An exploratory investigation into influences of form of GradeMark digital feedback on learners' engagement with their feedback

Report for CCCU

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Executive Summary

With the aim of informing markers' action research into their use of digital feedback, a small number of CCCU undergraduates were interviewed to investigate how the specific ways in which GradeMark (Turnitin) feedback can be presented may influence their engagement with it.

It was found that on-script 'Bubble Comments' and off-script 'Voice Comments' may both positively influence how valued learners feel and encourage and support their use of feedback for development while on-script 'QuickMark Comments' and off-script 'General Comments' and 'Rubrics' may negatively influence same. These influences arise from how these different GradeMark presentation affect personalisation, specificity and clarity of meaning of feedback, learners' emotional connection with their marker and by simply grabbing their attention. Ways in which presentation may influence content are also identified.

It is recommended that, through their own action research, markers using GradeMark explore the use of Bubble Comments and Voice Comments as alternatives to General Comments, and 'Grading Forms' as an alternative to Rubrics. Specific considerations in doing so are suggested. It is also recommended that CCCU considers strategies for helping learners apply GradeMark feedback to future work, including the possibility of re-writing generic assessment criteria in more 'student friendly' language and investigating improvements to accessing GradeMark via mobile devices.

Introduction

This is a summary of the author's dissertation report for a Masters in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh, completed in 2016. The aim is to raise awareness of findings within CCCU and promote discussion around development of digital feedback practice using GradeMark – the feedback tool within Turnitin.

Use of GradeMark has grown rapidly in CCCU in recent years. While this has helped to improve turnaround times, enhancing the utility of feedback for learners' development remains a priority. However, where digital feedback literature indicates positive outcomes in relation to development, reasons are often not clear. One possible factor is how the nature of digital feedback influences learners' engagement with their feedback.

Approach

This exploratory study investigated how form (as opposed to content) of GradeMark feedback may influence learners' engagement by considering specifically:

> *How may the ways in which feedback can be presented in the GradeMark digital feedback tool influence undergraduates' engagement in developmental use of lecturers' feedback for summative assessment of written coursework?*

Informed by a review of feedback and engagement literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted during 2015 with a purposive sample of seven CCCU undergraduates to explore their experiences of the eight ways[1] in which GradeMark feedback can be presented. The sample represented UG L4, 5 & 6 across eight disciplines from all four Faculties.

A thematic analysis revealed influences of GradeMark presentations across a range of different processes of engagement with feedback identified from the literature[2].

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[1] See Appendix 1 for the different presentations of GradeMark feedback

[2] See Appendix 2 for the range of processes of engagement with feedback used

Findings from this study are not intended to be generalisable; rather they may be used to inform lecturers' action research into their own feedback practice.

Summary of Findings

Between them, participants had experienced all GradeMark presentations, except for the Grading Form, and engaged in the majority of the processes of engagement with feedback identified from the literature.

Some GradeMark presentations were found to have influenced participants' ability, as well as motivation, to:

- read/listen to feedback,
- reflect on feedback and self-evaluate,
- action plan for future improvement,
- connect emotionally with the marker and
- feel valued.

It is suggested that these influences arise through the presentation of feedback affecting participants' perceived personalisation of feedback, its specificity and clarity of meaning; their emotional connection with their marker and by simply grabbing their attention.

