**The Open University in the East of England**

**Associate Lecturer Staff Development Day 27<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

**Time well spent? Making the most of correspondence tuition**

**Summary of the session**

**What do attendees want from the session?**

- Want to know how best to facilitate learning and to facilitate contact with students

- Want to share good practice

- What is expected?

- What is reasonable?

- What is manageable?

- Am I doing too much?

- Am I doing enough?

- What attention should be paid to spelling and grammar?

Note that wide-ranging practice was identified, between and within different faculties. For example, in the Faculty of Health and Social Care, students are given a detailed grid of the learning outcomes being assessed, and how to demonstrate these grids at various levels. Tutors receive nothing further. In contrast, on a second level physics module, tutors receive a mark scheme with marks to be awarded for various aspects of correct working and correct final answer; other Science Faculty modules make learning outcomes more explicit in both questions and tutor notes. The availability and guidance for use of 'student notes' varies considerably.

**What is correspondence tuition for?**

- Recognition of achievement

- Validatory

- Challenging able students

- Feedforward

- Does 'correspondence tuition' differ from 'tuition'?

- Assessment for learning

What do your students think correspondence tuition is for? – the answer here is completely different. Students are more driven by marks. Is this what leads to plagiarism?

**Sally's personal journey through relevant assessment theory (see separate sheet)**

**Barriers to effective learning from correspondence tuition**

- Student doesn't read your comments;
- Student drowns in your comments;
- Student doesn't understand your comments;
- Student doesn't engage with your comments because s/he doesn't believe them;
- Student doesn't engage with your comments because s/he doesn't believe s/he are capable of improvement;
- Student doesn't know how to 'close the gap';
- Feedback is backward-looking not forward-looking;
- Feedback doesn't arrive in time to be useful.

**Group discussion**

Share tips for good practice that will give your students useful feedback *without taking an unreasonable amount of your time.*

***Different aspects to consider:***

*What type of feedback is most useful?*

*How much feedback is useful?*

*Balance of assessment summary/on-script comments?*

*Using learning outcomes?*

*Technical tips for eTMAs*

**Summary of points raised in group discussion**

Comments on generic/key skills are the most useful [but there is a problem when TMAs are on different topics/skills].

Scepticism about the use of learning outcomes. Sometimes too generic. Do students understand them? Sometimes tutors don't understand them.

Reference between the script and the PT3, with examples on the script and general points on the PT3.

How much feedback? – 0.5 to 0.75 page on PT3. Try to limit points for improvement.

eTMA tips: Most people favour keeping it simple. Put tutor comments in brackets or change colour – don't use track changes! If there are common problems with the TMA, do general comments to all students. Get a big screen!

Make comments constructive

Make use of Module Team provided feedback sheets.

Summarise key points from script on PT3 (in case students don't look at the script). But need to encourage students to read both the script and the PT3. Ensure that students know how to open both the script and the PT3.

Give three or four key points for students to take forward.

Generic skills (spelling and grammar) are important.

Phone student with a poor mark ahead of the student receiving the TMA.

Engage in dialogue with student, encouraging student to state what was helpful.

Individual feedback appropriate to level of student [so don't say the same to a high-scoring student as a low-scoring one].

Take things one step at a time – aim for weak student to improve slightly from one TMA to the next.

Transferrable skills are important.

Traffic light scheme.

Student experience has helped tutor (who is also a student)

Feedback on TMAs can also help students in preparation for the exam.

Mark for the student not the monitor [though in practice, this can be difficult]

The monitoring form can be unhelpful , leading to undue focus on whether your work is 'excellent', 'good' or whether there is 'scope for improvement'. Pedantically, everyone has 'scope for improvement' but this category has become synonymous with poor-quality work. You become too anxious about the category the monitor has assigned your work to, and don't look at their detailed comments [a bit like the way in which students just look at the mark and don't then read your comments, either because they have done well – so there is no point – or they have done badly, so feel demotivated].

Concern was expressed that in the eTMA system, students can see their mark without even downloading the TMA or assessment summary (PT3).


Several associate lecturers expressed a wish to talk to their students about whether their correspondence tuition is helpful.  Please talk to your staff tutor before doing this. Sally will investigate options for a small project in this area. Please email s.e.jordan@open.ac.uk if you are interested in joining in.