative prefix 'unclear' denoting its perceived omission, was conducted and found that, collectively, these items occur once per 7.6 coding units across the whole data set, as in examples (3&4). This corroborates Turner's claim that '[t]he desirability of clarity in both the writing and the argumentation has long been advocated for academic writing in English' (2018 p.76). Interestingly, when this search was conducted separately for each module, the occurrence ranged from approximately 1 in 6 coding units to 1 in just under 13 (Table 5), suggesting there is an emphasis placed on this value across all four modules.

3. However, you could have described a product and process approach (or the process part of a genre-process approach) more clearly [AL-9] [W-C-IMP]
4. Keep sentences short – one point per sentence only – to aid clarity [CS-2] [W-C-PF-TC]

Whilst some commentary does contain some advice about how to improve clarity as in (4), perhaps unsurprisingly commentary addressing values associated with writtenness tends to be couched only in terms of whether expectations relating to this value are positively or negatively achieved. Thus, as Turner (2018) argues expectations relating to values such are clarity are rarely given explicitly, rather there is a taken-for-granted assumption that students already understand what those assumptions are.

Other values relating to writtenness occur with much less frequency across the data set. For example, there are only 12 occurrences of 'articulate', and 5 of 'well-written' across the whole data set (see Appendix XIIIa). There are seven comments referring to the ease of following the writers' ideas, which are consistent with the concept identified by Turner as 'the smooth read ideology' (2018 p.7). According to this ideology, the experience afforded to the reader of a text should ideally be that of 'moving along a smooth path' and that this easy passage through the text should not be encumbered

by any bumps along the way (2018 p.236). That this concept of an easy-to-follow path can also be found within the data (5-7) confirms Turner's claim that this smooth read ideology is an expectation appraisers of academic writing have as well as reviewers of academic books.

5. Your writing is clear and easy to follow [AL-11] [W-P]
6. Your essay is nicely written and it is easy to follow from one point to the next [BS-2] [W-P]
7. [Your essay is] lacking in a smooth narrative flow [CI-3] [W-C]

According to Turner, reading student texts become problematic in Western academic writing culture when 'the attention of academic readers is drawn to the prose itself, rather than the message being conveyed' (2018 p.238). And yet as Turner points out, the rhetorical writing norms needed to produce 'smooth' text are not made explicit, and instead its mastery is a taken-for-granted acquisition. Furthermore, this ideology does not recognise the diverse writing backgrounds and consequent varied rhetorical styles and use of English present in international higher education contexts.

A final point to make regarding this smooth read ideology is that, according to Turner, this concept 'privileges the position of the reader over the writer' (2018 p.7) since it emphasises the writer's responsibility to provide the reader with a smooth passage through the text. This notion of writer responsibility is also reflected in the data as in the following examples (8-10):

8. And make sure that the arguments have a coherent narrative flow, using 'signposting' to help the reader to follow your ideas [CI-9] [W-C-PF]
9. Just ensure that you don't ask too much of your reader to understand your position [CS-7] [W-C-PF]
10. The way you string your sentences together is not always as coherent as it could be, and the reader sometimes has to work hard to understand why and how a certain sentence is following on from the previous one [AL-11] [W-C]

Other lexical items appearing across the data set relating to writtenness include items associated with the values of concision and brevity, for example, 'repetitive', 'wordy', 'vague' and 'succinct' as in (11) below (see Appendix XIIIa)

11. Try to strip back your writing a little more so that you express yourself as precisely and succinctly as possible [CS-12] [W-C-PF]

Whilst there is a general consensus within the Western academic writing culture on the rhetorical preference for economy and concision due to their aesthetic value (Turner 2018), the need to adhere to strict word counts for university assignments also compels the student-writer to adhere to the principle of eliminating redundancy. As the Child Studies module convener highlights, this is an intrinsic part of the assessment process across all disciplines:

> *if you've got a given word count to which you have to comply and you get penalized if you go over the word count then you're going to do better… if you're going to adopt a succinct and clear style of writing […] so I think that's built into the assessment process …whenever you do any written assignments*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 388-393

Comments relating to 'vague' language also refer to the use of passive constructions with 'it' as an impersonal subject (12) rather than the preferred practice of directly attributing authors in the field through use of integral citation (13).

12. You use a lot of vague language – It is conceived that … It is notable that … It is acknowledged that … It is widely believed that. [AL-4] [W-C-TC]
13. You are supposed to build on work by previous scholars so better to say "Skehan (2005) argues that … Ellis (2014) emphasises … [AL-4] [W-C-PF-TC]

The rhetorical preferences expressed by the Applied Linguistics tutor in extract (13) align with the research base investigating rhetorical choices across disciplines. Hyland (1999), for example, explored citation practices by analysing a corpus of 80 research articles drawn from eight disciplines including Biology and Applied Linguistics, and found that both these disciplines displayed a preference for non-integral structures. A non-integral citation is where the cited authors are in parenthesis while an integral citation includes the authors grammatically as part of the sentence, frequently as the subject of the sentence (Hyland 1999). Interestingly, Hyland also found over three times as much use of integral structures in Applied Linguistics research articles compared to articles in Biology (1999 p.346). Thus, the tutor's preference in (13) for integral structures, placing greater emphasis on the author when referencing prior research, can suggest characteristic variations in knowledge-constructing practices across disciplines.

A final point of interest to emerge from the data in this subcategory, relates to the lack of comments referring to register. The few comments that do occur are found in the Biological Sciences sampling units and make reference to the use of non-scientific language (14&15).

14. Writing is somewhat vague / non-scientific in places (e.g. from the 1st paragraph: 'or so far the theory goes', 'does not seem suitable' 'most of the time, GWAS…'). [BS-1] [W-C-TC]
15. At times a scientific style was not used ("biomarkers are not a modest tribe") and this meant that it was not clear what was meant. [BS-10] [W-C]

Likewise, a lexical search for the item 'formal' 'informal' and lemmatised forms, found just a single reference to formality in the entire data set (16).

16. I would like you to develop this [style of writing] to be a little more formal and precise [CS-5] [W-C-PF]

The absence of comments relating to register was also a finding in Study 1, which included in-text tutor annotations in the data set. This suggests that tutors do not reserve such comments for in-text annotations, which the convener for Creative Industries acknowledged was the case for other word and sentence level comments in her feedback practice such as language and referencing (see section 4.2.2.3 below). The low tally of comments relating to register is surprising given the frequency with which focus on register features in EAP teaching resources (e.g. Swales & Feak 2004). This could either suggest that the amount of attention this language area receives is not warranted or that students acquire this aspect of writing more easily.

4.2.2.3 Language

Language is present as a criterion in the marking frameworks across all four modules. For example, the Child Studies module handbook expects 'high levels of presentational accuracy (including grammatical expression, accurate spelling and attention to typographical detail)' (see Appendix IV). However, in this study, language issues receive comparatively little attention in feedback commentary, 3.7 % of all coding units (see Table 6). Given that the percentage of language issues in Creative Industries and Biological Sciences in the first study averaged approximately 13% (Grannell

2017), it would appear comments related to the mechanical aspects of writing such as spelling and grammar more often appear as in-text annotations.

Table 6: Number & percentage of coding units tagged within subcategories of 'How the work is or should be expressed'.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total (%)
N° coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Formatting	19	1	5	3	28 (2.20)
Referencing	11	7	7	7	32 (2.52)
Writtenness	18	13	33	18	82 (6.45)
Language	19	4	14	10	47 (3.7)

In the present study, the higher proportion of comments relating to language within the Biological Sciences counters the findings from Hyland's study which found that 'the more discursive humanities and social science fields tended to offer more explicit commentary on language issues' (2013a p.245). However, in Hyland's study the data was drawn from texts written by L2 undergraduates and therefore the findings are not directly comparable. Furthermore, any conclusions drawn relating to the amount of commentary provided on language issues need to be seen within the context of this particular institutional setting. A similar study conducted in an institution with lower English entry requirements, for example, could reveal a higher proportion of commentary relating to language issues for L2 students.

The limited attention paid to language issues links well with the literature surveying students' feedback preferences which considers commentary focusing on spelling and grammar as less important (Ferguson 2011). The low number of coding units commenting on language also corresponds with the module conveners' self-reported commenting practices, specifically the point at which language issues are addressed. Comments made in interviews with all four conveners indicate a consensus that comprehension is the prerequisite in terms of what is acceptable or not.

> *I will tend to overlook them* [spelling and grammar mistakes] *in favour of the clarity of the expression and the quality of the ideas and the critical thinking*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 116-117

While the conveners attest to only highlighting language issues when they impede the readers' understanding, the convener of Applied Linguistics suggests that this is a collective practice required by the department:

We're not supposed to correct for language if the meaning is clear

Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 20-21

For the most part, this view accords with the feedback data since comments referring to language tend to be an overall remark (1) or a suggestion to proof-read work more carefully (2).

1. However, at times your understanding is partly obscured by language issues. [AL-4] [L-C]
2. Take care to proof-read your work, there are quite a lot of spelling and grammar issues in here [CI-8] [L-C-PF]

The convener of Biological Sciences also asserts that language is corrected only when impeding comprehension:

Occasionally a sentence can be a little bit clumsily worded but unless it really impedes the understanding then I wouldn't mark it down

Interview: Biological Sciences convener 465-466

However, this view does not always appear to be reflected in the actual feedback practices amongst the six feedback providers in the Biological Science data set as can be seen in extract (3).

3. You often miss out words such as "the" or "a" which makes reading your writing very hard work. E.g. "Furthermore, **a** recent study by Gotlib and others…" or "Glucocorticoids, **a** significant part…" [BS-4] [L-C-TC]

Whilst omitting the definite and indefinite articles can alter the meaning, the examples above would suggest that comments relating to language also occur when comprehension is not impeded. This may account, in part, for the higher frequency of coding units assigned to sampling units within the Biological Sciences compared to the other modules. Looking at commentary across all four modules, however, the general trend appears to endorse Hyland's (2019) findings that mistakes are tolerated by their subject tutors, provided the language issues do not undermine the meaning of the writing.

Coding units within the *Language* category refer to spelling, proof-reading, sentence structure, and word choice, the vast majority of which are encased in a negative evaluation. Comments referring to selection of vocabulary predominantly occur within Biological Sciences sampling units and emphasise

how misuse of a word can lead to a factually inaccurate statement as in the following consecutive coding units (4-7):

4. Also, be careful with the use of the terms “mediation” and “moderation”. [BS-4] [L-C]
5. You suggest that the 5-HTTLPR mediates the association between SLEs and depression. [BS-4] [L-C]
6. That suggests that SLEs cause 5-HTTLPR genotypes, which in turn, cause depression. [BS-4] [L-C]
7. However, I think you meant that the 5-HTTLPR moderates the effects of SLEs on depression (i.e. the S allele of the 5-HTTLPR enhances the effects of SLEs on depression). [BS-4] [L-C-TC]

The importance given to the precision of language within the Biological Sciences is also mentioned in the interview with the module convener, who provides the example of students using the verbs ‘consist’ and ‘contain’ as near synonyms thereby producing an incorrect statement:

> *amino acids consist of both a carboxyl and an amino group… where in fact the statement should read amino acids contain….*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 488-489

Another point of interest is the presence of metalanguage in some of the comments tagged *Language*. While this is perhaps unsurprising from markers for the Applied Linguistics module (8), it does appear to suggest that markers for other modules are able to describe language to highlight particular problems with language use (9).

8. You have some problems with use of conjunctions [AL-3] [L-C]
9. Watch for use of pronouns [CS-3] [L-C-PF]

Within the data, there are also examples of tutors clarifying this metalanguage, for example in (10 & 11) where the tutor indirectly provides an explanation of ‘run-on’ sentences in the course of advising the student-writer how to address this particular language issue.

10. There were far too many run-on sentences [BS-7] [L-C]
11. Try keeping to a single idea per sentence rather than linking ideas continuously with commas or semi-colons. [BS-7] [L-C-PF]

4.2.2.4 Referencing

As with *Formatting*, most of the coding units tagged *Referencing* occur within the Biological Sciences sampling units, although still only accounting for 11 out of the 266 total coding units in this module (see Table 6 above). Most coding units have a negative evaluation, identifying how the referencing falls short of adhering to the academic conventions and style guides required by the department (1). However, a relatively high proportion of comments, four, are tagged non-evaluative, and direct the student to referencing software (2).

1. Don't forget to add place of publication and publisher to books in your bibliography. [AL-12] [R-C-PF]
2. Use reference management software, learn how to use it correctly and then let it do this work for you [BS-7] [R-NE-PF-S]

Interestingly, in Study 1 (see section 1.2) which included in-text tutor annotations as well as end-text summative comments, there were three times as many coding units within the Creative Industries data set than in the present study indicating that comments on referencing are often made in annotations rather than summative comments at the end of the students' work. In Study 1, the annotations typically highlighted where a reference did not conform to departmental guidelines, for example the need to include page numbers in the reference for quotes. As the convener for Creative Industries points out in interview (see below), such comments lend themselves to in-text annotations since inserting the comment into the student text can pinpoint the particular reference.

> *then there would be more sort of granular comments as well I mean quite often I tend to deal with those in the in-text comments because it's easier to pick up on those things as you're going through and I think it's easier for the students to make sense of them if the comment is right next to the passage where the issue is … things like you know spelling and grammar*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 101-104

The Creative Industries module convener refers to the in-text annotations as "granular comments" since they tend to highlight issues at word and sentence level such as referencing, language and spelling, rather than comments at whole text level such as argumentation and coherence which are therefore more likely to be commented on in summary end-text comments. This could account for the lower frequency of coding units focusing on subcategories such as *Referencing*.

4.2.2.5 Conclusion

This section has analysed the coding units tagged within the four sub-categories of the broader grouping *How the work is or should be expressed*. While the four sub-categories within this grouping *Formatting*, *Referencing*, *Writtenness* and *Language* account for only 15% of all coding units, they reveal some interesting findings. Perhaps the most significant is that a far higher proportion of feedback comments relate to writtenness in the Creative Industries, Child Studies and Applied Linguistics, than in the Biological Sciences. This finding supports the view that social science and humanities disciplines place greater emphasis on the writing itself to express more complex ideas, whereas science disciplines such as the Biological Sciences module place relatively higher reliance on illustrative figures or diagrams to assist with conveying more difficult concepts. Concerning language, findings reveal comparatively little attention in feedback commentary is paid to language issues across all modules which for the most part accords with conveners self-reported feedback practices in interviews.

4.2.3 What is or should be included

Coding units within the broad grouping *What is or should be included* account for just over 80% of the total coding units in the data set (see Appendix XIIa). In Figure 7 below, the percentage of coding units for the two subcategories *Understanding* and *Argumen*t, relative to the number of coding units in the sampling units, can be seen. Coding units tagged *Understanding* relate to comments referring to the students' understanding of main ideas, facts, concepts and theories, whilst coding units tagged *Argument* relate to students' evaluation of arguments or the support provided for their own.

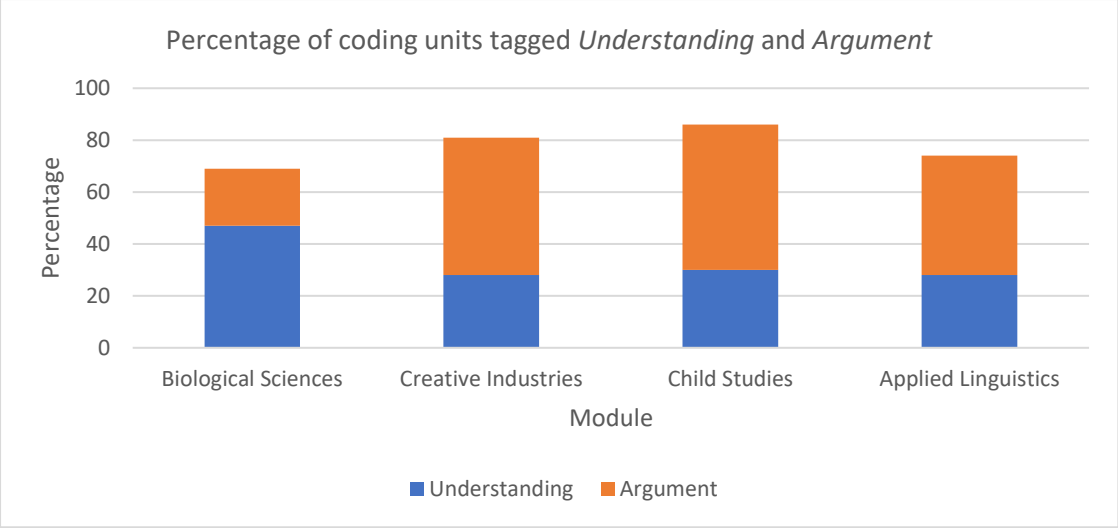


Figure 7: Percentage of coding units tagged 'Understanding', & 'Argument' under the broad grouping 'What is or should be included' for each of the four modules.

While conceding this understanding/argument categorisation is an arbitrary divide, it remains useful for revealing some of the epistemological differences corresponding to the broad division between the hard and soft disciplines. For example, from this we can see the proportion of coding units commenting on *Argument* within the social sciences and humanities disciplines is considerably greater than that for the Biological Sciences. This reflects differing tutor feedback practices reported in Hyland's (2013a p.246) study, for example, which found that subject tutors in the humanities fields privileged feedback emphasising the need for student writing to 'evaluate ideas and make connections between things they had read, while in the hard sciences teachers gave feedback which stressed the need for students to demonstrate an understanding of basic concepts of scientific methods and how experimental results are used as evidential support for conclusions.'

In addition to interviews with subject tutors, Hyland (2013a) employed a framework to analyse actual feedback data which included the categories *Content* and *Argument* and compared feedback data drawn from the Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines, as well as the Hard Sciences. Hyland found that a significantly higher percentage of comments related to *Content* within Biology and Engineering programmes compared to Business and History, while the reverse was true of comments relating to *Argument*. The starkest illustration of this point was between Biology assignments, which had just over 10% of comments relating to *Argumen*t, and History assignments with 40% of comments relating to *Argument*. The findings suggest a different weighting accorded to students' display of knowledge compared to argumentation between the hard and soft disciplines, a difference also present in this thesis. However, the context in which Hyland's study took place, a non-Anglophone country with English as the medium of instruction, and the fact that the study concerns the feedback practices

provided to undergraduate L2 student writers, needs to be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, the study provides important insights into tutor expectations across different disciplines, and it is noteworthy that these are reflected in the present study looking at feedback practices across the entire student body, not just to L2 students, and in the UK higher education setting.

The categorisation framework developed by Hughes et al*.,* (2015) to explore feed forward commentary provided in modularised programmes, included two categories similar to the two subcategories discussed here: *Critique of approach* referring to comments focussing on structure and argument, and *Factual Critique* focussing on content. Hughes et al., found that assignments from postgraduate Health programmes received more comments related to factual critique compared to those drawn from Professional Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education programmes which received more comments related to the critique of approach. This finding receives little attention in Hughes et al.'s study since their investigation focuses on the amount of feedback provided on drafts compared to that provided on final work. The finding does, however, reflect a similar pattern to those discussed in Hyland's (2013a) study as well as those in the present study.

This section will now discuss themes emerging from subcategories *Understanding* and *Argument* in turn.

4.2.3.1 Understanding

Coding units tagged *Understanding* accounted for a third of all coding units in the total data set and predominantly made reference to the inclusion of accurate and relevant material, students' choice and rationale of topic, identification of key issues and debates, definitions of terminology and concepts, and summarising of others' ideas. Coding units ascribed with a negative evaluation draw attention to a perceived insufficiency in those same areas, for example, the need for more details, lack of relevance or factual errors. Analysis of the coding units within this subcategory took place to determine possible differences in foci across the four modules, and specifically differences that would account for the relatively higher number of coding units within the Biological Sciences sampling units. Given the high number of coding units falling within this subcategory, organisation of this section centres around two prominent themes to emerge from the data: relevance and accuracy of content, and prescriptive content.

4.2.3.1.1 Relevance & accuracy of content

Close analysis of coding units tagged *Understanding* within the Biological Sciences module reveal comments predominantly credit the factual accuracy and relevancy of content, while those coding units ascribed with a negative evaluation, highlight lack of detail, inaccurate or irrelevant information (1). Often, these comments make reference to students' factual understanding of practical applications such as processes, techniques (2) and methods (3) and as such reflect scholarly enquiry within a hard applied discipline which is 'concerned with mastery of the physical environment and geared towards products and techniques' (Neumann et al., 2002 p.406).

1. You explain what bisulfite conversion is, however I could not find a paragraph explaining affinity enrichment. [BS-3] [U-M]
2. In addition, you describe endonuclease digestion only in context of Chromosome X inactivation – you do not explain this technique at all [BS-2] [U-C]
3. PRS methods not adequately described and the presentation of studies shows patchy understanding of the subject [BS-5] [U-C]

The above extracts also demonstrate how the language employed to provide feedback on the qualities of the students' work, reflects the disciplinary discourse associated with that of the hard sciences, for example with the use of scientific terminology and the reporting verbs 'explain' and 'describe' (Hyland 2002).

Studies examining academic writing have found clear differences in the way in which information is reported in broad disciplinary areas (e.g Hyland 2002). Hyland's study investigating reporting verbs in a corpus of 80 research articles within eight disciplines, found a preference for the forms 'report', 'describe', and 'show' in the science and engineering articles, whilst in the humanities and social sciences there was a clear preference for 'argue' (2002 p.124). Conducting a lexical search and frequency count of some of the most common reporting verbs in Hyland's corpus, a clear difference in the forms favoured between the four disciplines was also found in this thesis. For instance, the verb 'describe' and its word forms occurs once per 11.1 coding units in the Biological Sciences corpus, compared to once per 105.2 coding units in Child Studies (Appendix XIIIb). Similarly, 'explain' occurs once per 17.7 coding units in the Biological Sciences corpus, but once every 103.5 coding units in the Applied Linguistics data. A search was also conducted for the lexical items 'argue' and 'argument' and found that these items occur once per 88.7 coding units in Biological Sciences but once per 6.38 coding units in Creative Industries, once per 13.1 coding units in Child Studies, and once per 15.9 coding units

in Applied linguistics. Thus, the preferred rhetorical features of academic writing within discourse communities also extends to the discourse used by those providing feedback on student work under appraisal. The higher instance of the reporting verbs 'describe' and 'explain' occurring within the subcategory *Understanding* also corresponds with the higher number of coding units tagged within this subcategory in the Biological Sciences.

Another point of interest to emerge from analysis of coding units within the Biological Science, is that knowledge acquisition is frequently identified in absolute terms such as correct (4) or incorrect (5). This again corresponds with Neumann et al.'s (2002 p.407) conclusions that, in disciplines within the hard fields, curricula depends on 'established facts and on demonstrable theories rather than on uncertainties and relativities' and how, as a consequence, this may result in less contention surrounding the accuracy of information.

4. You correctly describe how early life stressors impact upon HPA axis dysregulation and are associated with adult onset major depression [BS-4] [U-P]
5. The comment on risk prediction from companies such as 23andme is incorrect here, since these are based on risk calculation at a few SNPs, and not the genome-wide polygenic scores. [BS-1] [U-C-TC]

4.2.3.1.2 Prescriptive content

Coding units tagged *Understanding* within the Biological Sciences, display a greater emphasis on tutors' expectations to find specific information in student responses as demonstrated in (1).

1. This essay contained a number of the important points relevant to the title and showed some good understanding of the topic [BS-12] [U-P]

According to Neumann et al., (2002) course structures within the hard pure fields tend to be tightly structured and the content typically fixed. This would account for feedback providers within a hard science module having a more prescribed view with regard to what content should be included for assignments. This in turn would account for the higher instance of coding units addressing the relevancy of the content or the omission of expected content. This more prescriptive view of content is also acknowledged by remarks made in interview with the Biological Sciences module convener:

> *What we expect in the essay is quite prescriptive […] when you're answering a question on twin heritabilities there are only certain things that you [can say]*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 334-337

Although the module convener refers to the assignment here and throughout the interview as an 'essay', the highly informational focus and register of coding units within the Biological Sciences combined with the relative lack of features associated with more overtly argumentative texts, indicates greater alignment to another of the 13 genre families as identified by Nesi and Gardner (2018), the Explanation genre (see section 3.7). Their inventory of genres of student writing are grouped according to the educational and social purpose the assignments serve, and according to Gardner and Nesi (2013), the social purpose of the Explanation genre is for students to demonstrate a systematic understanding of the current state of knowledge relating to a particular aspect of a discipline, and how that knowledge was acquired.

The title for one of the Biological Sciences assignments, for example, sets out a particular aspect of this field of study (use of genetics to predict risk of developing psychiatric disorders) and instructs the student to explain how the current state of knowledge was arrived at.

> One aim of genetic studies into psychiatric disorders is to use genetics to predict who may be at increased risk of developing these disorders. Describe the progress we have made towards this aim through genome-wide association studies and polygenic prediction.
>
> Biological Sciences Assignment title (Appendix II)

The students' assignment is therefore written to a title for which the content is much more prescribed than for other genres such as the critique. The prescriptive nature of this genre is also evidenced in the feedback comments. For example, in the following consecutive comments, the student has been penalized for including what is considered irrelevant material (2&3):

2. The next section is only tangentially relevant to the essay title and provides considerable detail around cognitive and biological brain factors including inflammatory markers, none of which were asked for in the title. [BS-6] [U-C]
3. This section was therefore not able to contribute a great deal to the overall mark. [BS-6] [U-C-CR]

Coding units along with assignment briefs as set out in Module Handbooks show that for Child Studies and Creative Industries, students have a level of flexibility over choice of subject, and in some cases titles and topics are student-initiated (4&5).

4. A clear rationale for the choice of topic [CS-4] [U-P]
5. You choose a potentially very interesting case study and identify some key issues and debates [CM-1] [U-P]

Interestingly, when interviewed, the Creative Industries convener reveals an inclination to reward students' attempts to answer the assignment question in an original way:

> *I find myself rightly or wrongly more kindly disposed to essays that have clearly shown some independent or tangential thinking and have chosen a different kind of topic or have chosen an unusual way of answering the question … … that doesn't always come off but if it does then you know I will give them credit for originality and ambition and I will say whether they did manage to pull it off but I think that's something to be commended that they had a go that they took a risk*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 95-100

The feedback comment below (6), written by the Creative Industries convener, endorses this interview comment, but also demonstrates the difficulty in striking the right balance between displaying originality and ambition on the one hand, whilst ensuring sufficiently relevant content on the other.

6. Your discussion of the digital and heritage is admirably ambitious and wide ranging, but some of it seems to be a little tangential to the subject of the essay. [CI-6] [U-M]

For the annotated bibliography, assignment rubric in the module handbook for Child Studies directs the students to select sources on 'a topic of your choice in relation to children's rights' (see Appendix IV). The Child Studies module handbook sets out how the content of the annotated bibliography should be structured and this reflects the typical structure of the genre as identified in Nesi and Gardner (2012), namely each annotation is headed by the full text reference followed by a summary and then a critical evaluation of the content and its significance (2012 p.146). The module handbook stipulates additional detailed requirements such as the need for students to set out the rationale for the selection of sources, the key points of the sources used, and the context and methods of investigation employed by the authors of each source included in the bibliography (see Appendix IV).

Students' adherence to this assignment brief and the extent to which this is perceived to be successful provides the basis for many of the comments within the subcategory *Understanding* for this module (7)

7. You do set out the key points here but could you be a little more precise from the outset? [CS-14] [U-M]

Thus, whilst many of the coding units within Biological Sciences relate to the inclusion or omission of prescriptive content, within the Child Studies assignment, many of the coding units relate to adherence to format expectations associated with the annotated bibliography genre.

As with the other social science and humanities modules, students on the Applied Linguistics module have the option of negotiating their own title with the course tutor. A point of difference for coding units within this sub-category, however, is that as well as these comments demonstrating an understanding of key issues and concepts, coding units also comment on the understanding of theories and principles in relation to practice.

8. You have demonstrated a good understanding of underlying aims of each stage of the lesson and how it fits together. [AL-9] [U-P]
9. I'm afraid it is not clear from the sequence of activities if you know how to stage a speaking skills lesson and how these lessons differ from language focused lesson in terms of both staging and types of tasks. [AL-12] [U-C-RW]

Comments such as (8 & 9) reflect another of the broad trends identified by Neumann et al.'s (2002) research, specifically that applied disciplines attach more importance to the application and integration of knowledge than their pure counterparts, and that soft applied programmes are more concerned with enhancing professional practice than the hard applied subject fields.

The feedback artefacts can therefore yield information on genre, and the educational and social purpose the assignments serve. A close examination of the artefacts, and assignment rubrics they respond to, can also reveal references to shared practices within discipline communities. The use of 'we' and 'our' in assignment titles, 'Describe the progress *we* have made' [BS 1] (my italics), 'weakens *our* knowledge and understanding of history', [CI-10] (my italics) (Appendix II), signifies a shared identity and purpose amongst those working and studying within this particular discipline. Conducting

a lexical search of the item 'we' across the entire data set found 17 instances across all four modules, reinforcing this view of a discipline community as in the examples (10-12) below (my italics):

10. Where *we* talk about developing writing skills at this level *we* are normally talking about constructing whole texts (emails, narratives etc.) rather than single sentences. [AL-13] [U-C-TC]
11. For example, *we* know that there is genetic overlap between life events and depression from adolescence onwards, whereas in pre-adolescent children this association is environmental. [BS-6] [U-C-TC]
12. It would be unusual for academic articles to be designed for children – but you make a good point by implication that perhaps *we* should consider child-friendly versions of research findings. [CS -4] [A-M-TC]

This use of 'we' to highlight the communal shared practices within disciplines, echoes Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of Community of Practice. Their concept refers to a group of people sharing a similar interest and concern; likewise a disciplinary community shares 'ideals, beliefs, values, goals, practices, conventions, and ways of creating and distributing knowledge' (Flowerdew & Costley 2016 p.3). In Lave and Wenger's theory of situated learning, newcomers become fully-fledged members of a community of practice through a process of legitimate peripheral participation. Likewise, within a disciplinary community, novices achieve expertise through participation in disciplinary practices and through a process of acquiring knowledge related to their field.

4.2.3.2 Argument

Within the entire data set, 47% of coding units were tagged *Argument* more than any other subcategory (see Table 7). Approximately 50% of total coding units in Creative Industries, Applied Linguistics, and Child Studies, the highest proportion in each module, were also tagged *Argument*. This finding reflects those in Hughes et al.'s (2015) study which found that there were more comments categorised 'Critique of approach', relating to structure and argument, than 'Factual critiques'. The corollary of a significantly higher percentage of coding units tagged *Understanding* within the Biological Sciences is the relatively lower number of units tagged *Argument*, approximately 22%.

Table 7: Number & percentage of coding units tagged within subcategories of 'What is or should be included'.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total (%)
Nº coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Understanding	125 (47)	47 (28.3)	190 (30.1)	58 (28)	420 (33.1)
	1 in 2.1	1 in 3.5	1 in 3.3	1 in 3.6	
Argument	58 (21.8)	89 (53.6)	355 (56.2)	96 (46.4)	598 (47.1)
	1 in 4.6	1 in 1.9	1 in 1.78	1 in 2.2	

As with the previous subsection, the organisation of this section centres around prominent themes to emerge from the data: use of literature and citation practices, expressing agreement and disagreement, criticality, genre knowledge, linking, voice and stance.

4.2.3.2.1 Use of literature & citation practices

Coding units within *Argument* relate to use of the literature and citation practices with more frequency than any other aspect. Within the Biological Sciences reference to the use of literature, specifically relate to the presentation of up-to-date findings (1&2). The need to cite the most recent literature is also reflected in the module's marking descriptors which stipulates evidence of reading 'current literature' as a criterion.

1. There have been a great deal more studies of the 5-HTTLPR and stress since Caspi et al (2003) and at least 4 meta-analyses (two negative two positive) of these effects which should have been mentioned here. [BS-4] [A-C-IMP]

2. There is a more recent meta-analysis (Karg et al. 2011), which finds support for this gene-environment interaction and further papers showing how a more accurate measurement of SLEs makes a difference to whether findings replicate (Uher & McGuffin 2010). [BS-8] [A-C-TC]

The emphasis on using up-to-date literature in the sciences is also intrinsic to the idea of 'superseded knowledge', that is to say, where a once accepted theory is later deemed inadequate or wrong by a current scientific consensus (Neumann et al., 2002 p.406).

Emphasis on the need to reference the most current literature is also present in Child Studies coding units. The Child Studies programme is a multidisciplinary course and as such draws upon a range of

disciplines including law, and consequently, the need to reference the most recent enactment of the law is emphasised (3), as is the need to cite the law rather than rely on a secondary source (4).

3. Watch reliance on text such as UNICEF 2012 for numbers of ratifications, which have risen since. [CS-9] [A-C-PF]
4. Take care with use of secondary sources eg why have you cited Besson and Amoros in the introduction rather than going directly to the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child? [CS-15] [A-C-PF-TC]

This emphasis is also reflected in comments by the convener of the module when interviewed:

> *in terms of law we give a very strong warning about the dangers of relying on …. academic work for what the law is… because there's a lag and …just explaining to them that the primary source there is the law itself …and if they go to commentary on the law… they need to check that it's up-to-date commentary and use it as commentary and not as primary source …*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 350-354

While Neumann et al., (2002 p.406), maintain that soft pure disciplines have 'no sense of superseded knowledge, as in hard pure fields', the authors do acknowledge, however, that certain disciplines may straddle the broad groupings headed soft/hard pure/applied, or may change categories. They go on to cite the example of linguistics which 'can be seen in large part to have moved from soft pure to hard pure as computer-related methods have gained ascendancy' (2002 p.407) In the following consecutive coding units from the Applied Linguistics data, a tutor responds to a student grappling with the concept of superseded knowledge on the one hand (5&6) whilst on the other, the need to acknowledge the continued relevancy of certain theoretical and previously prevalent ideas, as in (7&8).

5. The point your raise about the brain's ability to learn languages is underpinned by a very old reference (1969), and this is indeed a very outdated view. [AL-11] [A-C]
6. The last two decades of research have shown that the brain can indeed learn new structure even quite late in life. [AL-11] [A-C]
7. While it is indeed the view of many academics and education professionals that a standard (native) model is 'out of date' it would be hard to argue that it is 'irrelevant' [AL-11] [A-M]
8. In many contexts the native model remains highly relevant, even if contested; and there are many parts of the world where it is still completely accepted. [AL-11] [A-C-TC]

This distinction is articulated most clearly by comments made by the feedback provider in Child Studies (9).

9. There is no need to apologise for the age of this article as philosophical and ethical arguments do not age, even if the scientific evidence that influences individual decision-making may affect the outcome of cases. [CS-12] [A-NE-TC]

Instead of an emphasis on use of most recent sources, within the Creative Industries comments referring to use of the literature predominantly focus on the use of sources to provide support for the substantiation of claims and arguments (10&11).

10. If you are discussing increases in visitor numbers it is important to include some hard data to support this, facts and figures, or the reader has no real sense of how things are changing, or at what pace. [CI-4] [A-C-PF]
11. Use specific evidence and examples (including dates, facts & figures) to support your arguments, don't assume that a citation is sufficient evidence in itself. [CI-9] [A-C-PF]

There is also greater focus in the feedback from this discipline on student use of direct quotation, particularly with relation to the over-use of direct quotation (12) and over-reliance on secondary sources (13).

12. Try to be a bit more judicious in your use of quotes, use them when the author has something really original or significant to say, or you really could not have said it better yourself. [CI-2] [A-C-PF-TC]
13. There is, I feel, an over-reliance on secondary sources, Picard in particular, [CI-9] [A-C]

The frequency of coding units focussing on citation practices is also informed by disciplinary variations in citation practices. The convention of using only indirect quotation within the biological sciences (Hyland 2002) means there are fewer coding units relating to use of sources within those sampling units. Another point of difference can be seen within coding units from Applied Linguistics where comments refer to the use of the students' own teaching practice and experience in support of the arguments being made (14&15), exemplifying the emphasis on the integration of theory and practice within the Applied Linguistics coding units and, more broadly, the vocational nature of most applied fields (Neumann et al., 2002)

14. You also provide a good level of critical analysis of both your experience and the existing literature. [AL-6] [A-P-RW]
15. And draws nicely on your own experience [AL-4] [A-P]

4.2.3.2.2 Expressing agreement and disagreement

Much of the focus of the feedback commentary on sampling units within Child Studies expresses tutor agreement or disagreement with the students' summary and evaluation of each annotation, evidenced by the high instance of the lexical item 'agree', within the Child Studies sampling units. A lexical search for the item 'agree' and 'disagree' including lemmatised forms of both, occurs 33 times across the entire data set, and interestingly, all occurrences, with one exception, appear in the Child Studies data. Most frequently, tutor agreement is provided in relation to the students' interpretation or evaluation of the individual annotations (1 & 2) or asking for the student writers' position (3).

1. From a brief review of this article I have to agree with your puzzlement over the comparison of South Africa and the US and indeed the inclusion of a range of other countries in passing. [CS-1] [A-P]
2. I disagree that Pichon does not propose a solution. [CS-11] [A-C]
3. You pose an important question of the balance of rights at the end but do not indicate whether you agree with the author's conclusions and why/why not? [CS-4] [A-M]

In contrast, tutors providing feedback within the Creative industries and Applied Linguistics choose not to express agreement, but rather credit arguments that are 'well made' (4&5) or 'balanced' (6), thus in terms of their credibility rather than whether the tutor personally agrees with them or not.

4. Many of your points are well made and supported with relevant evidence and examples. [CI-2] [A-P]
5. Clearly you have researched this subject extensively, drawing very effectively on the sources you cite to give support to your arguments. [AL-5] [A-P]
6. [you] construct some balanced arguments considering the advantages and disadvantages of visitor access to the site [CI-4] [A-P]

The only instance of the word 'agree' not occurring within the Child studies coding units, takes place in the Biological Sciences across the following consecutive coded extracts (7-9). Here, use of 'agree'

comes as a departure from the rest of the feedback commentary which acknowledges information as either being correct or incorrect. The use of agree here could be interpreted as a form of mitigation on the marker's part, thus used as a less harsh way of telling the student-writer they are wrong.

7. You also state that bisulfite conversion is 'not effective pretreatment to use for genome-wide DNA methylation analysis but suitable for locus-specific DNA methylation analysis' [BS-3] [U-C]
8. I do not agree with that comment [BS-3] [U-C]
9. Currently, bisulfite conversion is widely used for microarray research, applied in 450k Methylation and new 850k EPIC Array. [BS-3] [U-NE-TC]

4.2.3.2.3 Criticality

According to Neumann (2001), soft disciplines place greater importance on skills such as developing critical perspectives. While reference to criticality can be found across the marking criteria for all four modules, examination of marking criteria in module handbooks reveals varying expectations relating to the demonstration of criticality, according to discipline and genre. For example, while Biological Sciences requires 'critical evaluation of relevant literature demonstrating understanding of topic' (see Appendix VI), in the marking criteria for Applied Linguistics, critical analysis is stipulated in relation to evaluation of syllabus, materials, chosen textbook or teaching approach (See Appendix VII). The Child Studies module handbook states 'In making an assessment of the value and relevance of a source, the key aspect is a critical evaluation of the article content' (see Appendix IV). In the Creative Industries marking criteria, criticality appears as a descriptor in relation to the ability to analyse sources critically but also to the ability to evaluate theories and reflect critically (see Appendix V). Variation in these descriptors accords with the view espoused in a paper by Colclough, Fox and Driscoll (2019), exploring the way different academic disciplines use literature. From interviews with subject tutors in Architecture, Finance and Engineering, Colclough et al., conclude that 'criticality may be handled differently according to discipline and for different source types', thus caution against EAP practice advocating 'the need to critically evaluate the literature as a rather blanket piece of advice.' (2019 p.56).