Figures 1 and 2 show positive and negative influences on engagement with feedback respectively. They depict how GradeMark presentations (left of figures), through affecting personalisation, specificity, clarity, emotional connection and grabbing attention (centre of figures), influenced participants' ability and motivation in relation to specific processes of engagement with feedback (right of figures).
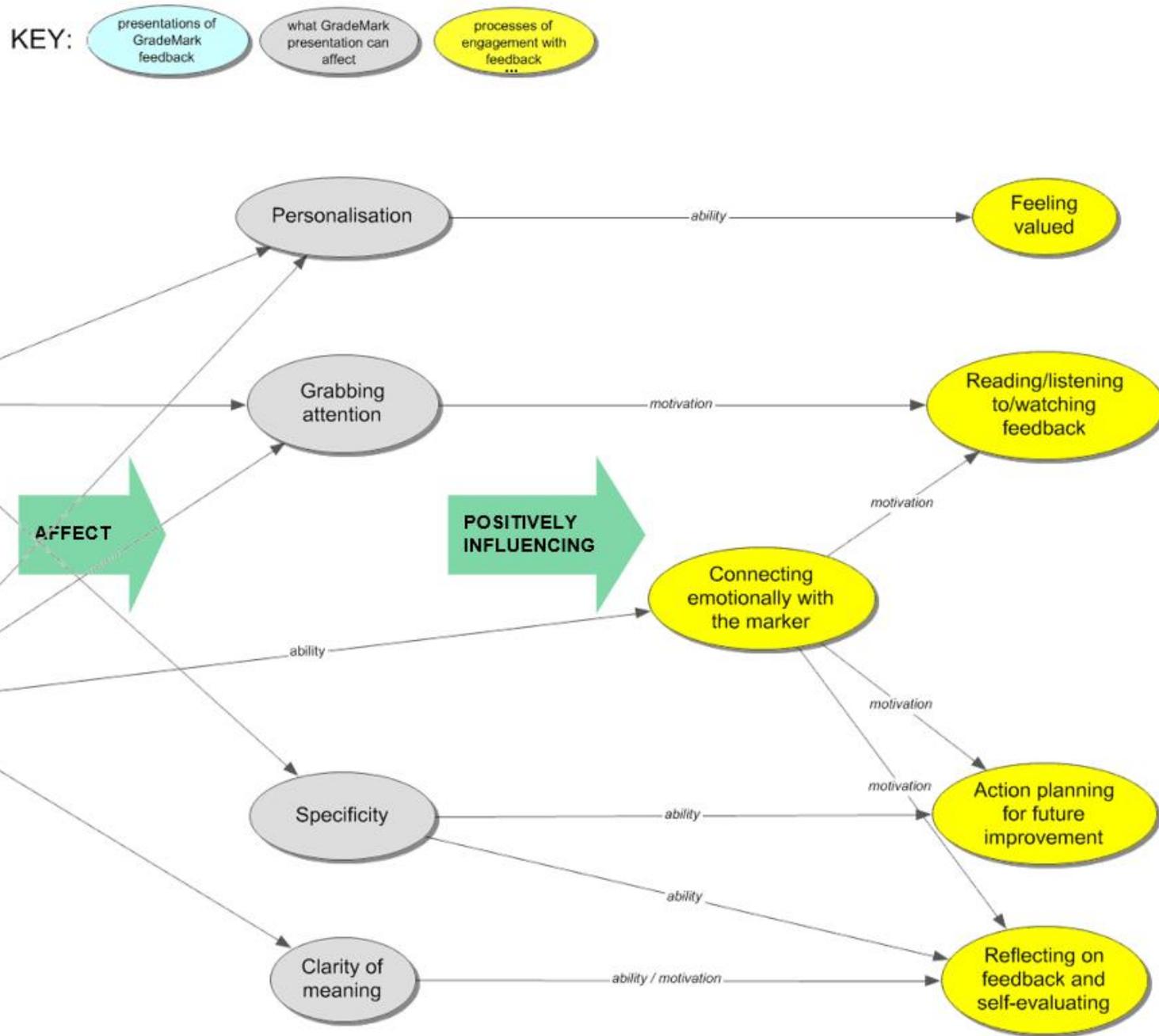
Figure 1: Ways in which GradeMark presentations *positively* influenced participants' engagement

KEY: presentations of GradeMark feedback | what GradeMark presentation can affect | processes of engagement with feedback ...

