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Generating complex formative feedback: using blogs and screen casts to promote dialogue around content and skills

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Abstract:

Assessment for learning depends on student engagement with the assessment process and particularly with feedback. However, students are often ill equipped to decode feedback messages because they lack the tacit knowledge necessary to understand assignment marking criteria and they do not share the same understanding of quality in writing that tutors refer to in their comments (Sadler, 2010). This is particularly problematic in relation to critical analytical writing.

The use of exemplars, or carefully chosen samples of previous student writing, is widely championed in the literature on formative assessment as a means to engaging students through peer to peer discussion and student / tutor dialogue (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Burke & Pieterich, 2010; Handley & Williams, 2011). Using Camtasia software, screencast videos of exemplars with tutor commentary were created within an MATESOL module in the Department of Education to help students develop an understanding of 'quality' in written work in their disciplinary context and specific assignment tasks. The presentation will demonstrate this use of the technology to facilitate dialogue around tacit knowledge of critical analytical writing, enabling deeper engagement with module content. The presentation will also raise issues for discussion relating to the design of exemplars and further applications of screencasting software within formative assessment.