Given that criticality is a descriptor in the marking criteria for all four modules, it is not surprising that coding units commenting on criticality appear with significant frequency. A lexical search for the items 'criticality' 'critique' and 'analysis' including lemmatised forms, appear 94 times across the four

modules although with much greater frequency in the Creative Industries sampling units (1 in 5.5 coding units) (see Appendix XIIIc). Within Biological Sciences, comments mentioning criticality predominantly relate to critical analysis of the literature, however, some coding units also prompt the student to take a more questioning stance with relation to the subject matter as in the following consecutive coding units (1 & 2).

1. I can see how considering MS as an SLE may provide further support for a role of SLEs in depression, but you need to critically analyse this association. [BS-8] [A-M-IMP]
2. You go some way towards doing this, by saying that MS doesn't appear to cause depression, but you should also consider whether MS causes SLEs or the same risk factors cause both MS and depression. [BS-8] [A-M-IMP]

Likewise for coding units within Child Studies, students are expected to critically consider the contribution of each article in the bibliography, as directed in the assignment brief. In addressing the Child Studies assignment on children's rights, some students choose to focus on contentious subjects such as the debate surrounding children's and women's rights with regard to abortion (3), and the debate surrounding unaccompanied migrant children in the US (4). The students are therefore expected to cast a critical lens on these subjects, critiquing arguments on both sides of the debate.

3. I'd have liked though for you to at least have given some indication of how the rights of women to bodily integrity and autonomy should be balanced against the asserted rights of the foetus and/or have considered the 'viability' issue. [CS-11] [A-C-IMP]
4. An excoriating critique of the authors' understanding of the US refugee and welfare services, which would have benefited from being backed up by the use of additional references. [CS-5] [A-C-IMP]

Clearly, any account of critical thinking embraces a composite of skills in both the identification and evaluation of arguments, the structuring of argumentation, and the making of sound judgements. However, more recently, criticality has been used to refer to a wider agenda. For example, Davies and Barnett (2015) use the term 'critical participation' to refer to criticality as a concept that encourages students to participate critically in society and 'to become more skeptical toward commonly accepted truisms' (2015 p.21). Analysing the coding units in the Creative Industries data, it is striking how some students are required to go beyond that of simply critiquing the literature or materials. The most notable example of this is the tutor commentary provided for an assignment written by a Chinese

student in which the effects of cultural tourism on Tibet are discussed, eliciting this response from the feedback provider in the following consecutive coding units (5 & 6):

5. In particular, the essay mentions nothing about the specific political circumstances of Tibet, which are perhaps the most important aspect of its recent history and contemporary circumstances (certainly as far as much of the world is concerned), and which must have a significant impact on the attitudes of Tibetans (particularly the Buddhists) to tourist, and vice versa, both from China and overseas. [CI-1] [A-C-TC]
6. While I appreciate that this is perhaps a sensitive issue, to omit it from an essay altogether is extremely problematic as it essentially ignores a key element of what makes Tibet interesting and unique, and how it might shape visitor motivations and attitudes. [CI-1] [A-M-TC]

Here, the tutor's comments reveal an expectation greater than that of taking a critical perspective towards the literature. The comments align more closely with a critical pedagogy defined as 'the use of higher education to overcome and unlearn social conditions that restrict and limit human freedom.' (Davies & Barnett 2015 p.18). In this instance the object of critical inquiry is Tibet and therefore, presumably, there is an expectation for the student to challenge some of the views and values within which the student has been socialized and which they have come to accept. As O'Sullivan and Guo (2010 p.59) argue, the demand of students' critical thinking skills become particularly acute 'when the critical lens is focused on ideas, values, institutions that are near and dear to them and which have been previously unexamined by them.' This expectation to take a critical orientation towards established norms constitutes an intellectual and cultural challenge that is not evidenced in the sampling units as clearly in the other modules within this small data set.

4.2.3.2.4 Genre Knowledge

Genre knowledge, specifically the functions and patterns of textual organisation typically associated with a text/genre and its constituent parts, receives prominent attention in investigations of feedback provided to thesis and dissertation writing (e.g. Bitchener & Basturkmen 2006). These studies report that students tend to be uncertain about rhetorical characteristics of these genres, specifically the appropriate content and how it might be organized effectively in each part of the genre. In Bitchener et al.'s (2010) study looking at written feedback provided for theses and dissertations across three disciplines within HEIs in New Zealand, the authors categorised 'part-genre' knowledge, specifically what content should be included in different parts of the student work (2010 p.87). The authors found

that the majority of supervisors reported their feedback practice as including commentary on the function and content of certain parts of the student work and that there was 'no observable difference in practice' across the different disciplines (2010 p.87). It should be noted that this finding is based on supervisors own self-reports and not substantiated by data taken from actual feedback artefacts.

Although the present study is not investigating the dissertation or thesis genre, it is still somewhat surprising that across the data set for this study, there are notably few references relating to generic expectations. Of the few examples present, these relate to generic issues such as the expectation to include an overview of the structure in the introduction (1) and exclude new information in the conclusion (2).

1. Before mapping out clearly the ground you intend to cover in answering this question [AL-4] [A-P]
2. However, it also contains new information that was not included in the main text, such as the role of gene-environment correlation or the effects of prenatal stress on infant depression [BS-4] [A-C-TC]

These generic expectations for both introductions and conclusions reflect those outlined in academic writing guides such as Swales and Feak (2004).

4.2.3.2.5 Linking

Other commonalities in referential foci across the data set include coding units commenting on linking to the essay title or between sections of the text. A lexical search for the item 'link' including lemmatised forms, occurs 28 times, most frequently within the Applied Linguistics and the Biological Science coding units (see Appendix XIIId). One feedback provider for Applied Linguistics privileges this quality in academic writing above all else (1).

1. The key to a good assignment (or dissertation) is making the links and signposting. [AL-3] [A-NE-PF]

This view is also emphasised in remarks made by the Applied Linguistics module convener:

> *unless [students] can connect ideas and signpost and link … they're not showing that they've understood …*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 25-26

Within Child Studies, coding units commenting on linking predominantly apply to the need to cross-reference between annotations (2), whilst in the Applied Linguistics sampling units predominantly apply to linking between theory and practice (3).

2. The individual annotations are self-contained in the main and little more linkage between the articles and cross-referencing would have helped the sense of argument [CS-15] [A-C-IMP]
3. Your discussion of your own practices in relation to encouraging learner autonomy is really interesting, and you mostly do a good job of drawing the links in this later section with principles in the earlier sections [AL-2] [A-P]

Bitchener et al., (2010 p.91) surveyed supervisors through use of questionnaires and found supervisors within the Humanities made particular mention of highlighting the need for linking between sections of students' writing. This finding is not reflected in the present data, with very few references to linking occurring within the Creative Industries sampling units. However, Bitchener et al.'s study explores the research report, a lengthier and more complex genre, which can account for the greater emphasis on linking across their data set. (see section 5.2.3)

4.2.3.2.6 Stance

Hyland (2005 p.176) defines stance as how writers choose to 'present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments. It is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement.' In their study examining feedback provided on dissertations and PhD theses, Bitchener et al., (2010) found more supervisors within the Humanities were providing feedback on stance than those in Science or Commerce.

Within most sampling units, direct references related to stance tend to be made by referring to the possessive 'your' followed by the pronoun 'own', most frequently in Child Studies (1 & 2) and Applied Linguistics (3).

1. Try to avoid phrases such as 'one could argue' as they avoid setting out what your own views are. [CS-15] [A-C-PF]
2. I'd have liked you to develop your own thoughts on the validity of the claim that the UNCRC is liable to be used to turn against the poor and the vulnerable [CS-1] [A-C-IMP]

3. You also make a good use of existing literature to explain and analyze your own thoughts when learning a language. [AL-6] [A-C]

Similar references can also be found in Creative Industries (4) but with less frequency.

4. The result of this is that the analysis is rather anecdotal and superficial, without an in-depth analysis of issues or examples, or much evidence of your own independent reflections on the material. [CI-9] [A-C]

Within the Biological Sciences coding units, there are no direct references responding to the students' own thoughts, opinions or ideas.

4.2.3.3 Conclusion

This section has analysed the coding units tagged under the sub-categories *Understanding* and *Argument* within the broader grouping *What is or should be included in the work*. Categorising according to this understanding/argument divide has revealed some of the epistemological differences corresponding to the broad division between the hard and soft disciplines and the nature of knowledge. For example, there is a significantly higher ratio of coding units categorised *Understanding* within the Biological Sciences compared to the other three disciplines. Comments within this subcategory predominantly relate to accuracy and relevancy of content. Conversely, a far greater proportion of coding units in the social sciences and humanities disciplines fall under the subcategory *Argument* than that for the Biological Sciences. Coding units within this subcategory predominantly relate to the evaluation and synthesis of sources, as well as the use of sources in support of arguments. Furthermore, whilst tutors' responses to student work within the Biological Sciences are often couched in absolute terms confirming or correcting the accuracy of statements, within the subcategory *Argument*, a common theme is tutors' expression of acceptance, agreement or disagreement with students' ideas and argumentation. These findings therefore reflect some of the different ways knowledge is constructed, disseminated and received across the disciplines.

4.2.4 How the work is or should be organised

The third broad grouping relates to coding units addressing the structure of the work or where certain elements of the work should be in the text. Coding units within this grouping account for less than 4%

of the total units, the highest proportion of which occur in the Biological Sciences sampling units (see Table 8).

Table 8: Number & percentage of coding units tagged within the subcategory 'How the work is or should be organised'.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
Nº coding units per module	266	166	632	207	1271
Organisation	16 (6.02)	4 (2.41)	15 (2.37)	11 (5.31)	46 (3.6%)

Coding units tagged within this broad grouping include comments referencing structure at whole text level (1) and paragraph level (2).

1. However, the essay could have been much better structured and ordered more clearly (subheadings would have helped) because the present structure made it difficult to follow in places. [BS-12] [O-C-IMP]
2. Try to start each section/paragraph with the main point to help orient the reader before then going into the detail. [BS-4] [O-C-PF]

Within the Child Studies sampling units, reference to the order of the individual annotations provides the basis for most comments as in extract (3).

3. It wasn't entirely clear why you ordered the articles as you did in this bibliography, and not, for example, in chronological order. [CS-15] [O-C-TC]

A point of difference within the Applied Linguistics sampling unit, are the specific references to structure at paragraph level and the advice given in the following four consecutive coding units (4-7):

4. It is at times hard to follow your arguments because of the way you organise your paragraphs. [AL-12] [O-C]
5. Paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence which introduces the main point. [AL-12] [O-C-PF]
6. The paragraph should then develop this same point. [AL-12] [O-C-PF]
7. It's confusing if you introduce other ideas in the same paragraph [AL-12] [O-C-PF]

The detail on how to organise paragraphs and specific reference to topic sentences may signal the marker's EAP background. Whilst not the specific commentator on the script to which the above comments apply, remarks made by the module convener of the Applied Linguistics module acknowledges that previous work within EAP background informs their feedback commentary:

> *I certainly imagine the fact that I understand language and the fact that I have in the past taught writing and taught teachers about teaching writing so at least … you know what discourse and coherence and cohesion mean and so on and these are how you can teach them… I think you know we must… all of us have a much greater awareness... I would have thought much much greater awareness than teachers of other content subjects*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 40-45

There are few comments relating to the organisation of students' work within the Creative Industries sampling units. This appears to be at some variance with the module convener's remarks on her commenting practices. Asked what her feedback comments focus on, the convener provides the following response:

> *some of it will be holistic I guess so I will talk about how the piece of work holds together as a sort of overall narrative and argument and to what extent the various elements of the content cohere into a meaningful whole*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 84-86

In response to the same question regarding the focus of feedback, the module convener for Biological Sciences also indicates a greater emphasis on overall organization than the findings in the actual samples of feedback data suggest.

> *so I try and at least start by giving them the positive what I think was good about this essay and usually that can be overall structure was good it was written well or it could be that they cover specific topic really well*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 248-251

A little later, the module convener adds:

> *and then after that I probably focus on what might be what could be improved you know usually it's things like the organization it's disjointed it doesn't connect through*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 253-255

To seek confirmation of this discrepancy, a search was conducted of the Biological Sciences sampling units and the accompanying marking templates. For sample 2 [BS-2] the descriptor 'structure and organisation' on the marking template has been ticked 'fail' (See Appendix XIV). The 244-word written feedback provided in addition to the completed template not only lacks any mention of structure or organisation, but also 51 of those words address the students' use of punctuation, specifically the placing of the full stop in relation to the citation (8).

8. Also, the citation should be placed before the period at the end of the sentence, for example: 'with genetic risk variants for schizophrenia (Hannon et al., 2015).' rather than how you use it: 'with genetic risk variants for schizophrenia. (Hannon et al., 2015)' - this is repeated throughout the essay. [BS-2] [F-C-TC-PF]

This study does not investigate tutors' reasoning behind individual comments or reasoning behind what is not commented on. However, comments such as these addressing sentence level correction, in this case punctuation (8), indicate how some issues are easier and less time-consuming to provide a repair for, and thus more easily 'fixable'. This can account for why some issues are attended to while others, for example how the work is organised at the level of whole text, are not.

The relative lack of commentary referring to structure, reflects Hyland's (2013a) study which found a relatively small proportion of tutor comments categorised as 'format'. On the other hand, Bitchener et al.'s (2010) study reported that nearly all the participating supervisors provided feedback on the structure and organisation of students' work across all three disciplines sampled. Given this finding is based on supervisors own self-reports, it is unclear if the tutors' perceptions reflect their actual commenting practices or, as is the case with this present thesis, there is a disconnect between tutors' perceptions and the actual frequency of comments relating to structure.

4.2.5 Non-specific focus

This final sub-category captures all those coding units which do not fall under any of the three broad groupings above. Across the entire data set, only 17 comments were tagged within this category, accounting for just over 1% of all coding units. These segments either refer to the work as a whole piece (1), justify the grade (2) or direct weaker students to attend tutorials (3).

1. This was a pleasure to mark – thank-you! [CS-8] [NE-P-E]
2. I am afraid this paper does not meet the requirements of the assignment. [AL-14] [NE-C-GJ]

3. Do bring an essay plan to the next meeting for us to discuss. [CS-13] [NE-C-S-]

As such, these comments are all tagged with a third code relating to the qualities perceived as valuable by students, thus for the above examples, *Grade Justification*, *Encouragement about performance*, and *Directing to additional support*. The categories for the third codes address the second research question and therefore are discussed in the next section.

4.2.6 Conclusion

Thus far, this chapter has analysed the first set of codes to investigate the research question what tutors, across four participating disciplines, focus on in their written feedback comments at PG level. In doing so, this section has drawn primarily on extracts taken from feedback artefacts, as well as interviews with all four module conveners, providing scope to explore correspondence between tutors' perceptions of their own feedback practices with that of their actual practice. Use of MaxQDA has enabled an investigation of the frequency of coding units within each subcategory as well as the frequency of specific language items. Taken together, these data provide a more detailed understanding of the feedback corpus.

Perhaps most notable is how relatively little commentary relates to the structure of students' work across all four disciplines, and how this corresponds with findings in similar feedback studies (e.g. Hyland 2013a). The scarcity of commentary addressing structure in feedback is also not congruent with some of the remarks made about the conveners' own feedback practices in interview. Overall, most feedback comments address issues relating to the content of student work, and it is within this broad grouping that disciplinary differences between tutors' feedback responses to work within the humanities and social sciences and those provided within the biological sciences, are most stark. Indeed, the findings presented above could provide a corrective to suggestions within the literature that there is 'little difference in the types of feedback provided in the different discipline areas' (East et al., 2012 p.15). Whilst there appears to be broad alignment between tutors' perceptions of their own feedback practice with that of the findings in the actual feedback artefacts, there is some disjuncture concerning comments addressing the organisation of students' work. Analysis of the data will now continue by exploring the findings of the second set of codes.

4.3 Research Question 2

4.3.1 Introduction

This section presents the analysis and findings of the second and third set of codes to investigate research question two: the extent to which subject tutor feedback aligns with and differs from student perceptions of effective feedback as outlined in the literature. In doing so, this section will also continue to investigate how the findings differ and align across the four programmes.

To analyse the second and third set of codes, the complex coding query function in MaxQDA was used. This enables the researcher to investigate the number of instances where two or more codes co-occur, for example the co-occurrence of *Critique* [C] and *Pointers to take forward* [PF] (see section 4.3.3.3). In (1) below for instance, the first two codes [CI-4] identifies the coding unit as an extract from sampling unit 4 in the Creative Industries data set, while the subsequent three codes identify the assigned categorization: *Referencing* [R], *Critique* [C], and *Pointers to take Forward* [PF].

1. Make sure the source of all the information you include in your essay is clear, and that the referencing is accurate, complete and adheres to departmental guidelines. [CI-4] [R-C-PF]

4.3.2 Second code: Qualitative assessment

The second code assigned to all coding units in the data set identifies the qualitative assessment ascribed to the comment. Analysis of this second layer of coding helps explore the balance between remarks which positively comment on the student work under appraisal and those which critique the work. Rather than using the term 'criticism', this study uses the label *Critique*, since it is felt that this ascription encompasses a broader definition, and recognises that categorising comments according to the qualitative judgement they carry, is often not clear cut. Interrogative commentary, for example, frequently serves to point out omissions in the student work thus carrying an implied negative assessment. Therefore, in this study interrogative commentary is also categorized under *Critique* (1).

1. And it what ways were your tasks and your approach to TBLT adapted to the context? [AL-1] [U-C-Q]

Frameworks such as Ferris, Pezone, Tade and Tinti (1997) which look at both the pragmatic intention and linguistic form of the written commentary, have attempted to categorically distinguish between

question forms making a request and those asking for information. However, as Hyland and Hyland (2001) point out, this has the potential to lead to significant overlapping. Consequently, in this study, *Critique* also encompasses question forms such as (2) expressing a request.

2. Could you have given examples of the partisan stance taken to illustrate the criticism and the dilemma you refer to (and also in relation to the policy recommendations)? [CS-5] [A-C-Q-IMP]

Likewise, suggestions, for example (3) are tagged *Critique* since, as Hyland and Hyland (2001) point out, they embed an assumption that improvement to the work under appraisal is needed and thus carry an implied criticism, albeit considerably less forceful than sentences containing a negative evaluative adjective (4).

3. Perhaps you could have exploited it much more as this is an extremely relevant concept in the current literature. [AL-6] [U-C-IMP]
4. However, the structure is poor [BS-4] [O-C]

This section also investigates the use of rhetorical paired acts as a mitigating move whereby one part of the rhetorical pattern carries a positive evaluation of the students' work, and the other identifies a perceived shortcoming. Coding units containing this rhetorical pattern are tagged *Mitigating paired act* [M] and are also ascribed to this category as examples of tutors using language considerate of affect. The feedback literature investigating students' perceptions of effective feedback indicates that students value commentary which provides a balance between positive and negative evaluation, as well as commentary which attends to affect (e.g. Getzlaf et al., 2009; Dawson et al., 2019). Thus, this section explores alignment between subject tutor commentary, and student perceptions of effective feedback in relation to both qualities.

The second layer of coding was exhaustive, consequently the few units not containing a positive or negative qualitative assessment, 4% of the coding units, were categorized under the separate category, *Non-evaluative* [NE]. After analysing and discussing the qualitative assessment ascribed to coding units within the data, this chapter will then move on to look at the third code assigned to coding units which investigates the extent to which feedback adheres to other qualities perceived as valuable by students.

4.3.2.1 Critique and Praise

As can be seen in Figure 8 below, *Critique* was found to be the dominant type of evaluative commentary across all four modules, although 1 in 3.1 coding units were tagged *Praise*, thus ascribed a positive evaluation. The frequency of negative and positive evaluations was most even within the Child Studies and Applied Linguistics sampling units, with almost 40% of all comments tagged *Praise* (see Appendix XIIb).

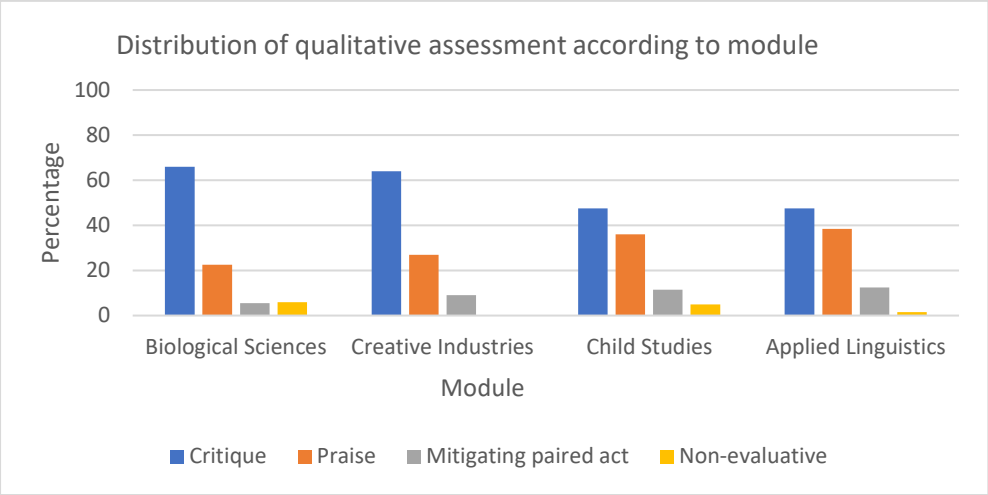


Figure 8: Distribution of coding units, in percentage, of comments relating to qualitative assessment.

Within Biological Sciences, the module with the biggest difference between proportion of positive and negative coding units, one in 4.5 coding units commends an aspect of the students' performance (see Appendix XIIb). This does not take into account positive clauses contained within coding units tagged Mitigating paired act. Unsurprisingly, the data demonstrates that when expressing judgments, tutors do provide both positive and negative comments even, as in this case, where commentary responds to work only receiving a pass grade. This view is confirmed by convener comments in interview as demonstrated in the following extracts:

> *however bad the work is start with something positive and constructive … sometimes it's more of a stretch than in other cases but I always try to find something … some kind of redeeming … feature of the work*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 82-84

> *I think just for morale and confidence kind of boost for a student it's important to have positive feedback as well as ...I think that's what's important having the balance the positive the negative and also constructive*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 118-132

When comparing the percentage of coding units tagged *Critique* for Creative Industries (62%) and Biological Sciences (66%), with the percentage assigned *Critique* for Child Studies (47%) and Applied Linguistics (47%) (see Appendix XIIb), we can see a difference of approximately 19%. The higher instance of negative comments within the Biological Sciences and Creative Industries modules is likely to reflect the lower marks awarded sampling units in these two modules. The 24 scripts drawn from these modules were awarded a pass band, whilst those in the Child Studies and Applied Linguistics modules were randomly collected and thus include feedback scripts also written in response to work awarded a mark within the merit and distinction band (see Appendix II). The higher percentage of negative comments in work awarded a pass band would appear to support findings presented by Mutch (2003) which found a clear relationship between the mark awarded and the number of negative comments in feedback provided to undergraduate work. Likewise, Wingate's (2010) study found that higher-achieving undergraduate work generally received more positive comments than other work. Unsurprisingly, findings in the present study appear to indicate that the lower-achieving work within the sampled postgraduate modules also receives more negative comments.

Although other studies investigating written feedback have found *Praise* to be the dominant comment type (e.g. Hyland & Hyland 2001; Orsmond & Merry 2011; Austen 2016), these studies employ different categorisation frameworks to that developed for the present study. Both Hyland and Hyland (2001) and Austen (2016) distinguish between 'criticism' expressing negative comments, and 'suggestions' containing 'an explicit recommendation for remediation', thus consequently coded separately (Hyland & Hyland 2001 p.186). In the present study, however, a third layer of coding is used to distinguish between bare negative comments which do not have a third code as in (1), and those that do, as in (2), indicating in this case that the comment contains a suggestion as to how the current work requires improvement [IMP].

1. It is misleading and shows you do not fully understand the subject [BS-3] [U-C]
2. While in your own mind there may be an 'obvious' link between World Englishes/native speakerism debates and ELT coursebooks, this link nevertheless needs to be stated to make the argument stronger. [AL-11] [A-C-IMP]

This third layer of coding and the extent to which these codes co-occur with units tagged *Critique* is discussed in section 4.3.3.

Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study considers the illocutionary force of comments categorised as criticism and suggestion, and places them at opposite ends of a continuum. In this present thesis, comments tagged *Critique* can also be placed along a continuum: coding units such as (3), which flag inaccurate information, lie at one end since they are expressed in terms of what is not to standard about the work; comments such as (4) lie at the other end, since they are expressed in terms of how the work could be improved, thereby intended as advice rather than an explicit evaluation.

3. The comment on risk prediction from companies such as 23andme is incorrect here, since these are based on risk calculation at a few SNPs, and not the genome-wide polygenic scores. [BS-1] [U-C-TC]
4. The introduction of some more up-to-date source material might have helped you explore this in more depth [CI-2] [A-C-IMP]

These comments can be softened by the use of hedging, which as Hyland and Hyland (2001 p.196) note, is employed 'to tone down criticisms and reflect a positive, sympathetic relationship with student-writers'. In the case of (4), for example, the commentary is hedged through use of low modality (might) in conjunction with the third conditional. Interestingly, the language employed by feedback providers in this study resonates with many of the findings identified in a study by Starfield et al., (2017) which looked at the linguistic features used by PhD examiners' in their reports and how their choice of language construes different examiner roles. Language used in extract (3) above, for example, is indicative of 'the expert role' since in this role, according to Starfield et al., (2017 p.58), examiners position themselves in relation to their expertise and knowledge by correcting factual errors and providing facts relating to their subject. The language used is therefore frequently 'an authoritative unmitigated declarative' which determines the more negative tone (Starfield et al., 2017 p.58). In contrast, distinctive linguistic features of 'the commentator role' (2017 p.60) include the use of the first-person singular pronoun allowing the feedback provider to intrude upon the message, and the use of the third conditional communicating a hypothetical distance. Starfield et al., (2017 p.61) argue that feedback pertaining to the commentator role should be construed as 'advice functioning' rather than prescriptive. These linguistic features are also co-present in coding units tagged [C] in the data for this thesis (5):

5. I would have liked some attempt to grapple with the scientific evidence underpinning her argument given that it is that which she relies on. [CS-11] [A-C-IMP]

Similarity between the language used by PhD examiners in Starfield et al.'s (2017) study and feedback commentary present within the data set for this study, suggests that subject tutors for the four sampled postgraduate modules adopt various roles in the process of writing feedback just as examiners of doctoral reports do.

The frequency of coding units tagged *Critique* and *Praise* can also be analysed according to the referential foci of the comments. Figure 9 below shows that whilst approximately 70% of comments in my study are ascribed a negative evaluation when addressing issues relating to *How the work is expressed* and *How the work is organised*, a negative evaluation is identified in only 50% of comments addressing issues relating to the subcategory *What is included in the assignment*.

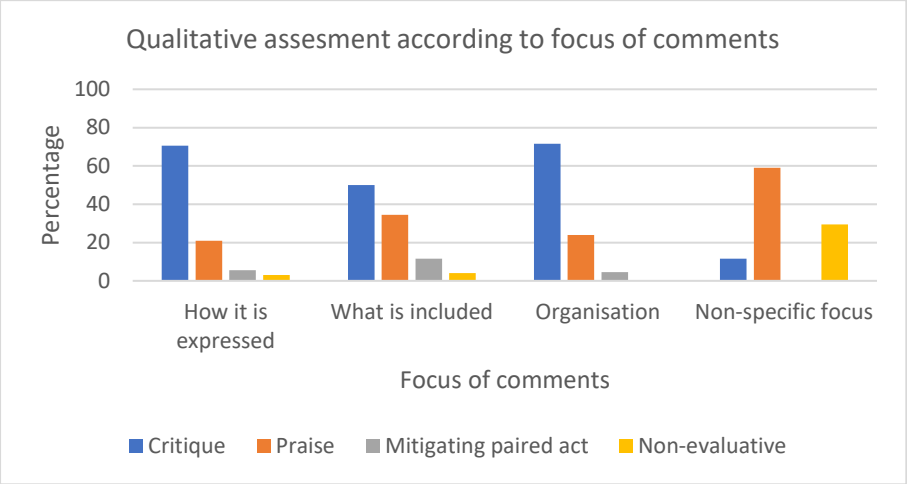


Figure 9: Distribution of qualitative assessment according to focus of comments across the total data set.

Analysing evaluative commentary according to the referential foci of the comments shows similar results to those found in Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study investigating feedback provided to L2 student work. The authors found that commentary praising student work focused predominantly on ideas, with relatively little commentary focusing on issues relating to form or academic writing conventions.

Breaking these results down still further to investigate the number of comments ascribed *Critique* and *Praise* within the different subcategories, Figure 10 shows that over 80% of all coding units tagged *Language* are ascribed with a negative quality (Appendix XIIc). This appears to endorse Turner's (2010 p.6) view that within the academy "[l]language use is only marked when it is perceived as being faulty, and unmarked when the message is apparently clearly delivered" and as a consequence, the issues relating to language work circulate within a predominantly deficit discourse. However, Figure 10 also

shows how there is a more even balance between positive and negative evaluative comments relating to *Writtenness* than any of the other three subcategories. Although coding units tagged *Formatting*, *Referencing* and *Language* are predominantly assigned a negative evaluation, a much higher percentage of coding units, 35%, have been tagged with a positive ascription within the *Writtenness* subcategory. This would appear to indicate that, contrary to Turner's (2010) claim, tutors in this study do credit the student work when ideas are clearly expressed.

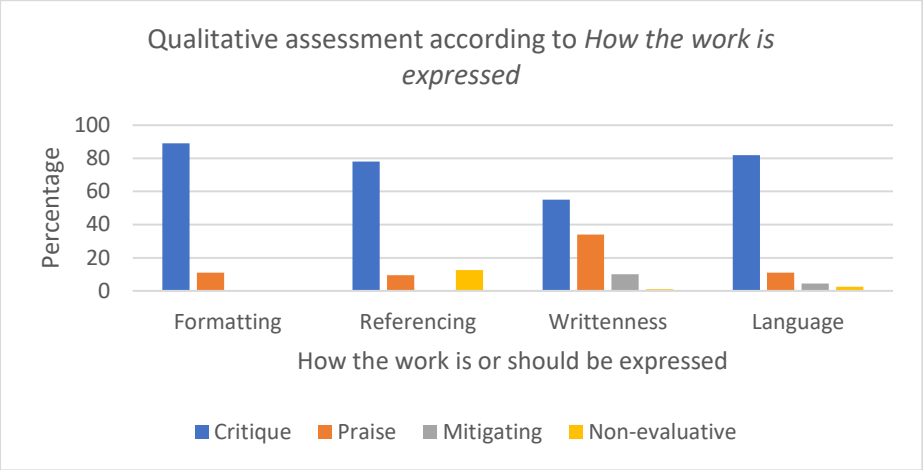


Figure 10: Distribution of qualitative assessment according to 'How the work is or should be expressed'.

Looking at a break down of the subcategories within the broad grouping *What is or should be included*, Figure 11 below shows a higher proportion of comments relating to argument have a negative ascription than those relating to students' understanding of the subject.

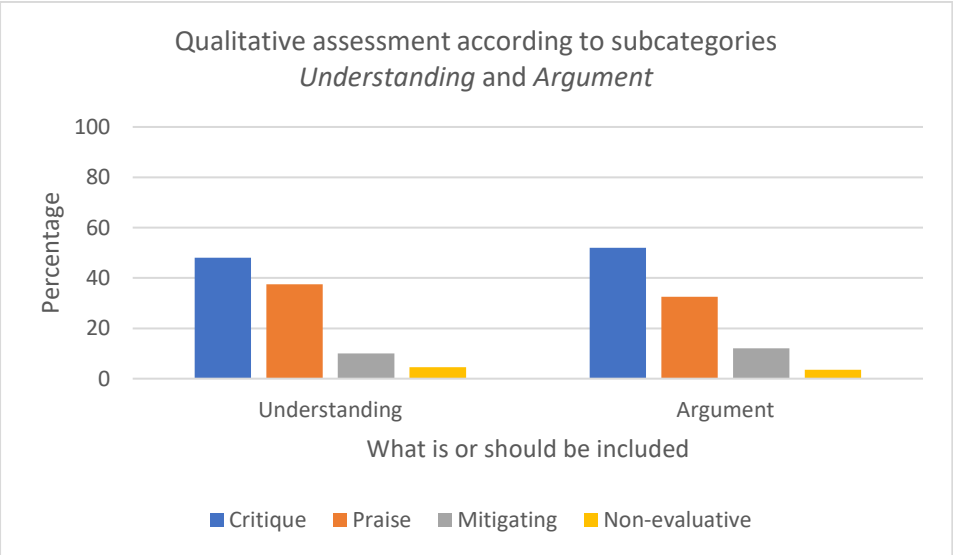


Figure 11: Qualitative assessment assigned to coding units tagged 'Understanding', & 'Argument'.

The higher proportion of negative comments focusing on issues relating to argumentation issues can be found in all four modules, with comments such as (6) and (7) appearing with particular frequency:

6. Make sure that any claims you make are articulated in sufficient detail and are appropriately supported by evidence and examples. [CI-4] [A-C-PF]
7. An excoriating critique of the authors' understanding of the US refugee and welfare services, which would have benefitted from being backed up by the use of additional references. [CS-5] [A-C-IMP]

This aligns with the strong emphasis on improving students' ability to critically evaluate others' arguments, and the ability to use literature in support of their own arguments within EAP teaching and EAP resources (e.g. Swales & Feak 2004).

4.3.2.2 Mitigating paired act pattern

As discussed in section 3.13.3, the framework developed for this study categorises coding units as a *Mitigating paired act* [M] where the sentence contains the adjacency of both positive and negative evaluation as a strategy to mitigate the illocutionary force of tutors' commentary. When investigating the qualitative assessment of tutors' feedback remarks, it was found that 1 in 9.3 coding units across the four modules, fell under this sub-category (Table 9). Whilst this proportion of paired acts is half that found in Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study, their investigation looks at the adjacency of criticism and praise within 'feedback points', which often involve longer stretches of discourse, rather than within the sentence which is the default unit of analysis in the present thesis.

Table 9: Number & percentage of coding units tagged 'Mitigating paired act pattern' [M].

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total (%)
Nº coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Mitigating paired act pattern	16 (6.01) 1 in 16.6	18 (9.64) 1 in 9.2	77 (11.36) 1 in 8.2	26 (12.56) 1 in 8	137 (10.23) 1 in 9.3

Interestingly within the data set for this study, there appears to be considerably less use of this 'redressive strategy' employed within the Biological Sciences sampling units (Hyland & Hyland 2001 p.194). However, given the categorisation of mitigating paired acts does not include the adjacency of *Praise* and *Critique* across consecutive coding units such as (1&2) below, overall this result suggests feedback providers are aware, either consciously or unconsciously, of the affect such comments carry

and often attempt to mitigate the force of negative comments by accompanying them with a positive one.

1. Generally you summarise the key points. [CS-14] [U-P]
2. However, you do not provide evaluation of the articles [CS-14] [A-C]

This view is reinforced by conveners' comments in interview which demonstrate that conveners are considerate of affect when writing feedback.

> *how I frame things … so you can say the same thing or make the same point and it can either be just downright critical and probably quite upsetting to the student and without actually giving them any indication of where they might improve or say you know in a more positive way so yeah I think about tone a lot*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 162-165

Likewise, when asked whether language was considered when providing feedback, the Child Studies module convener responds:

> *Hugely… I do try to be as sensitive as I can … I always try to start with something that worked well … and then go on to the things in the understanding that were not so stellar*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 436-443

Here the convener's comments reveal a conscious placing of positive comments ahead of those more negative, demonstrating her awareness of linguistic strategies to temper comments.

Although coding of these paired act patterns did not differentiate between those combining critical and positive comments with those combining a critical with a more neutral restatement of the work as in (3), many of the coding units within this subcategory do display this more neutral adjacency.

3. You state what the articles cover but not how you selected specific items for inclusion from what is now a large body of literature. [CS-3] [A-M]

In the present study, where there is adjacency between two evaluative acts, a positive comment combined with a negative one, this is most frequently formed by use of either a subordinator (e.g. *although*, *while*) or conjunction (e.g. *but*) within the sentence. The predominant subordinate pattern positions the positive evaluation in the subordinating clause thereby mitigating the illocutionary force

of a negative evaluation in the main clause as in (4). However, a third of coding units with this rhetorical pattern have the negative comment in the subordinating clause as in (5).

4. Although you present a balanced argument, it is rather second hand and there is little evidence of you asking your own questions about the issues at hand, or exploring them [CI-2] [A-M]
5. Some good points on the rationale for TBLT although this is rather incomplete. [AL-1] [U-M]

When interviewed, the module convener for Applied Linguistics, expands on the use of paired acts which subordinate criticism in his feedback practice. Rather than employing this rhetorical pattern as an attempt at mitigating the negativity of the evaluation, the module convener asserts the use of this structure in his feedback practice is more frequently an attempt to mitigate a positive comment:

> *I'm trying to write something positive … but then I also want to say however you haven't done this so it's not me trying to soften a negative comment with something positive … it's me trying to find something positive to say but then … it feels to me more like I'm weakening my praise*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 411-420

While this is a subtle difference, it does suggest that the feedback providers' motive for syntactically subordinating negative comments can differ from that of subordinating positive comments. However, the intention is still to avoid expressing commitment to a proposition, in this case a positive evaluation, too categorically.

Other linguistic features accompanying paired acts serve to lessen or strength the mitigation. These include using hedging (6), restating the content of the assignment rather than crediting the work (7), and suggesting how to improve or posing a question in the main clause (8). These examples of paired acts lie along a continuum of varying degrees of mitigation.

6. I tend to agree that the example of moral context in terms of relationships before and after birth could be stronger but you perhaps over-simplify Porter's argument yourself here. [CS-12] [A-M]
7. You explain what bisulfite conversion is, however I could not find a paragraph explaining affinity enrichment. [BS-3] [U-M]

8. In terms of contribution, although you state Myers lacks the 'benefit of recent changes in the rights-based perspective', to what extent does this text help to make those possible? [CS-3] [A-M-Q]

The range and frequency of mitigating strategies within the data suggest the feedback providers are making conscious linguistic choices when providing feedback, anticipating how the feedback recipient might react to the tone and content of the comments as well as communicating what the student needs to know to improve future performance. Therefore, as Hyland and Hyland (2001) point out, accompanying a negative evaluation with either praise or suggestions for improvement in paired act patterns serve an interpersonal as well as a pedagogic function.

4.3.2.3 Non-evaluative

As can be seen in Table 10, just under four percent of coding units in the data was tagged *Non-evaluative*. This low percentage is unsurprising given that feedback is essentially evaluative in nature.

Table 10: Number & percentage of coding units tagged 'Non-evaluative' [NE].

Nº coding units per module	Biological Sciences 266	Creative Industries 166	Child Studies 632	Applied Linguistics 207	Total 1271
Coded units tagged NE (%)	16 (6.02)	0	31 (4.91)	3 (1.45)	50 (3.9)

Comments falling within this sub-category contain neither a positive nor negative qualitative assessment of the students' performance. Rather, comments include those that factually report what is written in the assignment (1) or direct students to support (2).

1. You have chosen to use parts of a listening and speaking lesson to start this writing lesson. [AL-13] [A-NE]
2. Use referencing software, learn how to use it correctly and then let it do this work for you. [BS-7] [R-NE-S-PF]

There is a relatively higher instance of comments tagged NE in Biological Sciences and Child Studies, with many of these comments providing factual information in response to an inaccurate statement in the students' work as in (3), or a clarification where the tutor disagrees with a students' interpretation of an argument (4). These comments are also indicative of 'the expert role' with the feedback provider once again positioning themselves in relation to their expertise and knowledge by

providing a factual correction and extending the students' knowledge with additional facts relating to the subject (Starfield et al., 2017 p.58).