General Comments

Specificity

ability

Reflecting on feedback and self-evaluating

ability

ability

motivation

Rubrics

AFFECT

Clarity of meaning

NEGATIVELY INFLUENCING

ability

Action planning for future improvement

motivation

QuickMark Comments

Personalisation

ability

Reading/listening to/watching feedback
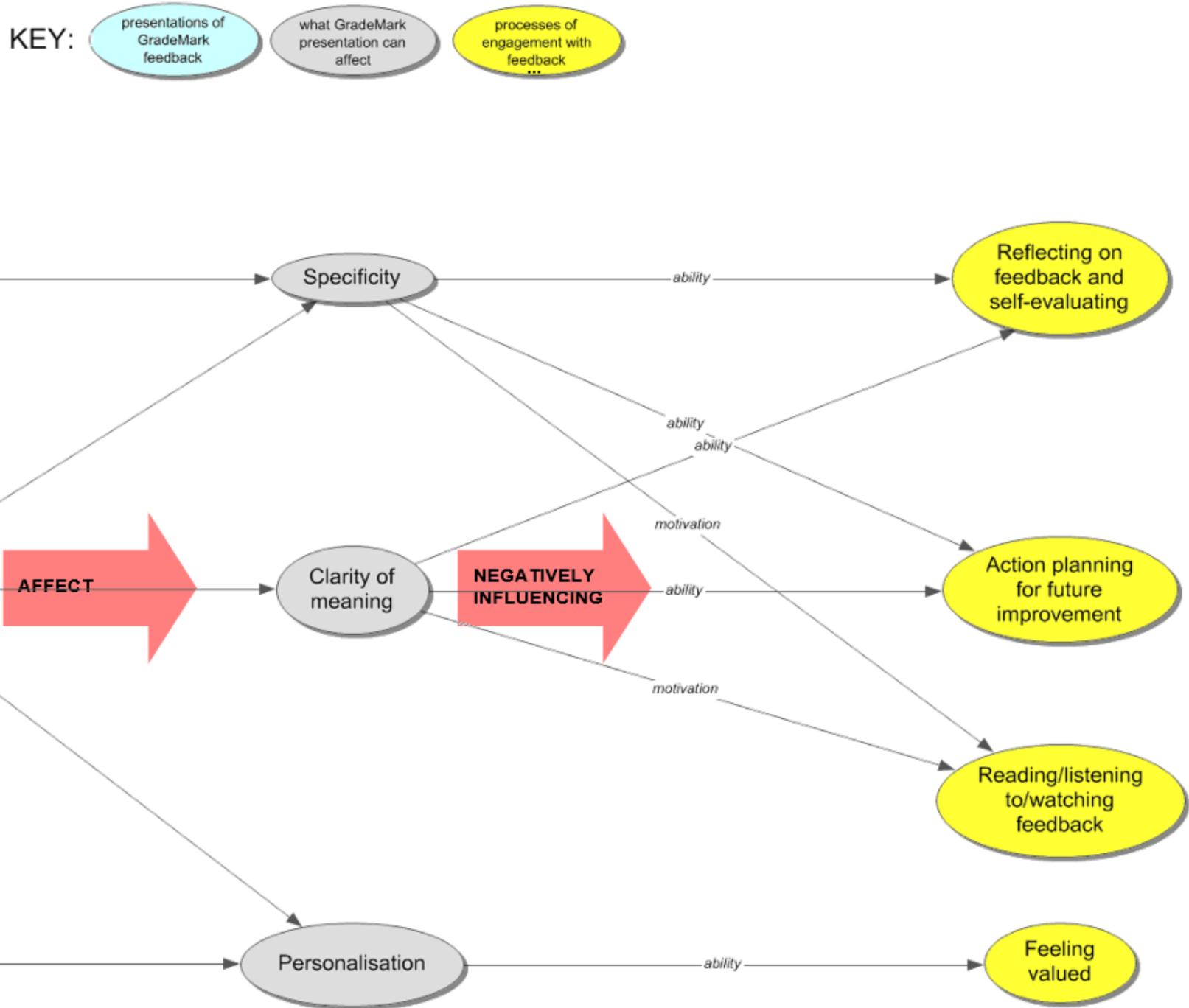
Feeling valued

Figure 2: Ways in which GradeMark presentations *negatively* influenced participants' engagement

Some of these influences on engagement arose in turn from the way presentation of feedback influences its content. For example, the positive influence of Voice Comments on participants' ability to reflect on and use feedback for improvement arose from the use of easier to understand language and the addition of non-textual content (tone of voice) in spoken feedback. Conversely, the negative influence of Rubrics on participants' engagement arose from this presentation requiring the content to be pre-set, generic assessment criteria-related comments which participants found hard to understand and to relate to their own work.

Some participants related technical difficulties in accessing their feedback, particularly in GradeMark not being optimised for mobile devices. Some were not aware they had received feedback in certain GradeMark presentations or had the skills to access it.

