

Stream: Pedagogic Research

Submission title:

Using exemplars as formative assessment episodes: conformance, deformative or transformative?

Presenter:

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Exemplars are increasingly being used in higher education settings for a variety of reasons. For example, practitioners have investigated the use of exemplars of students' summative work to help learners:

- gain valuable insight into task requirements;
- improve their grades/marks;
- engage actively and productively with criteria and standards;
- gain access to feedforward, especially in the context of large groups (see, for example, Scoles et al, 2013; Hendry et al, 2016; Hawe et al, 2017).

Furthermore, exemplars are routinely promoted as vital tools for explicitly developing students' assessment and feedback literacy (Price et al, 2012; Sutton, 2012; Carless et al, 2011) as their concrete nature helps learners to 'see' what counts as quality and to calibrate their own work accordingly. Dialogic interaction and active engagement in the process of analysing samples are emerging as vital key dimensions in the productive pedagogic use of exemplars. However, to date few studies have sought to illuminate the ways in which students interact with exemplars during the process of working on them in class, especially in the context of large group lectures.

The study reported in this paper focuses on an action research project, running over two academic years, which forms part of a cross-university community of practice on the use of exemplars in higher education. The exemplars in this instance were drawn from writing-to-learn activities. The samples had explicitly been selected by teachers to engage students in pre-emptive formative assessment (Carless, 2007) in a large-class context.

In addition to gathering students' perceptions of the value of the activities (via surveys and follow-up interviews with selected participants) data were gathered as the workshop unfolded. These included feedback which each student generated during the process of peer-reviewing each exemplar, combined with self-review and action-planning as a result of the workshop.

Broad themes from the initial analysis, using Torrance's (2012) critique of formative assessment as a starting point, will be presented and linked to key aspects of practice.

Participants will have chance to discuss issues and challenges for using exemplars to foster active learning in their own practice, and to consider if they're interested in contributing to the broader community of practice around exemplars in HE.

References:

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