3. Currently, bisulfite conversion is widely used for microarray research, applied in 450k Methylation and new 850k EPIC Array. [BS-3] [[U-NE-TC]

4. His main point therefore appears to be the importance of prioritizing this right over 'efficiency' of education, which has been a preoccupation of the World Bank, but which privileges the goal of economic development. [CS-10] [U-NE-TC]

4.3.2.4 Conclusion

This section has found that there is a fairly even balance in the type of qualitative assessment ascribed to commentary within all sampling units but particularly across modules where samples were self-selected. This is congruent with studies surveying students' preferences regarding feedback which found that students desire a balance between supportive positive comments and negative critical commentary (e.g. Getzlaf et al., 2009; Weaver 2006; Ferguson 2011). Furthermore, the high instance of comments juxtaposing positive and negative comments in praise-critique paired patterns suggest tutors not only attempt to mitigate evaluative commentary, but also that tutors are cognisant of the high interpersonal stakes in feedback and how affective language can be used to maintain interpersonal relationship with the feedback recipient of the feedback. Thus, this element of tutors' feedback is also congruent with students' preference for comments which are considerate of affect (Dawson et al., 2019).

4.3.3 Third Code: Qualities valued by students

The third code is assigned to coding units according to whether the comment adheres to a quality perceived as constituting good feedback by students surveyed in the literature (see section 3.14). The classification of these codes accords with the feedback qualities generated from a survey of the literature investigating students' perceptions of effective feedback (e.g. Winstone et al., 2016). The eight subcategories and their respective codes to emerge from this process are: *Criteria-referenced* [CR], *How the work could have been improved* [IMP*], Pointers to take froward* [PF], *Tutor Clarification* [TC], *Asking questions of the work/student* [Q], *Applicability to real-world settings* [RW], *Encouragement about performance* [E], and *Direction to addition support* [S] (see Appendix I). Other subcategories to emerge from the literature, such as the amount of commentary attending to

language issues, relate to the aspect of the work the comment focuses on, and therefore have been discussed in sections which present the analysis and findings of the first set of codes (see section 4.2.2).

The third layer of coding is not exhaustive, consequently there are coding units not assigned a third code. These coding units, taken alone, do not directly address any of the attributes identified in the relevant literature as a necessary quality of good feedback by students (1). In some instances, coding units are assigned two third codes. This is particularly the case where tutors provide examples as in (2), in which case the code Tutor Clarification [TC] is also assigned.

1. The next section is only tangentially relevant to the essay title and provides considerable detail around cognitive and biological brain factors including inflammatory markers, none of which were asked for in the title. [BS-6] [U-C]
2. You might have engaged a little more with some of the theory eg Capabilities Approach and the nature of a Christian theological approach to children's rights [CS-3] [U-C-IMP-TC]

In analysing this third set of codes, this section continues to investigate research question two: the extent to which subject tutor feedback aligns with and differs from student perceptions of effective feedback. Discussion of this research question will also continue to draw on relevant extracts from interviews with the four module conveners, providing some insight into whether tutors' perceptions of effective feedback reflect their actual practice.

4.3.3.1 Criteria-referenced

Coding units, tagged under the sub-category *Criteria-referenced* [CR], comment on the meeting, or not meeting, of assessment criteria. Table 11 shows that only 16 coding units in the data make reference to the marking criteria or grade. To confirm this low occurrence, a lexical search for items such as 'criteria', 'grade' and 'mark' was undertaken, after which all relevant occurrences were cross-referenced against coding units tagged CR, to confirm they had been correctly assigned to this sub-category.

Table 11: Number & percentage of comments tagged 'Criteria-referenced' [CR] for each of the four modules.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
Nº coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Coding units tagged CR (%)	1 (0.38)	1 (0.6)	10 (1.58)	4 (1.93)	16 (1.26)

Of the 16 coding units, 11 of these co-occur with comments tagged *Critique* (Appendix XIId), indicating that these comments predominantly highlight where the assignment falls short of meeting criteria (1) or what was needed to be awarded a higher mark (2).

1. But the assignment-specific criteria ask also that you consider (where appropriate) the appropriateness of the study design and any possible study limitations and assess the contribution of each source to the literature and these tasks are rarely included. [CS-6] [A-C-CR]

2. This (*showing how you would follow a process-genre approach*) would have demonstrated your understanding of the approach more clearly and pushed this essay up to distinction level. [AL-9] [U-C-CR]

The low occurrence of comments referring to marking criteria reflects observations in Dawson et al.'s (2019) study, which found that few teaching staff made reference to marking criteria in their feedback practice. However, the low occurrence of coding units within this subcategory appears to be at odds with students' stated preferences according to studies surveying students' perceptions of useful feedback. For example, Li and De Luca's (2014) study found that most students expected comments to be criteria-related, while in Ferguson's (2011) study, students reported that they found criteria a useful reference point provided the criteria had been made clear in advance. Interestingly, from remarks made by module conveners in interviews, it transpires that not only do the conveners' feedback practices differ with regard to the referencing of marking criteria, but their practices also differ from colleagues in their respective departments:

> *I don't really refer to the marking criteria that explicitly I think some of my colleagues do … they use it much more overtly as a framework*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 78-79

The difference in marking practices within Applied Linguistics is remarked upon during the convener's recounting of an attempt to make criteria-related marking standard practice across all marking on the module:

what I've pushed for the last four or five years was to say each assignment will have assignment specific criteria … I think that's probably more in line with what we should be doing and I did try to push that with colleagues … When marking we would comment on each of these criteria and I think this was also very good practice that students would see … you told us to do this and I've lost marks because I didn't do this

Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 158-163

Although there are relatively few coding units making specific reference to criteria, some sampling units include the use of headings which help clarify the criteria against which the work is being evaluated. Headings, for example, are consistently employed within the Child Studies data set, where the module convener is the provider of feedback for all 16 sampling units drawn from this module (see Appendix II). The feedback is first provided under headings according to each of the six annotations, and then under headings adhering to the Generic Taught Postgraduate university marking criteria (see Appendix XV). In the extract below for example, the heading highlighted in bold, clarifies the general criteria to which this comment applies (3):

3. **Understanding** You demonstrate a good grasp of tensions in this area between universal children's rights claims and cultural and social norms and practices. [CS-9] [U-P]

In interview, remarks by the convener of Child Studies point to the organisation of feedback under headings as a systematic practice, as evidenced in the tutor's actual practice:

I probably titled it under understanding and then depth of knowledge and then structure clarity and then general…including accuracy of presentation

Interview: Child Studies convener 53-55

The convener goes on to add how reference to criteria is also made in relation to the actual work under scrutiny. This is demonstrated in the coding unit below (4) which comments on how the student's work does not fully meet one of the specific assessment criteria for this module: 'the ability to assess the contribution of each source to the literature' (see Appendix IV). Interestingly, the convener also informs the student how this criterion may have less applicability in future assignments.

4. A little more commentary on the particular contribution of sources would have raised the mark for this assignment (not necessarily so relevant for future ones though). [CS-4] [A-C-IMP-CR]

Thus, while there are only 10 coding units within the Child Studies data set that explicitly make reference to the criteria, the provision of comments under these criterial headings demonstrate a greater linking between feedback and criteria than the number of coding units would otherwise suggest.

The convener of Child Studies does point out, however, different feedback practices within the department with relation to the referencing of specific criteria. In the extract below, the convener refers to an initiative at school level adhered to by some colleagues and which appears to advocate provision of commentary under two generic headings rather than use of specific assessment criteria:

> *There's been a bit of a move at school level to go to … that this worked well and this is what worked less well … and some people are using that and I've second marked some that use that … I'm in two minds about it … it's quicker for us … it can be clear to students but I tend to feel that they need concrete examples and that they also need to see more than just you know what works well … without any specifics that relate to the actual task they were set*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 38-45

The school level initiative referred to above appears to reflect the practice followed by the convener of the Creative Industries module. In interview, the Creative Industries convener who is the provider of feedback for all 12 sampling units drawn from this module, points to the systematic use of generic headings such as 'strengths' in her feedback practice:

> *I tend to in my long form comments … I split it up into strengths weaknesses and omissions*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 79-80

These headings are also employed consistently throughout the Creative Industries sampling units as in (5) with the heading highlighted in bold. However, unlike those used in Child Studies, the headings employed here signal the grouping of positive or negative qualitative assessment and are not criterial:

5. **Weaknesses and Omissions** However, too many of these arguments are really very vague and speculative. [CI-4] [A-C]

Within the Applied Linguistics data set, feedback for the 14 sampling units is provided by seven different subject tutors and the organisation of comments within the feedback artefacts varies across the seven feedback providers. For example, feedback is not organised under headings in sampling units [AL-1] to [AL-4], all of which are provided by marker I, who is the convener for this module (see Appendix II). On the other hand, commentary in sampling unit 11, provided by marker J, is organised according to the subheadings used by the student in their assignment (6):

6. **Global Englishes** This section covers important issues in the multilingualism / translanguaging debate, especially those relevant to teachers. [AL-11] [U-P]

Of the four coding units directly referencing assessment criteria within the Applied Linguistics sampling units, two of these occur in sampling unit [AL-14] which received a fail grade (7) thereby indicating perhaps a greater need to justify the mark:

7. In addition, you have not kept to the recommended word limit and hence lost a further 7% of your mark you would have received [AL-14] [NS-C-CR]

Long-form summative comments within the Biological Sciences module are accompanied by a table listing assessment specific criteria with adjacent columns labelled 'good' or 'could be improved' which feedback providers tick according to each criteria (see Appendix VI). This can account for the lack of correspondence between the convener's interview remarks which portray the referencing of marking criteria as standard practice within the department, and the absence of these comments in the actual feedback commentary. The module convener identifies criteria-referencing as an area where her own feedback practice needs improving although her concern appears to be more related to the appropriate use of wording in relation to the band awarded:

> *the thing I need to focus more on as a marker individually is the marking criteria … I've only ever been called up on it with undergraduate when a second marker said no you can't say good here when it should be very good or reasonable that's why I say I focus less on marking criteria than I should*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 276-281

The convener's concern over consistency between the comment and mark is also an issue mentioned by students in the prior literature (e.g. Brown 2007). Surveyed participants in Weaver's (2006) study, for instance, express concern over lack of warranting between mark and feedback comments which the author attributes to feedback comments not being criteria-related.

Whilst there are relatively few coding units making specific reference to criteria, the use of criterial subheadings within Child Studies sampling units, and the marking template used across all Biological Sciences sampling units, attests to consistent feedback practices referencing the criteria within some modules. In the case of Child Studies, we can also observe correspondence between the conveners' stated beliefs and actual feedback practice. However, the referencing of criteria appears to be absent within Applied Linguistics and Creative Industries sampling units, either by use of criterial headings or specific comments. Remarks made by module conveners also reveal different feedback practices amongst colleagues.

4.3.3.2 How the work could have been improved

Table 12 shows that 195 coding units relate to the subcategory *How the work could be improved* (IMP), about 15% of the total number of units and one of the highest frequencies of all the third code subcategories. The number of comments falling within this subcategory equates to 1 in 6.5 coding units. The high occurrence of suggestions across the data accords with the literature investigating feedback qualities valued by students as well as the literature providing guidelines advocating good feedback practice (e.g. Evans 2013; Nicol 2010). Studies investigating students' perceptions found that the majority of participants believe suggestions for improvements are necessary for feedback to be considered effective (e.g. Ferguson 2011; Dawson et al., 2019). In Dawson et al.'s (2019) study, when both staff and students were asked about the purpose of feedback, the most common response was improvement.

Table 12: Number & percentage of coding units tagged 'How the work could have been improved' [IMP] per module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
N° coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Coding units tagged IMP (%)	40 (15.04)	36 (21.69)	103 (15.53)	16 (7.73)	195 (15.35)
Fraction	1 in 6.65	1 in 4.6	1 in 6.1	1 in 12.9	1 in 6.5

The percentages of units tagged IMP in Table 12 show a much wider variation between modules than for the previous sub-category, *Criteria-referenced*. Creative Industries has the highest portion of coding units suggesting improvements. This is perhaps unsurprising given that, despite some

commentary provided under the heading 'strengths', the majority of the feedback is provided under the headings 'weaknesses' or 'weaknesses and omissions'. These headings have a "past" orientation focussing on the work done rather than looking ahead to future work. Likewise, coding units tagged IMP also have a retrospective emphasis since these comments relate specifically to the work done, often referring to a particular section or part of the assignment (1).

1. In section 2.3., you should give the reader some sense of why you have chosen specific studies to discuss; this must be explained by their relevance to your case study. [AL-8] [A-C-IMP]

Winstone and Boud (2020 p.5) note that commentary focussing on the work under appraisal, can often 'take on the flavour of grade justification', and this 'flavour' can be found in coding units within this data, for example in (2) below, effected by use of the third conditional.

2. You should have said more about the controversy in the field, including the wide number of meta-analyses, particularly the fact that some did not support the interaction whilst others do. [BS-4] [A-C-IMP]

Winstone and Boud (2020) suggest that commentary justifying a grade is provided at the expense of information that can help students improve future work. While it can be argued that some comments within this sub-category lack developmental information, and thus limited utility, even comments that offer no explicit guidance for future performance still frequently contain a potential learning element. For example, in (3) below, although the advice of using more recent sources addresses the current work, it can also apply to future work.

3. The introduction of some more up-to-date source material might have helped you explore this in more depth. [CI-2] [A-C-IMP]

The need to justify the grade is endorsed by remarks made by the convener of the Creative Industries module who suggests that:

> *unless they* (students) *have a clear understanding of why they got that grade and what criteria were used to mark that piece of work … they don't really have any sort of benchmarks to work against*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 20-22

Furthermore, the convener goes on to argue that such comments can also facilitate future performance:

> *Feedback suggesting what you might improve on … is offered partly as an explanation but also as an encouragement to do better in the future*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 25-27

Winstone and Boud (2020) argue that the framing of comments around the defence of a grade, can lead to comments reflecting the language associated with grade descriptors and quality assurance, thereby impacting on the transparency of the comments for students. Other studies such as Winstone et al., (2017) and Jönsson (2013) also highlight a concern surrounding students' ability to decode academic jargon contained within feedback. This issue is also addressed in remarks by one of the conveners:

> *I try to model good writing in everything that I put in my feedback erm… I don't necessarily put my feedback in simple terms because it may not be simple feedback and the students need to have a level seven to take the program and they'd be engaging in much more complicated academic text*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 443-447

Here, the convener's comments highlight the potential use of feedback scripts as exemplars of writing within a discipline, and therein the discourse that the student should be trying to emulate as part of the socialisation process of becoming a member of that discourse community. The convener also rightly points out that published academic text tends to have more sophisticated schemata and greater lexical density than feedback commentary, thereby offering a rebuttal to concerns over the use of academic jargon or terminology in feedback.

Table 13 below shows that comments tagged *How the work could have been improved*, predominantly address issues relating to how to improve content thereby aligning with reported students' preferences in studies such as Getzlaf et al., (2009).

Table 13: Number, percentage % fraction of units tagged 'How the work could have been improved' [IMP] according to focus of feedback.

	How the work should be expressed				What should be included		
	Formatting	Referencing	Writtenness	Language	Understanding	Argument	Organisation
	28	32	82	47	420	598	46
IMP nº	4	1	5	0	60	119	6
(%)	(14.29)	(3.13)	(6.1)		(14.29)	(19.9)	(13.04)
Fraction	1 in 7	1 in 32	1 in 16.4		1 in 7	1 in 5	1 in 7.6

By using the MaxQDA Code Relations Browser, it is possible to break these results down still further to see a higher proportion of comments address issues relating to *Argument* such as use of literature and evaluation of arguments (4) than comments relating to *Understanding* (5).

4. You might also have considered whether the small scale of the study introduced limitations, and if so what those are [CS-2] [A-C-IMP]
5. It would have been useful to begin the essay with potted history of Brazil, and Rio, and the reasons for its current complex racial and socio-economic mix and political landscape. [CI-7] [U-C-IMP]

Other studies such as Walker (2009 p.68) report students' preference for comments facilitating improvement in 'generic issues', identified as comments relating to structure and use of citations, since they are considered more useable. Table 13 shows that in the present study, few coding units tagged *How the work could have been improved* address issues relating to referencing, yet 1 in 7.6 coding units addressing structural issues, and 1 in 7 coding units addressing formatting issues suggest some improvement.

4.3.3.3 Pointers to take forward

Table 14 below shows that 106 coding units provide information that potentially pertain to future work and learning. The higher percentage of units within Biological Sciences and Creative Industries is likely to be the result of all sampling units for those two modules being awarded a pass mark, thus necessitating a greater need for advice to help students improve future work.

Table 14: Number, percentage & fraction of coding units tagged 'Pointers to take forward' [PF] per module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
Nº coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Coding units tagged PF	39 (14.66%)	26 (15.66%)	29 (4.59%)	12 (5.8%)	106 (8.35%)
Fraction	1 in 6.8	1 in 6.38	1 in 21.8	1 in 17.3	1 in 12

While some of these comments still have a past orientation addressing the specific work being appraised, many comments within the sub-category *Pointers to take forward* [PF] are expressed as an imperative communicating more forward-looking information (1).

1. Try to use sections with clear headers to organise the flow of information. [BS-7] [O-C-PF]

Comments tagged PF also relate to learning strategies, such as (2) where the tutor addresses an issue with clarity of language, by exhorting the student to read the sentences out loud. Feedback focusing on improvements to learning strategies is also recognised as a characteristic of effective feedback by students (Dawson et al., 2019).

2. Try reading them out loud to check if they make sense! [AL-13] [L-C-PF]

Recognition that for feedback to be effective, comments need to have a forward orientation is a theme which emerges clearly from conveners in interviews:

> *the idea is that if we give the feedback it's not just on this particular assignment but ought to enable students to improve in on future work as well.*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 5-6

Likewise in remarks made by the convener of Child Studies:

> *I think feedback's effective if it helps students to see how to improve their work in the future while not undermining their confidence*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 159-161

However, the number of comments tagged PF within the data set is considerably lower compared to those tagged *How the work could have been improved.* This reflects similar findings to those in Hughes et al.'s (2015) study investigating written feedback in the context of modularised postgraduate programmes. When discussing their findings, the authors express surprise at the low number of generic comments containing specific orientation to future work. From their examples, it appears the authors are referring to comments that explicitly address this forward-looking orientation with the use of time references such as 'in future' or 'in your next assignment' (Hughes et al., 2015 p.1086). Commenting on the lack of such comments, the authors contend that the feedback providers 'are not thinking of future learning when they write feedback' (2015 p.1090). They conclude that the prevalence of comments containing a retrospective orientation along with limited comments feeding

forward, shows a tendency towards 'feedback closure', which the authors attribute to the self-contained nature of modularised programmes (2015 p.1080).

In the present study, there are only a few coding units in the data making an explicit reference to future work (3). Most coding units falling within this subcategory highlight an area of development without specifically referring to future work, although the notion that students should take these areas of development forward, is clearly there as in (4).

3. It might be helpful if in future the student carefully proofreads the essay. [BS-10] [L-C-PF]
4. I would advise that you avoid using acronyms in your essays unless they are used in normal lay language. [BS-6] [F-C-PF]

Hughes et al., (2015) argue that the discrete nature of modules, particularly those with just one assignment and feedback opportunity, makes the provision of feed-forward commentary inherently more difficult to write since the comments are likely to be less applicable to future modules. This is a theme that also emerges from the interviews:

> *things are really different from module to module… it did mean that the feedback from my module would be less helpful for the next module…*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 127-133

> *I will try very much to say what they might do to improve their work for the next assignment but to do that in a way that actually fits what they're required to do in the next assignment*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 74-76

Comments such as (5) below also point towards the difference in text type and genre impacting on the tutor's provision of commentary which feeds forward:

5. You won't need to do this in the same way in the essay but watch out for issues where there is clear disagreement and don't be afraid to discuss those and reach a balanced and reasoned view. [CS-11] [A-C-PF]

Here, the feedback provider acknowledges some comments responding to the annotated bibliography have limited relevance for the next assignment, an essay, due to the different type of assessment and genre. The comments thus demonstrate how genre is not only a text type but also involves different

scholarly discourse, which in this case, relates to how the student is expected to position themselves in the text.

The third layer of coding can also be explored by looking at the distribution of coding units tagged PF according to the aspect of the work the comment focuses on (see Table 15 below).

Table 15: Number & percentage of coding units tagged 'Pointers to take forward' [PF] according to focus of feedback.

	How the work should be expressed				What should be included		
	Formatting	Referencing	Writtenness	Language	Understanding	Argument	Organisation
	28	32	82	47	420	598	46
PF nº	18	14	17	18	4	29	7
(%)	(64.29)	(43.75)	(20.73)	(38.3)	(0.95)	(4.85)	(15.22)
Fraction	1 in 1.6	1 in 2.3	1 in 4.8	1 in 2.6	1 in 105	1 in 20.6	1 in 6.6

The proportion of units tagged PF is highest within those subcategories relating to *How the work should be expressed*, particularly *Formatting* and *Referencing* since these relate to general skills (6).

6. Don't forget to add place of publication and publisher to books in your bibliography. [AL-12] [R-C-PF]

Although the number of coding units tagged PF accounts for just under 5% of coding units in the subcategory *Argument*, this still amounts to the highest number of comments. These coding units tend to relate to use of up-to-date material (7), and the use of sources - either in terms of direct or indirect quotation (8) or more generally in support of ideas (9).

7. You should always make sure the literature you are citing is not outdated and include most up to date research. [BS-3] [A-C-PF]
8. Try to be a bit more judicious in your use of quotes, use them when the author has something really original or significant to say, or you really could not have said it better yourself. [CI-2] [A-C-PF-TC]
9. Use specific evidence and examples (including dates, facts & figures) to support your arguments, don't assume that a citation is sufficient evidence in itself. [CI-9] [A-C-PF-TC]

As with issues relating to formatting and referencing, comments addressing selection and incorporation of sources are also applicable to up-coming assignments. Therefore, the high frequency of coding units tagged PF that fall within the subcategories *Formatting* and *Referencing* as well as those comments under *Argument* addressing use of sources, reinforces Knight and Yorke's (2003) view

that feedback addressing more general areas has greater potential to influence future learning and thus feed forward. This view also accords with that of Hughes et al., (2015) who argue that comments relating to higher order skills such as critical analysis of the literature, are more difficult to provide future oriented commentary on (see section 4.3.3.4)

The MaxQDA complex coding query also enables investigations into the frequency with which certain codes, for example *Pointers to take forward* [PF] co-occur with other codes. Thus, Table 16 shows that 1 in 6.3 coding units addressing a perceived shortcoming of the student work and thereby tagged [C], also carry some advice to take forward [PF].

Table 16: Co-occurrence of coding units 'Critique' [C] and 'Pointers to take forward' [PF].

	Coded units tagged [C]	Co-occurrence of Critique [C] & [PF]	
Biological Sciences	175	39 (22.29%)	1 in 4.5
Creative Industries	103	26 (25.24%)	1 in 4
Child Studies	296	29 (9.8%)	1 in 10.2
Applied Linguistics	98	12 (12.24%)	1 in 8.2
Total	672	106 (15.77%)	1 in 6.3

Looking at the percentages for each module, we can see a higher proportion of co-occurrence between *Critique* and PF within the Biological Sciences and Creative Industries sampling units, again indicating that tutors provide more commentary containing advice to take forward on weaker performing work. The few coding units tagged [PF] that do not co-occur with [C] either form part of a mitigating pair act [M] with the advice appearing in the negative clause, as in extract (10), or they co-occur with [NE], signifying that the advice appears as part of a non-evaluative comment as in (11) and (12).

10. Generally good standards of accuracy but watch for plurals (parents_ compared with possessives (parents'). [CS-12] [L-M-PF]
11. The key to a good assignment (or dissertation) is making the links and signposting. [AL-3] [A-NE-PF]
12. If you haven't yet done so, take one of the free courses (reference management software) put on by XXXXXX's and learn how to make full use of one of these tools. [BS-7] [R-NE-PF]

A similar MaxQDA complex coding query was conducted to investigate co-occurrence between *Critique* and *How the work could have been improved*. Table 17 shows that 195 comments tagged [IMP] co-occur with *Critique* [C], signifying that just under 30% of all comments tagged [C] also carry some information pertaining to how the work could have been improved.

Table 17: Co-occurrence of coded units 'Critique' [C] and 'How the work could have been improved' [IMP].

	Coded units tagged [C]	Co-occurrence of Critique [C] & [IMP]	
Biological Sciences	175	40 (22.86%)	1 in 4.4
Creative Industries	103	36 (34.95%)	1 in 2.9
Child Studies	296	103 (34.8%)	1 in 2.9
Applied Linguistics	98	16 (16.33%)	1 in 6.1
Total	672	195 (29.02%)	1 in 3.4

There are no instances in the data where a coding unit is assigned both a [PF] and a [IMP] tag. Thus, taking the results from both complex coding queries together (Table 16 and 17), the combined number of coding units tagged [PF] and [IMP] co-occurring with *Critique* is 301. This means that 1 in 2.2 coding units tagged *Critique* are accompanied by additional information either in terms of what is needed to improve performance in the specific work, or advice with wider applicability pertaining to future work. Clearly, all comments are only effective if the students are feedback literate, that is to say, able to read, interpret and implement the feedback (Sutton 2012). However, this finding does accord with students' perception of effective feedback identified in the literature that reveals students' desire feedback that can help improve upcoming assignments, and that highlights strategies for future action and learning (Getzlaf et al., 2009; Ferguson 20011; Dawson et al., 2019).

The findings to emerge from investigating co-occurrence between Critique and [PF] and [IMP] also corresponds with the conveners' own perceptions of what constitutes effective feedback. Extracts drawn from interviews with the conveners, presented in this section, testify to their communal belief that for feedback to be effective, comments need to have a carry-forward component. Tutors' perceptions regarding what constitutes effective feedback are not well-represented in the literature (see section 2.9.1). However, in a large-scale study surveying both tutors and students, Dawson et al., (2019 p.28) found that 89% of tutors considered the main purpose of feedback was to facilitate improvement in students' work. In the same study, when asked what makes feedback effective, tutors primarily pointed towards design concerns such as timing and connected tasks. In the present study, conveners do not refer to design concerns when expressing their beliefs about effective feedback, emphasising instead the uptake of feedback or attributes of the feedback artefact itself. Given all four conveners were aware of the focus of the present study, specifically looking at samples of feedback, it is perhaps not surprising that their responses addressed this question only in relation to their commenting practices.

4.3.3.4 Tutor clarification

Just under 18% of all coding units within the total data set are tagged *Tutor Clarification* [TC], which equates to 1 in 5.8 coding units (see Table 18). Comments within this subcategory provide additional information, most frequently in the form of an example (1), explanation, or additional facts extending the students' knowledge (2). According to Walker (2009) such comments are potentially more useful in actualising improvement than comments which do not offer explanation.

1. Although the student did provide an answer to progression of risk prediction through polygenic risk scoring, the student demonstrated some misunderstanding of PRS analysis e.g suggesting PRS increase the effect size, increase the number of SNP risk markers etc. [BS-11] [U-M-TC]
2. Please bear in mind that not all sources are of equal value or likely accuracy, anecdotal and online sources treated with caution. [CI-12] [A-C-TC]

The percentage of total coding units tagged TC needs to be considered separately from those tagged PF and IMP since there is some co-occurrence: 26 coding units tagged TC co-occur with PF, and 35 co-occur with IMP, as in examples (3) and (4) below.

3. You are supposed to build on work by previous scholars so better to say "Skehan (2005) argues that ... Ellis 2014 emphasises ... [AL-4] [W-C-PF-TC]
4. I'd have liked to see an entry from Hollingsworth, eg Theorising Children's Rights in Youth Justice: The Significance of Autonomy and Foundational Rights. Modern Law Review 2013, 76(6), 1046-1069 would have added depth to your mention of the importance of the right to an open future. [CS-8] [A-C-IMP-TC]

Table 18 shows that Biological Sciences has the highest proportion of coding units containing some element of clarification. The percentage of coding units tagged TC within Creative Industries (11%) is surprisingly lower than in Biological Sciences despite feedback in both of these modules only addressing work awarded within the Pass band.

Table 18: Number & percentage of coding units tagged 'Tutor Clarification' [TC] per module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
N° coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Coding units tagged TC	59 (22.18%) 1 in 4.5	19 (11.45%) 1 in 8.7	124 (19.62%) 1 in 5.1	18 (8.7%) 1.11.5	220 (17.31%) 1 in 5.8

The Child Studies module convener describes providing additional clarification as a customary part of her feedback practice and uses the example of critical analysis to illustrate this point:

> *they'll* [students] *come to me with someone else's feedback and say well it says there's not enough critical analysis but I don't understand what they mean … so I will always try and give an example and say perhaps you could have been more critical in the analysis of so and so's theory … or by looking at the size of the study you know whatever is appropriate but not just say not enough critical analysis but say this is how you could increase critical analysis in this context and so they have an understanding of what it means and the different ways in which we would expect them to critique the sources that they are using*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 196-206

Coding units such as extract (5) below, not only corroborates the convener's espoused feedback practice reported in interview, but also demonstrates the marker trying to develop the disciplinary skills identified by Hughes et al.'s (2015) as higher order.

5. Try to practise critical reading and develop the habit of asking what is new about the conclusions, how robust and well-evidenced are they, do you agree with them and why / why not? [CS-2] [A-C-PF-TC]

The convener's remarks, specifically the reference to providing advice on critical analysis in relation to the *context*, endorse Hughes et al.'s (2015) argument that feedback relating to higher order skills such as critical analysis of the literature, are more difficult to address since the analysis relates to a particular literature of a module which makes comments more difficult to feedforward into other modules. Coding units that stand-alone, unaccompanied by additional guidance such as (6), do appear within the data, and as Hughes et al., state, commentary '[s]imply exhorting students to be more critical next time is unlikely to be helpful.' (2015 p.1082).

6. The essay would also be improved by including more critical analysis of the literature. [BS-8] [A-C-IMP]

Within the Creative Industries data set, extract (7) was singled out in section 4.2.3.2.3 as being notable for demonstrating the requirement for the student to take a critical perspective beyond that of simply critiquing the literature. Specifically, the extract demonstrates the expectation to challenge long-held views and values from a standpoint the student is unlikely to have taken before.

7. In particular, the essay mentions nothing about the specific political circumstances of Tibet, which are perhaps the most important aspect of its recent history and contemporary circumstances (certainly as far as much of the world is concerned), and which must have a significant impact on the attitudes of Tibetans (particularly the Buddhists) to tourist, and vice versa, both from China and overseas. [CI-1] [A-C-TC]

This extract (7) provides an illustration of how the issue of criticality is addressed in relation to the specific context, the situation in Tibet, thus demonstrating Hughes et al.'s contention that higher order skills such as criticality are difficult to decontextualise. It is also interesting to note, that the feedback provider does not explicitly refer to analysis or criticality here or in the coding units surrounding this extract.

Whilst the comments in extract (7) do not address the acquisition of these higher order skills beyond the assignment or module, these comments do highlight why consideration of the political situation regarding Tibet was important to make the argument more persuasive and thereby improve the level of performance. Comments providing explanation such as above, thus shed light on the gap between the 'actual level' of students' work and the 'reference level', that is to say, the desired standard of students' work (Ramaprasad 1983 p.4). Addressing this gap is a theme also echoed in comments made in interview by the Biological Sciences convener when asked what constitutes effective feedback:

> *what's important about it (feedback) it has to show how the student could really change … so you have to probably give examples of how it could have been done better or you know whether it's a question of organizing … so rather than just saying it's disorganized to say you know it's disorganized perhaps you should do an essay plan before or have some kind of subheadings or something to help organize or maybe have a figure that helps pull things together … so often going that extra step to suggest what is useful*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 122-129

The coding unit below, drawn from sampling unit [BS-9] and thus written by the convener for Biological Sciences, provides a demonstration of the feedback practices stated in interview.

8. Addition of some figures or a summary table would also improve the clarity of your essay, as it would nicely complement the text. [BS-9] [F-C-PF-TC]

Close analysis of coding units tagged TC within Biological Sciences also shows a correspondence with the levels of depth developed by Brown and Glover (2006). In their three-tiered system, the first level acknowledges an issue (performance gap), the second provides correction (information needed to help reduce this gap), and the third provides an explanation (details why the correction is preferable). Example (9 & 10) illustrate how coding units tagged *Critique* and TC can adhere to this framework, by first highlighting an inaccuracy, then providing the correction, followed by details informing the student why this is the correct response. This level of depth is often presented over consecutive coding units as in example (9 & 10).

9. Some inaccuracies in the paragraph about penetrance of CNVs (not actually a GWAS, but analysis of pre-existing GWAS). [BS-5] [U-C-TC]
10. PRS is not on identifying previously hidden variants, it just increases the predictive power which indicates that there are associated variants below threshold level. [BS-5] [U-C-TC]

Given Brown and Glover's coding framework was developed for analysing feedback provided on Biological, and Physical Sciences modules, it is perhaps unsurprising to find a pattern of similar moves within Biological Sciences sampling units in the present study. Within the other three modules, Brown and Glover's framework also finds some applicability, although reasoning tends to take the place of a 'correction'. For example, in (11) below, the 'issue' pertains to the aspect of the argument the tutor finds unconvincing, in this case the criticism which is perceived by the tutor to be unfair. This is followed by the tutor's reasoning that this was not the author's aim. A similar pattern of disagreement followed by reasoning can also be found in extract (12).

11. It isn't a fair criticism that authors don't directly address child labour or the assessment of capabilities when its expressed aim is a philosophical enquiry into the claim for special priority to be afforded to children's rights. [CS-3] [A-C-TC]
12. Perhaps a little unfair though to say the authors do not provide philosophical underpinning to their arguments, since they focus very much on the primacy of women's rights and the

importance of women's bodily integrity and freedom, to the extent that they regard unwanted motherhood as forced labour. [CS-11] [A-C-TC]

This pattern can also be observed in the Creative Industries data, for example in the consecutive coding units below (13 &14). Here the 'issue' pertains to the lack of consideration of alternative arguments. This is followed by the tutor's reasoning and examples of the opportunities afforded by digital reproduction.

13. I feel you offer a rather one-sided view of the relationship between heritage and the digital. [CI-6] [A-C]

14. The emphasis here seems to be very much on the digital as a threat, and there is very little consideration of the opportunities it can offer the sector – as an aid to archiving, preservation, research, and providing new and engaging experiences for visitors and tourists. [CI-6] [A-C-TC]

Tutors' responses to students' ideas presented within Creative Industries and Child Studies assignments compared to those made in response to students' ideas from Biological Sciences assignments, reflect the insights into disciplinary differences presented in Bazerman's (1981) essay examining knowledge-bearing texts from different disciplines. In exploring variation in the way knowledge claims are made, Bazerman finds that 'the biological and biochemical audiences share an acceptance of much knowledge … and criteria of judgement' when responding to claims, compared to the humanities and social science audiences, which, 'sharing no uniform framework of thought or criteria of proof, must be urged, persuaded and directed along the lines of the author's thoughts.' (1981 p.378). Interview remarks made by the convener of Applied Linguistics, echo this view:

there aren't that many certainties in our field …there are no good ways to teach writing or to teach one approach to task-based language teaching

Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 293-294

An example (15-17) drawn from Applied Linguistics, demonstrates another pattern in the scholarly discourse: first highlighting the aspect of the argument the tutor finds unconvincing, which in this instance also includes the students' strength of language when presenting the claim, followed by a refutation of the students' claim:

15. It is not so useful to call the 'focus on native-speakerism' 'fascinating'. [AL-11] [A-C]
16. After all, all other languages are learned and taught according to the models of their native speakers [AL-11] [A-C-TC]
17. What is 'fascinating' is that this approach is no longer appropriate for English, when it still is being used for every other language. [AL-11] [A-C-TC]

Investigating the relationship between codes further, Table 19 below shows the distribution of units tagged TC according to the aspect of the work being addressed. In each of the four modules, comments tagged TC predominantly focus on content: *What is or should be included in the assignment*.

Table 19: Number & percentage of coding units tagged 'Tutor Clarification' [TC] according to focus of feedback & module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
Coding units per module	266	166	631	207	
How the work is expressed	14 (5.2%)	2 (1.2%)	7 (1.11%)	6 (2.9%)	29
Understanding	32 (12.03%)	5 (3.01%)	45 (7.12%)	3 (1.45%)	85
Argument	11 (4.14%)	12 (7.23%)	69 (10.91%)	9 (4.35%)	101
Organisation	2	0	2	0	3
Non-specific focus	0	0	1	0	1
Total	59	19	124	18	218

Within the Biological Sciences, the proportion of units tagged TC is highest within the subcategory *Understanding* as in (18):

18. Polygenic prediction(b) is unnecessary– a major advantage of polygenic prediction is that validation of association at specific SNPs unnecessary. [BS-1] [U-C-TC]

This finding is unsurprising given there is a higher ratio of comments tagged *Understanding* within the Biological Sciences compared to the other three modules. As discussed in section 4.2.3.1, these comments often focus on crediting or correcting factual accuracy of content reflecting how knowledge acquisition tends to depend on 'established facts and demonstrable theories rather than on uncertainties and relativities' in the hard science disciplines (Neumann et al., 2002 p.407). This emphasis on factual content also accords with the nature of the Explanation genre which, according to Nesi and Gardner (2018), is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding (see section 3.7). It therefore follows that a higher proportion of units adding clarification occurs within the

Understanding category in Biological Science, since many of these comments provide further clarification accounting for the correction.

Table 19 shows there is an inverse relationship between Biological Sciences and the other three modules, in which there is a higher proportion of units coded TC addressing issues relating to *Argument*. Analysis of these units within the Child Studies module reveals their focus frequently relates to the genre expectations associated with the annotated bibliography (Nesi & Gardner 2012). This genre, as set out in the Child Studies module handbook (see Appendix IV), requires a greater emphasis on succinct analysis of, and cross-referencing between, annotations. In extract (19) below, for example, the tutor questions the student's interpretation of the author's argument. Both of these academic practices, evaluating arguments, and identifying common themes and contradictions across the literature, fall under the category *Argument.* This, therefore, can account for the higher co-occurrence of units tagged *Argument* and TC within Child Studies.

19. And although he does not state what the 'right rights' are, he does suggest a means of working towards identifying them at an international level. [CS-3] [A-M-TC]

Tutors' responses to students' work thus not only reflect insights into disciplinary differences but also reflect variation in genre and the expectations associated with each type of assignment.

4.3.3.5 Asking questions of the work/student

Table 20 shows the number of coding units expressed in the interrogative across all four modules. The Child Studies sampling units contain a considerably higher proportion of coding units tagged *Asking questions of the work/student* (Q) compared to the other three modules.

Table 20: Number, percentage & fraction of coding units tagged 'Asking questions of the work/student [Q] per module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
N° coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Coding units tagged Q (%)	9 (3.38%)	4 (2.41%)	85 (13.45%)	4 (1.93%)	102 (8.03%)
	1 in 29.5	1 in 41.5	1 in 7.4	1 in 51.8	1 in 12.5

The commentary for all 16 feedback scripts drawn from Child Studies is provided by a single marker (see Appendix II), thus it could be argued that the relatively high instance of interrogatives is an indication of a preferred response style (Hyland & Hyland 2001 p.188). To seek confirmation of the

prevalence of interrogative forms in the Child Studies data set compared to the other modules, a case-sensitive lexical search was undertaken as well as a search of auxiliary verbs with inverted word order (see Appendix XIIIf). Interestingly, the most frequent interrogative was the question form 'can you' / 'could you' which appears 18 times in the Child Studies data set, for example (1). There are no occurrences of these forms used in the interrogative in sampling units drawn from the other modules.