Most participants said they wanted GradeMark feedback followed by face-to-face discussion with their marker to be able to ask questions. The ability to clarify points in their feedback was one reason for this.

A detailed discussion of findings is contained in the full dissertation report[3].

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[3] available on request

Recommendations

That *markers* using GradeMark:

1. are encouraged and supported, through their own action research, to explore influences on learners' engagement of:
    a. using Bubble Comments and Voice Comments as alternatives to General Comments,
    b. Grading Forms as an alternative to Rubrics,
2. are cognisant that the way their feedback is presented may influence its content, altering the message they intend to convey;

That the *institution* considers:

3. strategies for helping learners apply GradeMark feedback to future work, including the possibility of re-writing generic assessment criteria in more 'student friendly' language and
4. investigating improvements to accessing GradeMark via mobile devices.

Limitations

The focus of this study was limited to summative assessment of undergraduates by lecturers, not formative assessment or other levels of study or peer assessment. It should also be noted that the interview sample contained no part-time or distance learners.

Findings are not intended to be generalisable, rather it is hoped they inform lecturers' action research to enhance their own feedback practice.

Participants in this study were mostly highly independent, proactive users of feedback. Influences of GradeMark presentation on less independent learners may of course be different.

Appendix 1

Examples of the eight ways feedback can be provided using GradeMark

plagiarism detection software.   Turnitin is one such system.   Over 80% of UK universities have adopted it, as well as a number of schools, FE colleges, professional and awarding bodies (see http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/turnitinuk.php).

RefURL

QuickMark Comments (click to expand)

Turnitin is an Internet-based plagiarism-detection service created by iParadigms, LLC. Institutions, typically universities and high schools, buy licenses to submit essays to the Turnitin website, which checks the documents for plagiarism.   Students may be required by schools to submit essays to Turnitin, as a deterrent to plagiarism.   This has been a source of criticism, with some students refusing to do so in the belief that requiring it constitutes a presumption of guilt.   Additionally, critics have alleged that use of the software violates educational privacy and intellectual property laws. Parent company iParadigms, LLC, also offers a similar plagiarism detection service for newspaper editors, book and magazine publishers called iThenticate, and run the informational website Plagiarism.org. Other services marketed under the Turnitin brand are aimed at the education market, such as Grademark and Peer Review services. Turnitin released the WriteCycle Suite bundles the Originality Checking service with Peer Review tools.

NdRef

Expand - how does Turnitin compare students' work? Google?

