Using Turnitin to Provide Timely Feedback to First Year Nursing Students on Clinical Placement.

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Class Sizes:
26 Students

Discipline:
Social Care
(part-time degree)

Feedback Approaches
Multistage assignment (Draft and Final), Marking Guide with Exemplar, online written feedback

Technologies
Moodle Assignment, Moodle Marking Guide, Moodle Feedback Files

Challenge & Aim

The aim of the initiative is to provide good quality feedback that is accessible to students when they are off-campus on clinical placement. The General Nursing degree is 50 % based in clinical placement; students typically spend half of each semester in college and half on clinical placement.

The challenge for lecturers is that by the time assignments are submitted students typically are heading off-campus on placement, making it difficult to access feedback and lecturers.

Evidence from the Literature

Effective feedback is informative, constructive, specific, non-judgmental, positive in nature and timely (Weaver 2006, Ball 2010, Boud & Associates 2010). However, vague and generalist comments can contribute to students dismissing and devaluing feedback (Nicol 2010). There is strong evidence that providing timely feedback whilst the task is still fresh in the student's mind can influence whether or not students access their feedback (Race 2006). However, in a time were student numbers are rising and study periods are shortened, the provision of timely feedback is challenging (Gibbs and Simpson 2004/5).

Furthermore, traditional routes of providing written feedback could affect the timeliness and accessibility of feedback to students. Consequently, it has been suggested that technology can play a role in addressing these concerns and facilitate effective and timely feedback which is easily accessible from any personal computer (Ball *et al*. 2009, HEFCU 2010). This could potentially advantage students, facilitating their engagement and influencing future academic and professional performance.

Feedback Approach

The Lecturers used Turnitin via Moodle to provide summative feedback and to grade final submissions. The process was:

1. Students submitted their assignment to Turnitin via the module Moodle page.

2. The lecturer accessed the assignments via the same route.

3. The lecturers used the Grademark facility in Turnitin to annotate the student's work, thus providing specific feedback.

4. The lecturers also provided overall/general comments on the assignment.

5. The grade for the assignment was recorded.

6. Students accessed both grade and feedback via the module Moodle page.

Outcomes

Overall, both lecturers and students found the use of Turnitin via Moodle very beneficial for providing feedback that was timely, accessible and useful for future work. Furthermore, both indicated that they would like to use this system again for feedback.

Student

An online survey was distributed via email as the students were on placement. The response rate was under 25% (10 students). Unfortunately, owing to timing issues around ethical approval for the wider project, the survey was distributed to these students sometime after the feedback had been received and this most likely accounted for the low response rate. Most students found Turnitin easy to use and to access their feedback. They used a range of technologies (computer, laptop, mobile phone, tablet) to access their feedback, generally from home. Interestingly, while the respondents found it easy to access their feedback most reported that they lacked confidence in using the technology. In terms of difficulties, just over half of the students indicated experiencing some difficulty relating to where to find their feedback *"it's a bit unclear, what to click on to access it."* This highlights that it cannot be assumed that all students are "tech savvy ".Most students positively rated the written feedback provided. Timeliness of feedback was found to be good (56%) with a further 22% of students rating it as very good. Two-thirds of respondents accessed their feedback two or more times, in order to ensure they had read the feedback properly and checking for a way to print feedback.

Overall, the majority of students found the feedback very useful in facilitating reflection and learning from clinical placement; however a portion did not. This requires further investigation and highlights the necessity for educators to ensure that feedback provided is clear and constructive.

Students found the annotations on the text of their assignment to be the most useful aspect of the feedback. Moreover, students reported to use this feedback in future assignments and plan to pay attention to and use feedback in future work thus making feed forward a reality.

Staff

The use of Turnitin via Moodle facilitated the provision of more detailed and specific feedback by allowing lecturers to annotate the assignment text: by clicking on the "comment icon" we could identify the word or sentence that relates to our provided comments. It allowed for inclusion of explicit suggestions on how to improve written assignments both in terms of knowledge and understanding of the subject area and writing skills. Providing feedback that is timely is another challenge for educators and by using this approach feedback is instantly available to the student. This saved lecturer time as there was no need to copy/ scan feedback or e-mail it to the student. In addition, as the work and feedback is stored electronically there is less administration in terms of sorting assignments for external examiners and checking marks. This approach ensures that feedback provided is available on an ongoing basis and can be revisited throughout the academic year by the student when they need it.

The process was relatively straightforward. It was time-consuming initially. As this was the first time this mechanism was used there was no bank of personalised comments however as these have been developed it will be more efficient in future. The use of annotation coupled with giving written general comments / overall feedback on the assignment took time. The option of providing audio feedback using the "Voice comment" is available and potentially could save time in giving overall feedback.

Recommendations

- Agree a date to issue feedback in advance and give it to students when providing assignment information.

- Get feedback from students on the process closer to the time they received it.

- Give information to students on how to access all of their feedback e.g. a screencast on locating overall general comments.

- Give information to students on how to download/ print (if desired) and save their feedback for future reference.

- Once the process of providing feedback using Turnitin via Moodle is embedded continue to evaluate & improve on the content & effectiveness of feedback provided e.g. review which students accessed feedback, allowing further follow-up.

- Develop a rubric for the assignment which students can access.

References

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