1. Could you have ordered the articles and structured your annotations in such a way as to achieve a greater sense of flow between each? [CS-5] [O-C-Q]

Use of 'could' in conjunction with the second person pronoun is, according to Starfield et al., (2017), one of the linguistic features of the 'supervisor' role who advises and monitors by posing 'thought provoking questions that do not resemble confronting interrogations' (2017 p.59). The authors also argue that use of linguistic devices such as the low modality (e.g. should, might) helps 'construe intimacy, equal power, involvement and engagement' (p.59). While Starfield et al.'s paper addresses the linguistic choices in PhD reports by examiners, the use of requests over, for example, wh-questions by the Child Studies marker, similarly point to a preferred choice to promote a more positive relationship between the feedback provider and recipient. That this is a preference, is highlighted further when taking into account that none of the other 14 markers within the sampled data use this request form.

Coding units expressed in the interrogative are used either as a means to highlight the omission of relevant material in the specific work (2), or to guide the student to consider their work more deeply (3). The latter group reflects other studies in the prior literature, for example in Hyatt's (2005) study in which 'reflective questions' emerged as a functional category from a corpus analysis of feedback provided on postgraduate assignments.

2. What is your evidence for stating that street children may benefit from ICA? [CS-7] [A-C-Q]
3. Should academics bear more responsibility for public awareness or is that not their role? [CS-1] [A-C-Q]

Hughes et al., (2015) recognise use of questions within the data for their study not only as a means for students to consider their work more deeply but also as a way of opening up a dialogue with the student. In their study, the authors found that although there were a considerable number of questions on draft work, there was almost a complete absence of questions in summative work which

the authors attribute to the possible context specificity of questions in feedback. While many of the questions in the data sample in the present study are context-specific (2), approximately 8% of coding units were couched as a question in the data set which comprises only summative feedback. Furthermore, the data collection for the first study (Grannell 2017) included tutors' in-text comments, and found a higher frequency of use of question forms in the annotations than in the end-text commentary. Hughes et al.'s (2015) data comprises predominantly longer end-text comments. Both of these factors demonstrate that, unlike the data analysed in Hughes et al.'s (2015) study, tutors for the four sampled modules do use questions in summative work.

In interviews, conveners make no reference to the use of questions, or indeed the use of feedback commentary in general, as a means of inviting dialogue with the student as suggested by Hughes et al., (2015). Rather, use of the request form points towards employing questions as a mitigating act, assuaging the force of critical comments, rather than a dialogic one. Some coding units within this subcategory use the question form in conjunction with other mitigating strategies such as use of second conditional (4). The adjacency of the two clauses also suggests a mitigating act rather than an attempt to invite dialogue.

4. Young people may 'know a lot' (about what?) but would it not be more important for them to understand their rights in US law than the UNCRC given the reality of their situations? [CS-5] [A-M-Q]

This view is supported by prior research employing think-aloud protocols with tutors providing feedback to written work. For example, in Hyland and Hyland's study (2001) investigating feedback to L2 written work, one participating EAP tutor acknowledged choosing the interrogative as a way to impart an accusation of plagiarism more indirectly. Interestingly, it was found that the very act of mitigating, resulted in the L2 student failing to grasp the implied message, thereby hindering any potential dialogue on the issue of plagiarism.

4.3.3.6 Applicability to real-world settings

Coding units within the subcategory *Applicability to real-world settings* (RW), apply to students' future professional practice. All coding units tagged within this subcategory lie within the Applied Linguistics sampling units (Table 21). This is perhaps unsurprising given the assignment tasks require students to look at particular case studies, and place importance on the integration and application of knowledge to the students' professional practice (see Appendix VII). According to Neumann et al., (2002), the

provision of practical experience on university courses is a central feature in both the soft and applied disciplines though soft applied knowledge, for example Education, is concerned with the enhancement of professional practice.

Table 21: Number & percentage of coding units tagged 'Applicability to real world settings' [RW] per module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
Coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Coding units tagged RW (%)	0	0	0	14 (6.76) 1 in 14.8	14

Most of the coding units in this subcategory credit the students with linking theory to practice, in particular, analysing their own professional practice and providing examples to demonstrate how their practice has been informed by theory (1&2). Although limited in number, these comments accord with students' perceptions of effective feedback as identified in studies by both Poulos and Mahony (2008) and Getzlaf et al., (2009).

1. Overall you provide a nice conclusion with appropriate reflection on how this assignment might help your own future teaching. [AL-6] [A-P-RW]
2. Your discussion of your own practices in relation to encouraging learner autonomy is really interesting, and you mostly do a good job of drawing the links in this later section with principles in the earlier sections. [AL-2] [A-P-RW]

An observation from my own experience studying and working with the Applied Linguistics department, is that many of the students on the MA programme are practicing teachers working or interested in working within EAP units within HE. Thus, the development of academic writing skills and students' awareness of subject tutors' expectations, are potentially two other areas where the students' professional practice could be informed by written feedback and the course more generally. It could therefore be argued that comments which address elements of academic writing are also applicable to the students' real-world setting and future professional practice. Interestingly, the convener of Applied Linguistics acknowledges how his own writing skills improved when completing his Masters:

> *I know my writing improved amazingly on my MA… nobody had ever really taught me to write before that*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 32-33

Interview remarks by the Child Studies convener highlight the practical application to real-world setting more broadly, specifically, the transferability of skills and attributes developed on the course, such as independent learning, to students' professional practice.

> *what I want out of it for them… from a master's program…is for them to be able to go into employment as proactive… confident* [students] *and able to manage a project basically from start to finish…taking advice where they need to… but you know by the time they've done a master's dissertation… they should be able to make all those decisions for themselves*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 470-475

These comments echo the wider debate on graduate employability, interest in which has grown considerably since the shift towards mass higher education. As a result of university becoming more student-funded, the issue of employability is now often framed in terms of the return on students' investment (Tomlinson & Holmes 2016). Furthermore, according to Lea and Stierer (2000), changes to Higher Education within the UK also bring additional pressure to bear on applied disciplines with the need to enhance the practical relevance of courses creating possible tension between 'real-world' and 'academic' learning (2000 p.9).

4.3.3.7 Encouragement about performance

While comments tagged *Praise* also serve to encourage performance, comments tagged *Encouragement about performance* [E] appear as a holistic, one-off message at the end of the summative feedback. Consequently, when the comments occur, they do so once per script. Over half of the scripts within Child Studies sampling units contain this type of comment where the sole purpose is to provide encouragement and motivate students (Table 22).

Table 22: Number of coding units tagged 'Encouragement about performance' [E] per module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
	266	166	631	207	1270
Number of scripts	12	12	16	14	
Coding units tagged E	0	1	9	2	12

The coding units below demonstrate some consideration of affect either in terms of building confidence (1) or encouragement (2).

1. This is a skill you will develop in time with plenty of critical reading and reflection. [CS-14] [A-NE-E]
2. But your interest for your topic shines through, [AL-11] [NS-P-E]

In these examples, subject tutor feedback demonstrates alignment with findings in the literature that reports encouragement of performance and personal competence can enhance intrinsic motivation (Ferguson 2011). The comments also align with students perceptions of effective feedback. For example, Dawson et al., (2019) noted that a number of students identified affective purposes as a characteristic of effective feedback, in particular the requirement of feedback to 'acknowledge student effort, to encourage students, or to make them feel good about their work' (2019 p.29).

In another example (3), the feedback provider positions themselves as the audience by making reference to herself as the reader. This reflects findings in Turner's (2018) work which found positive evaluations of writtenness often co-occurred with comments relating to the effect on the reader, in particular the notion of readability and the positive impact on the reader.

3. A pleasure to read [CS-9] [NS-P-E]

A final point to make in relation to this sub-category, while the majority of feedback providers refer to the student as 'you', four of the feedback providers within Biological Sciences use the third person, referring to the feedback recipient as 'the student' (4).

4. it might be helpful if in future the student carefully proofreads the essay. [BS-10] [L-C-PF]

A lexical search and frequency count of the word 'student' used in relation to the feedback provider found ten instances, all within the Biological Sciences sampling units. The ten instances occur in four different scripts all with a different marker. In Starfield et al.'s (2017) study investigating the implications of language used in PhD examiner reports, addressing the student in the third person is one of a number of linguistic features which can construe the feedback provider as adopting the role of examiner, a role generally associated with powerful authoritative figures. Thus, use of such language does not promote the positive relational aspects of feedback (O'Donovan et al., 2021) or align with students' preference for feedback which is 'supportive, positive, encouraging and friendly' (Getzlaf 2009 p.11).

4.3.3.8 Direction to additional support

Although only a few comments directing students to additional support (D) appear in the data (see Table 23), comments such as these, as one would expect, generally appear as a one-off message at the end of the summative feedback, making frequency counts redundant.

Table 23: Number of coding units tagged 'Direction to additional support' [S] per module.

	Biological Sciences	Creative Industries	Child Studies	Applied Linguistics	Total
Coding units per module	266	166	631	207	1270
Coding units tagged S	2	0	5	0	7

The additional support referred to relates either to guidance on use of referencing software (1), tutorial support (2) or language support (3).

1. If you haven't yet done so, take one of the free courses put on by XXXX's and learn how to make full use of one of these tools. [BS-7] [R-NE-PF-S]
2. Do bring an essay plan to the next meeting for us to discuss [CS-10] [NS-NE-S]
3. Do use the ELC facilities and the ELC workshops - and make the most of your dissertation supervisor for review of drafts. [CS-14] [L-NE-PF-S]

The direction to seek additional language support appears in a single feedback script written in response to an assignment written by an L2 student (see Appendix II). The advice follows on from a number of references to the student's use of English as in (4).

4. The English gets a little more difficult to decipher here [CS-14] [L-C]

The single direction to language support throughout the data set, reflects the relatively little amount of commentary provided to students on language issues. Both these findings need to be seen within this particular institutional setting as a similar study conducted in an institution with lower entry requirements may well show a higher proportion of commentary relating to language issues for L2 students, and indeed L1 students, and therein a greater amount of commentary directing students to additional language support.

4.3.3.9 Conclusion

This section has analysed the third set of codes to explore the extent to which subject tutor feedback aligns with and differs from student perceptions of effective feedback. To this end, an analysis of the frequency of codes was conducted, along with an investigation of the frequency of co-occurrence between specific codes. This section also drew on extracts from interviews where conveners' remarks related to one of the themes emerging from the analysis, thereby exploring the extent to which tutors' perceptions of effective feedback reflects their actual practice.

A number of themes have emerged from this section. Perhaps most significant is the extent to which coding units provide information either in terms of advice to improve the work under appraisal, advice pertaining to future performance, or clarification provided in the form of examples or explanations. The feedback data also provides evidence of tutors attempting to address higher order disciplinary skills. Extracts from the data show tutors addressing criticality in relation to the specific context of the assignment, thereby corroborating Hughes et al.'s (2015) assertion that these higher order skills are difficult to decontextualise, and therefore more difficult to address beyond the confines of the module compared to generic skills such as referencing. Thus, in relation to these higher order skills, the data appears to support Hughes et al.'s (2015) assertion that 'assessors construct feedback in the immediate context of a modular assignment, rather than as a means towards developing skills and attributes for future disciplinary learning' (2015 p.1092).

Whilst findings in this section have demonstrated close correspondence between the conveners' stated beliefs and actual feedback practice with regard to most of the properties discussed here, in other areas, for example commentary tagged *Criteria-referenced*, correspondence between tutor beliefs and practices is less clear. Findings in this subsection also demonstrate greater divergence in feedback practices between module conveners. Furthermore, conveners' remarks in interview point towards different feedback practices in relation to their respective colleagues. Finally, findings reveal considerable difference in conveners' feedback practices regarding use of the interrogative forms. The high instance of interrogatives within the Child Studies sampling units, all of which are authored by a single marker, points towards a preferred response style of this particular feedback provider.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In the discussion chapter of this thesis, we return to the research questions guiding this study. To address the research questions, a content analysis of subject tutor feedback provided to students' scripts from four different disciplines was undertaken. This analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative steps requiring the researcher first to make valid inferences from the text throughout the coding process, and then to count the occurrence of the assigned coding units within the data. Coding of the feedback data in this study was also guided by other coding schemes. That is not to say the codes were pre-determined, rather, it is a recognition that background knowledge and understanding informed how the data was seen and how the categories were constructed. The starting point for the analysis of data in this study was therefore a more top-down, deductive approach, one in which the researcher brought their existing understanding of the literature and theoretical concepts to bear on the analysis. It was through this lens that the researcher interpreted the data and how the coding framework was developed.

To support the investigation of both research questions, a single framework was developed with three tiers, each comprising a different set of codes. While the feedback data is the principal source of empirical data, this study also drew on interviews with all four module conveners. These interviews shed light on the extent views expressed in the interviews corroborate practices exhibited in their actual feedback commentaries, both in terms of the focus of their feedback, RQ1, and also in terms of alignment with student perceptions of effective feedback as outlined in the literature, RQ2. By using interviews as well as the tripartite coding framework developed from both objective and inferential coding processes, this study has drawn upon both quantitative and qualitative research methods which has enabled triangulation between the different data sources to corroborate findings. In so doing, this study has adhered to one of the central tenets of pragmatism underpinning this study.

To address the research questions, key empirical findings to emerge from the previous chapter will be summarised to draw out some relevant themes for discussion. This chapter will also draw comparisons with findings from other feedback studies; however, in doing so, it is recognized that these comparisons need to be interpreted with some caution. Studies employ different methods of data collection and analysis, leading to divergent findings and conclusions. Furthermore, for the analysis of feedback data, researchers have developed different frameworks. Whilst coding within frameworks is straight-forward for some categories, the demarcation between others may be less

clear-cut. Word count constraints of published research articles also means the demarcation of some of the categories is not always clearly defined nor the categorising descriptors always so well expounded on. These considerations factor into the extent to which comparability across similar feedback studies is possible.

5.2 RQ1a What do tutors in modules on four programmes in different disciplines focus on in their written feedback comments at PGT level?

The first research question in this inquiry was to investigate subject tutor feedback provided on postgraduate students' written work across four disciplines. When setting out the framework to address this question, broad groupings taken from a study by Hyland (2013a) provided the basis for the first layer of coding (see section 3.12). Hyland (2013a p.246) found that when subject tutors from four different disciplines provided written commentary to students, their comments emphasised 'what should be included, where it should be in the assignment, and how it should be expressed' (2013a p.246). These broad groupings therefore formed the basis of the first tier of coding and it is under these three groupings that the findings relating to the first research question will be addressed.

5.2.1 What is or should be included

The broad grouping *What is or should be included*, that is to say 'content', was divided into the subcategories *Understanding* and *Argument*. The study found that commentary falling under the former tended to relate to the relevance and accuracy of what the student had included, whilst commentary falling under the latter tended to relate to use of the literature and students' evaluation of arguments. Given the intention behind the *Understanding* / *Argument* divide within the broad content category was to highlight disciplinary differences, many of findings to emerge from analysis of these two subcategories are presented in section 5.3 which discusses where findings differ.

Findings in the previous chapter clearly show a large majority of coding units, in fact 80% across all four modules, address issues relating to content (see Appendix XIIa). This finding reflects the results of other feedback studies which investigate the focus of tutor feedback commentary using similar categorization frameworks (e.g. Glover & Brown 2006; Walker 2009; Hyland 2013a). In Glover and Brown 's (2006) study, for example, over 50% of feedback comments related to the science content. However, Glover and Brown also found that much of this commentary concerned omissions in the students' work, thus imbued with a negative inscription. In contrast, in the present study there is a fairly even distribution relating to the qualitative ascription of coding units within the broad content

category, with 50% of coding units tagged *Critique*, 34.5% tagged *Praise* and the remaining comprising a *Mitigating paired act* (see Figure 9 section 4.3.2.1).

The predominance of commentary focusing on content issues is perhaps unsurprising given the weighting accorded to understanding and argumentation within the criteria. For example, in the generic postgraduate marking criteria, two out of the three criteria relate to issues falling within these subcategories (see Appendix VIII). Likewise, most descriptors within the specific assessment criteria for the annotated bibliography fall under 'Understanding of the issues' and 'Depth of knowledge' (see Appendix IV). Applied Linguistics descriptors outlining expectations of 'a good essay' also predominantly relate to issues falling within the subcategories *Understanding* or *Argument* such as the analysis of materials (see Appendix VII).

The predominance of comments addressing content may also be the result of a modularised curricula, particularly on programmes where there is just one cycle of assessment and feedback per module. In such cases, commentary specific to the subject content of that assignment is unlikely to apply to content in the assignment for the next module. This view is supported within the literature, for example, by Hughes et al., (2015), who suggest that modularisation encourages content-specific advice at the expense of feed forward commentary. The finding in the present study, that 80% of coding units address content issues, therefore, lends credence to their argument.

5.2.1.1 Retrospective and prospective dichotomy

Many of those writing on the subject of feedback (e.g. Carless 2006; Sadler 2010; Hughes et al., 2015; Winstone & Boud 2020) present feedback commentary as a dichotomy between retrospective feedback, that is to say referring to the specific work under appraisal, and prospective commentary identifying broader principles applicable to future work. Winstone and Boud (2020 p.5) for example argue that a retrospective emphasis 'looks back on what a student has done, *rather than* serving to facilitate improvement that looks to what a student can do to produce better work in the future' (my italics). This view is also reflected in the literature reporting students' perspectives of feedback. For example, Carless (2006) reports that:

> a number of students commented that they could not improve much from the lecturers' comments because they were specific to a particular assignment *and so did not provide support* to do better in another assignment for a different module.' (2006 p.225 my italics)

Likewise, Hughes et al., (2015) also report how developmental feedback providing information pertaining to future assignments is found useful by students, while '[*c]onversely*, retrospective critique that suggests what a student could have done to obtain a better grade' is deemed as unuseful by students (2015 p.1082 my italics). Thus, within the present study, the high frequency of comments addressing subject content on the particular assignment and its predominantly retrospective orientation, at first glance would suggest that approximately 80% of the feedback data collected for this study is void of applicability to future work and therein the possibility of leading to improved future performance.

However, as discussed later in this chapter (section 5.5) a considerable proportion of coding units categorized within the broad content grouping were also assigned a third code indicating that the comments contain a feedback quality valued by students. For example, Table 13 (section 4.3.3.2) shows that 1 in 5 coding units tagged *Argument* and 1 in 7 coding units tagged *Understanding* are also tagged *How the work could have been improved*. This demonstrates that although these coding units address how the specific work can be improved, they can also contain commentary orienting towards the future. Thus, while retrospective and developmental future oriented feedback are often presented as mutually exclusive within the literature, tutors' responses to a text in terms of the content are frequently interwoven with responses that can potentially contribute to prospective learning and written work. Therefore, while coding units within this study predominantly address issues relating to content, much of the commentary contains information which could help develop skills for further disciplinary learning and therein potententially contribute to students' performance in susbsequent work.

5.2.2 How the work is or should be expressed

Nearly 15% of all tutor commentary focuses on *How the work is or should be expressed*. Interestingly however, language receives comparatively little attention in summative feedback commentary, less than 4% (section 4.2.2.3). This finding should be viewed within the context of this particular institutional setting which has an English language entry requirement of IELTS 7.0 overall (section 3.5). A similar study conducted in an institution with lower English entry requirements, for example, may find a higher proportion of tutor comments addressing L2 language issues. The minimal attention paid to language issues, however, links well with the literature surveying students' feedback preferences which found that students consider commentary focusing on spelling and grammar as less important (Ferguson 2011) (section 3.14)

5.2.2.1 Language

The present study found that coding units within the *Language* category most frequently referred to spelling, proof-reading, sentence structure, and word choice. The study also found that over 80% of coding units within this subcategory were tagged *Critique*, thus carried a negative qualitative assessment (see Figure 10 section 4.3.2.1). This finding could be interpreted as support for Turner's (1999) claim that students' language only receives attention when it is perceived as deficient and not when their language is perceived as working well, leading the author to assert that '[l]language use is only marked when it is perceived as being faulty' (Turner 2010 p.6).

However, the conveners' self-reported commenting practices attest to attending to language issues only when meaning is compromised, a finding which, in the main, is supported by the actual feedback data (section 4.2.2.3). This observation also aligns with findings in Hyland's (2013b) study, in which students reported that language errors were generally tolerated by subject tutors provided meaning was not undermined. Thus, findings in both Hyland's and the present study indicate that language tends to be marked selectively, that is, when there is a communicative imperative. This in turn indicates that at times language perceived as not working well is left unmarked since it does not obscure meaning or the argument. Therefore, while Turner's assertion that 'issues relating to language work circulate within a predominantly deficit discourse' (2010 p.6), findings suggest that tutors have a more tolerant view of language than perhaps the pessimistic picture painted by Turner (2010). They also suggest, as Hyland (2013b) points out, that subject tutors pay more attention to the content of the writing than the grammatical accuracy when presenting those ideas.

5.2.2.2 Writtenness

Inclusion of the distinct category *Writtenness* within the grouping *How the work is or should be expressed* meant that comments focusing on the writing itself were investigated separately. In doing so, this study found there were more than twice as many comments pertaining to writtenness than any of the other categories under this broad grouping; however, it should be acknowledged that these comments still only accounted for 6.5% of the total coding units in the data set. The study also found a more even balance between positive and negative evaluation in commentary relating to writtenness (See Figure 10 section 4.3.2.1). Specifically, 34% of all coding units tagged under this subcategory were ascribed a positive evaluation and 55% a negative evaluation (see Appendix XIIc). Contrary to Turner's argument above, this suggests that feedback providers do indeed credit students writing when the message is clearly delivered.

Another important finding to emerge in relation to this subcategory, is that writtenness appears as a criterion for evaluating work across all four modules as evidenced in the assignment-specific criteria for each assignment (see section 4.2.2.2) This finding accords with Turner's (2018) assertion that how a text is written acts as a criterion when evaluating work, whether that text is a student assignment or a review of a book. To investigate the recurrence of the 'evaluative tropes', which according to Turner index writtenness (Turner 2018 p.66), a corpus search was undertaken to add another empirical layer to the study. The corpus search found a considerable recurrence of feedback comments relating to 'clarity' and its word forms, much greater than any other evaluative 'trope' (section 4.2.2.2). This finding testifies to the rhetorical value placed on the notion of clarity, a finding which also accords with Turner's (2018) findings. Interestingly, the occurrence of the item 'clarity' and its word forms within the feedback data was relatively similar across each module, suggesting a consistency in the emphasis placed on this value across disciplines. The study also found the presence of other values of writtenness identified by Turner (2018) across the data set, for example comments referring to the ease of following the writers' ideas, and those relating to concision, as well as where these aesthetic values are absent. However, these values appear in the data with much less frequency than those relating to clarity (see Appendix XIIIa).

Within the present study, it was found that commentary attending to the values associated with writtenness such as clarity, is generally couched in terms of whether expectations surrounding this value have been positively or negatively achieved. Likewise, in module handbooks and marking criteria the students are directed to write succinctly and clearly, assuming that students understand how these values are achieved. Turner (2018) also presents writtenness as a taken-for-granted phenomenon since the values associated with good writing, and expected from the student writer, are not 'given' (2018 p.33). This theme not only echoes her remarks likening rhetorical knowledge to the notion of 'tacit knowledge', but this theme also resonates with the academic literacies literature, which refers to the taken-for-granted assumptions surrounding 'the nature and value of academic writing for participation in knowledge making' (Lillis 2019 p.2). Turner's assertion that expectations are not 'given', also resonates with Hyland (2013b) who makes a similar insight specifically in relation to feedback provided to L2 students. He argues that messages contained within written feedback are not always conveyed explicitly. In making this point he draws on terms used by the sociologist Goffman (1959 p.120) who distinguishes between information which is 'given' and information which is 'given off'. Hyland likens this distinction with messages in feedback – some of which are intentionally conveyed by the feedback provider, thus 'given', and others which are conveyed accidentally, thus 'given off' (Hyland 2013b p.181).

5.2.3 How the work is or should be organised

Organisational issues also receive little attention in commentary, a finding which reflects those found in Hyland's (2013a) study. This finding contrasts with Bitchener et al.'s (2010) study, however, which reported that nearly all participating supervisors provided feedback on the structure and organisation of students' drafts of a thesis or dissertation, irrespective of discipline. Given the lack of correspondence between tutors' reported practices and actual practice regarding the amount of commentary attending to organisational issues in the present study (see section 4.2.4), the findings in Bitchener et al.'s (2010) study from predominantly self-report data should perhaps be treated with some caution. Nonetheless, one likely contributing factor for the greater emphasis on structural issues reported in their study is genre variation. The genre research report belongs to a 'more complex' and 'more elaborate' genre family comprising more 'individual components' (Gardener & Nesi 2013 p.47). Thus, providing feedback on a more highly structured genre such as a thesis or dissertation is likely to engender a greater amount of attention paid to how the text is organised at the level of whole text, or indeed the placing of certain units of content within a chapter. This may account for the contrasting findings between Bitchener et al.'s (2010) study and the present study.

We can gain an understanding that helps account for the lack of feedback commentary attending to structure within the literature. Lea and Street's (1998) seminal paper argues that tutors call attention to issues such as lack of structure, yet often do not detail why since tutors are unable to explicate what a well-structured assignment looks like. Lea and Street (1998 p.162) suggest that this relates to 'issues of epistemology', that is to say, tutors understanding of terms such as structure and argument is informed by their own disciplinary perspective relating to the nature of knowledge. Tutors, they go on to argue, have developed their own writing practices and expertise through participation in disciplinary practices over the course of many years, thus difficulties arise when trying to articulate what underlies a well-developed argument or a well-structured piece of work to a novice writer. Turner (2011) likens tutors' knowledge of rhetorical expectations to Polanyi's notion of 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi 1967 cited in Turner 2011 p.434). She argues that tutors acquire this knowledge through experience and disciplinary practice, and thus whilst they may understand how to operate within these disciplinary approved ways themselves, tutors do not necessarily know that they have this tacit knowledge nor how to explain it to students. An obvious example within the present study lending credence to this idea is the observation that within the Bioscience sampling units, one script receives no commentary attending to structure, despite the work not meeting the structure and organisation criteria (see section 4.2.4). Furthermore, the same work receives attention addressing issues relating to punctuation.

Other conditions concerning feedback production should also be taken into consideration when accounting for the lack of commentary attending to structural issues. Halliday (1994 p.392) for example refers to 'little texts', which are texts that 'have to achieve quite a lot in . . . very limited space'. Whilst Halliday observes how these 'little texts' often result in pared down statements producing their own grammar of minimal categorical responses, so too can this idea be extended to feedback: providing a satisfactory explanation as to what is meant by structure, a concept which carries a heavy informational load, and to do so within the confines of a feedback script or indeed within the confines of the time allocated to marking, can also result in minimal pared down responses. Molloy et al., (2013) posit tutor anticipation of students emotional response to feedback as another possible reason behind tutors hesitancy to comment in greater depth. The authors go so far as to declare that with regards to face-to-face feedback this appears to have 'paralysed educators' honesty', reducing verbal feedback 'to predictable linguistic rituals where not much is said at all' (2013 p.68). Whilst recognising the lack of explicitness relating to issues such as structure may be due to various factors, the view expressed by Molloy et al., (2013) is not one suggested in remarks made by the conveners.

To sum up, within the literature, this lack of explicitness is a pervasive theme and concerns conventions surrounding all aspects of writing practices within the academy. Lillis (1999 p.127) refers to this as the 'institutional practice of mystery', arguing that such practices particularly work against students from social groups who, until the introduction of educational policies in the 1990s (cf section 2.4.2), were traditionally excluded from Higher Education within the UK. Hyland's (2013b), comments above on the other hand are made in relation to feedback provided to L2 students. Both standpoints concern students coming from broader social and cultural contexts with different cultural value systems and beliefs, trying to negotiate the expectations of the academy but hindered in this endeavour by a lack of transparency in relation to those expectations.

5.3 RQ1b How do findings differ across the four disciplines?

Having explored what tutors in modules on four programmes in different disciplines focus on in their written feedback comments at PGT level, the following section looks at how these findings differ across the modules. In collecting feedback written in response to assignments that vary not only in terms of discipline but also in terms of genre, investigating how findings differ is a central part of this research endeavour. Therefore, to help address this research question the broad grouping *What is or should be included* was subdivided into two categories: *Understanding* and *Argument.* Whilst acknowledging this categorisation as an artificial divide, the aim behind this demarcation was to bring

to the fore disciplinary and generic differences within the broader content category (see section 3.12.2).

5.3.1 What is or should be included

The main difference found within the broad grouping *What is or should be included* is the greater privileging of feedback relating to *Argument* within the social sciences and humanities disciplines, that is to say, comments focussing on the evaluation of ideas and the connections students make between their reading of the literature (section 4.2.3.2). In contrast, within the Biological Sciences there is a greater emphasis on the need for students to demonstrate an understanding of what is known about the science, how it is known, and what is yet to be understood about the science (section 4.2.3.1). This study found that nearly half of all coding units within the Biological Sciences data base were tagged *Understanding* whereas within the other three data sets, under a third of all coding units fell within this subcategory (see Table 7 Section 4.2.3.2). This finding is not only congruent with those presented in studies using a similar categorisation (e.g Hyland 2013a; Hughes et al., 2015), but also aligns with the traditional distinction between the hard and soft disciplines (e.g. Neumann et al., 2002).

This broad divide within the findings is also indicative of differences in genre. While the students within the Biological Sciences are writing within a genre which privileges the demonstration and understanding of factual information, so the students within Child Studies and Creative Industries are writing within a genre which privileges the evaluation of ideas and the making of connections between annotations (see section 3.7). It is unsurprising, therefore, that a higher proportion of feedback comments address issues relating to *Understanding* within the Biological sciences, while more comments address issues relating to the students' argumentation within Child Studies. Likewise, within the Applied Linguistics module many of the feedback comments relate to the application and integration of knowledge, corresponding with the traditional characterization of applied disciplines (Neumann et al., 2002), but also aligning with the expectations of the genre, as set out in the assignment brief: to demonstrate an understanding of theories and principles in relation to practice. Thus, differences in findings across the four modules can be seen as resulting from variation in both discipline and genre between each data set. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate how the interaction between these two parameters informs not only the students' writing but also the tutors' response to it.

Other differences within the broad grouping *What is or should be included* also demonstrate the interrelation of these two parameters within tutor feedback. For example, there is a more prescribed view of what content should be included within the Biological Sciences sampling units compared to the other three modules (section 4.2.3.1.2). A common theme within the literature exploring characteristics of the hard disciplines is the greater linearity of the curricula (e.g. Becher 1994; Neumann 2001; Neumann et al., 2002; Hyland 2017), specifically the view that knowledge within science-based subjects tends to be a more cumulative process, with blocks of knowledge built upon each other in a hierarchical structure towards current understanding, resulting in a more tightly structured course. In contrast, knowledge-building within the humanities and social sciences, tends to be a more reiterative process involving 'increasing levels of subtlety and insight into already familiar areas of content', thus resulting in more loosely structured course curricula (Neumann 2001 p.407). The finding that coding units within the Biological Sciences point towards a more prescribed content in the assignments set by tutors, thus accords with the more tightly structured course curricula, more typical within hard disciplines. This element of prescriptivism also accords with the central purpose of the Explanation genre, in this case to foreground and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a scientific phenomenum (Gardner & Nesi 2013). The purpose of this genre engenders a greater amount of factual content, which in turn, engenders a greater degree of expected content from subject tutors in relation to this assignment.

5.3.2 Corpus searches

To investigate the variation in what subject tutors focus on in their written feedback comments further, a similar corpus search as to that examining the recurrence of values of writtenness was undertaken (see section 5.2.2.2). Corpus-based studies, such as those conducted by Hyland (2002), have taken investigations into disciplinary differences beyond general characteristics by examining the forms of rhetorical expression and structures. For example, Hyland has explored variation across disciplines in use of citation structures to reference previous work. These studies have helped develop a more nuanced understanding of disciplinary epistemologies and led Hyland to conclude that preferences for certain reporting verbs and structures across the corpus were not the result of 'stylistic proclivities'; rather, the findings displayed 'disciplinary preferences for particular forms of rhetorical expression which, in turn, instantiate the different procedures and epistemological understandings of particular fields of enquiry' (2002 p.129).

As in Hyland's study, the modest corpus-based searches conducted as part of this present study also reveal a disposition towards certain rhetorical features. For instance, an investigation of the

occurrence of common reporting verbs revealed a clear disposition towards use of verbs such as 'describe' and 'explain' within the Biological Sciences data set and a marked disposition towards items such as 'argue' and 'argument' in the Humanities and Social Sciences modules, corresponding with similar findings in Hyland's (1999) study. Importantly, however, the findings in the present study relate to tutor feedback whereas Hyland's study investigated a corpus comprising research articles within eight disciplines. Thus, disciplinary variations in the preferred rhetorical features displayed in the genre of academic research articles, also extends to the discourse displayed in subject tutor feedback and the way in which subject tutors express their judgement.

The prevalence of certain reporting verbs within the feedback artefacts also reflect variation in the genre of assignments. For example, a clear disposition towards use of the terms 'agree' and 'agreement' and their negative equivalents was evident within the Child Studies sampling units in which all 33 occurrences bar one appeared (see section 4.2.3.2.2). This finding accords with the genre activity associated with the annotated bibliography, namely the contestation when comparing and evaluating the arguments presented in the individual annotations. Thus, the prevalence of language expressing tutor agreement or disagreement is directly linked to the purpose of the annotated bibliography genre.

A further interesting point to emerge from the data is that while lexical searches reveal disciplinary variation in the marked disposition towards certain reporting verbs and non-specialised academic lexical items, much less variation was evident when searching for the item 'clarity' (Table 5 section 4.2.2.2) This suggests that whereas academic discourse to express concepts or the evaluation of ideas displays disciplinary variation, the preference for clarity appears to have a more equal value across disciplines.

5.3.3 Writtenness

To a lesser extent, findings also differ across the disciplines with regard to the recurrence of comments addressing writtenness. When analysing coding units within the broad grouping *How the work is or should be expressed* the present study found a greater emphasis paid to writtenness in the Social Science and Humanities modules compared with that in the Biological Sciences module, once again reflecting the traditional distinctions between hard and soft disciplines (e.g. Becher 1989; Neumann et al., 2002). The study also found that, in comparison to the other modules, feedback providers within the Biological Sciences sampling units drew greater attention to the use of diagrams, charts and tables to assist with the demonstration of difficult concepts. This finding accords with studies

exploring feedback provided within similar disciplines, even in studies where the investigation focused on a different level of study (e.g. Glover & Brown 2006). In contrast, commentary within the coding units in the other modules along with remarks made in interview with the Social Science and Humanities conveners pointed to a greater emphasis placed on writtenness, that is to say on the writing itself, to express complex ideas and convey more persuasive rhetoric (see section 4.2.2.2). This view accords with Hyland's (2013a) assertion that, in academic texts, writers attempt to convince the reader not only of their line of reasoning, but also their skill as a writer. Remarks made in interview reveal that this is also an expectation conveners have of their students.

5.3.4 Disciplinary and generic expectations

Given, the findings in the present study have demonstrated how genres and disciplines interact within academic writing and therein inform the tutor commentary provided in response, it is surprising to note the lack of direct references to generic or disciplinary specific expectations within the sampling units. As observed in the previous chapter (section 4.2.3.1.2), the data set includes commentary addressing adherence to assignment briefs and therein the genre, particularly within Child Studies and Applied Linguistics where the brief is more detailed. Furthermore there are a few comments highlighting generic activity in terms of the expectations of specific sections of the students' work, for example, in the introduction or conclusion (4.2.3.2.4).

Whilst there is an absence of comments directly addressing specific disciplinary practices within the data, when asked in interviews what it means to write within their particular discipline, module conveners' responses do reveal diversity. The responses are particularly revealing when viewed through the lens of Hyland (2004 p.3) who asserts that the essential difference between disciplines is '*how* they write rather than simply *what* they write' (author's italics). For example, when asked if their commentary provided guidance about writing within their particular discipline, the convener of Applied Linguistics, responded in the affirmative and emphasised elements corresponding to the *how*:

> *I think we think about the style of writing that we sort of appreciate on a linguistics MA… within our department we have a style and we try to make that style explicit … level of formality … style of reference level of argumentation and discussion … style for dealing with data especially qualitative data … signposting introductions conclusions paragraph shape and paragraph structure …paragraph length*
>
> Interview: Applied Linguistics convener 227-236

In contrast, when responding to the same question, the convener for Creative Industries emphasises those elements of disciplinary writing relating to content, thereby corresponding with the *what*:

> *I would expect to see them demonstrate in their essays that they have a reasonably firm grasp of key concepts and key writers in the area in the disciplinary area of the module.*
>
> Interview: Creative Industries convener 145-146

The convener for Biological Sciences appears to straddle both the *what* and the *how,* in her response to this question by referring to the content of the work under scrutiny and the emphasis on the need for factual content and scientific evidence, whilst also mentioning expectations in terms of style of writing and the amount of citation.

> *if they stray too far from factual information and evidence from scientific implication we might pull them back and maybe that's more specific to the biological sciences than the humanities perhaps erm we're more concise I think in the biological sciences about how we write so you know we're in favour of short to the point sentences with a citation at the end whereas I think in other disciplines you don't cite as much*
>
> Interview: Biological Sciences convener 288-293

In response to the same question, the Child Studies convener states that a broad social science approach is taken due to the multi-disciplinarity of the course. As an example of a specific disciplinary practice, the convener initially refers to the requirement to cite from the most recent ratification of a treaty or a law but then goes on to identify this as a generic academic convention rather than a feature of discipline specificity:

> *In terms of law we give a very strong warning about the dangers … of relying on academic work for what the law is because there's a lag and they need to go …but I think these are principles rather than disciplinary stuff*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 350-353

Within the Child Studies sampling units, the module convener highlights the requirement to cite up-to-date commentary on the law itself, as well as the absence of this requirement when referencing philosophical and ethical arguments (see section 4.2.3.2.1). Here, the primary sources drawn from different fields of study are perhaps indicative of the module's interdisciplinarity and therein reflect

the module convener's belief that such conventions as highlighted here are not specific to disciplines but rather practices shared beyond individual disciplinary silos.

Responses to this question of disciplinarity thus reveal how tutors' perceptions relating to what it means to be writing within their particular discipline differ. Some focus on the *how* when discussing writing within their particular discipline, others focus on the *what* is written or both the *what* and the *how*. And in the case of the Child Studies convener, eschewing the idea of discipline-specific writing altogether.

5.3.5 Criticality

Another finding which differs across the four disciplines relates to feedback commenting on criticality. Once again, variation in the attention to and scope of criticality within the different feedback data sets not only results from the difference in genre but also from difference in disciplinary epistemology, as represented in the literature exploring broad categories of knowledge fields. Neumann et al., for example refer to the 'high value placed on … critical thinking and creativity' within the soft disciplines (2002 p.410). Likewise, whereas the educational and social purpose of the Explanation genre is to account for current understanding of the particular object of study, the purpose of the Essay genre is to demonstrate and develop 'the ability to construct a coherent argument and employ critical thinking skills' (Gardner & Nesi 2013 p.38). It is therefore not surprising that the most frequent occurrence of lexical items relating to the term 'criticality' is within the Creative Industries coding units, with one in 5.7 coding units containing either the lexical item 'criticality', 'critique' or 'analysis' (Appendix XIIIc).

A more detailed examination of the present study's feedback data, however, also revealed differences in terms of the focus and scope of critical inquiry. For example, within the Biological Sciences comments pertaining to the application of critical skills predominantly relate to consideration of the available evidence in relation to scientific phenomenon such as the causes and factors contributing to MS and depression (see section 4.2.3.2.3). Within the Applied Linguistics sampling units, feedback providers tend to focus less on critical skills in terms of argumentation, instead commenting on the students' skills in critically analysing their own professional practice in relation to theoretical frameworks and principles. The expectation of students' to reflect on their teaching practice not only aligns with the requirements on the task (Appendix V) but also aligns with the characteristics of the genre and the epistemological ethos of the Applied disciplinary fields both of which lay emphasis on the enhancement of professional practice.