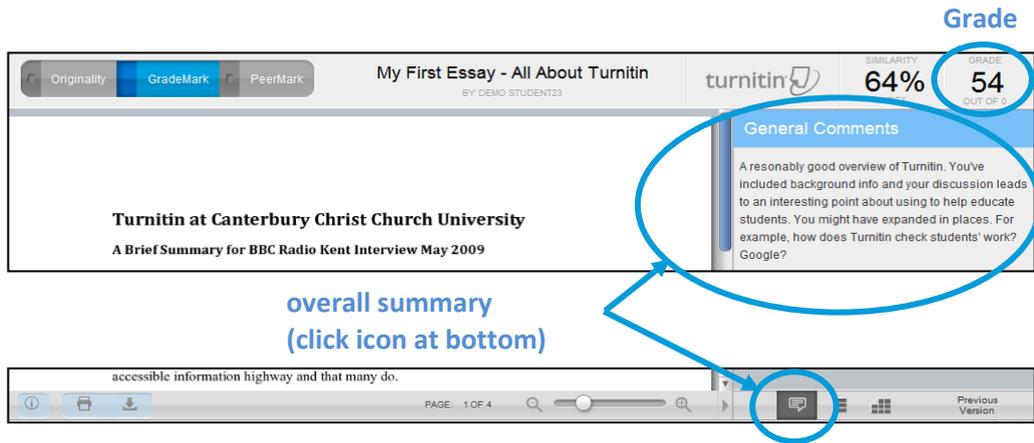**Bubble Comment (click to expand)**

Turnitin checks students' work for material which might have been included from other sources. It then reports back to academic staff as to the extent of any 'unoriginal' material – this is text reproduced in students' work which is known to exist in these other sources.   Turnitin itself doesn't make any judgement as to whether work has been plagiarised, rather it provides information on text matched elsewhere to support academic decision making.   For more information, including an overview of Turnitin with an example "originality report" and the pilot evaluation report, see the Turnitin page on the University's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (LTEU) web site at:
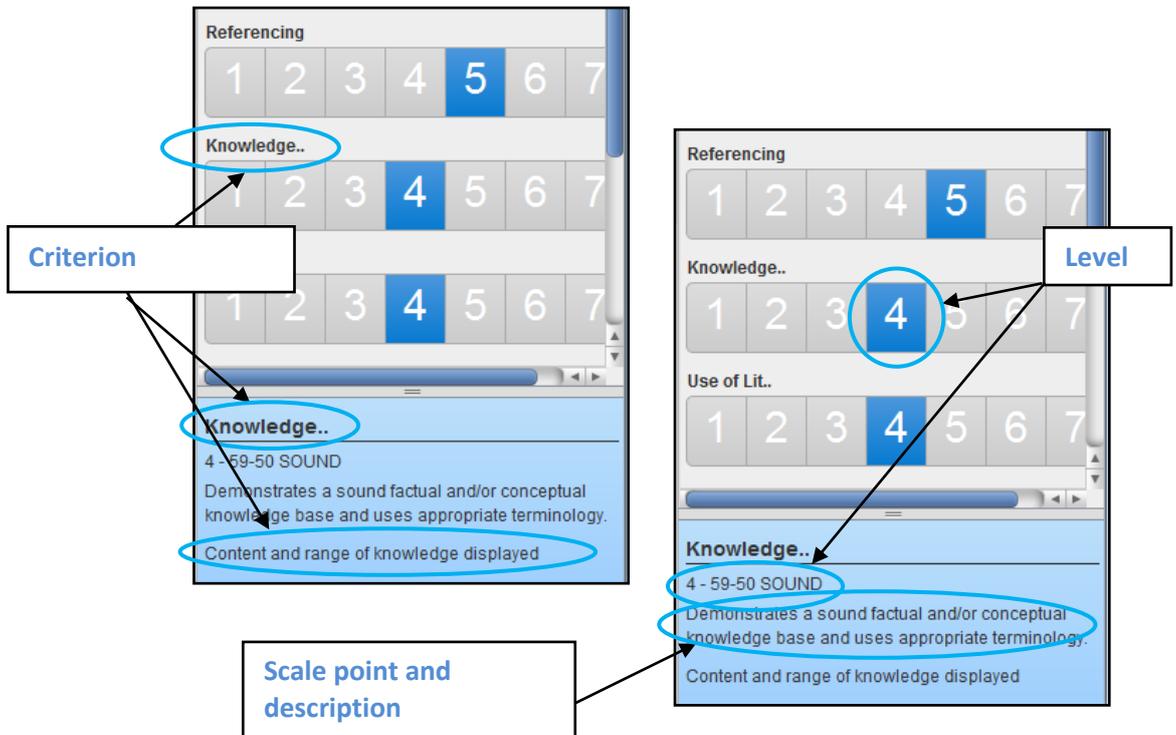
http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/support/learning-teaching-enhancement-unit/tools/turnitin.asp

Good link to more information

Inline Comment

GradeMark Inline, Bubble and QuickMark Comments (on-script)

Grade

Originality | GradeMark | PeerMark | My First Essay - All About Turnitin | turnitin | SIMILARITY 64% | GRADE 54 OUT OF 0
BY DEMO STUDENT23

General Comments

A resonably good overview of Turnitin. You've included background info and your discussion leads to an interesting point about using to help educate students. You might have expanded in places. For example, how does Turnitin check students' work? Google?

Turnitin at Canterbury Christ Church University

A Brief Summary for BBC Radio Kent Interview May 2009

overall summary
(click icon at bottom)

accessible information highway and that many do.

