



PRE-SESSIONAL ENGLISH USE OF GRADEMARK

Rob Playfair, IFP Course Tutor

OVERVIEW

On the pre-sessional English (PSE) course, in the summer of 2017, the course leader suggested that we choose between using e-feedback (Turnitin and Grademark) to mark students writing on pen and paper. I chose to try e-feedback.

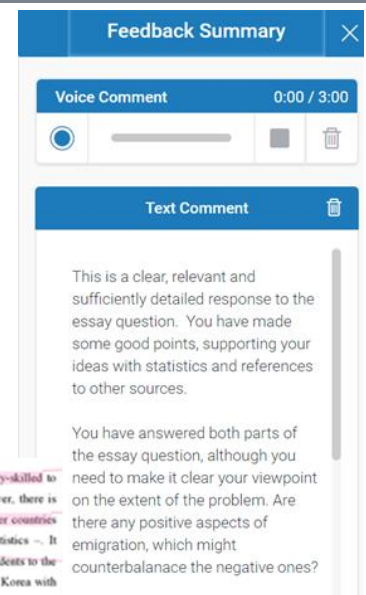
OBJECTIVES

I was interested in improving the efficiency of my marking, and liked the idea of having a digital record of written feedback to students.

During the PSE induction for new tutors we were told that the University is moving towards e-feedback over the next few years so it seemed like a useful skill to acquire.

CONTEXT

My group of international students were on a 9 week course to improve their level of English before starting their postgraduate studies. They needed to write three 500 word essays and one 1500 word project. For each of these, students wrote two drafts. I needed to provide written feedback on both drafts and the final version of each essay, i.e. a lot of marking!



IMPLEMENTATION

Jonathan Smith, PSE course director and ISLI TEL Director, gave all teachers a one-hour workshop on how to use Turnitin and



Grademark, during which we had a chance to get hands on with the software. Each year Jonathan runs a training session for new members of PSE staff who will work on the PSE courses during the summer.

Later, Jonathan shared the PSE 'QuickMarks', with those of us who had opted to use e-feedback. We could download these, via our

QuickMarks library, into our own personal QuickMarks set. These comments were then available each time we opened an essay. The QuickMarks focussed on common student errors with explanations and links to relevant sources. 'Quickmarks' are based not only on common grammar and lexical errors but also on the complexity of the structures used and coherence and cohesion in the texts.

Students grew accustomed to submitting work, accessing feedback and seeing their progress.

IMPACT

- It was quicker to note common student errors in-text using the QuickMarks, than repeatedly hand writing the same comments.
- Students were able to read & start acting on my feedback as soon as I did it, rather than waiting until the next class.
- I could quickly refer to previous drafts and the comments I had given to monitor uptake.
- I could browse work from students who were not in my class, via the Turnitin feedback suite, to see a broader range of essays and also see the feedback that colleagues were giving because, in this case, the point of submission was the same for the whole cohort. As this was my first experience teaching the programme, this was particularly useful.

REFLECTIONS

The speed of communication with students was the biggest benefit – as soon as my marking was done students could see it. This meant that students could formulate questions about my feedback before class, making the time in class much more productive.

In terms of quality of marking I think there might be a tendency to over-mark using the QuickMarks, because it only takes a second to add a one yet creates quite a lot for the student to do – reading an explanation and perhaps visiting a website. I'd like to explore the impact of this on uptake.

Finally, on a practical level I found this helped my organisation – all the scripts, scores and comments are in one place. It was also

easier to submit scripts for moderation: I just gave the names of students to the Course Directors who could go into the system and see the scripts themselves.

FOLLOW UP

- I'm currently using it in a similar way on the International Foundation Programme (IFP).
- At present all students can do is upload their work then download my comments. I'd be interested in a function which allows students to respond to my comments – making corrections or asking questions. This would support the feedback cycle.
- To improve the reliability of the summative scores, I wonder whether we can learn from elements of comparative judgment programmes such as No More Marking.

LINKS

www.nomoremarking.com

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/ema/ema-news.aspx>

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/ISLI/study-in-the-uk/isli-pre-sessional-english.aspx>