Within Child Studies, the focus of critical inquiry concerns not only the evaluation of the arguments presented in the annotated bibliography but also the strength of the student's reasoning. However, the examination of coding units within the Creative Industries feedback data reveals the expectation for students to demonstrate a still wider application of critical skills; one not just concerned with the validity and strength of arguments, but one which extends to a critique of societal and ideological issues. This was particularly evident in the feedback provided to a student writing about the tourist industry in Tibet (section 4.2.3.2). The feedback comments demonstrate a critical pedagogy 'educating to dissolve habits of thought', in this case prompting the student to reappraise long-held beliefs relating to the political situation in Tibet (Davies & Barnett 2015 p.6).

Thus an examination of coding units addressing students' demonstration of criticality across all four disciplines highlights different expectations held by feedback providers. These expectations are informed by both the genre and assignment requirements but also disciplinary epistemology. The expectations also reveal how criticality encompasses a composite of skills and that different assignments vary in terms of the extent and scope of the critical skills to be demonstrated.

5.4 RQ1 Conclusion

In researching what tutors in modules on four programmes focus on in their written feedback at PGT level, this section has revealed that comments predominantly address content-specfic issues and thus align with findings of similar feedback studies. The predominance of commentary relating to content accords not only with the emphasis within the generic postgraduate marking criteria on the demonstration of understanding and argumentation, but also reveals the possible effect of modularisation. The provision of feedback within discrete self-contained modules reinforces the natural disposition to comment on the current work, an easier task than composing comments directed towards students' future work. However, it has also been argued that the dichotomy presented in the feedback literature between retrospective feedback and prospective commentary is somewhat oversimplified. The tripartite coding framework employed in this study has highlighted considerable cooccurrence of coding units tagged content and those tagged *How the work could have been improved*, and thus revealed how a considerable proportion of the commentary categorized as content also has a forward orientation.

The investigation of the first research question has also identified those aspects of student writing, such as register and language, which received little attention within the feedback artefacts. Interestingly, the writing itself receives greater attention, with the notion of clarity emerging as a

rhetorical value on which considerable value is placed by feedback providers across all four modules. The structure of students' work, despite acting as a criterion in generic and specific marking frameworks, also receives little attention in commentary, even in work where this is identified as an aspect of writing needing improvement. Likewise, the investigation has revealed how few comments directly address generic or disciplinary expectations, a counter-intuitive finding given the extent to which genres and disciplines inform academic writing. This resonates with the literature holding the view that tutors can call attention to issues such as lack of structure without explicating what underlies these issues or what constitutes a well-strucured piece of work (Lea & Street 1998). This lack of explicitness is attributed within the literature to the difficulty of explaining what is essentially tacit knowledge, internalised knowledge gained through experience and disciplinary practice, thus difficult to articulate to students (Turner 2011; Lillis 1999).

Findings emerging from the investigation of the first research question have demonstrated how the scholarly discourse of the feedback artefact itself tends to reflect the epistemological differences between writing within a 'hard' discipline compared to writing within a 'soft' discipline. Within the context of the present study this broadly translates to a division between findings from the Biological Sciences data set and those from the data sets of the other three modules. The literature exploring distinctions between different knowledge domains can offer somewhat simplified characterisations of 'hard' and 'soft' disciplines. Thus, the present study also conducted corpus-based lexical searches to investigate disciplinary variation beyond this broad division provided within the literature. Findings to emerge from these corpus searches provide further evidence supporting the epistemological variation within the disciplinary discourse along the hard and soft divide. Thus, not only does disciplinary writing differ in the way knowledge claims are made, arguments developed, and readers engaged (Lea & Street 1998; Hyland 2004), so too does the way in which subject tutors respond to disciplinary writing and the discourse used when expressing their judgements on student work.

One reason for disciplinary variation is generic activity, revealed as a result of the different assignment types included within the data set for this study. The inclusion of the annotated bibliography, case study, and the explanation genre, along with their accompanying assignment rubrics, informs not only the content of the assignments but also the structure of these texts, the extent and nature of critical analysis expected, and the variability of rhetorical practices, such as the amount of cross-referencing expected or the preference for integral structures. Thus, the findings to emerge from this study have demonstrated how both genre and discipline are important parameters effectuating variation in academic discourse. The comparison of tutor feedback from different faculties has enabled us to

catch a glimpse of regularities within sampling units drawn from one module, and how these may differ from, or align with, regularities observed within sampling units from another. This research endeavour has consequently shed light on the norms of inquiry associated with different disciplines and demonstrated that discipline requirements differ on several dimensions, not just in terms of modes of expression and specialist lexis, but also on what Lea and Street (1998 p.167) refer to as the 'deeper epistemological issues' surrounding what counts as knowledge and learning, and how this can affect the writing requirements within specific contexts. Thus, an analysis of written feedback can highlight how disciplines and genres embed different understanding and expectations of concepts such as critical analysis. These differences influence the academic discourse that students are expected to master in order to become a competent member of their specific discourse community. Analysis of feedback also reveals those expectations which remain implicit, and which as EAP practitioners we are well placed to help unpack and therein further students' understanding of what it means to write within disciplines.

5.5 RQ2a To what extent does subject tutor feedback align with student perceptions of effective feedback as outlined in the literature?

The second research question in this inquiry was to investigate the extent to which subject tutor feedback aligns with and differs from student perceptions of effective feedback. To this end, a list of qualities was generated, informed by key papers surveying students' perceptions of what constitutes effective feedback (see section 3.14). This list of valued feedback qualities was then used as a point of reference with which to explore the correspondence between actual tutor practice and students' views of effective feedback. The following section discusses this alignment according to the following themes: affective factors, suggestions for improvement, forward orientation, and tutor clarification. Proceeding on from this, section 5.6 will discuss the extent to which subject tutor feedback differs from student perceptions of effective feedback.

5.5.1. Affective factors

A review of the literature surveying students' views relating to feedback shows that students value comments that are considerate of affect, namely, providing a balance between positive and negative comments (Weaver 2006; Ferguson 2011), and commenting on poor performance without adversely affecting students' self-esteem (e.g. Dawson et al., 2019; Getzlaf et al., 2009; Carless 2006; Henderson et al., 2019). To investigate, coding units were tagged according to the qualitative assessment of the performance. Furthermore, the recurrence of paired-act patterns was investigated. This two-part

rhetorical pattern has been identified as one of the principal redressive strategies to mitigate the force of a negative comment (Hyland & Hyland 2001). Thus, in investigating its frequency the study was able to explore the tutors' awareness of the affective by-product their comments potentially have and the extent to which this strategy is employed to mitigate them. Comments tagged *Encouragement about performance* also fall within the bracket of being considerate of affect, however these tended to appear as one-off messages at the end of a feedback script and thus constituted only a very small proportion of the overall number of coding units (section 4.3.3.7).

Although *Critique* was found to be the dominant type of commentary, the present study found that 1 in 3.1 coding units were ascribed a positive evaluation (section 4.3.2.1). This finding demonstrates that tutors do indeed seek to provide both positive and negative comments when appraising student work. Unsurprisingly, the study found a higher instance of negative comments within the Biological Sciences and Creative Industries sampling units. These units respond to work awarded a mark within the pass band, thus, likely to warrant more criticism than higher grade bands, as evidenced in Wingate's (2010) study. That tutors are cognisant of the need to provide an appropriate balance between positive and negative commentary finds further support when taking into consideration that 1 in 9.3 coding units across the data set are tagged *Mitigating paired act* (see Table 9 section 4.3.2.2). The relatively frequent employment of praise-criticism paired act patterns is perhaps unsurprising given the high interpersonal stakes in feedback and the need for the tutor to anticipate how the recipient of the feedback, the sole audience of the text, is likely to react.

It is particularly noteworthy that some commentary written under the heading 'weaknesses' within the Creative Industries data set is also accompanied by praise as part of a paired act pattern. Thus, the feedback provider still chooses to frame some of these comments within a praise criticism pair, even when writing comments under the heading 'weaknesses'. The intention in such instances, therefore, is not primarily to commend an aspect of work since these comments appear under the heading 'strengths'. Rather, the employment of the paired act pattern serves to mitigate the force of the negative comment, and demonstrates tutor awareness of the potential impact that predominantly negative feedback can have on the recipient.

Conveners' comments in interview (see section 4.3.2.2) reveal an awareness of the affective function carried by their comments, and the potential their commentary has to facilitate or undermine students' performance. Hyland & Hyland (2001) also assert that the presence of redressive strategies such as praise-criticism pairs is evidence of tutors seeking to enhance the student tutor relationship

and promote a positive interpersonal relationship with the student. This interpersonal function of commentary is not specifically remarked upon in interview with the conveners, however consideration of the tone employed when writing comments does emerge as a theme (section 4.3.2.2). The conveners' consideration of tone not only aligns with the stated preferences of students within the literature (e.g. Winstone et al., 2016) but also links well with prior research investigating pedagogic best-practice. This literature suggests that the framing of comments, in particular the tone, is an important determining factor in the extent to which students engage with feedback (Esterhazy & Damsa 2019; Carless & Boud 2018).

Whilst this study found affective attributes prevalent across the data set, it was notable that the markers of four sampling units in the Biological Sciences data set address the recipients of feedback as 'the student' (section 4.3.3.7). Use of this depersonalised term runs counter to findings in studies such as O'Donovan et al., which found that students desire personalised 'relational' feedback, described by one student as akin to being 'in conversation' with the tutor (2021 p.325). Whilst use of the second person 'you' employed by the other markers is a more personalised form, it should also be acknowledged that the practice of anonymous grading on summative work across all four modules and indeed the college, limits the potential for both personalised commentary as well as ipsative feedback on progression in relation to the students' prior work (Hughes 2011).

Overall, however, with respect to affective factors the present study has found subject tutors do seek to provide both positive and negative evaluation of students' work. The frequency of mitigating strategies, along with conveners comments in interview revealing the conscious attention paid to tone, suggest that feedback providers make calculated linguistic choices when providing feedback, therein demonstrating correspondence with students desire for feedback considerate of affect. It is also worth mentioning that these findings reflect well on the feedback practices of tutors participating in this study since as Sadler (2010 p.539) points out, consideration of tone in addition to the content of comments 'calls for a significant affective outlay on the teacher's part'.

5.5.2 Suggestions for improvement

As we saw in section 3.14.2, suggestions for improvement was one of the principal properties desired of feedback to emerge from a review of the feedback literature (e.g. Higgins et al., 2002; Weaver 2006; Ferguson 2011). While some studies found that students desired comments focusing on improvement in skills or study strategies (e.g. Winstone et al., 2016), others found that students desired comments

focusing on how to improve content (e.g. Getzlaf et al., 2009). Most pertinent to the present study, given the predominance of comments tagged within the subcategory *What is or should be included* (see section 5.2.1 above), Dawson et al., (2019) found that students desired comments communicating specific advice on areas relating to the work under appraisal.

The present study found that 1 in 5 coding units within the subcategory *Argument*, and 1 in 7 coding units within the subcategory *Understanding* co-occurred with the sub-category *How the work could have been improved* [IMP] (see Table 13 section 4.3.3.2). Thus, whilst 80% of coding units across all four modules address issues relating to content, a substantial proportion of those coding units, on average 1 in 6, provide some suggestion for improvement. Additionally, approximately 1 in 7 coding units tagged *Formatting* and *Structure* also co-occur with IMP. Having stated an interest in whether the data would reveal a balance of comments covering improvement in both skills and content (section 3.14.2), on the surface it would appear that a greater proportion of comments address improvement in the latter as a greater number of units tagged IMP co-occur with *Understanding* and *Argument*. However, drawing such a conclusion would overlook that many of the comments tagged within the subcategory *Argument* comment on issues such as the selection and use of sources.

The term skills is generally used to refer to competencies which are beyond the subject specific and transferable (Knight & Yorke 2003 p.6), which in this context refers to competencies that are applicable from one writing task or module to another. According to this linguistical qualification, the selection of up-to-date source material can be termed a skill, and yet within the framework employed for this study, this coding unit falls under *Argument* since the tutor pinpoints the currency of the source as impacting on the effectiveness of the student's argument. Thus, while the categorisation framework employed in this study does not demarcate between skills and content, looking at the co-occurrence between coding units tagged IMP with coding units across all first tier subcategories, and taking into account how skills relating to use of sources are tagged within the subcategory *Argument*, there does appear to be a fairly even balance of comments addressing improvement in skills and content. Coding units falling within the subcategory *Understanding* on the other hand tend to focus on inaccurate, missing or irrelevant content, and thus are less likely to address competencies beyond the subject specific even when the comment provides a suggestion as to how the work could be improved.

To sum up, the findings therefore do demonstrate correspondence with the reported preferences in Dawson et al.'s (2019) study, since comments communicate specific advice on areas that need

improving in relation to the work under appraisal. However, this study has also found that comments addressing 'skills', particularly skills which can be easily decontextualised, also frequently have applicability to future work even when relating to the specific work under appraisal.

5.5.3 Forward orientation

The future orientation of feedback emerged as a key theme across the literature exploring the qualities desired by students (e.g. Getzlaf et al., 2009; O'Donovan et al., 2021; Ferguson 2011; Henderson et al., 2019) and in some cases identified as the most important feature of effective feedback (e.g. Dawson et al., 2019). Recognition that feedback should provide information that can potentially pertain to future work and learning was also a belief collectively expressed in interviews with conveners (section 4.3.3.3). Overall, the present study found 1 in 12 coding units were tagged *Pointers to take forward* [PF] which also equates to just over 8% of the total coding units (see Table 14 section 4.3.3.3). While the frequency of comments tagged PF is relatively low compared to those suggesting improvements, as argued in the previous section (5.5.2) coding units commenting on improvements can also contain input with applicability to future work, particularly when the comments address skills which are easier to decontextualize such as referencing and formatting. Although extremely low in frequency, comments tagged *Direction to additional Support* [S] were also found to have a forward orientation since they direct students to seek tutorial or EAP support (section 4.3.3.8).

Comments suggesting improvement often use the conditional perfect to express how the work *could have been* improved (my italics). In contrast, coding units tagged PF or S orient more directly to future work, most frequently effectuated through use of the imperative. Subject tutors signpost how the comments relevancy extends beyond that of the present work through a number of other linguistic strategies: reference to students' cognitive skills such as 'remember' and 'bear in mind', use of real conditionals, use of present tense to express a habitual truth, use of should to advise the students what they need to work on, to name but a few. This study has therefore found that while there are a limited number of coding units explicitly addressing this future work with use of language such as 'in your next assignment', this forward-looking orientation is nevertheless achieved using other more implicit linguistical means.

This study also found that the proportion of units tagged PF is considerably higher within the subcategories relating to *How the work should be expressed*. For example, Table 15 (section 4.3.3.3) shows much greater levels of co-occurrence with comments addressing *Formatting* (1 in 1.6),

Referencing (1 in 2.3) and *Language* (1 in 2.6) compared to comments addressing *Argument* and particularly *Understanding* (1 in 105). This is perhaps to be expected given the greater ease with which skills such as formatting and referencing can be commented on by tutors, as well as the greater ease with which comments addressing these issues can be implemented in future work by the student. In contrast, comments addressing subject content are more likely to be context-dependent, that is to say, bound to a specific point within the context of the work, and therefore less likely to be applicable to future assignments. These comments are also more likely to address 'higher order disciplinary skills', such as critical analysis, which as Hughes et al. (2015 p.1082) argue are more difficult to decontextualise, and therefore more difficult to address beyond the confines of the module compared to other context-independent skills such as referencing.

Within the data, the present study found evidence of tutors attempting to address the issue of criticality both in relation to the context of the work but also in relation to future work, in particular the questions they should be asking of the work. The data also found evidence of tutor commentary which merely instructed students to be more critical (4.3.3.5). Within the literature investigating the qualities valued by students, there are few references to students' preference for feedback addressing these higher order skills. However, a study by Higgins et al., (2002 p.60) did find that 90% of students considered commenting on the level of critical analysis an important aspect of feedback. The authors partly attributed this finding to students' awareness that such skills carry more marks. They also linked this to the finding that the students were predominantly intrinsically motivated and thus valued comments focusing on skills encouraging 'deep' learning (2002 p.61). According to Biggs (1999), students who identify with a 'deep' approach to learning adopt higher-order cognitive skills such as critical analysing as opposed to students with a surface level approach to learning who adopt an 'inappropriately low cognitive level' to their learning (Biggs 1999 p.60). Thus, while there is a lack of evidence indicating students value comments addressing higher order cognitive skills such as criticality, the provision of such commentary does link well with the literature that highlights the need to promote and develop higher order learning such as criticality and self-regulatory skills (e.g. Biggs 1999; Hughes et al., 2015).

5.5.4 Tutor clarification

Within the literature investigating qualities identified as valuable by students, commentary providing an explanation also emerged as a desirable quality (Ferguson, 2011; O'Donovan et al., 2021). The present study found that overall 1 in 5.8 coding units across the data set were tagged *Tutor Clarification* (see Table 18 section 4.3.3.4). This study also found a considerably higher proportion of

coding units providing tutor clarification co-occurring with comments tagged *Argument* and *Understanding*. This finding aligns with Hughes et al.'s (2015) argument that higher order skills such as criticality or theoretical concepts require greater tutor clarification since they are conceptually more difficult. Comments providing explanation also help clarify the gap between the 'actual level' of students' work and the 'reference level', that is to say, the desired standard of students' work (Ramaprasad 1983 p.4).

Conveners' comments in interview reveal the provision of additional clarification to be an intentional part of their feedback practice (section 4.3.3.4). Interestingly the conveners' remarks also reflect epistemological differences in the examples they provide to demonstrate this point. For example, the Child Studies convener provides the hypothetical example of helping a student understand how they could demonstrate more criticality, while the Biological Sciences provides an example of helping a student improve the structure of their work. Similarly, a pattern of moves corresponding with the levels of depth advanced by Brown and Glover (2006) and found repeatedly within the data, also revealed variation according to the epistemologies generally characterized within the hard and soft disciplines (section 4.3.3.4). For example, this move within the Biological Sciences comprised the highlighting of an inaccuracy, providing the correction followed by an explanation as to why the correction was preferable. However, within Child Studies the pattern was more likely to comprise the highlighting of a line of argument the tutor disagreed with followed by reasoning as to why.

5.6 RQ2b To what extent does subject tutor feedback differ from student perceptions?

Whilst in the previous section I argue that analysis of the third set of codes revealed close correspondence in relation to some of the qualities desired by students, with regards to other qualities such as those tagged *Criteria-Referenced* and *Asking questions of the work/student* analysis of the data revealed lower levels of correspondence.

5.6.1 Criteria-referenced

Making reference to the marking criteria or grade descriptors was a quality to emerge from the prior literature (e.g. Ferguson 2011; Li & De Luca 2014; Winstone et al., 2016). Studies surveying student preferences found that learners value information relating to which aspects of the work meets the criteria and which do not (e.g. Weaver 2006; Poulos & Mahony 2008). Furthermore, students' engagement with assessment criteria is often linked to the development of students' own evaluative

judgement, leading to some voices within the feedback literature emphasizing the need for educators to reference the criteria in feedback since this supports students' ability to self-regulate their own work (e.g. Thumser, Bailey & Trinder 2020; Tai et al., 2017). The present study, however, found a relatively low proportion of coding units tagged *Criteria-Referenced* across all four modules indicating a limited amount of commentary pertaining to the meeting, or not meeting, of assessment criteria. The study also found that those comments that do refer to criteria tend to highlight where the assignment falls short of meeting criteria (see section 4.3.3.1).

However, this study also found systematic use of criterial headings for example in the Child Studies data set, which clarified the criteria against which the work is being evaluated. This points towards a greater degree of alignment, certainly within some of the module data sets, than the number of coding units tagged within this category suggests. In other modules, non-criterial headings such as 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' were employed, thereby addressing areas more broadly and not in relation to the specific criteria. This appeared to be in keeping with an initiative relating to the provision of feedback at school level.

While feedback on the Biological Science sampling units was provided by six different markers (see Appendix II), a criteria tick-box table was used systematically across all the sampling units in the data set. The use of criteria-standard templates is critiqued by some commentators within the literature (e.g. Sadler 2010) on the grounds that their use focuses on specific qualities of the work rather than an appraisal of the quality of the work at a holistic level. However, sampling units within the Biological Sciences data set were also accompanied by long-form summative comments, providing the opportunity for feedback providers to appraise the work as a whole.

Feedback on the Applied Linguistics sampling units was provided by seven markers, however, unlike Biological Sciences there appeared to be no systematic approach to the organisation of comments across the data set. This difference in marking practices, particulary in relation to criteria, is remarked upon in interview by the convener for Applied Linguistics. The convener recounts an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to standardise practice across the programme by making specific criteria a requisite for each assignment, against which all markers were expected to reference in their feedback commentary (section 4.3.3.1). It is therefore surprising that this practice does not appear to be systematic within the sampling units for this module with very few comments relating to the specific criteria, or use of criterial headings to relate comments to the specific assignment criteria.

Dawson et al., (2019) found that few members of the teaching staff surveyed in their study made reference to the marking criteria as a valuable feature of effective feedback. Whilst all the conveners participating in the present study acknowledge the importance of students understanding the criteria used to mark the piece of work, as we have seen, the present study found considerable variation in how criteria formed part of their feedback practice. This was evident not just within the feedback practices across the four participating conveners, but it would appear from comments in interview that practices also varied between departmental colleagues. This variation in use of the marking criteria is consistent with previous findings. For example, Murray and Sharpling (2019) found that subject tutors tend to notice and credit different elements within the same piece of work, particularly when the student writing was about different topics. Likewise, Nesi and Gardner (2006) found that even where subject tutors referred to faculty-wide assessment criteria, the criteria were interpreted in a subject specific way. These findings therefore emphasise the need for students to be aware of variation in use of marking criteria, not just across subject areas but also between markers teaching on the same module.

5.6.2 Asking questions of the work/student

Although interrogatives have often been categorized separately in other frameworks analysing feedback data (e.g. Hyatt 2005; Hughes et al., 2015), asking questions of the work or the student does not emerge as a valued characteristic of feedback within the literature surveying students' perceptions of effective feedback (see section 3.14.5). Thus, a predominance of questions within the Child Studies data set (1 in 7.4 coding units) and, to a lesser degree, across the feedback artefacts of the three other modules (see Table 20 in section 4.3.3.5), would appear to suggest a disjuncture between tutor feedback and those qualities of feedback desired by students. However, the use of interrogative forms does link well with the literature which suggests that question-raising promotes on-going dialogue between the feedback provider and seeker (Brown & Glover 2006; Hughes et al., 2015), and encourages self-directed learning (Carless, Salter, Yang & Lam 2011). Furthermore, while students do not identify questions *per se* as a valued characteristic of effective feedback, there is evidence within the literature that students value feedback which encourages a deeper level of engagement with their subject area (e.g. Higgins et al., 2002), thus demonstrating accordance with the use of interrogatives prompting students to think more deeply about their work.

While the feedback data for the present study only comprises summative end-text comments from all four modules, the earlier study, Study 1, included in-text as well as end-text commentary (see section 1.2). In that study (Grannell 2017), a prevalence of short interrogatives such as 'evidence for this?'

were found within the in-text annotations; indeed, 14 instances of stand alone question marks in-text, unaccompanied by further comment, were found (Grannell 2017 p.47). These findings point to differences between in-text feedback discourse and that provided end-text. Furthermore, although the subcategory *Asking questions of the work/student* in the present study includes both reflective questions seeking further thought as well as those highlighting an omission, a much greater predominance of the former type of questions were found in the present study compared to those found in Study 1. It should be acknowledged, however, that the distinction between the two different types of questions is not always so clear cut, an observation also made by Hughes et al., (2015).

The findings of the present study also counters findings in Hughes et al.'s (2015) study which found a prevalence of questions in formative feedback yet very few in feedback provided on summative final work. The greater use of interrogatives in the present study is a likely consequence of there being no formative written feedback provided on drafts before final submission. The use of interrogatives prompting students to think more deeply about their work also accords with the literature arguing feedback providers have a duty to challenge those students who expect feedback to state exactly what they need to do (Winstone et al., 2017). Question raising and encouraging students to find out answers for themselves, are activities that can help promote feedback literacy, that is to say, students' ability to use and learn from feedback practices (Molloy, Boud & Henderson 2020). This is particularly important given the development of feedback literacy is often not part of a programme's formal curricula, but rather developed through students' experience of feedback practices (O'Donovan et al., 2021). Thus, providing students with strategies for developing feedback literacy, such as requiring students to reflect more deeply on their work or the practice of marking their own or other students' work, links well with the literature that argues feedback should aim to provide:

> an intentional focus on developing students' epistemic beliefs to enhance student understanding and thereby satisfaction with feedback on high-level and complex tasks for which feedback cannot be as specific and corrective as students holding absolute beliefs about knowledge may want (O'Donovan et al., 2021 p.327).

Since all 16 feedback scripts within the Child Studies data set were written by the same marker, the module convener, the relatively high use of interrogatives suggests a preferred response (see section 4.3.3.5). Furthermore, Hyland and Hyland (2001 p.199) argue that interrogatives can be employed as a mitigating strategy since they can weaken the force of a criticism. A lexical search of interrogative forms revealed a relatively high instance of request forms, particularly the item 'could you' within the Child Studies data set (see Appendix XIIIf). According to Starfield et al., (2017), the use of the request form 'could you' demonstrates a purposive strategy to avoid more confronting question forms.

Therefore, the use of the interrogatives as a form of mitigation further supports the view expressed earlier, that the subject tutors participating in the present study provide feedback which is largely considerate of affect (see section 5.5.1).

5.7 RQ2 Conclusion

Investigating the second research question has furthered our understanding of the extent to which values desired by students in feedback are present in actual tutor commentary. The key qualities identified as desirable within the literature include providing strategies for improvement, comments oriented towards future work, and additional tutor clarificaton. While there are few studies against which to draw comparisons, research by Fernando, Cleland, McKenzie and Cassar (2008) reported that only 50% of feedback encounters included any strategies as to how the student could improve: a feedback encounter in their study being equivalent to a whole sampling unit in the present study. That half of all sampling units in their study did not contain a single reference as to how the work could be improved was described as 'alarming' by Molloy and Boud (2013 p.15), dismissing feedback that merely diagnosed faults in the work as 'dangling data'. This phrase, coined by Sadler (1989 p.121), refers to feedback that contains no information that could lead to improved performance. With regard to this one area of feedback alone, the proportion of coding units commenting on improvement within all sampling units and across all four modules compares favourably with findings in Fernando et al.'s (2008) study. Certainly, taking the three key qualities together, the average frequency of occurrence, 1 in 6.5 coding units tagged IMP, 1 in 12 tagged PF, and 1 in 5.8 tagged TC, supports the view that tutor commentary demonstrates considerable amount of correspondence with those qualities relating to improvement and future orientation, identified by students as desirable (see Appendix XIId).

Analysis of coding units assigned a second code reveals that subject tutors do seek to provide both positive and negative evaluation of students' work. Likewise, the use of mitigating strategies across all four modules demonstrates subject tutor awareness of the affective by-product their commentary potentially has. One of the main findings to emerge from the investigation of the first research question was that 80% of the feedback data collected for this study addresses issues relating to content, often associated with a retrospective orientation not easily reconciled with prospective learning and future written work. However, given a considerable proportion of these coding units were assigned a second and third code, we can conclude that much of this commentary still contains qualities valued by students. Thus, the findings presented in this study tend to counter Li and De Luca's (2014) conclusion that subject tutors have difficulty balancing the provision of feedback

justifying the grade with that which informs student learning. Overall, findings also tend to counter Li and De Luca's conclusion that there is a divergence between subject tutors' actual practice and students' preferences relating to the feedback artefact.

Coding units falling within all of three key subcategories provide information about the desired performance and thus the potential to help bridge the gap between the students' actual level and the level they are trying to attain (Ramaprasad 1983). According to Sadler (1989), a necessary condition for helping the student to move forward in their practice is ensuring students are feedback literate, that is, have the know-how to effectuate the advice provided in order to enhance performance and close the feedback loop. Findings in the present study reveal that subject tutors provide feedback 'on knowing' that is to say feedback provided to students on the quality of knowledge presented in their work, as well as feedback 'for knowing', commentary providing guidance on how students' performance can be improved, and how they can develop skills and learning to carry forward (Sutton 2012 p.34). Therefore, according to Sutton's definition of the term, the feedback artefacts comprising the data for this study, fulfil the conditions relating to the development of feedback literacy.

The use of interrogatives does not appear to receive much attention in the literature reporting students' feedback preferences. The relative high frequency of interrogatives within the Child Studies sampling units, therefore, does not appear to align with students' preferences. However, given questions can be used as a means to prompt further reflection, it is argued that their occurrence does link well with the literature advocating how feedback can be used as a means to develop students' feedback literacy. The use of questions as a form of mitigation also links well with the literature reporting students desire for feedback attending to affect. This study also found less correspondence between students' reported preference for criteria-referenced feedback and actual tutor feedback. The use of criterial headings by some of the tutors, however, suggests commentary addressing the marking criteria was greater within some modules than the findings might otherwise suggest. It was also found that feedback practices in relation to criteria-referencing varied between the four conveners participating in this study and within their respective departments. This disjuncture appears to be the result of variation in adherence to institutional guidance, pointing to the need for greater programme and cross-college guidance if an aligned system of feedback referencing criteria is to be achieved.

Analysing comments made by conveners in interview alongside the feedback data also provided insight into the extent to which there is correspondence between the conveners' stated and actual

feedback practice. Findings reveal a shared belief across all four conveners that for feedback to be effective, comments need to help improve student performance and carry forward to future work. In this regard, analysis of the feedback data does indeed reveal a substantial part of tutors' feedback practice is directed towards this end.

5.8 Contribution to the literature and EAP practice

The rationale for this study stems from a desire to gain further understanding of disciplinary writing to help inform both EAP writing practitioners and classroom practice. Thus, it is important to consider the contribution to scholarly endeavour investigating writing within the academy and the implications of this contribution for the EAP practitioner. It is to this aspect of the present study that I now turn. In discussing the implications of these findings for EAP practice I will also return to the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

One important contribution of this study is the demonstration that feedback artefacts can be a useful resource for revealing information relating to the disciplinary and genre contexts within which the student is writing. For instance information relating to the greater disposition of commentary within the Humanities and Social Sciences modules addressing use of the literature, citation practices and the evaluation of ideas can assist the writing practitioner when identifying priorities of EAP provision for those studying within these faculties. Likewise, the greater disposition of commentry on students' understanding of current knowledge and how that knowledge was acquired in the hard sciences can inform the EAP provision offered to those studying, for example, within the Biosciences. Scrutiny of feedback also reveals a disposition towards certain reporting verbs such as 'argue' and 'agree' when responding to genres set within the soft sciences. This can help clarify to the EAP practitioner the extent to which writing to genres, such as the annotated bibliography, requires students to engage in a measure of contestation, involving the persuasion of the reader through consideration of alternative views and substantial citational support. In contrast, finding that these same reporting verbs are not priviledged within the feedback provided to genres within the hard science could indicate to the EAP practitioner that persuasion of the reader relies more heavily on other means such as statistic or laboratory findings. Thus, by harvesting information from the feedback artefacts the writing practitioner can identify and prioritise the discourse norms needed to present arguments and assertions in a way most likely to be deemed persuasive to the students' reader. These findings also contribute to the literature investigating differences in writing across the academy specifically those arguing that this variability reflects the broad areas of inquiry associated with the hard and soft fields (e.g. Hyland 2002).

Another contribution to scholarly endeavour is the demonstration of how feedback artefacts can be harvested to shed light on the extent to which subject tutors credit original and creative content. For example, this study found that the educational goals of the Explanatory genre, set within the Biological Science module, impose greater constraints on the content than the essay set within the Creative Industries module, the marking for which, as the convener acknowledges, credits original and creative content. This study therefore contributes to the literature arguing that some academic genres have greater tolerance of innovation than others (e.g. Tardy 2015). This study also found notable variation in the expected scope of critical inquiry (see section 5.3.5). For example, the extent and nature of critical analysis required as part of the Creative Industries assignment includes the critiquing of societal and ideological issues and the requirement for the student to question long-held beliefs, whist within the biological sciences criticality pertains to the consideration of the available evidence. Despite the differences outlined above, this study found the label 'essay' was applied to assignments across both of the Creative Industries and Biological Science data sets. It is therefore incumbent on the EAP writing practitioner to investigate beyond this broad labelling to familiarise themselves with the educational purpose of the genre and the defining characteristics of the genre the students need to write to. This can be done by scrutinising exemplars, assignment briefs and criteria, and through collaboration with the subject tutors. This explicit knowledge can help EAP tutors avoid blanket pieces of advice and steer students' awareness towards a more informed understanding of subject tutors' expectations. This is particularly important given the limited commentary relating to genre and discipline within all four data sets. For example there is very limited commentary focusing on the patterns of textual organisation typically associated with a genre or indeed rhetorical structures characteristic of these genres.

Other findings help address Godfrey and Whong's call for research to develop a 'more nuanced understanding of broad generalizations that currently exist' within the academic writing literature. (2021 p.20). One such generalisation, highlighted by the authors, is the view that 'complex ideas require complex sentence structure' (2021 p.20). Across the data set, there was an absence of feedback commentary calling for greater complexity in sentence structure to facilitate the conveyance of complex ideas. However, this study did find variation in terms of the means by which complex ideas could be conveyed. Within the social sciences data, feedback commentary priviledged a clear, fluent writing style to convey complex ideas, whereas in the Biological sciences emphasis on the use of visual representation to convey complex ideas appeared both in the feedback commentary and in the criteria marking descriptors. Despite this difference, the concept of 'writtenness' appeared in the assignment criteria across all data sets therein indicating that quality relating to how the work is

written is valued across disciplines. More specifically, reference to 'clarity' appeared with more frequency than any other trait suggesting this value has salience to feedback providers across all four modules. However, as mentioned above (see 5.2.2.2) this study also found a lack of commentary clarifying what tutors meant by 'clear'. Thus, it is not just incumbent on the EAP researcher to identify the traits considered most important to particular kinds of writing but also to investigate subject tutors' understanding of these concepts and how this understanding can be made explicit to the student.

Findings to emerge from the investigation of RQ2 also contribute to the feedback literature but, in this case, findings tend to offer an alternative perspective to the prevailing literature. For example, the observation that feedback providers not only pay considerable attention to providing comments with applicability to future work, but also that the language employed is overall considerate of affect, lends credence to the view that feedback does, by and large, match the student expections in regard to the qualities they desire in feedback. This runs counter to the literature arguing that there is a divergence between actual feedback practice and students' preferences (e.g. Li & De Luca 2014). This lack of reported divergence along with the modest improvement in NSS and PTES satisfaction rates leading up to the pandemic (see section 1), also align with comments from the module conveners which attest to greater departmental awareness of effective feedback practices over the last decade. Again, this view counters the view of feedback provision traditionally reported in the literature which, until now, has typically painted a rather negative picture.

The exploratory purpose of the study set out at the start of this thesis (see section 2.2.4) centres around the 'problem' of disciplinary difference not being well understood by either tutors of EAP or students. Using my own experience as an example, it was argued that within EAP units teaching can sometimes adhere to a homogeneous academic discourse, despite studies demonstrating variation in academic discourse between disciplines (e.g. Flowerdew 2002; Hyland 2004; Hyland 2009) and that, consequently, students are sometimes not made aware of disciplinary variations. Furthermore, as this study has found, there is a lack of explicitness surrounding writing within the academy with students' understanding of expectations often taken-for-granted. This makes the task of trying to negotiate concepts such as what is meant by structure or good writing, problematic for both the student and the EAP tutor. As the conclusions drawn from this study have demonstrated, much can be learnt from analysis and comparison of authentic academic texts including feedback artefacts. It is therefore beholden on EAP tutors to investigate the discursive features of academic discourse rather

than rely on generic course materials (e.g. UEFAP website) or on their own disciplinary background which is, more often than not, in Applied Linguistics.

5.8.1 Critical pragmatic pedagogy

Returning to the theoretical framework underpinning this study (section 2.2.4), the present study positions itself in the middle ground between pragmatic and critical approaches. Drawing on critical pragmatic pedagogy, this study therefore advocates a consciousness-raising approach to highlight differences in disciplinary discourse and genres through comparison, noticing and reflection, by encouraging students to examine and compare texts drawn from a range of disciplines. As Bazerman (1981 p.362) argues, this can help students 'explore the possibilities of variation in what constitutes a statement of knowledge and to accentuate textual features through contrast.' Such an approach aligns with pragmatic EAP's emphasis on exposing students to the dominant discourse norms to help access the academy. The critical pragmatic pedagogy, as Benesch (2001 p.64) argues, can then be achieved by encouraging students to critically appraise the discourse norms, before considering whether to follow or critique them. This approach is therefore distinct from an 'identify and induct' model which Lillis and Scott (2007 p.14) argue is evident in much of EAP teaching.

However, as Harwood and Hadley (2004 p.367) argue, perhaps a more cautious middle-ground is needed between this dichotomy between the 'acceptability' or 'floutability' of established practices. The authors suggest corpus-based activities as one method of enabling students to explore how conventions vary across disciplines. As an example, they suggest raising students' awareness of both the frequency and function of personal pronouns in texts across disciplines through analysis of corpora. According to the authors, the students would then be in a position to make an informed choice regarding their own writing, in this case whether to use pronouns such as 'I' or 'we'. Although Harwood and Hadley (2004) acknowledge the need for students to be made aware of the risk that comes with departing from dominant discourse norms, their approach may still raise concerns for EAP practitioners working with L2 students, since the decision to depart from norms, albeit an informed one, might not be acceptable to the subject tutor.

Such departures from conventions were explored in a study by Tardy (2015). In this study, the author investigated student writing that, despite diverting from genre norms, was yet still adjudged 'good' by content tutors and concluded that some genres may be more accepting of innovation than others. Indeed, within the present study we have seen how the module tutor for Biological Sciences has a prescribed view of the assignment content with considerable intolerance shown to deviating from the

subject tutors' expectations. In contrast the convener for the Creative Industries assignment acknowledges the credit given to students choosing to address an assignment in an original way. The very nature of the Explanation genre, with emphasis on the demonstration of students' understanding of a particular aspect of study, compared to that of the Creative Industries assignment, in which students are encouraged to explore and develop their own case studies, clearly plays a part in this difference in leniency. Part of the EAP practitioner's remit, therefore, could be to investigate genres and whether adherence to generic conventions is valued by subject tutors, and therein raise student awareness as to which genres lend themselves to innovation and which do not.

5.8.2 Exemplars

Another approach adhering to a more cautious middle ground is the use of students' work as exemplars. Through the analysis, comparison and grading of exemplars, students can develop an understanding of the criteria which are often tacit and unarticulated. By developing an appreciation of different performance levels, students can also enhance their ability to make academic judgements, not just on other students' work but also in relation to their own. As discussed in section 2.5.3, there can often be a dissonance between teacher-authored 'external feedback', and 'internal feedback' relating to students' self-assessment of their performance. Thus, exemplars can play a useful role in addressing this 'judgement gap' and help nurture students' feedback literacy (Molloy et al., 2013 p.56).

While Sadler (1989) was an early advocate of the use of exemplars, this approach has gained traction within the more recent literature as well (e.g. Nicol 2010; Carless & Boud 2018; Sambell & Graham 2020). Remarks made in interview with the Child Studies convener testifies to the use of exemplars as a regular practice within the department:

> *we provide exemplars of all the assignments that we do that we set and sometimes they ask for … can we see a good sort of good medium and poor but we only ever provide distinction level ones*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 295-298

As Sadler argues, however, exemplars demonstrating a single level will not suffice as exemplars of varying quality need to be provided to illustrate the distinction between performance of high and low quality.