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GradeMark Grade and General Comments (off-script)

Referencing
1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7

Knowledge..
1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7

1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7

Criterion

Knowledge..
4 - 59-50 SOUND
Demonstrates a sound factual and/or conceptual knowledge base and uses appropriate terminology.
Content and range of knowledge displayed

Referencing
1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7

Knowledge..
1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7

Use of Lit..
1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7

Level

Knowledge..
4 - 59-50 SOUND
Demonstrates a sound factual and/or conceptual knowledge base and uses appropriate terminology.
Content and range of knowledge displayed

Scale point and description

GradeMark Rubric (off-script)
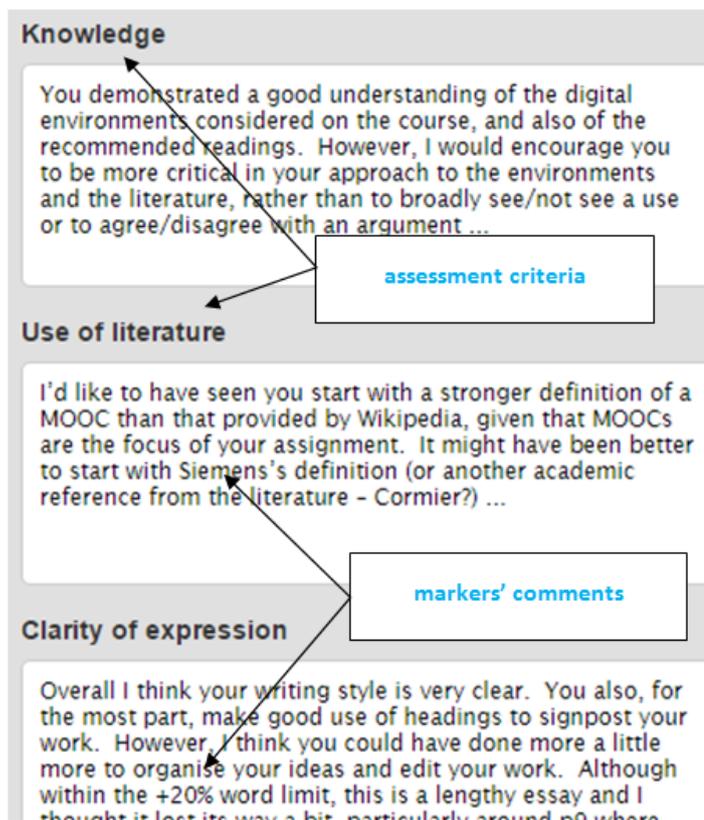
GradeMark Grading Form (off-script)
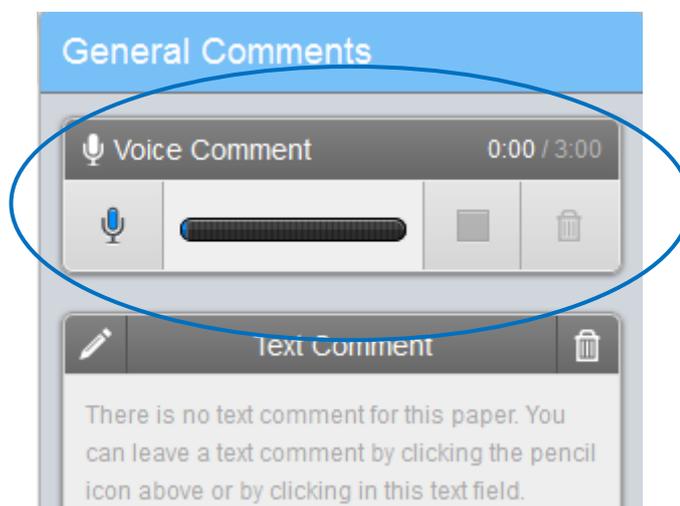
GradeMark Voice Comments (off-script)

Appendix 2

Evaluating participants' engagement with their feedback

During interview analysis, evidence was sought of the following processes of engagement identified from a review of the literature:

- Buying in to the assessment task and having a desire for feedback
- Developing ability and confidence to use feedback
- Creating a sense of ownership of the feedback process
- Reading/listening to/watching feedback
- Storing and returning to feedback
- Reflecting on feedback and self-evaluating
- Accessing resources
- Responding emotionally to feedback
- Connecting emotionally with the marker
- Feeling valued
- Seeking dialogue with markers, peers and others
- Developing a will to improve as a result of feedback
- Action planning for future improvement
- Developing an increased understanding of what quality is
- Stimulation of interest in learning as a result of receiving feedback