Tutors may have concerns about the use of such exemplar-based pedagogy, for instance that it may encourage students to replicate the exemplars, produce stereotyped responses to tasks and stifle the production of original responses. Sadler (1989) counters these concerns by also advocating for the provision of more than one exemplar at a particular standard. This raises awareness of the various ways in which one piece of work can meet certain criteria in one respect and not in another, whilst another piece of work meeting different criteria can be appraised at the same level. Thus, use of exemplars can help nurture students' agency.

Use of exemplars can also help analyse collaboration between disciplines, such as on inter-disciplinary courses defined as an interaction and integration of knowledge drawn from different academic disciplines (Holley 2017) and multidisciplinary programmes, where faculty or students from different disciplines work together. In interview, the Child Studies convener notes that since the module is multidisciplinary the course attracts students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds:

> *we have some scientists occasionally and we quite often have doctors nurses health professional social workers lawyers so we take a broad social science approach*
>
> Interview: Child Studies convener 348-350

The convener goes on to add:

> *we try to allow people to pursue their own areas of interest and keep within their discipline if they want to… but also they have to adapt a bit*
>
> Interview: Child Studies Convener 358-360

In the extract above, the convener demonstrates an awareness that there is not a single autonomous model of literacy within the academy and that students moving from one discipline to another are required to 'adapt' the way in which they write. This awareness corresponds with the literature which holds that students need to be cognizant of how approaches to writing and knowledge-making varies from one subject to another, and thus the need for students on multi-disciplinary programmes to be able to 'switch' (Street 2015 cited in Street, Lea, & Lillis p.385). Such an understanding would suggest that subject tutors working on multi-disciplinary courses are able to guide students more than just in terms of the preferred practices and priorities of a single discipline but also in terms of where these practices and priorities vary between disciplines.

The use of exemplars also aligns with Hyland's (2008) idea of consciousness-raising activities to demystify genres by raising awareness of key features and characteristics of those genres within the students' field. Rather than explicit genre-based teaching encouraging an uncritical reproduction of

genres, Hyland advocates an approach aligning with a critical pragmatic pedagogy in calling for a critical appraisal of them. As Hyland (2008) argues, demystifying the genres does not need to be prescriptive, but instead this approach can be employed to highlight how and why texts are structured in the ways that they are, which in turn can help empower both the student and the EAP tutor. As mentioned above, a genre-based approach can also explore exemplars where genre norms are departed from and, in cases where exemplars are accompanied by tutor feedback, the extent to which these departures are acceptable.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has analysed feedback from four disciplines to shed light on what tutors from different faculties value in a text. This investigation does not represent a sample from which generalisations can be drawn, since commentary provided on students' work comprises just a small part of a complex intervention (Boud & Molloy 2013). However, examining findings through contrast of disciplines has yielded interesting information on the influence both disciplinary preferences and genre norms have on subject tutor expectations and the discourse they use when appraising student work. The study has also demonstrated that in order to become a fully-fledged member of a disciplinary community, a student needs to be familiar with, and be able to write to, the written genres associated with that discipline. The study has also explored feedback from the learner's perspective and the extent to which values, desired by students in feedback, are present in actual tutor commentary. The process of undertaking this research endeavour has also furthered our understanding of the qualities desired by students in feedback appraising their work.

Having discussed findings in relation to each of the research questions, the concluding chapter in this work will discuss potential areas for future research before moving on to consider the limitations of this study. This chapter concludes with my final remarks.

6.1 Further practitioner research

To explore the correspondence between actual tutor practice and students' views of effective feedback, the present study generated a list of valued feedback qualities drawn from the literature surveying students. Whilst the evidence pointed to a positive alignment, to be certain of a causal relationship between feedback and learning requires engagement with the recipient of the feedback to investigate what meaning they elicit from the feedback, and to examine subsequent work to see whether they have been able to act on the basis of their feedback. However, as Yorke (2003 p.492) argues, research investigating this 'action-feedback-learning-new action' cycle needs to be tightly controlled and the conditions clearly circumscribed or extraneous factors may impact on findings. Another fertile area for practitioner research is to build on the work of Rowe, Wood and Petocz (2008) and explore the relationship between different learning approaches, such as 'surface' learners and 'deep' learners (Biggs 1999 see section 5.5.3), and their engagement with feedback, specifically why some students respond well to certain feedback practices while others do not. Researching students'

feedback preferences is limited in application if not also taking into account these different approaches as well as students' feedback literacy. As Nicol (2010 p.503) states:

> Just as learning does not occur through the mere transmission of written or spoken information, nor does feedback delivery on its own lead to learning improvement. … While the quality of the comments is important, the quality of the students' interaction with those comments is equally, and perhaps more, important.

Many areas of study provide considerable scope for collaborative scholarship between EAP and subject specialists to explore academic practices. For example, having established that subject tutors across disciplines tend to value writing that is 'clear' (Section 5.2.2.2), exploring exactly what tutors mean by 'clear', for instance whether it relates to clarity of expression or thought, and whether clarity differs according to discipline or even tutors, provides further scope for useful scholarship. As Whong and Godfrey (2021) point out, this research area would help develop EAP practioners' understanding, not only in terms of what constitutes good writing but also in terms of how subject tutors articulate concepts such as 'clarity', 'structure' and 'good writing', not just to themselves, but also to students. Whong and Godfrey (2021) advise that such collaborative projects should be led by EAP practitioners rather than subject tutors, since the former has specialist knowledge of academic writing as well as access to this knowledge across a range of disciplines. However, as acknowledged above, subject tutors working on multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary subjects are now accruing knowledge beyond that of specificity relating to a single discipline, thus somewhat blurring this distinction between subject specialist tutors and EAP specialists.

More generally, given the dynamic nature of disciplinary practices there needs to be an on-going effort to add to the pool of examples of student writing and subject tutor feedback data written in response, particularly in relation to under-reported disciplines within the research literature. Extending this research base to include other disciplines is also important given the move towards interdisciplinary programmes (Lea & Strierer 2000). Embedded provision, where writing instruction is integrated into the teaching of the subject, is widely regarded as the optimal way to help students improve disciplinary writing skills (Wett 2019), and many academic institutions have made moves to embed such programming within departments. Not only is close collaboration between EAP practitioners and subject tutors required for embedded provision to be effective, but such collaboration is also likely to increase writing practitioners' access to feedback data and exemplars.

6.2 Limitations

The work presented here is not without limitations, most of which directly result from difficulties accessing feedback data for Study 2 as outlined below.

6.2.1 Data Collection

The module conveners for all four disciplines were selected as a result of convenience sampling; the conveners approached were those with whom I had had previous contact via my role as Insessional Coordinator at the participating university. Therefore, the four conveners agreeing to participate do not serve to represent any group apart from themselves (Cohen et al., 2011), and conclusions drawn from their participation in this study do not seek to generalize about the experiences of other module conveners or make broad claims of representativeness of feedback practices across other disciplinary sites or HE Institutions. Extracts from interview data have been included where conveners' comments address themes that emerged through analysis of the feedback data. Thus, while some of the interview data has not been used in this study, the omitted data was deemed not relevant to addressing the research questions guiding this study.

With regard to the feedback artefacts, in Study 1 purposive sampling was undertaken to achieve sufficient representativeness across the two data sets, Biological Sciences and Creative Industries. This enabled comparisons to be made investigating the amount of feedback attending to language issues at pass level on L1 scripts and that provided on L2 scripts (see section 1.2). The Biological Science and Creative Industries module conveners were thus asked to select 12 samples of extended pieces of work (approximately 3,000 words in length) on the basis the samples possessed the particular characteristics being sought, namely work awarded a grade band, and an equal number of scripts written by L1 and L2 students.

For units collected from Creative Industries and Biological Sciences, there was arguably potential for sampling bias to occur if conveners were selecting only the 'best' examples (Brown & Harris 2018 p.105). However, inclusion criteria for the collection of data for Study 1 limited the pool from which samples could purposively be selected. Furthermore, the size of the student intake studying these modules was small (see section 3.5), as evidenced by the fact that each convener had to draw on assignments from previous year cohorts in order to find sufficient numbers of L1 and L2 assignments at pass level (see Appendix II). These factors restricted the opportunity for conveners to be selective, thereby limiting the potential for sampling bias.

Regarding data collection for the present study, Study 2, the aim was to recruit participants from another hard science disciplinary area to acquire a balanced representation across broad disciplinary areas. For Study 1, module conveners selected assignments with a ticked box on the generic departmental cover sheet indicating students' consent for use of assignment, feedback and grade awarded (Appendix XV1). However, as a direct consequence of new data protection laws (GDPR), introduced in 2018 in the interim period between the first and second data collections, students interested in participating for Study 2 had to self-select for this study. Thus, data for the present study was determined by the number of students responding to an email appeal or a more direct face-to-face appeal when I was able to attend students' lectures. The latter approach was not possible for the recruitment of participants studying Applied Linguistics due to Covid-19. The factors outlined above thus precluded the opportunity to purposively select feedback samples, and therefore sampling units for Study 2 were collected as a result of volunteer sampling.

Volunteer sampling can potentially incur sampling bias if students are less amenable to sharing feedback they are disappointed with or for which they have received lower marks. Whilst it was anticipated that students receiving higher grades would be more willing to share feedback, in fact the sample comprises a range of marks and not just work awarded higher marks (see Appendix II). Nonetheless, it is recognized that there may be a range of motives behind volunteering for the study, thereby providing further reason for any claim for generalizability to be made with caution.

Although conveners of modules within the hard sciences were approached to participate in the study, ultimately these attempts were frustrated by either insufficient number of students responding to my appeal for volunteers, or by senior programme managers citing concerns over the release of student data and the logistics of obtaining student consent in light of updated GDPR regulations (see Appendix XVII). Thus, the introduction of GDPR impacted on the way student consent was sought and consequently the ease with which data was obtained (see section 3.6). This in turn impacted on the amount of data I was able to collect, and thus the sample size, and the generalizability of the data. Consequently, within the four data sets comprising Study 2, the social sciences are more heavily represented. The data sets also vary in sample size and include work representing a range of grade bands. Gillway (2020) encountered a similar problem collecting data for her doctoral thesis as an internal researcher. Having intended to include academics across each of the six faculties participating in the study, ultimately Gillway (2020) was only successful in recruiting four. As with the present study, this affected the nature of her data collection, and as a consequence Gillway's selection of cases which

were ‘never intended to be random, [...] turned out to be less purposeful than anticipated’ (2020 p.31).

Along with the rigors of obtaining consent for the use of feedback, sensitivities surrounding feedback can also be a contributing factor in the difficulty in recruiting students and conveners. The feedback artefact is a personal form of correspondence, and whilst some feedback providers may also consider moderating markers and external examiners when composing it, the only intended audience is the recipient of the feedback, the student. Students have typically invested significant effort in their work and therefore, feedback often does not engender a positive disposition within the recipient. This may account for the low student response rate to appeals for volunteers. Furthermore, as a form or written communication that has come under considerable scrutiny due to the relatively low student satisfaction rates in NSS and PTES surveys, a certain amount of hesitancy in sharing feedback was also encountered on the part of some conveners which also impacted on the data collection process. The difficulties obtaining feedback, certainly by an external research, is such that feedback could belong to the category of genres Swales refers to as “typically hidden ‘out of sight’ or ‘occluded’ from the public gaze by a veil of confidentiality” (Swales 1996 p.46).

6.2.2 Data Analysis

The impact of differences in sample size and grades across the data set have been considered throughout the analysis of the data. For example, it was noted that the higher percentage of units coded *Pointers to take forward* within Biological Sciences and Creative Industries reflects that all sampling units for those two modules were awarded a pass mark, thus likely to necessitate a greater need for advice to help students improve future work (see section 4.3.3.3). In regard to the difference in sample size, particularly the amount of data within the Child Studies data set compared to the other three data sets (see Table 1 section 3.5), quantification of the data is presented as proportionate within each module. Thus, in presenting quantified data, percentage-based statistics and fractions, for example 1 in 7, are provided for each module rather than comparing the number of coding units in one category with the number in the same category but in another module since the sample size in each data set varies. In discussing findings, I have also endeavored to provide a sample of coding units representative of all four disciplines whilst at the same time acknowledging that in selecting coding units deemed most illustrative of the point being made, I incur potential research bias in the selection for inclusion.

Use of MaxQDA in the analysis of data, was undertaken for the first time in the course of this research. Whilst I found this a useful tool for comparing data across the different modules, there were a number of areas where a finer-grained application of codes could have investigated these differences further. For example, a more sophisticated employment of the software could have coded other mitigating strategies such as hedges. However, I feel the employment of this software programme sufficed to give an indication of the main areas under investigation within the coding framework developed for this study.

The range of experience in feedback markers could also be considered a limitation. The interview participants, all experienced module conveners, are also the providers of feedback for 35 out of the 54 sampling units (see Appendix II). Whilst background information relating to years of experience was gathered in interviews, no demographic variables such as experience, or L1, was available for the other 11 markers, since in most cases, the sampling units were forwarded on by the students themselves. It was therefore not possible to consider the impact of marker demographic variables such as experience. There are samples within the data collection where some of the commentary, or lack of it, is arguably questionable. For example, in section 4.3.3.1 the absence of commentary relating to a criteria awarded fail was noted. This may be an indication that some samples in the data collection have been written by less experienced or less effective feedback practitioners. Experience has been identified as a contributing factor in relation to feedback practices and in correspondence between tutors' espoused beliefs and actual practices (e.g. Basturkmen 2012; Buehl & Beck 2015). While the intention of this study has not been to evaluate the feedback practices observed, I have nontheless been impressed by the overall pedagogical soundness of both the conveners' acutal commentary and the discussion of their feedback practices in interview. Whilst acknowledging the range of possible motives behind consenting to participation, the very act of responding to my request for volunteers may in itself be indicative of their conscientiousness not necessarily representative of the wider academic community.

6.3 Concluding Remarks

This research venture began with a desire to enrich both my own and other EAP practitioners' understanding of subject tutors' disciplinary expectations surrounding student writing. To this end, the research studied real-world data, specifically, the actual feedback artifacts provided on students' written work, a relatively untapped source. Given the tendency for academic research to be monodisciplinary (Lindgreen, Di Benedetto, Brodie, & Vand der Borgh 2020) and how research within the EAP and academic literacies field is frequently 'serendipitous rather than selective in design' (Lillis

& Scott 2007 p.21), the cross-disciplinary perspective of this study is another key contribution. Investigating different disciplines has not only enabled an examination of findings through use of contrast, but has also extended the existing research base to include disciplines as yet unexplored. Furthermore, by making the expectations of subject tutors the centre of the research, the current enquiry has shifted the focus from feedback practices of those that teach writing to the less explored feedback practices of those for whom most writing is done.

In investigating the first research question, analysis of feedback has demonstrated the extent to which students need to consider disciplinary epistemology and generic textual forms in addition to subject content. This can pose a significant challenge to students and hence the middle-ground taken by this researcher in which pragmatic issues are balanced with transformative ones. To help develop students' understanding of disciplinary and generic differences, a consciousness-raising approach is advocated, one which can help demystify academic discourses through comparison and reflection of different texts. Use of exemplars can also help provide a fuller understanding of the criteria against which student work is assessed, and therein develop students' evaluative judgement. Engaging students in the analysis of different texts could also make the genres and disciplinary conventions surrounding them more easy to challenge should this be desirable. Thus, it is hoped that the findings emerging from this study have gone some way in providing an account of the relatively unexplored feedback artefact and the extent to which as EAP practitioners we can learn from these texts. Armed with this knowledge, the writing teacher can help raise students' awareness about tutor expectations and help students acquire a better understanding of writing in disciplinary approved ways.

In investigating the second research question, a review of the prior literature surveying students' perspectives of effective feedback has offered considerable insight into the attributes of quality desired by students, attributes which can also help inform the feedback practices of EAP writing practitioners. However, students' feedback preferences reported in surveys or interviews should be interpreted with a note of caution since reported preferences may not always reflect what students want in practice (Carless et al., 2011), or indeed what is best for them given some students' dependence on explicit instruction. Furthermore, as Winstone et al., (2017) argue, while students can recognise the importance of feedback in facilitating their improvement, students can also underplay their role in enacting this feedback. And if, as O'Donovan (2020) argues, students fail to recognize their responsibility in the feedback process, in this increasingly consumerist university context, students are likely to be left with always wanting more and better feedback no matter how much feedback practices are refined.

The preceding section (6.2) has laid out the challenges faced during the data collection process for this study. Were this research to be undertaken again, collecting data as an internal researcher, particularly if conducted in an institution in which writing instruction was embedded across the academy, would certainly make the process of collecting feedback data easier and thereby afford greater opportunity for purposive sampling to achieve sufficient representativeness across data sets and a greater balance between the hard and soft disciplines. Greater access to students would also facilitate the organisation of student interviews which would provide empirical triangulation with which to investigate the 'action-feedback-learning-new action' cycle (Yorke 2003 p.492). However, the reluctance of some tutors and students in sharing feedback and feedback practices encountered in both this study and others (e.g. Gillway 2020) should serve as a salutary reminder that in this new GDPR age there is an even greater need for those working and studying within the academy to assist with research endeavours so that the feedback genre 'typically hidden … from the public gaze by a veil of confidentiality' (Swales 1996 p.46), is not also hidden from the gaze of the researcher.

References

Amineh, R. J., & Asl, H. D. (2015). Review of constructivism and social constructivism. *Journal of Social Sciences, Literature and Languages*, *1*(1), 9-16.

Askew, S. & Lodge, C. (2000). Gifts, ping-pong and loops: Linking feedback and learning. *Feedback for Learning,* 1-17.

Atkins, M. (1995). What should we be assessing? In P. Knight (Ed.) *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*, (pp.25-34) London: Kogan Page.

Austen, L. (2016). 'Balancing academic gatekeeping and interpersonal positioning: A qualitative analysis of written feedback to undergraduate students', *Practitioner Research in Higher Education Journal*, 10(2), pp.67-81.

Bailey, R., & Garner, M. (2010). Is the feedback in higher education assessment worth the paper it is written on? Teachers' reflections on their practices. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *15*(2), 187-198.

Barton, K. L., Schofield, S. J., McAleer, S., & Ajjawi, R. (2016). Translating evidence-based guidelines to improve feedback practices: The interACT case study. *BMC Medical Education*, *16*(1), 1-12.

Basturkmen, H. (2012). Review of research into the correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices. *System,* 40(2), 282-295.

Basturkmen, H., East, M., & Bitchener, J. (2014). Supervisors' on-script feedback comments on drafts of dissertations: Socialising students into the academic discourse community. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *19*(4), 432-445.

Baughan, P. (Ed.). (2020). On your marks: Learner focused feedback practices and feedback literacy. *Advance HE*. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/your-marks-learner-focused-feedback-practices-and-feedback-literacy

Bazerman, C. (1981). What written knowledge does: Three examples of academic discourse. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, *11*(3), 361-387.

Becher, T. (1989). *Academic tribes and territories*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Becher,T. (1994). The significance of disciplinary differences. *Studies in Higher Education,* 19(2) 151-161.

Benesch, S. (1993). ESL, ideology, and the politics of pragmatism. *TESOL Quarterly*, *27*(4), 705-717.

Benesch, S. (2001). *Critical English for academic purposes: Theory, politics, and practice*. New Jersey, Routledge.

Bhatia, V.K. (2002). A generic view of academic discourse. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic Discourse* (pp.21-39) Harlow: Pearson Education.

Biber, D., Nekrasova, T., & Horn, B. (2011). The effectiveness of feedback for L1-English and L2-writing development: A meta-analysis. *ETS Research Report Series*, *2011*(1), i-99.

Biggs, J. (1999). What the student does: Teaching for enhanced learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *18*(1), 57-75.

Birenbaum, M. (2007). Assessment and instruction preferences and their relationship with test anxiety and learning strategies. *Higher Education*, 53(6), 749-768.

Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of the difficulties of postgraduate L2 thesis students writing the discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 4-18.

Bitchener, J., Basturkmen, H., & East, M. (2010). The focus of supervisor written feedback to thesis/dissertation students. *International Journal of English Studies*, *10*(2), 79-97.

Bitchener, J. & Knoch, U. (2009). The relative effectiveness of different types of direct written corrective feedback. *System*, 37(2), 322–9.

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice,* 5(1), 7-74.

Boud, D. (2000). Sustainable assessment: Rethinking assessment for the learning society. *Studies in Continuing Education*, *22*(2), 151-167.

Boud, D. & Molloy, E. (2013). What is the problem with feedback? In D. Boud and E. Molloy (Eds.), *Feedback in higher and professional education: Understanding it and doing it well.* (pp. 1 – 10) Oxon: Routledge.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Terry, G. (2015). Thematic analysis. In P. Rohleder & A. Lyons (Eds.), *Qualitative research in clinical and health psychology.* (pp. 99-113) Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Brenner, M. E. (2006). Interviewing in educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 357–370) Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Brown, E. & Glover, C. (2006). Evaluating written feedback. In C. Bryan and K. Clegg (Eds), *Innovative Assessment in Higher Education,* (pp. 81-91) London: Routledge.

Brown, G. T. L., & Harris, L. R. (2018). Methods in feedback research. In A. A. Lipnevich & J. K. Smith (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of instructional feedback* (pp. 97–119). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, J. (2007). Feedback: The student perspective. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, *12*(1), 33-51.

Bryman, A. (2008). The end of the paradigm wars? In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman, and J. Brannen (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods* (pp. 13 – 25) London: Sage Publications.

Buehl, M. M., & Beck, J. S. (2015). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices. In H. Fives, H., & M.G. Gill. (Eds.). *International handbook of research on teachers' beliefs.* (pp. 66-84) Oxon: Routledge.

Carless, D. (2006). Differing perceptions in the feedback process. *Studies in Higher Education*, *31*(2), 219-233.

Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: Enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315-1325.

Carless, D., Salter, D., Yang, M., & Lam, J. (2011). Developing sustainable feedback practices. *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(4), 395-407.

Cherryholmes, C. H. (1992). Notes on pragmatism and scientific realism. *Educational Researcher*, *21*(6), 13-17.

Cho, J. Y., & Lee, E. H. (2014). Reducing confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences. *Qualitative Report*, *19*(32).

Christie, F. & Maton, K. (Eds.). (2011). *Disciplinarity: Functional linguistic and sociological perspectives.* Bloomsbury Publishing.

Clegg, K., & Bryan, C. (2019). How innovative are we? In C. Bryan & K. Clegg (Eds.), *Innovative assessment in higher education: A handbook for academic practitioners: research*. (pp. 1-6) Oxon: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education.* Oxon: Routledge.

Colclough, T., Fox, A., & Driscoll, J. (2019). The use of literature in three academic disciplines. In S. Brewer, A. Standring & G. Stansfield (Eds.), *Papers from the Professional Issues Meeting (PIM) on In-sessional English for Academic Purposes.* Renfrew: BALEAP

Crisp, B. R. (2007). Is it worth the effort? How feedback influences students' subsequent submission of assessable work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *32*(5), 571-581.

Davies, M., & Barnett, R. (Eds.), (2015). *The Palgrave handbook of critical thinking in higher education*. London: Springer.

Dawson, P., Henderson, M., Mahoney, P., Phillips, M., Ryan, T., Boud, D., & Molloy E. (2019). What makes for effective feedback: Staff and student perspectives. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 44 (1)

Denzin N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., (Eds.), (2017). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed). London: Sage Publications.

Diener, E., & Crandall, R. (1978). *Ethics in social and behavioral research*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Dunworth, K. & Sanchez, H. S. (2016). Perceptions of quality in staff-student written feedback in higher education: A case study. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21(5) 576–589.

East, M., Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2012). What constitutes effective feedback to postgraduate research students? The students' perspective. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, *9*(2),7.

Ellis, R., Sheen, Y., Murakami, M., & Takashima, H. (2008). The effects of focused and unfocused written corrective feedback in an English as a foreign language context. *System*, 36, 353–71.

Esterhazy, R., & Damşa, C. (2019). Unpacking the feedback process: An analysis of undergraduate students' interactional meaning-making of feedback comments. *Studies in Higher Education*, *44*(2), 260-274.

Evans, C. (2013). Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education. *Review of Educational Research*, *83*(1), 70-120.

Fairclough, N. (2001). Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis.* (pp. 121–138) London: Sage.

Falchikov, N., & Boud, D. (2007). Assessment and emotion: The impact of being assessed. In D. Boud, & N. Falchikov (Eds.), *Rethinking Assessment in Higher Education. Learning for the Longer Term*. (pp. 154-166) London: Routledge.

Ferguson, G. (2007). The global spread of English, scientific communication and ESP: Questions of equity access and domain loss. *Ibérica* 13, pp. 7-38.

Ferguson, P. (2011). Student perceptions of quality feedback in teacher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* 36 (1): 51–62.

Fernando, N., Cleland, J., McKenzie, H., & Cassar, K. (2008). Identifying the factors that determine feedback given to undergraduate medical students following formative mini-CEX assessments. *Medical Education*, *42*(1), 89-95.

Fernández-Toro, M., Truman, M., & Walker, M. (2013). Are the principles of effective feedback transferable across disciplines? A comparative study of written assignment feedback in languages and technology. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *38*(7), 816-830.

Ferris, D. R. (2010). Second language writing research and written corrective feedback in SLA: Intersections and practical applications. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 181-201.

Ferris, D.R. & Kurzer, K. (2019). Does error feedback help L2 writers? Latest evidence on the efficacy of written corrective Feedback. In K. Hyland and F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues.* (pp. 106-124) Cambridge: CUP.

Ferris, D. R., Pezone, S., Tade, C. R., & Tinti, S. (1997). Teacher commentary on student writing: Descriptions & implications. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *6*(2), 155-182.

Flowerdew, J., (Ed.), (2002). *Academic Discourse.* London: Pearson Education.

Flowerdew, J. (2016). English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) Writing: Making the case. *Writing & Pedagogy*, 8(1).

Flowerdew, J., & Costley, T. (Eds.), (2016). *Discipline-specific writing: Theory into practice*. London: Routledge.

Fortanet, I. (2008). Evaluative language in peer review referee reports. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *7*(1), 27-37.

Fosnot, C. T., (Ed.). (2005). *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice*. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College.

Gardner, S., & Nesi, H. (2013). A classification of genre families in university student writing. *Applied Linguistics,* 34(1), 25-52.

Getzlaf, B., Perry, B., Toffner, G., Lamarche, K., & Edwards, M. (2009). Effective instructor feedback: Perceptions of online graduate students. *Journal of Educators Online,* 6(2), n2.

Gibbs, G., & Simpson, C. (2005). Conditions under which assessment supports student learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, (1) 3–31.

Gillway, M., (2020). *An exploration of the depths of feedback in higher education: Bringing the beliefs of academic teachers to the surface.* Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Bath.

Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. London: Sage.

Glaser, B.G. (1992). *Emerging vs. forcing: Basics of grounded theory analysis.* Mill Valley: The Sociology Press.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago.

Glover, C., & Brown, E. (2006). Written feedback for students: too much, too detailed or too incomprehensible to be effective? *Bioscience Education*, *7*(1), 1-16.

Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. In D.M Newman & J O'Brien (2008). *Sociology: Exploring the architecture of everyday life*. (pp. 120-129) London: Sage Publications

Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, *24*(2), 105-112.

Grannell, L., (2017). *An investigation of subject tutor feedback on student written work within disciplines*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Reading.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (pp.105- 117) Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Hall, G. (2000). Local approaches to critical pedagogy: An investigation into the dilemmas raised by critical approaches to ELT. Lancaster University *CRILE Working Paper,* 48.

Halliday, M.A. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar.* London: Arnold.

Han, Y. & Hyland, F. (2019). Learner Engagement with written feedback. A sociocognitive perspective. In K. Hyland & F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues.* (pp. 247-264) Cambridge: CUP.

Harwood, N., & Hadley, G. (2004). Demystifying institutional practices: Critical pragmatism and the teaching of academic writing. *English for Specific Purposes*, *23*(4), 355-377.

Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.

Henderson, M., Ryan, T., & Phillips, M. (2019). The challenges of feedback in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *44*(8), 1237-1252.

Higgins, R., Hartley, P., & Skelton A. (2002). The conscientious consumer: Reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education,* 27 (1) 53-64.

Hill, J., & West, H. (2020). Improving the student learning experience through dialogic feed-forward assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*.

Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Fairbairn, H., & Lovat, T. (2014). The focus and substance of formative comment provided by PhD examiners. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(6), 983-1000.

Holley, K. A. (2017). Interdisciplinary curriculum and learning in higher education. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*.

Holmes, J. (1988). Doubt and certainty in ESL textbooks. *Applied Linguistics,* 91, 20-44.

Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. (4th Ed) London: Routledge.

Hood, S. (2010). *Appraising research: Evaluation in academic writing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Howe, K. R. (1988). Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard. *Educational Researcher*, *17*(8), 10-16.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, *15*(9), 1277-1288.

Hughes, G. (2011). Towards a personal best: A case for introducing ipsative assessment in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *36*(3), 353-367.

Hughes, G., Smith, H., & Creese, B. (2015). Not seeing the wood for the trees: Developing a feedback analysis tool to explore feed forward in modularised programmes. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *40*(8), 1079-1094.

Huxham, M. (2007). Fast and effective feedback: Are model answers the answer? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *32*(6), 601-611.

Hyatt, D. F. (2005). Yes, a very good point!: A critical genre analysis of a corpus of feedback commentaries on Master of Education assignments. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 10(3), 339-353.

Hyland, F. (1998). The impact of teacher written feedback on individual writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *7*(3), 255-286.

Hyland, F. (2001). Providing effective support: Investigating feedback to distance language learners. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, *16*(3), 233-247.

Hyland, F. (2010). Future directions in feedback on second language writing: Overview and research agenda. *International Journal of English Studies*, *10*(2), 171-182.

Hyland, F., & Hyland, K. (2001). Sugaring the pill: Praise and criticism in written feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *10*(3), 185-212.

Hyland, K. (1999). Academic attribution: Citation and the construction of disciplinary knowledge. *Applied Linguistics*, *20*(3), 341-367.

Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary discourses: Social Interactions in academic writing*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Hyland, K. (2002). Activity and evaluation: Reporting practices in academic writing. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic Discourse*. (pp. 115-130) London: Longman.

Hyland, K. (2005). Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse. *Discourse studies*, *7*(2), 173-192.

Hyland, K. (2008). Genre and academic writing in the disciplines. *Language Teaching*, *41*(4), 543-562.

Hyland, K. (2009). Writing in the disciplines: Research evidence for specificity *Taiwan International ESP Journal* 1(1) 5-22.

Hyland, K. (2013a). Faculty feedback: Perceptions and practices in L2 disciplinary writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22(3), 240-253.

Hyland, K. (2013b). Student perceptions of hidden messages in teacher written feedback. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *39*(3), 180-187.

Hyland, K. (2017). Learning to write for academic purposes: Specificity and second language writing. In J. Bitchener, N. Storch & R. Wette (Eds.), *Teaching writing for academic purposes to multilingual students: Instructional approaches*. (pp. 24-41) London: Routledge.

Hyland, K. (2019). What messages do students take from teacher feedback? In K. Hyland and F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues.* (pp. 265-284) Cambridge: CUP.

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). Feedback on second language students' writing. *Language Teaching*, *39*(2), 83-101.

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (Eds.), (2019). *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues.* Cambridge: CUP.

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2019). Interpersonality and teacher-written feedback. In K. Hyland and F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues.* (pp. 165-183) Cambridge: CUP.

Ilgen, D. & Davis, A. (2000). Bearing bad news: Reactions to negative performance feedback. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 49, 550-65.

Johns, A. (2008). Genre awareness for the novice academic student: An ongoing quest. *Language Teaching,* 41(2), 237–252.

Joffe, H., & Yardley, L. (2004). Content and thematic analysis. *Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology*, *56*, 68

Jolly, B., & Boud, D. (2013). Written feedback: what is it good for and how can we do it well? In D. Boud & E. Molloy (Eds.), *Feedback in higher and professional education: Understanding it and doing it well.* (pp. 104-124) Oxon: Routledge.

Jönsson, A. (2013). Facilitating productive use of feedback in Higher Education. *Active Learning in Higher Education,* 14 (1), 63–76.

Kang, H. S., & Dykema, J. (2017). Critical discourse analysis of student responses to teacher feedback on student writing. *Journal of Response to Writing*, *3*(2).

Knight, P. & Yorke, M. (2003). *Assessment, learning and employability.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Kondracki, N. L., Wellman, N. S., & Amundson, D. R. (2002). Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, *34*(4), 224-230.

Krippendorp, K. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology.* London: Sage.

Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Laurillard, D (2002). *Rethinking university teaching: a conversational framework for the effective use of learning technologies.* (2nd Ed) London: Routledge.

Lave, J & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lea, M.R. & Street, B.V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education,* 23(2), 157-172.

Lea, M. R., & Stierer, B. (Eds.), (2000). *Student writing in higher education: New contexts*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press/Society for Research into Higher Education.

Lee, I. (2008). Understanding teachers' written feedback practices in Hong Kong secondary classrooms. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *17*(2), 69-85.

Leki, I. (1991). The preferences of ESL students for error correction in college-level writing classes. *Foreign Language Annals*, *24*(3), 203-218.

Leki, I. (2006). You cannot ignore: L2 graduate students' response to discipline-based written feedback. In K. Hyland & F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues* (pp.266-286) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Li, J., & De Luca, R. (2014). Review of assessment feedback. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(2), 378-393.

Lillis, T. (1999). Whose common sense: Essayist literacy and the institutional practice of mystery. In: C. Jones, J. Turner and B.Street (Eds.), *Students writing in the university: cultural and epistemological issues* (pp.127-140) Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Lillis, T. (2008). Ethnography as method, methodology, and deep theorizing: Closing the gap between text and context in academic writing research. *Written Communication,* 25(3), 353-388.

Lillis, T. (2019). Academic literacies: Sustaining a critical space on writing in academia. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, (15).

Lillis, T., & Tuck, J. (2016). Academic literacies: A critical lens on writing and reading in the academy. In K. Hyland & P. Shaw (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes*. (pp.30-43) Oxon: Routledge.

Lillis, T., & Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: Issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *4*(1), 5-32.

Lillis, T., & Turner, J. (2001). Student writing in higher education: Contemporary confusion, traditional concerns. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *6*(1), 57-68.

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E.G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. (4th ed). (pp. 97-128) London Sage Publications.

Lindgreen, A., Di Benedetto, C. A., Brodie, R. J., & Van der Borgh, M. (2020). How to undertake great cross-disciplinary research. *Industrial Marketing Management,* 90, A1-A5.

Lipnevich, A. A., Berg, D. & Smith. J.K. (2016). Toward a model of student response to feedback. In G. T. L. Brown & L. Harris (Eds.), *Human Factors and Social Conditions in Assessment*, (pp.169–185) New York: Routledge.

Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2008). Feedback on assessment: Students' perceptions of quality and effectiveness. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *33*(3), 263-275.

Lu, J., & Law, N. (2012). Online peer assessment: Effects of cognitive and affective feedback. *Instructional Science*, *40*(2), 257-275.

Martin, J. R., & White, P.R.R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Mayring, P. (2004). Qualitative content analysis. In U. Flick., E. von Kardoff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research*. (pp. 159-176) London: Sage.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. London: Sage.

Molloy, E. (2009). Time to pause: Giving and receiving feedback in clinical education. *Clinical Education in the Health Professions*, 1, 304.

Molloy, E. (2010). The feedforward mechanism: A way forward in clinical learning? *Medical Education*, *44*(12), 1157-1159.

Molloy, E., Borrell-Carrió, F., & Epstein, R., (2013). The impact of emotions in feedback. In D. Boud, & E. Molloy (Eds.), *Feedback in higher and professional education: Understanding it and doing it well*. (pp.50-71) Oxon: Routledge.

Molloy, E. & Boud, D. (2013). Changing conceptions of feedback. In D. Boud & E. Molloy (Eds.), *Feedback in higher and professional education: Understanding it and doing it well*. (pp.11-33) Oxon: Routledge.

Molloy, E., Boud, D., & Henderson, M. (2020). Developing a learning-centred framework for feedback literacy. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *45*(4), 527-540.

Mondschein, C.F. & Monda, C., (2019). The EU's general data protection regulation (GDPR) in a research context. In P. Kubben, M. Dumontier & A. Dekker (Eds.), *Fundamentals of Clinical Data Science* (pp. 55-71) Cham: Springer.

Murray, N., & Sharpling, G. (2019). What traits do academics value in student writing? Insights from a psychometric approach. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *44*(3), 489-500.

Mutch, A. (2003). Exploring the practice of feedback to students. *Active Learning in Higher Education,* 4(1), 24-38.

NCIHE. (1997). Higher education in the learning society. *Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education ('the Dearing Report')*. HMSO, London

Nesi, H., & Gardner, S. (2006). Variation in disciplinary culture: University tutors' views on assessed writing tasks. *British Studies in Applied Linguistics*, *21*, 99.

Nesi, H., & Gardner, S. (2012). *Genres across the disciplines: Student writing in higher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nesi, H., & Gardner, S. (2018). The BAWE corpus and genre families classification of assessed student writing. *Assessing Writing*, *38*, 51-55.

Neumann, R. (2001). Disciplinary differences and university teaching. *Studies in Higher Education, 26*(2), 135-146.

Neumann, R., Parry, S., & Becher, T. (2002). Teaching and learning in their disciplinary contexts: A conceptual analysis. *Studies in higher education*, *27*(4), 405-417.

Newby, P. (2014). *Research Methods for Education*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Nicol, D. (2010). From monologue to dialogue: Improving written feedback processes in mass higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 501-517.

Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, *31*(2), 199-218.

NSS (2021). *National Student Survey*, *Office for Students.* Retrieved from: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/nss-data-overview/

O'Donovan, B. (2020). What makes feedback effective? Enhancing students learning from, and satisfaction with, assessment feedback. In P. Baughan (Ed.) On your marks: Learner focused feedback practices and feedback literacy. *Advance HE.* Retrieved from: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/your-marks-learner-focused-feedback-practices-and-feedback-literacy

O'Donovan, B. M., den Outer, B., Price, M., & Lloyd, A. (2021). What makes good feedback good? *Studies in Higher Education*, *46*(2), 318-329.

O'Sullivan, M. W., & Guo, L. (2010). Critical thinking and Chinese international students: An east-west dialogue. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, *5*(2).

Orrell, J. (2006). Feedback on learning achievement: Rhetoric and reality. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *11*(4), 441-456.

Orsmond, P., & Merry, S. (2011). Feedback alignment: Effective and ineffective links between tutors' and students' understanding of coursework feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *36*(2), 125-136.

Paltridge, B., & Phakiti, A., (2015). *Research methods in applied linguistics.* London: Bloomsbury.

Pelgrim, E. A., Kramer, A. W., Mokkink, H. G., & Van der Vleuten, C. P. (2012). Quality of written narrative feedback and reflection in a modified mini-clinical evaluation exercise: An observational study. *BMC Medical Education*, 12(1), 97.

Pennycook, A. (1997). Vulgar pragmatism, critical pragmatism, and EAP. *English for Specific Purposes*, *16*(4), 253-269.

Pintrich, P. R., & Zusho, A. (2002). Student motivation and self-regulated learning in the college classroom. In J.C. Smart & W.G. Tierney (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 55-128) Dordrecht: Springer.

Pitts, S. E. (2005). 'Testing, testing...' How do students use written feedback? *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *6*(3), 218-229.

Poulos, A., & Mahony, M. J. (2008). Effectiveness of feedback: The students' perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *33*(2), 143-154.

Price, M., Handley, K., Millar, J., & O'Donovan, B. (2010). Feedback: All that effort, but what is the effect? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *35*(3), 277-289.

PTES (2020). Postgraduate taught experience survey. *Advance HE*. Retrieved from: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/postgraduate-taught-experience-survey-2020

Ramaprasad, A. (1983). On the definition of feedback. *Behavioral Science*, *28*(1), 4-13.

Ramsden, P. (1992). *Learning to teach in Higher Education.* London: Routledge.

Rolfe, H. (2002). Students' demands and expectations in an age of reduced financial support: The perspectives of lecturers in four English universities. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *24*(2), 171-182.

Rowe, A. D., & Wood, L. N. (2008). Student perceptions and preferences for feedback. *Asian Social Science* 4(3), 78-88.

Rowe, A. D., Wood, L. N., & Petocz, P. (2008). Engaging students: Student preferences for feedback. In *Proceedings of the 31st HERDSA Annual Conference*.

Sadler, D.R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science,* 18(2), 119-144.

Sadler, D. R. (2009). Grade integrity and the representation of academic achievement. *Studies in Higher Education* 34 (7): 807–26.

Sadler, D. R. (2010). Beyond feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 535-550.

Sambell, K., & Graham, L., (2020). Managing exemplars to mazimise learning: shifting the focus to develop students' inner feedback. In P. Baughan (Ed.) On your marks: Learner focused feedback practices and feedback literacy. *Advance HE.* Retrieved from: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/your-marks-learner-focused-feedback-practices-and-feedback-literacy

Samraj, B. (2002). Disciplinary variation in abstracts: The case of wildlife behaviour and conservation biology. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic Discourse* (pp.40-56) Harlow: Pearson Education.

Sandelowski, M. (2010). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in Nursing & Health*, *33*(1), 77-84.

Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F. & Silverman, D. (2004). Introduction: Inside qualitative research. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice.* London: Sage Publications.

Sharpling, G. (2002). Learning to teach English for academic purposes: Some current training and development issues. *English Language Teacher Education and Development*, 6, 82-94.

Starfield, S., Paltridge, B., McMurtrie, R., Holbrook, A., Lovat, T., Kiley, M., & Fairbairn, H. (2017). Evaluation and instruction in PhD examiners' reports: How grammatical choices construe examiner roles. *Linguistics and Education*, *42*, 53-64.

Stewart, M. (2015). The language of praise and criticism in a student evaluation survey. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *45*, 1-9.

Street, B., Lea, M. R., & Lillis, T. (2015). Revisiting the question of transformation in academic literacies: the ethnographic imperative. In T. Lillis, K. Harrington, M. R. Lea, & S. Mitchell (Eds.), *Working with academic literacies: case studies towards transformative practice*, 383-390. WAC Clearinghouse.

Sutton, P. (2012). Conceptualizing feedback literacy: Knowing, being, and acting. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 49 (1): 31–40.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. (1996). Occluded genres in the academy: The case of the submission letter. In E. Ventola & A. Mauranen (Eds.), *Academic writing: Intercultural and textual issues*. (pp. 45-58) Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (Vol. 1). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Tai, J., Ajjawi, R., Boud, D., Dawson, P., & Panadero, E. (2017). Developing evaluative judgement: enabling students to make decisions about the quality of work. *Higher Education*, *76*(3), 467-481.

Tardy, M. (2015). Bending Genres, or When Is a Deviation an Innovation? In N. Artemeva & A. Freedman (Eds.), *Genre Studies Around the Globe: Beyond the Three Traditions*. Canada: Inkshed Trafford publishing.

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic Analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. (pp. 17-37) London: Sage.

Thistoll, T., Hooper, V., & Pauleen, D. J. (2016). Acquiring and developing theoretical sensitivity through undertaking a grounded preliminary literature review. *Quality & Quantity*, 50(2), 619-636.

Thumser, A., Bailey, I., & Trinder, S. (2020). Integration of assessments and feedback into a reflective learning loop on an MSci module. In P. Baughan (Ed.) On your marks: Learner focused feedback practices and feedback literacy. *Advance HE.* Retrieved from: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/your-marks-learner-focused-feedback-practices-and-feedback-literacy

Tomlinson, M., & Holmes, L. (Eds.). (2016). *Graduate employability in context: Theory, research and debate*. London: Springer.

Tribble, C. (2002). Corpora and corpus analysis: new windows on academic writing. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), (2002) *Academic Discourse* (pp. 131-149) London: Pearson Education Ltd.

Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning*, *46*(2), 327-369.

Truscott, J. (1999). The case for 'The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes': A response to Ferris. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *8*(2), 111-122.

Tuck, J. (2012). Feedback-giving as social practice: Teachers' perspectives on feedback as institutional requirement, work and dialogue. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *17*(2), 209-221.

Turner, J. (1999). Academic literacy and the discourse of transparency. In: C. Jones, J. Turner and B.Street (Eds.), *Students writing in the university: cultural and epistemological issues* (pp. 149-160) Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Turner, J. (2010). *Language in the academy: Cultural reflexivity and intercultural dynamics.* Bristol: Multilingual matters.

Turner, J. (2011). Rewriting writing in higher education: The contested spaces of proofreading. *Studies in Higher Education*, *36*(4), 427-440.

Turner, J. (2018). *On writtenness: The cultural politics of academic writing*. Bloomsbury Academic, London.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, *15*(3), 398-405.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walker, M. (2009). An investigation into written comments on assignments: Do students find them usable? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *34*(1), 67-78.

Watson, D., (1996). Modularity: for and against. In: *Modular Higher Education in the UK in Focus.* (pp. 6-9) Higher Education Quality Council, London.

Weaver, M.R. (2006). Do students value feedback? Student perceptions of tutors' written responses. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* 31(3), 379-394.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston: Harvard business press.

Wette, R. (2019). Embedded provision to develop source-based writing skills in a Year 1 health sciences course: How can the academic literacy developer contribute? *English for Specific Purposes*, 56, 35-49.

Whong, M., & Godfrey, J. (Eds.). (2021). *What is Good Academic Writing?: Insights Into Discipline-specific Student Writing*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Wingate, U. (2010). The impact of formative feedback on the development of academic writing. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* 35(5): 519–533.

Wingate, U., & Tribble, C. (2012). The best of both worlds? Towards an English for academic purposes/academic literacies writing pedagogy. *Studies in Higher Education*, *37*(4), 481-495.

Winstone, N. E., & Boud, D. (2020). The need to disentangle assessment and feedback in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-12.

Winstone, N. E., Nash, R. A., Rowntree, J., & Menezes, R. (2016). What do students want most from written feedback information? Distinguishing necessities from luxuries using a budgeting methodology. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(8), 1237-1253.

Winstone, N. E., Nash, R. A., Rowntree, J., & Parker, M. (2017). It'd be useful, but I wouldn't use it: barriers to university students' feedback seeking and recipience. *Studies in Higher Education*, *42*(11), 2026-2041.

Woodward-Kron, R. (2004). Discourse communities and writing apprenticeship: An investigation of these concepts in undergraduate Education students' writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *3*(2), 139-161.

Yelland, C. (2011). A genre and move analysis of written feedback in higher education. *Language and Literature*, *20*(3), 218-235.

Yorke, M. (2003). Formative assessment in higher education: Moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education,* 45(4), 477-501.

Zamel, V. (1985). Responding to student writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, *19*(1), 79-101.

Appendices

Appendix I: Coding Framework

First tier of coding framework: Focus of feedback			Description	Example of coded segments	Codes module; sampling n°; assigned codes
How the work is or should be expressed	Formatting [**F**]		Use of illustrative figures, tables italics, abbreviations	In the finding section, you nicely visualized the quantitative data in a table.	[AL-8] [**F**-P]
	Referencing [**R**]		Comments relate to missing or unclear referencing, and adherence to academic conventions.	Make sure that all referencing is accurate and complete, and conforms to the recommendations of the department style guide	[CI-3] [**R**-C-PF]
	Writtenness [**W**]		Comments relate to how well the work is written, register, inappropriate use of bullet points	You need to use greater precision when you outline the various issues and ideas	[CI-12] [**W**-C-IMP]
	Language [**L**]		Comments relate to grammatical accuracy and sentence level commentary eg run-on sentences, proof-reading and word choice	High levels of presentational accuracy Also, be careful with the use of the terms “mediation” and “moderation”	[CS-9] [**L**-P] [BS-4] [**L**-C]
What is or should be included in the work	Understanding of subject [**U**]	[**P**]	Comments crediting work / student with understanding of main ideas, concepts, theories, definition of key terms, ability to summarise other authors’ main arguments/ relevant content.	The essay contained a number of the important points relevant to the title and showed some good understanding of the topic. In most cases you have demonstrate the ability to summarise the key points of the texts used.	[BS-12] [**U-P**] [CS-2] [**U-P**]

		[**C**]	As above but includes a negative evaluation ie missing content, insufficient detail, explanation, focus, depth, irrelevant, repetitive / inaccurate information, misunderstandings	You should also mention why DNA needs to be pre-treated. However, it provides only a rather tangential and incomplete answer to the question set	[BS-3] [**U-C**] [CI-11] [**U-C**]
	Argument [**A**]	[**P**]	Crediting students' evaluation of arguments or convincing support of their own; cross-referencing; use of evidence & wide reading; identification of limitations or flaws; students' suggestions, identify contribution / significance of articles, source selection	You also provide a good level of critical analysis of both your experience and the existing literature. I agree that the solutions are disappointing and impressed by your reference to innovative interventions elsewhere in Africa. You make some good suggestions about how to manage and organize tasks in the classroom.	[AL-6] [**A-P**-RW] [CS-9] [**A-P**] [AL-12] [**A-P**-RW]
		[**C**]	As above but where comment includes a negative evaluation eg insufficient analysis, use of the literature etc; ideas the tutor disagrees with / not convinced by	You might perhaps have critiqued her proposal for a 'gradualist' approach to elimination of child labour Many of the points you make are general points about cultural tourism and could equally apply to many other destinations and communities	[CS-3] [A-C-IMP] [CI-1] [A-C]
How the work is or should be organised	Organisation [**O**]		Includes organisation of sections or misplacing of content at whole text level and organisation at paragraph level	Could you have ordered the articles and structured your annotations in such a way as to achieve a greater sense of flow between each? Paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence which introduces the main point	[CS-5] [**O-**C-Q] [AL-12] [**O**-C-PF]
Non- specific focus [**NS**]			Not addressing a particular aspect of the text / encouraging students to seek further support.	This was a pleasure to mark – thank you! Do bring an essay plan to the next meeting for us to discuss.	[CS-8] [**NS**-P-E] [CS-10] [**NS**-NE-S]

Second tier of coding framework: Qualitative assessment	Descriptors	Example of coded segments	Codes module; sampling nº; assigned codes
Praise [**P**]	May refer to overall work or specific aspect of the work under appraisal. The comments contain a positive evaluation. Includes comments which express agreement with the student's claim	Clearly you have researched this subject extensively, drawing very effectively on the sources you cite to give support to your arguments. From a brief review of this article I have to agree with your puzzlement over the comparison of South Africa and the US and indeed the inclusion of a range of other countries in passing.	[AL-5] [A-**P**] [CS-1] [A-**P**]
Critique [**C**]	Refer to comments which identify what is weak, absent, incorrect, not necessary or wrong. Also includes comments which express disagreement with the students' viewpoint	However, too many of these arguments are really very vague and speculative. I do not understand your claim that the 'paper does not fully persuade how abortion is a risk to the life of the infant' as the procedure is intended to result in the death of the foetus.	[CI-4] [A-**C**] [CS-13] [A-**C**-TC]
Mitigating paired act patterns [**M**]	A strategy to mitigate the impact of negative criticism. Usually, one or both of the clauses within the paired act pattern contain a positive or negative evaluative comment.	Your suggestion for adapting TBLT is a good one although you could have provided more detail	[AL-4] [A-**M**]
Non-evaluative [**NE**]	Comments which are not imbued with any evaluation of the students' performance.	If you haven't yet done so, take one of the free courses put on by XXXXXX's and learn how to make full use of one of these tools.	[BS-7] [R-**NE**-PF-S]

Third tier of coding framework: Qualities perceived as valuable by students	Descriptors	Example of coded segments	Codes module; sampling nº; assigned codes
Criteria-referenced [**CR**]	Comments either referring to meeting marking criteria or justifying grade	This would have demonstrated your understanding of the approach more clearly and pushed this essay up to distinction level.	[AL-9] [U-C-IMP-**CR**]
How the work could have been improved [**IMP**]	Comments which focus on what is needed to improve performance in the specific work	I would like to have seen a more extended and critical consideration of why the categorising of popular culture as heritage might be considered controversial.	[CI-5] [A-C-**IMP**]
Pointers to take forward [**PF**]	Do not apply to the specific work per se but have a wider applicability, giving advice beyond the work in question	You should always make sure the literature you are citing is not outdated and include the most up to date research.	[BS-3] [A-C-**PF**]
Tutor Clarification [**TC**]	Comments which provide additional clarification, often following on from a correction or misunderstanding.	Currently, bisulfite conversion is widely used for microarray research, applied in 450k Methylation and new 850k EPIC Array. Grounded theory if well conceived should be a rigorous analytical approach	[BS-3] [U-NE-**TC**] [CS-5] [A-NE-**TC**]
Asking questions of the work / student [**Q**]	Questions asking for further information, clarity or prompting further consideration. They may also be questions challenging claims.	Does your final point potentially contradict identification of the need for cultural sensitivity though? Should academics bear more responsibility for public awareness or is that not their role?	[CS-9] [A-C-**Q**] [CS-1] [A-C-**Q**]
Applicability to real-world settings [**RW**]	Comments that could be applied to students' future professional practice	Overall you provide a nice conclusion with appropriate reflection on how this assignment might help your own future teaching.	[AL-6] [A-P-**RW**]
Encouragement about performance [**E**]	Encouraging comments of the student's general skills beyond the assignment in question or overall performance	An enjoyable read. A fluent and accurate writing style which will support your academic development well.	[CS-6] [NS-P-**E**] [CS-11] [W-P-**E**]
Directing to additional support [**S**]	Comments which direct students to additional support	Do bring an essay plan to the next meeting for us to discuss.	[CS-10] [NS-NE-**S**]

Appendix II: Assignment title, module title, student's first language, grade awarded, and number of markers for each data set

MSc Biological Sciences (BS)

Sample number	Assignment Title Submitted AY 2015-16 & 2016-17; 3,000 word length	Module Title	Student's First Language	Grade[1]	Six Markers (A – F)
BS 1	One aim of genetic studies in psychiatric disorders is to use genetics to predict who may be at increased risk of developing these disorders. Describe the progress we have made towards this aim through genome-wide association studies and polygenic pre-diction. What are the challenges of genetic prediction?	Research Methods: Statistical Genetics	German	54%	E
BS 2	State two main approaches for studying DNA methylation and explain one of the approaches in detail including its advantages and limitations.	Research Methods Molecular Genetics	Korean	50%	C (MC 1)
BS 3	State two main approaches for studying DNA methylation and explain one of the approaches in detail including its advantages and limitations.	Research Methods Molecular Genetics	Romanian	56%	C (MC 1)
BS 4	Stressful life events play a major role in the development of depression. Discuss considering genetic, environmental, and developmental effects.	Psychology & Psychopathology	Polish	58%	F
BS 5	One aim of genetic studies into psychiatric disorders is to use genetics to predict who may be at increased risk of developing these disorders. Describe the progress we have made towards this aim through genome-wide association studies and polygenic prediction. What are the challenges of genetic prediction?	Research Methods: Statistical Genetics	Greek	57%	E
BS 6	Stressful life events play a major role in the development of depression. Discuss considering genetic, environmental, and developmental effects.	Psychology & Psychopathology	Thai	54%	F
BS 7	Provide an overview of next generation sequencing as a tool for genomics *Describe the benefits over chip based technology *In general terms describe the process of data handling and analysis of this data type *Consider the breadth of application for this technology *Suggest how this technology may impact modern medicine.	Research Methods: Bioinformatics	English	52%	A
BS 8	Stressful Life Events Play a Major Role in the Development of Depression. Discuss considering genetic, environmental and developmental effects.	Psychology & Psychopathology	English	58%	B
BS 9	State two main approaches for studying DNA methylation and explain one of the approaches in detail including its advantages and limitations.	Research Methods: Molecular Genetics	English	52%	C (MC 1)

[1] Fail 0-49, Pass 50 – 59, Merit 60-69, Distinction ≥ 70

BS 10	Biological Markers are useful in understanding the genetic, environmental and developmental basis of mental health disorders. Discuss using examples.	Psychology & Psychopathology	English	55%	D
BS 11	One aim of genetic studies into psychiatric disorders is to use genetics to predict who may be at increased risk of developing these disorders. Describe the progress we have made towards this aim through genome-wide association studies and polygenic prediction. What are the challenges of genetic prediction?	Research Methods: Statistical Genetics	English	59%	E
BS 12	One aim of genetic studies into psychiatric disorders is to use genetics to predict who may be at increased risk of developing these disorders. Describe the progress we have made towards this aim through genome-wide association studies and polygenic prediction. What are the challenges of genetic prediction?	Research Methods: Statistical Genetics	English	53%	E

MA Creative Industries (CI)

Sample number	Assignment Title Submitted AY 2015-16 & 2016-17; 3,000 word length	Module Title	Student's First Language	Grade	Single Marker (MC 2)
CI 1	What are the potential benefits and detriments of cultural tourism to a host community?	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	Mandarin	53%	G
CI 2	What are the potential benefits and detriments of cultural tourism to a host community?	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	Spanish	59%	G
CI 3	What are the potential benefits and detriments of cultural tourism to host community?	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	Mandarin	53%	G
CI 4	Does visitor access to heritage sites ultimately aid or threaten their preservation? The Skellig Michael case.	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	French	50%	G
CI 5	Examining Hong Kong's neon: can popular culture be heritage?	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	Cantonese	59%	G
CI 6	What happens to the 'aura' of heritage in the era of digital reproduction and virtual tourism?	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	Russian	58%	G
CI 7	To what extent does heritage policy and practice include minority and marginalized social groups within national stories, and can inclusion genuinely empower such groups?	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	English	58%	G
CI 8	Blurring the line between tangible and intangible heritage.	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	English	57%	G
CI 9	Does cultural tourism lead to cultural understanding, or cultural 'othering'?	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	English	54%	G

CI 10	Robert Hewison argues that the commodification of heritage weakens our knowledge and understanding of history. Critically interrogate this argument.	International Heritage - Politics, Policy & Practice	English	58%	G
CI 11	Subcultural evolution: underground punk and capitalism.	Youth Subcultures	English	58%	G
CI 12	Do subcultures provide marginalised groups with a space for identify formation absent from mainstream culture and society?	Youth Subcultures	English	55%	G

MA Child Studies (CS)

Sample number	Assignment Title Annotated Bibliography, submitted AY 2018-19; 2,000 word length	Module Title	Student's First Language	Grade	Single Marker (MC 3)
CS 1	America and the UN convention on the rights of the child	International Children's Rights	English	75%	H
CS 2	The right to play in school settings	International Children's Rights	English	51%	H
CS 3	A rights-based perspective on children's work	International Children's Rights	English	64%	H
CS 4	Deaf children's rights in education: a rights-based literature approach	International Children's Rights	English	60%	H
CS 5	Examining recent literature concerning unaccompanied children immigrating to the United States from Latin America	International Children's Rights	English	67%	H
CS 6	UNCRC and importance of playgrounds on children's right to play	International Children's Rights	English	54%	H
CS 7	Children's rights in relation to intercountry adoption	International Children's Rights	English	68%	H
CS 8	The rights of children in conflict with the law: practising youth justice within the International Children's Rights framework	International Children's Rights	English	74%	H
CS 9	Child marriage and children's rights	International Children's Rights	English	70%	H
CS 10	The effect of the economic situation in India on the right to education.	International Children's Rights	English	50%	H
CS 11	When should the right to life begin?	International Children's Rights	English	65%	H
CS 12	The right to life for children with disabilities	International Children's Rights	English	61%	H

CS 13	Abortions: the right to life or the right to health?	International Children's Rights	English	45%	H
CS 14	Children's right to participate and protect themselves in mainland China.	International Children's Rights	Mandarin	52%	H
CS 15	Donor conceived children: A child's right to identity	International Children's Rights	Polish & German	55%	H
CS 16	The African charter on the rights and welfare of the child (ACRWC)	International Children's Rights	Italian	64%	H

MA Applied Linguistics (AL)

Sample number	Assignment Title submitted AY 2019-20; 3,000 word length	Module Title	Student's First Language	Grade	Seven Markers (I - O)
AL 1	Describe what is meant by a task-based approach to language teaching and learning and discuss the rationale for such an approach. What are the arguments for and against using this approach in a context you are familiar with?	Principles and Practices in Second / Foreign Language Teaching	Mandarin	58%	I (MC 4)
AL 2	Discuss how you would foster the development of learner autonomy with a group of language learners in your context	Principles and Practices in Second / Foreign Language Teaching	Mandarin	72%	I (MC 4)
AL 3	Describe what is meant by a task-based approach to language teaching and learning and discuss the rationale for such an approach. What are the arguments for and against using this approach in a context you are familiar with?	Principles and Practices in Second / Foreign Language Teaching	Italian	55%	I (MC 4)
AL 4	Describe what is meant by a task-based approach to language teaching and learning and discuss the rationale for such an approach. What are the arguments for and against using this approach in a context you are familiar with?	Principles and Practices in Second / Foreign Language Teaching	Mandarin	59%	I (MC 4)
AL5	Give a detailed account of the mechanisms of policy and planning that shape the teaching of English as a Second Language to adults in the UK. Critically examine what is driving the "demand" for English and discuss the extent to which the interests of different parties are met.	Sociolinguistics	English	78%	J
AL 6	Language Learning report	Second/Additional Language Acquisition	English	80%	K
AL7	Evaluation of materials for teaching productive skills	Language Teaching Methodology	Mandarin	68%	L

AL 8	A case study of a language learner looking at one or two individual differences studied on the SLA course	Second/Additional Language Acquisition	Mandarin	66%	M
AL 9	Evaluation and use of materials for teaching the productive skills	Language Teaching Methodology	English	67%	N
AL 10	A case study of a language learner looking at one or two individual differences studied on the SLA course	Second/Additional Language Acquisition	English	70%	K
AL11	The end of the native speaker ideal: how the study of sociolinguistics can help teachers raise their students' awareness of the varieties of English	Sociolinguistics	Dutch	62%	J
AL 12	Evaluation and use of materials for teaching the productive skills	Language Teaching Methodology	Dutch	55%	O
AL 13	Evaluation and use of materials for teaching the productive skills	Language Teaching Methodology	Dutch	55%	O
AL14	Case study of a language learner looking at one or two individual differences studied on the SLA course	Second/Additional Language Acquisition	Dutch	45%	K

Appendix III: Sample Cover Sheet Study 1

[redacted]

Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Coversheet for submission of coursework

(Undergraduate & Taught Postgraduate)

Complete all sections of this form and ensure it is the first page of the document you submit.

Failure to attach the coversheet as required may result in your work not being accepted for assessment.

Word count, which should be calculated electronically, must be stated accurately below.

For details of what is included in the word count, and penalties incurred by exceeding the word count limit, please consult the coursework submission policy in the Faculty handbook.

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

This assignment is entirely my own work. Quotations from secondary literature are indicated by the use of inverted commas around ALL such quotations AND by reference in the text or notes to the author concerned. ALL primary and secondary literature used in this piece of work is indicated in the bibliography placed at the end, and dependence upon ANY source used is indicated at the appropriate point in the text. I confirm that no sources have been used other than those stated.

I understand what is meant by plagiarism and have signed at enrolment the declaration concerning the avoidance of plagiarism.

I understand that plagiarism is a serious examinations offence that may result in disciplinary action being taken.

I understand that I must submit work BEFORE the deadline, and that failure to do so will result in capped marks.

Candidate no. [redacted] (This is a letter followed by five digits, and can be found on Student Records)

Module Title:	International Heritage & Cultural Tourism
Module Code: (e.g. 5AABC123)	7AAIOC44
Assignment: (may be abbreviated)	Question 3
Assignment tutor/group:	[redacted]
Deadline:	3 May 2016
Date Submitted:	3 May 2016
Word Count:	3023

Your assignment may be used as an example of good practice for other students to refer to in future. If selected, your assignment will be presented anonymously and may include feedback comments or the specific grade awarded. Participation is optional and will not affect your grade.

Do you consent to your assignment being used in this way? Please tick the appropriate box below.

YES ☒ NO ☐

1

Appendix IV: Extract taken from MA Child Studies Handbook

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: the assessment is in two parts:

Part A: Annotated bibliography (worth 30% of the mark for the module).

Choose 6-8 sources on a topic of your choice in relation to children's rights, which may (but does not have to) be pertinent to the essay title that you choose (see below). **You must draw at least 2 sources from the Children's Rights reading list, but at least one source must come from your own literature search**. We suggest you draw primarily on academic articles. You may use chapters in academic books (but not student textbooks) but avoid whole books, which will be too large to summarise and critique in a very short word count. You must take an explicitly rights-based approach to the literature, although the articles themselves do not all have to be written from a rights-based perspective.

Choosing a topic that will feed into your later essay will be helpful in identifying pertinent literature and obtaining feedback into your understanding and analysis of the literature at an early stage. However, please note that if you do choose similar topics for the bibliography and the essay you must take care not to self-plagiarise in the essay: that is, ensure that you do not submit any of the same material (or make very similar points that have been reworded slightly) for both of the assignments.

Structure:

Cite the articles you have chosen using the Harvard or APA system of referencing: for more details please see the online programme handbook.

Provide a very brief **introduction** to the chosen topic, explaining its importance and the rationale for the selection of the sources included in the bibliography. Then write an annotation of each source, which will comprise **i) a concise summary of the source and ii) some assessment of its value or relevance.** For each source the summary will involve identifying a) its key aims or research questions, b) its major methods of investigation, and c) its main conclusions. In making an assessment of the value and relevance of a source, the key aspect is a critical evaluation of the article content, but it may be appropriate to a) consider the authority or background of the author, b) comment on the intended audience and c) compare or contrast this work with another you have cited, or others in the literature more widely. Finish with a very brief **conclusion**, highlighting key issues, common themes and contradictions across the literature you have discussed.

Assignment specific assessment criteria:

Understanding of the issues: demonstrates understanding of i) theoretical perspectives on children's rights; ii) the key points of the sources used; iii) the implications of children's rights in terms of their impact on children's lives; and iii) the ability to identify common themes and contradictions across sources.

Depth of knowledge: i) identification of key sources on the topic from the literature; ii) (where appropriate) the appropriateness of the study design and any possible study limitations; iii) the ability to summarise the argument of each paper succinctly; and iv) the ability to assess the contribution of each source to the literature. **Any additional sources cited are referred to in the reference list at the end of the essay.** (Please use the Harvard or APA system of referencing: for more details please see the handbook).

Structure and clarity of presentation: discussion of the individual papers is integrated into a coherent bibliography which includes an explanation of the choice of topic and papers and a succinct summary of the state of the knowledge base. Key points are made succinctly and clearly.

General: i) demonstration of the ability to analyse sources critically; ii) high levels of presentational accuracy (including grammatical expression, accurate spelling and attention to typographical detail).

Appendix V: Extract taken from MA Creative Industries Handbook

International Heritage & Cultural Tourism – Module Outline 2016-17

Summary

Heritage and tourism are increasingly important concepts in cultural and environmental policy, diplomacy, place attachment and marketing (at the national, regional and local level), racial, ethnic and cultural identities, and museum policy. This module aims to introduce students to both historical and contemporary debates about heritage and cultural tourism, and to illuminate how definitions and techniques reflect both the societies that produce them and the broader global context. It will consider various ways in which heritage and cultural tourism might be regarded as both compatible and irreconcilable (the tension between preservation and 'visitability', for example.) The module familiarises students with a number of key concepts in and theoretical approaches to heritage and cultural tourism, and applies these to a range of case studies from around the world. Students will be encouraged to explore and develop their own case studies and examples.

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge:

- Students will develop a theoretical, methodological and empirical framework for understanding heritage and cultural tourism.
- Students will be able to critically evaluate the contested term 'heritage' in relation to other key terms and paradigms.

Skills:

- Students will be able to communicate theoretical concepts both orally and in writing, integrating the appropriate literature to support their positions.
- Students will be able to identify, develop and test case studies of heritage politics, policies and practices.
- Students will be able to write essays that reflect a critical and scholarly engagement with the terrain of heritage and heritage studies.

Assessment

Coursework – 1 x 10-15-minute filmed presentation and 1 x 3,000 word essay.

Essay

Please write a 3,000-word essay answering one of the following questions. You can, if you wish and where it is appropriate, use the same case study for both elements of the assessment, but you are not obliged to do so. You are expected to critically discuss your chosen question using specific example(s) and relevant theoretical literature.

1. Robert Hewison argues that the commodification of heritage weakens our knowledge and understanding of history. Critically interrogate this argument.
2. Does visitor access to heritage sites ultimately aid or threaten their preservation?
3. Does cultural tourism lead to cultural understanding, or cultural 'othering'?
4. Can popular culture legitimately be categorised as heritage?
5. What happens to the 'aura' of heritage in the era of digital reproduction and virtual tourism?

Appendix VI: Extract taken from MSc Biological Sciences Handbook

ESSAY

DEGREE PROGRAMME: MSc [redacted]

MODULE:

Student's Number: **Examiner:**

Essay Title: **Mark (out of 100%):**

Tick box to indicate grade:

	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Fail
Title understood and addressed				
Logical presentation				
Structure & organisation				
Factual content				
Legibility and literacy				
Clarity of expression				
Conclusion(s)				
Reference				
Evidence of research and originality				

MARKER'S FEEDBACK

Please tick boxes to indicate if the following assessment criteria have been met to an appropriate standard.

Assessment Criteria:	Good	Could be improved
Majority of main points are covered adequately		
Critical evaluation of relevant literature demonstrating understanding of topic		
Evidence of extended reading of relevant and current literature		
Writing style: clear and readily understood. Flowing and coherent narrative		
Arguments: clear, logical, factually correct, supported by published evidence		
Structure: organised logically, introduction and summary, use of headings		
Language: appropriate style, correct terminology, abbreviations, spelling, grammar		
Figures: relevant, good quality, correctly cited		
References: used appropriately, current, sufficient, relevant, correct format		
Style: format, font, margins, spacing, layout		

Appendix VII: Extract taken from MA Applied Linguistics Handbook

Principles and Practices in Second/Foreign Language Teaching (30 credits)

The following marking criteria specific to this module will be used in conjunction with the King's generic Master's marking criteria which can be found in your handbook here:
https://[redacted]/PTaught/markingcriteria.pdf

- A good principles and practice paper will provide strong links between theory, approaches and principles relevant to the topic on the one hand, and practice in a particular context on the other (bearing in mind that the theory-practice relationship is often problematic)

The principles section will:

- Draw on carefully-selected appropriate (relevant, up-to-date) sources in order to present and discuss relevant theories/principles: in such a short paper 6-12 key articles or chapters may be sufficient although wider reading if used well would be a bonus.
- In the theory/principles section, present (in summary), explain and discuss key ideas, synthesising and comparing different sources, within substantial paragraphs. This means that within such a short paper you will need to pick a smaller number of key issues to discuss fully rather than dealing with a large number of issues superficially;
- Where relevant, discuss implications, advantages and disadvantages of theories and principles in relation to practice at a general level before going on to discuss implementation in your particular context. For example you might look at the advantages and difficulties or promoting learner autonomy in general before discussing your own context
- (possibly) sum up the key decisions or principles that you will take forward to the practice session of the paper, for example in the form of a framework or set of guidelines.

The application to practice section will:

- Briefly describe key features of your context relevant to the issue, supported by references where necessary;
- Draw closely on the principles/theories in evaluating your practice or suggesting guidelines for future practice
- Make suggestions that are feasible, practical and appropriate to the context as you have described it.

General points about your assignment

- There should be an integration of theory and practice. Theory might involve research studies from the findings of which classroom practice has been derived, or educational thinking that has contributed to the field, or discussions in applied linguistics that have influenced our ideas about the topic

- Since you will be talking about practice, usually your own, please feel free to use the first person pronouns 'I' in your discussions.

- There should be clear connections between theory and practice with references back and forth if these are dealt with in different parts of your assignment.

- Make sensible use of appendices as these do not have to be included in your word count. This is the place to put sample tasks or materials.

- Please make any description of your context brief, with only points salient to your topic.

---

1. Analyse the approach to language teaching in a textbook you use, and discuss the suitability of the approach to the learners and the context. Suggest ways in which the materials could be adapted (by the teacher) or revised (by the publishers) to improve their effectiveness.

This question relates to materials evaluation, but not at the level of individual topics, exercises and activities but rather at the level of approach and design (see Richards and Rogers 2014). It is important to remember that materials evaluation is not about assessing how good or bad materials are in general. Materials evaluation is about assessing how suitable or effective materials are likely to be in a particular context.

A good essay is likely to include, amongst other things, the following linked parts (not necessarily in this order):

a) A brief discussion of the concept of approach (see Richards and Rogers 2014)
b) An analysis of the set of materials at the levels of approach and design)
c) An analysis of the teaching context, highlighting features that suggest the need for a particular approach and or particular design features.
d) Discussion of the extent of the match (and mismatch) between the approach in the materials and the approach needed in the context.
e) Where appropriate, suggestions for adapting the materials so that there is a greater match with the needs of the students and teachers in the chosen context.

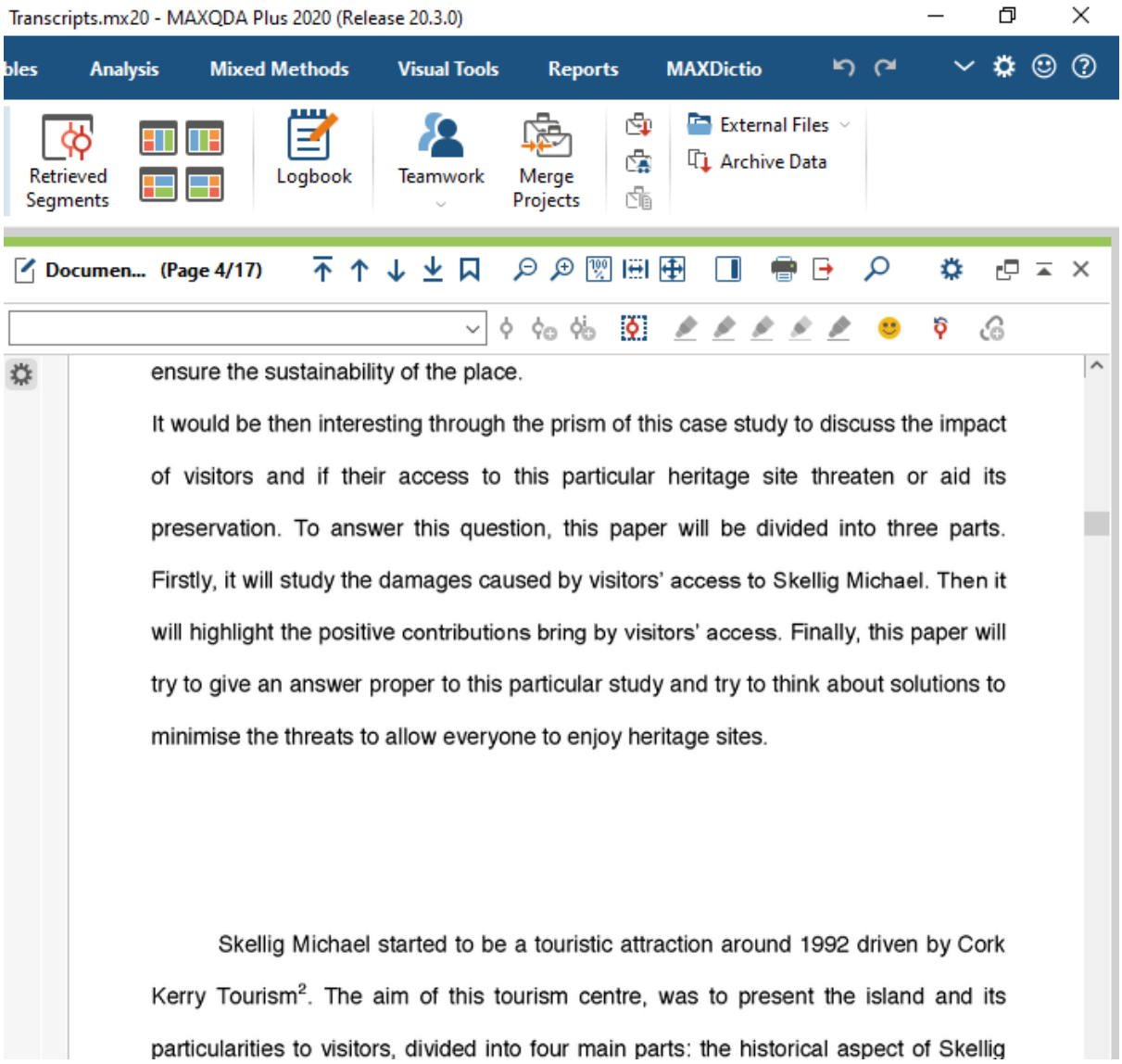
Appendix VIII: Generic Post-Graduate Marking Criteria

Level 7				
An exceptional answer that reflects outstanding knowledge of material and critical ability – Distinction ≥ 70				
Understanding	**Selection and Coverage**	**Structure**	**General**	
Authoritative, full understanding of all the issues with originality in analysis	Full range of sources used selectively to support argument	Coherent and compelling argument well presented	**A++ (90-100)** Strikingly insightful, displaying for example: publishable quality, outstanding research potential, highest originality and independent thought, outstanding ability to make informed judgements, highest professional standards of writing and presentation.	
			A+ (80-89) Insightful, displays for example excellent research potential, very high originality, possibly of publishable quality, professional standards of writing and presentation.	
			A (70-79) Excellent; displays for example high levels of originality, accuracy, evidence of the potential to undertake research, the ability to analyse primary sources critically, very good standards of writing and presentation.	
A coherent answer that demonstrates critical evaluation – Merit 60-69				
Understanding	**Selection and Coverage**	**Structure**	**General**	
Independent, critical evaluation of full range of theories with some evidence of originality.	Complex work and concepts presented, key texts used effectively	Argument concise and explicit	**B+ (65-69)** Approaching excellence in some areas, evidence of the potential to undertake research, good standards of writing and presentation.	
			B (60-64) Well developed relevant argument, good degree of accuracy and technical competence, good standards of writing and presentation.	
A coherent and logical answer which shows understanding of the basic principles – Pass 50 -59				
Understanding	**Selection and Coverage**	**Structure**	**General**	
Some capacity to reflect critically but with no significant evidence of originality.	Sound knowledge base of primary and secondary sources	The argument is developed but lacks fluency.	**C (55-59)**	**(55-59)** approaching merit, sound degree of competency but incomplete argument, contains some inaccuracies, acceptable standards of writing and presentation.
				(50-54) broadly satisfactory, narrow argument, contains inaccuracies, acceptable standards of writing and presentation.
A superficial answer with limited knowledge of core material and limited critical ability – Fail 40 – 49[1]				
Understanding	**Selection and Coverage**	**Structure**	**General**	
Lack of understanding and focus	Limited sources	Argument not fully developed and lacks structure	**F+ (40-49)** patchy overall knowledge, presentational weakness, little evidence of independent thought	
An answer almost entirely lacking in evidence of knowledge and understanding – Fail 0-39				

[1] A mark ≥40 is condonable where programme specific regulations permit

Level 7			
Understanding	**Selection and Coverage**	**Structure**	**General**
Shows almost no insight into the problem or topic	Irrelevant sources and/or out of date sources	Argument not developed, confused and incoherent	**F (0-39)** fundamental mistakes, poor/unacceptable presentation

Appendix IX: Extract taken from Creative Industries Assignment [CI-4]



Appendix X: Module convener interview questions

Start of interview

- Consent form
- Background information e.g. number of years at the institution and in the convener role

Institutional feedback policies

- What guidance does the faculty/school provide regarding feedback? Use of GradeMark? Anonymous marking?
- Aside from college generic postgraduate criteria, are you required to give specific criteria for each assignment set?

Tutors' feedback-related beliefs

- What value do you believe feedback has in learning? Do you think students share this view?
- Are there any guiding principles that you adhere to when providing feedback?
- What do you think constitutes effective feedback? How do you try to achieve this?
- How do you expect students to respond to your feedback?
- Is your overall impression that students do / do not respond to feedback?

Feedback practices

- When setting the assignment, what guidelines do you provide for that assessment?
- Do you consider your own language when providing feedback?
- Is there an opportunity for dialogue with the student about the feedback they've received?
- Do you provide exemplars of the assignment? What is the rationale?
- Do you ever learn new content when assessing student work?
- Does assessing student work ever provide you with information that helps shape your teaching?

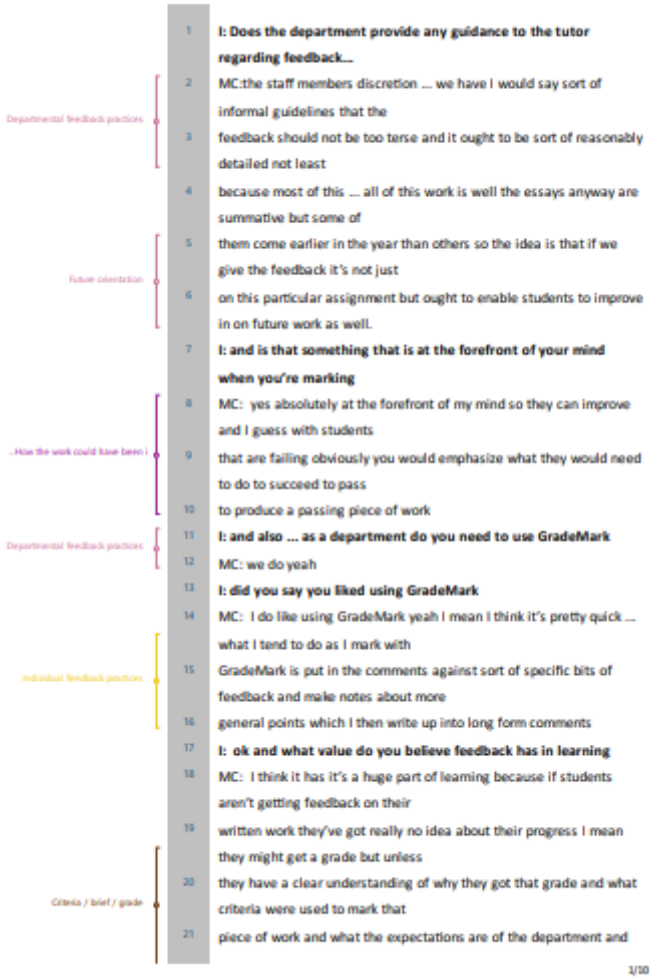
Focus of feedback

- What do your feedback comments focus on?
- Do you provide explicit feedback on language issues?
- Do you think your commentary provides guidance about writing specifically within your discipline?
- Is there anything that is difficult or different for students coming from a different disciplinary background?

Modularisation

- Do you think modularisation impacts on feedback?
- Is there an opportunity to see if students have applied feedback in subsequent work?

Appendix XI: Sample interview transcript: Creative Industries module convener



I: Does the department provide any guidance to the tutor regarding feedback...

MC:the staff members discretion ... we have I would say sort of informal guidelines that the feedback should not be too terse and it ought to be sort of reasonably detailed not least because most of this ... all of this work is well the essays anyway are summative but some of them come earlier in the year than others so the idea is that if we give the feedback it's not just on this particular assignment but ought to enable students to improve in on future work as well.

I: and is that something that is at the forefront of your mind when you're marking

MC: yes absolutely at the forefront of my mind so they can improve and I guess with students that are failing obviously you would emphasize what they would need to do to succeed to pass to produce a passing piece of work

I: and also ... as a department do you need to use GradeMark

MC: we do yeah

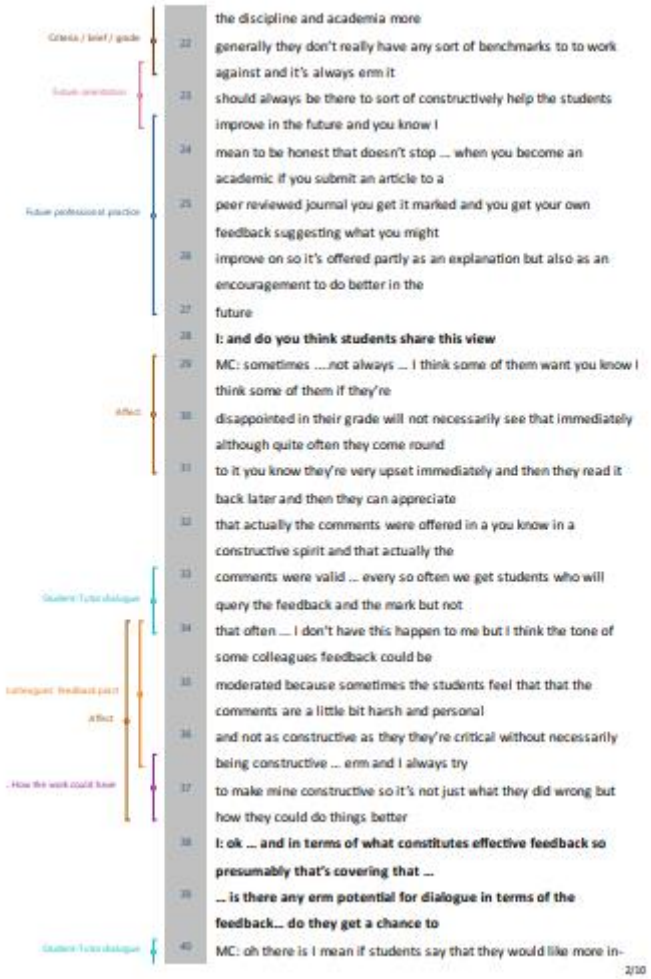
I: did you say you liked using GradeMark

MC: I do like using GradeMark yeah I mean I think it's pretty quick ... what I tend to do as I mark with GradeMark is put in the comments against sort of specific bits of feedback and make notes about more general points which I then write up into long form comments

I: ok and what value do you believe feedback has in learning

MC: I think it has it's a huge part of learning because if students aren't getting feedback on their written work they've got really no idea about their progress I mean they might get a grade but unless they have a clear understanding of why they got that grade and what criteria were used to mark that piece of work and what the expectations are of the department and

1/10



the discipline and academia more

generally they don't really have any sort of benchmarks to to work against and it's always erm it

should always be there to sort of constructively help the students improve in the future and you know I

mean to be honest that doesn't stop … when you become an academic if you submit an article to a

peer reviewed journal you get it marked and you get your own feedback suggesting what you might

improve on so it's offered partly as an explanation but also as an encouragement to do better in the

future

I: and do you think students share this view

MC: sometimes ….not always … I think some of them want you know I think some of them if they're

disappointed in their grade will not necessarily see that immediately although quite often they come round

to it you know they're very upset immediately and then they read it back later and then they can appreciate

that actually the comments were offered in a you know in a constructive spirit and that actually the

comments were valid … every so often we get students who will query the feedback and the mark but not

that often …. I don't have this happen to me but I think the tone of some colleagues feedback could be

moderated because sometimes the students feel that that the comments are a little bit harsh and personal

and not as constructive as they they're critical without necessarily being constructive … erm and I always try

to make mine constructive so it's not just what they did wrong but how they could do things better

I: ok … and in terms of what constitutes effective feedback so presumably that's covering that …

… is there any erm potential for dialogue in terms of the feedback… do they get a chance to

MC: oh there is I mean if students say that they would like more in-

Appendix XII: Frequency counts per module for every sub-category within each tier

Appendix XIIa: First tier of coding framework: Focus of feedback

How the work is or should be expressed	Biological Sciences [BS] 266	Creative Industries [CI] 166	Child Studies [CS] 631	Applied Linguistics [AL] 207	Total coding units 1,270
Formatting [F]	19 [18C 1P]	1 [1C]	5 [5C]	3 [1C 2P]	28 (2.2%) [25C 3P]
Referencing [R]	11 [8C 3NE]	7 [7C]	7 [6C 1NE]	7 [4C 3P]	32 (2.5%) [25C 3P 4NE]
Writtenness [W]	18 [10C 5P 2M 1NE]	13 [9C 4P]	33 [14C 14P 5M]	18 [12C 5P 1M]	82 (6.5%) [45C 28P 8M 1NE]
Language [L]	19 [19C]	4 [4C]	14 [7C 4P 2M 1NE]	10 [8C 1P 1NE]	47 (3.7%) [38C 5P 2M 2NE]
Total	67	25	59	38	189 (14.9%)
What is or should be included	BS 266	CI 166	CS 631	AL 207	Total 1,270
Understanding of subject [U]	125 [68C 40P 8M 9NE]	47 [28C 14P 5M]	190 [80C 78P 23M 9NE]	58 [23C 26P 9M]	420 (33.1%) [199C 158P 45M 18NE]
Argument [A]	58 [38C 11P 6M 3NE]	89 [53C 23P 13M]	355 [173C 120P 46M 16NE]	96 [41C 38P 15M 2NE]	598 (47.1%) [305C 192P 80M 21NE]
Total	183	136	545	154	1,018 (80.2%)
How the work is or should be organised	BS 266	CI 166	CS 631	AL 207	Total 1,270
Organisation [O]	16 [14C 2P]	4 [1C 3P]	15 [11C 3P 1M]	11 [7C 3P 1M]	46 (3.6%) [33C 11P 2M]
	BS 266	CI 166	CS 631	AL 207	Total 1,270
Non-specific focus [NS]	0	1 [1P]	12 [7P 5NE]	4 [2C 2P]	17 (1.3%) [2C 10P 5NE]

Appendix XIIb: Second tier of coding framework: Qualitative Assessment

	Biological Sciences [BS] 266		Creative Industries [CI] 166		Child Studies [CS] 631		Applied Linguistics [AL] 207		Total units 1,270
Praise [P]	59 (22.2%)	1 in 4.5	45 (27.1%)	1 in 3.7	226 (35.8%)	1 in 2.79	80 (38.6%)	1 in 2.6	410 (32.3%) 1 in 3.1
Critique [C]	175 (65.8%)	1 in 1.5	103 (62%)	1 in 1.6	296 (46.9%)	1 in 2.1	98 (47.3%)	1 in 2.1	672 (52.9%) 1 in 1.9
Mitigating paired act [M]	16 (6%)	1 in 16.6	18 (10.8%)	1 in 9.2	77 (12.2%)	1 in 8.2	26 (12.6%)	1 in 8	137 (10.8%) 1 in 9.3
Non-evaluative [NE]	16 (6%)	1 in 16.6	0		32 (5.1%)	1 in 19.7	3 (1.4%)	1 in 69	51 (4%) 1 in 24.9

Appendix XIIc Qualitive Assessment according to focus of feedback

Code	How the work should be expressed				What should be included		
	Formatting	Referencing	Writtenness	Language	Understanding	Argument	Organisation
	28	32	82	47	420	598	46
Praise [P]	3	3	28 (34.1%)	5 (10.6%)	158 (37.6%)	192 (32.1%)	11
Critique [C]	25	25	45 (54.9%)	38 (80.9%)	199 (47.4%)	305 (51%)	33
[M]	0	0	8	2	45	80	2
[NE]	0	4	1	2	18	21	0

Appendix XIId: Third tier of coding framework: Qualities perceived as valuable by students

	Biological Sciences [BS]	Creative Industries [CI]	Child Studies [CS]	Applied Linguistics [AL]	Total 1,270
Criteria-referenced [CR]	1 [1 C]	1 [1 C]	10 [5C 1P 2M 2NE]	4 [4C]	16 1 in 79.3
How the work could have been improved [IMP]	40 [36C 4M]	36 [34C 2M]	103 [86C 17M]	16 [14C 2M]	195 1 in 6.5
Pointers to take forward [PF]	39 [37C 2NE]	26 [26C]	29 [26C 2M 1NE]	12 [10C 2NE]	106 1 in 12
Tutor Clarification [TC]	59 [44C 4M 11NE]	19 [15C 1P 3M]	124 [86C 2P 16M 20NE]	18 [16C 1M 1NE]	220 1 in 5.8
Asking questions of the work / student [Q]	9 [9C]	4 [4C]	85 [74C 6P 5M]	4 [4C]	102 1 in 12.5
Encouragement about performance [E]	0	1 [1P]	9 [8P 1NE]	2 [2P]	12 1 in 105.8
Applicability to real-world settings [RW]	0	0	0	14 [4C 9P 1M]	14 1 in 90.7
Directing to additional support [S]	2 [2NE]	0	5 [1C 4NE]	0	7 1 in 181.4

Appendix XIII: Frequency counts from lexical searches of the data

Appendix XIIIa: Frequency counts of lexical items relating to Writtenness

Lexical item & lemmatised forms *Writtenness*	N° of occurrences & fraction across whole data set (1270 coding units)
clear, clearly, clarity, clearer, unclear	168 (1 in 7.6 coding units)
succinct, succinctly	16
articulate, articulate, articulation	12
vague	8
easy to follow, difficult to follow	7
fluent, fluency	7
repetitive, repetition	6
precise, precision, imprecise	6
well-written, well written, written well	5
flow	5
wordy	3
concise, concision	2
Total	245 (1 in 5.1 coding units)

Appendix XIIIb: Reporting verbs tallied by frequency and fraction (occurrences per n° of coding units) per module

Lexical item & lemmatised forms *Reporting verbs*	BS 266	CI 166	CS 631	AL 207	Total 1270
argue, argument	3 1 in 88.7	26 1 in 6.38	48 1 in 13.1	13 1 in 15.9	90
explain, explained, explanation,	15 1 in 17.7	5 1 in 33.2	18 1 in 35.1	2 1 in 103.5	40
describe, description	24 1 in 11.1	2 1 in 83	6 1 in 105.2	6 1 in 34.5	38
agree, agreement, disagree, disagreement	1 1 in 266	0	32 1 in 19.7	0	33
show	10 1in 26.6	1	7 1 in 90.1	9 1 in 23	27
report	1	0	5	2	8

Appendix XIIIc: Lexical items relating to Criticality tallied by frequency and fraction (occurrences per n° of coding units) per module

Lexical item & lemmatised forms *Criticality*	BS 266	CI 166	CS 631	AL 207	Total 1270
analyse, analysis, analyze	17	14	8	10	49
critical, criticize, criticism,	4	14	14	4	36
critical analysis	3	2	3	1	9
Total	24 1 in 11.1	30 1 in 5.5	25 1 in 25.2	15 1 in 13.8	94

Appendix XIIId: Frequency counts of lexical items relating to Linking per module

Lexical item & lemmatised forms	BS	CI	CS	AL	Total
Linking	266	166	631	207	1270
link linking links linked	10	0	6	12	28
Cross-referencing	0	0	9	0	9
Signpost, signposting	0	1	1	2	4

Appendix XIIIe: Lexical item 'your own' tallied by frequency and fraction (occurrences per n^{o} of coding units) per module

	BS	CI	CS	AL	Total
Lexical item	266	166	631	207	1270
'your own'	0	5	8	6	19
		1 in 33.2	1 in 78.9	1 in 34.5	

Appendix XIIIf: Frequency counts of lexical items relating to question words per module

Lexical items (Case sensitive or	BS	CI	CS	AL	
inverted word order)	266	166	631	207	Total
could you /can you	0	0	18	0	18
How	0	1	10	1	12
What	0	0	11	1	12
Does	4	0	3	0	7
Do you	0	0	5	0	5
Why	0	0	4	1	5

Appendix XIV: Feedback provided to sampling unit [BS-2] MSc Biological Sciences

Essay Title: State two main approaches for studying DNA methylation and explain one of the approaches in detail including its advantages and limitations

Tick box to indicate grade:

	Distinction	**Merit**	**Pass**	**Fail**
Title understood and addressed				√
Logical presentation			√	
Structure & organisation				√
Factual content				√
Legibility and literacy			√	
Clarity of expression			√	
Conclusion(s)				√
Reference			√	
Evidence of research and originality				√

MARKER'S FEEDBACK

Please tick boxes to indicate if the following assessment criteria have been met to an appropriate standard.

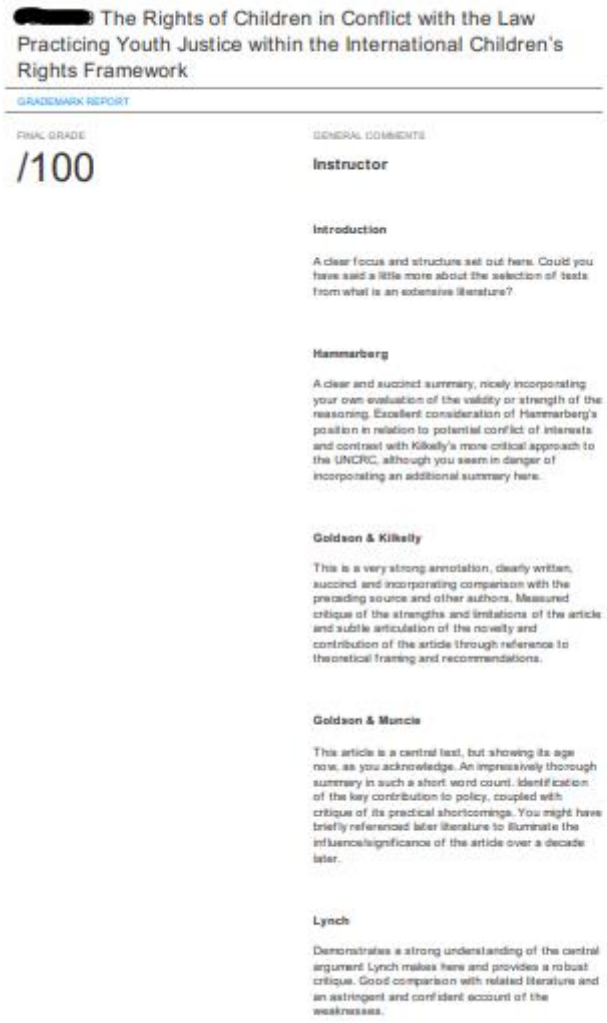
Assessment Criteria:	**Good**	**Could be improved**
Majority of main points are covered adequately		√
Critical evaluation of relevant literature demonstrating understanding of topic		√
Evidence of extended reading of relevant and current literature		√
Writing style: clear and readily understood. Flowing and coherent narrative	√	
Arguments: clear, logical, factually correct, supported by published evidence		√
Structure: organised logically, introduction and summary, use of headings		√
Language: appropriate style, correct terminology, abbreviations, spelling, grammar	√	
Figures: relevant, good quality, correctly cited		√
References: used appropriately, current, sufficient, relevant, correct format		√
Style: format, font, margins, spacing, layout	√	

Comments:

Your essay is nicely written and it is easy to follow from one point to the next. However, the essay was too short and the topic wasn't covered in enough depth. In addition, you describe endonuclease digestion only in context of Chromosome X inactivation. You do not explain this technique at all. This was only an example provided in the lecture and not the sole purpose of this method. You describe bi-sulfite conversion however you do not mention how you could utilise the bi-sulfite conversion, for example for sequencing approaches such as EpiTYPER, pyrosequencing or whole-genome sequencing (Illumina 450k and EPIc arrays). You could elaborate further on those techniques and their merits. You could describe these methods in more depth. You could also use sub-headings to make your essay neat and dividing it clearly into sections. You should also always use a full name when you use it for the first time, then abbreviation. You use gene names, such as MGMT without explaining what they are.

Also, the citation should be placed before the period at the end of the sentence, for example: 'with genetic risk variants for schizophrenia (Hannon et al., 2015).' rather than how you use it: 'with genetic risk variants for schizophrenia. (Hannon et al., 2015)' This is repeated throughout the essay. Gene names should always be italicised. Your essay would benefit from few figures either to summarise or present each method or a summary table for all the methods mentioned.

Appendix XV: Sampling Unit from Child Studies [CS-8]



[redacted] The Rights of Children in Conflict with the Law Practicing Youth Justice within the International Children's Rights Framework

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

Introduction

A clear focus and structure set out here. Could you have said a little more about the selection of texts from what is an extensive literature?

Hammarberg

A clear and succinct summary, nicely incorporating your own evaluation of the validity or strength of the reasoning. Excellent consideration of Hammarberg's position in relation to potential conflict of interests and contrast with Kilkelly's more critical approach to the UNCRC, although you seem in danger of incorporating an additional summary here.

Goldson & Kilkelly

This is a very strong annotation, clearly written, succinct and incorporating comparison with the preceding source and other authors. Measured critique of the strengths and limitations of the article and subtle articulation of the novelty and contribution of the article through reference to theoretical framing and recommendations.

Goldson & Muncie

This article is a central text, but showing its age now, as you acknowledge. An impressively thorough summary in such a short word count. Identification of the key contribution to policy, coupled with critique of its practical shortcomings. You might have briefly referenced later literature to illuminate the influence/significance of the article over a decade later.

Lynch

Demonstrates a strong understanding of the central argument Lynch makes here and provides a robust critique. Good comparison with related literature and an astringent and confident account of the weaknesses.

Ko et al.

Very pleasing inclusion of literature demonstrating the developmental and trauma-informed arguments for the treatment of youth offenders with compassion and care. Important consideration of the danger that the youth justice system will contribute to re-traumatisation. Very good discussion of recommendations with reference to later authors.

Case & Haines

Clear articulation of the novelty of the authors' model for youth justice policies. A succinct summary of the distinguishing features of the model and good commentary on the practical challenges to implementation.

Conclusion

You invest significant word count in the conclusion, enabling you to pull together the commonalities and differences in the articles reviewed and to suggest the way forward for reform of youth justice internationally. Insightful consideration of the lack of evidence on effective approaches for the prevention of youth offending and of the limitations of the current literature base in an area where few commentators brave a highly politicized arena.

Understanding

Meets all the objectives of the assignment criteria.

Depth of Knowledge Excellent synthesis skills demonstrated notwithstanding the very short word count and constrained structure. I generally advise not to use the same author twice but as Goldson is probably the leading figure in this field, both articles are jointly authored, and you use additional literature to contextualise your annotations, it works well here. I'd have liked to see an entry from Hollingsworth, eg **Theorising Children's Rights in Youth Justice: The Significance of Autonomy and Foundational Rights**, *Modern Law Review* 2013, **76**(6), 1046-1069 would have added depth to your mention of the importance of the right to an open future.

Structure and Clarity

Both excellent – possibly you could work on a slightly more focused introduction.

General

This was a pleasure to mark – thank you! Inclusion

Appendix XVI: Departmental cover sheet indicating students' consent for Study 1

[redacted]
Faculty of Arts & Humanities
Coversheet for submission of coursework
(Undergraduate & Taught Postgraduate)

Complete all sections of this form and ensure it is the first page of the document you submit.

Failure to attach the coversheet as required may result in your work not being accepted for assessment.

Word count, which should be calculated electronically, must be stated accurately below.

For details of what is included in the word count, and penalties incurred by exceeding the word count limit, please consult the coursework submission policy in the Faculty handbook.

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

This assignment is entirely my own work. Quotations from secondary literature are indicated by the use of inverted commas around ALL such quotations AND by reference in the text or notes to the author concerned. ALL primary and secondary literature used in this piece of work is indicated in the bibliography placed at the end, and dependence upon ANY source used is indicated at the appropriate point in the text. I confirm that no sources have been used other than those stated.

I understand what is meant by plagiarism and have signed at enrolment the declaration concerning the avoidance of plagiarism.

I understand that plagiarism is a serious examinations offence that may result in disciplinary action being taken.

I understand that I must submit work BEFORE the deadline, and that failure to do so will result in capped marks.

Candidate no. [redacted] (This is a letter followed by five digits, and can be found on Student Records)

Module Title:	International Heritage & Cultural Tourism
Module Code: (e.g. 5AABC123)	7AAIOC44
Assignment: (may be abbreviated)	Question 3
Assignment tutor/group:	[redacted]
Deadline:	3 May 2016
Date Submitted:	3 May 2016
Word Count:	3023

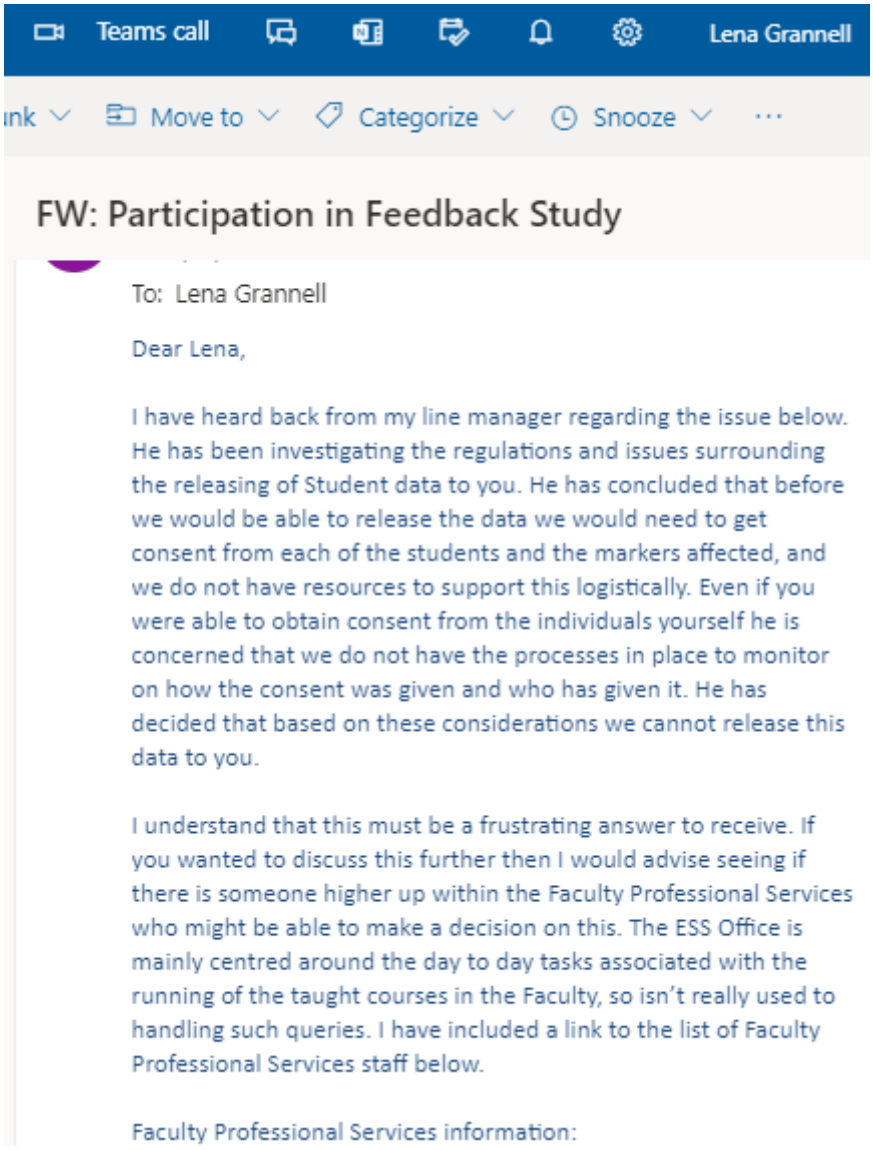
Your assignment may be used as an example of good practice for other students to refer to in future. If selected, your assignment will be presented anonymously and may include feedback comments or the specific grade awarded. Participation is optional and will not affect your grade.

Do you consent to your assignment being used in this way? Please tick the appropriate box below.

YES ☒ NO ☐

1

Appendix XVII: Email from professional Services



Appendix XVIII: Student Consent form

School of Literature and Languages
Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Consent Form - use of assignment and accompanying tutor feedback

Project title:

An analysis of subject tutor feedback on PG written work to investigate how students are required to display their academic knowledge in specific ways within particular disciplines.

I understand the purpose of this research and understand what is required of me; I have read and understood the Information Sheet relating to this project, which has been explained to me by Lena Grannell. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

University of Reading

Lena Grannell
Email: l.grannell@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisor:
Dr Tony Capstick
Phone: 0118 378 6669
Email: tony.capstick@reading.ac.uk

Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

HumSS Building
The University of Reading
Whiteknights, PO Box 218
Reading RG6 6AA
Phone 01183788141

INFORMATION SHEET Student consent for use of assignment and accompanying tutor feedback

This study analyses subject tutor feedback on postgraduate written work from different faculties in order to investigate how students are required to display their academic knowledge within particular disciplines. Studies have demonstrated that academic disciplines can show considerable variation not just in terms of the use of language forms and structures but also with regard to other disciplinary practices, for example the way in which knowledge claims are made and arguments are developed. A study of feedback can help writing teachers gain a better understanding of what subject tutors from different faculties value in a text. The writing tutor can, in turn, help students acquire a better understanding of writing in disciplinary approved ways and the performance standards associated with learning and achievement in particular disciplines.

Consent is sought for your assignment and your tutor's feedback to be used by a researcher, Lena Grannell, as part of a study investigating how students are required to display their academic knowledge within particular disciplines. The main focus of the study will be the tutor's feedback and the extent to which your tutor attempts to guide you to write in disciplinary specific ways. The researcher will use extracts of the assignment to provide context for the tutor's comments.

If used, your assignment and feedback will be presented anonymously and may include the grade band awarded. Participation is optional and will not affect your grade. The researcher will ensure your privacy and confidentiality is carefully observed. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the data. The data will be used for academic purposes only, restricted by terms of the Data Protection Act. You have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage by contacting the module convener. The researcher will then remove the relevant assignment and feedback from the data sample. The data will be stored on a password-protected laptop for a period of 3 years, after which time they will be destroyed.

This project has been subject to ethical review by the School Ethics Committee at University of Reading and has been allowed to proceed under the exceptions procedure as outlined in paragraph 6 of the University's *Notes for Guidance* on research ethics. If you have any queries or wish to clarify anything about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher's supervisor by email at tony.capstick@reading.ac.uk

Signed

Appendix XIX: Module Convener Consent form

School of Literature and Languages
Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

University of Reading

Project Submission

Principal Investigator (Supervisor): Dr Tony Capstick

Student name: Lena Grannell

Department: Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

Title of Project:

An analysis of subject tutor feedback on PG written work to investigate how students are required to display their academic knowledge in specific ways within particular disciplines.

Proposed starting date: 1st November 2018

Number of participants that you require consent from (approximate):

Up to 50 student scripts and 25 student interviews, including pilot interviews, and a minimum of 2 feedback providers / module conveners

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the Ethics Committee have been made aware of all relevant information. I undertake to inform the Committee of any such information which subsequently becomes available whether before or after the research has begun.

I confirm that a list of the names and contact details of the participants in this project will be compiled and that this, together with signed Consent Forms, will be retained by the researcher under secure storage. All (or in large sample cases a selection) of the signed copies will be submitted with a copy of the dissertation.

Signed:

…….(Supervisor) Date…….

…….(Student) Date…….

School of Literature and Languages
Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

University of Reading

Consent Form

Project title:

An analysis of subject tutor feedback on PG written work to investigate how students are required to display their academic knowledge in specific ways within particular disciplines.

I understand the purpose of this research and understand what is required of me; I have read and understood the Information Sheet relating to this project, which has been explained to me by Lena Grannell. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Researcher:
Lena Grannell
Email: l.grannell@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisor:
Dr Tony Capstick
Phone: 0118 378 6669
Email: tony.capstick@reading.ac.uk

Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

HumSS Building
The University of Reading
Whiteknights, PO Box 218
Reading RG6 6AA
Phone 01183788141 +44 (0)118 378 6472
+44 (0)118 975 6506
Email appling@reading.ac.uk p.a.thompson@reading.ac.uk

INFORMATION SHEET Module convener / Feedback provider

This study analyses subject tutor feedback on postgraduate written work from different faculties in order to investigate how students are required to display their academic knowledge within particular disciplines. Studies have demonstrated that academic disciplines can show considerable variation not just in terms of the use of language forms and structures but also with regard to other disciplinary practices, for example the way in which knowledge claims are made and arguments are developed. A study of feedback can help writing teachers gain a better understanding of what subject tutors from different faculties value in a text. The writing tutor can, in turn, help students acquire a better understanding of writing in disciplinary approved ways and the performance standards associated with learning and achievement in particular disciplines.

The researcher investigating this study seeks your consent to participate as module convener / feedback provider. As a participant, you will be asked to provide the student summative assignments completed as part of a module on a taught postgraduate programme along with your written feedback. The assignments need to have a ticked consent box on the accompanying cover sheet providing consent for the assignment and feedback to be used for research purposes. The suggested wording is as follows:

> *Consent is sought for your assignment and your tutor's feedback to be used by a researcher as part of a study investigating how students are required to display their academic knowledge within particular disciplines. The main focus of the study will be the tutor's feedback and the extent to which your tutor attempts to guide you to write in disciplinary specific ways. The researcher will use extracts of the assignment to provide context for the tutor's comments. If selected, your assignment and feedback will be presented anonymously and will include the grade band awarded. Participation is optional and will not affect your grade.*
>
> *Do you consent to your assignment being used in this way? Please tick the appropriate box below.*

Once assignments have been marked, tutors will share the student assignments and tutor feedback via a secure central hosting service such as Dropbox. Participants will also be asked to provide marking criteria, assignment question(s), assignment rubric and any other information relating to departmental expectations for the writing of the assignment in order to provide context for the feedback commentary. You will also be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher, lasting approximately 30 – 45 minutes, to discuss the feedback you provided. The interviews will be audio-recorded.

Data from assignments, feedback, interviews and interview transcripts will be anonymised. The researcher will ensure your privacy and confidentiality is carefully observed. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the data. The data will be used for academic purposes only, restricted by terms of the Data Protection Act. Tutors have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage by contacting the researcher. Students wishing to withdraw will be advised to contact their tutor. If this situation arises, you are asked to inform the researcher who will then remove the relevant assignment and interview recording from the data sample. The data will be stored on a password-protected laptop for a period of 3 years, after which time they will be destroyed.

This project has been subject to ethical review by the School Ethics Committee at University of Reading and has been allowed to proceed under the exceptions procedure as outlined in paragraph 6 of the University's *Notes for Guidance* on research ethics. If you have any queries or wish to clarify anything about the study, please feel free to contact my supervisor by email at tony.capstick@reading.ac.uk

Signed

A. Does your ethics document include:

a Project Submission, Project Description, Information Sheet & Consent Form?	

B. In your Information Sheet for the participants, have you mentioned the following points? Put a tick in if you have.

The data will be securely kept on a password-protected computer **or** in a locked drawer.	
Only the researcher and their supervisors will have access to the data.	
The data will be used for academic purposes only.	
The data will be anonymous **or** pseudonyms will be used.	
The data will only be used for the purposes of academic study, restricted by terms of the Data Protection Act.	
The participants' privacy and confidentiality will be carefully observed.	
The participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time they wish to.	

C. Ensure you have done all the necessary checks.

Have you used the University of Reading logo on all the ethics document pages?	
Have you checked your ethics documents with your supervisor?	
Have you and your supervisor signed the finalised ethics documents?	
Have you included a copy of the first page of your questionnaire, if you are using one?	

D. Only for those who will be working at schools with children and if the school has required for a DBS check.

Have you submitted a copy of your DBS check?	

Appendix XX External Research Permission for Study 1

Lena Grannell
Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics
School of Literature and Languages
University of Reading

28th June 2017

Dear Lena,

RE: 'An interdisciplinary investigation of subject tutor feedback on student written work'. – [redacted] external research request permission

I am writing with regard to your recent application for permission from the [redacted] Research Ethics Office to undertake the above research study, as per our external research request procedure.

I can confirm that your application for permission has been accepted and that you now have permission to undertake external research using [redacted] staff or students. Your permission has been granted by the Chair of the College Research Ethics Committee. Please note that the external research request procedure does not constitute ethical review, rather it is a permission procedure put in place to ensure that only ethically acceptable studies are carried out by [redacted] staff/students and premises.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Research Ethics Office should you have any queries regarding the above.

Kind regards

[redacted]
Senior Research Ethics Officer
[redacted]

Appendix XXI External Research Permission for Study 2

Research Ethics Office
[redacted]

Lena Grannell
University of Reading
18th January 2019

Dear Lena,

RE: 'An analysis of subject tutor feedback on PG written work to investigate how students are required to display their academic knowledge in specific ways within particular disciplines.

I am writing with regard to your recent application for permission from the [redacted] Research Ethics Office to undertake the above research study, as per our external research request procedure.

I can confirm that your application for permission has been accepted and that you now have permission to undertake external research using [redacted] staff or students. Your permission has been granted by the Chair of the College Research Ethics Committee. Please note that the external research request procedure does not constitute ethical review, rather it is a permission procedure put in place to ensure that only ethically acceptable studies are carried out by [redacted] staff/students and premises.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Research Ethics Office should you have any queries regarding the above.

Kind regards

[redacted]
Senior Research Ethics Officer
[redacted]

Appendix XXII Key studies informing categories within each tier of coding frame

First tier of coding framework: Focus of feedback	Key studies informing the first tier of coding framework.
How the work is or should be expressed: Formatting [F], Referencing [R], Writtenness [W], Language [L].	Brown & Glover (2006); Ferguson (2011); Glover & Brown (2006); Hyland (2013a); Turner (2018)
What is or should be included in the work: Understanding [U], Argument [A]	Basturkmen et al., (2014); Brown & Glover (2006); Grannell (2017); Hughes et al., (2015); Hyland (2013a); Walker (2009)
How the work is or should be organized [O]	Bitchener et al., (2010); Hyatt (2005); Mutch (2003);
Second tier of coding framework: Qualitative assessment	Key studies informing the second tier of coding framework.
Praise [P], Critique [C], Mitigating paired act pattern [M], Non-evaluative [NE]	Brown & Glover (2006); Carless (2006); Ferguson (2011); Ferris et al., (1997); Fortanet (2008); Getzlaf et al., (2009); Henderson et al., (2019); Hyatt (2005); Hyland & Hyland (2001); Lipnevich et al., (2016); Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006); Pitts (2005); Sadler (2010); Starfield et al., (2017); Weaver (2006); Wingate (2010)

Third tier of coding framework: Qualities perceived as valuable by students	Key studies informing each category in the third tier of coding framework.
Criteria-referenced [CR]	Dawson et al., (2019); Ferguson (2011); Li & Di Luca (2014); O'Donovan et al., (2021); Poulos & Mahony (2008); Rowe & Wood (2008); Tai et al., (2017); Thumser et al., (2020); Weaver (2006); Winstone et al., (2016);
How the work could have been improved [IMP]	Dawson et al., (2019); Ferguson (2011); Getzlaf et al., (2009); Higgins et al., (2002); Weaver (2006); Winstone et al., (2016)
Pointers to take Forward [PF]	Dawson et al., (2019); Ferguson, (2011); Getzlaf et al., (2009); Henderson et al., (2019); Hill & West (2020); O'Donovan et al., (2021); Pitts (2005); Sadler (2010); Sutton (2012);
Tutor Clarification [TC]	Brown & Glover (2006); Ferguson (2011); Holbrook et al., (2014); O'Donovan et al., (2021); Walker (2009)
Asking questions about the work / student [Q]	Brown & Glover (2006); Carless et al., (2011); Hughes et al., (2015); Hyatt (2005); Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006);
Applicability to real-world settings [RW]	Getzlaf et al., (2009); Poulos & Mahony (2008)
Encouragement about performance [E]	Hyatt (2005); Pitts (2005); Rowe & Wood (2008)
Directing to additional support [S]	Dawson et al., (2019); Getzlaf et al., (2009)