
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK IN PSYCHOLOGY

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Receiving, interpreting and adopting feedback is a crucial component of higher education learning. Rubrics offer structured feedback and are widely used to increase marker consistency, increase feedback detail and increase student self-regulation. Despite widespread use, the empirical evidence for these claims across different forms of rubrics remains lacking.

This cohort-controlled trial examined 491 psychology student perceptions of assessment task feedback using a detailed assessment rubric compared to a graded rating scale including a description of the highest level. Across two years, students completing two introduction to psychology units (one per semester) received feedback on the major assessment for each unit using an alternate assessment rubric or graded rating scale. The two introductory units were consecutive courses with the same cohort of students. Using a novel 9-itemed measure, students completed anonymous online questionnaires about both forms of feedback.

There was a significant difference for one item, student understanding of the feedback, suggesting a preference for the graded rating scale. Across 8 other items there was no significant difference between feedback forms. These outcomes included other items measuring student comprehension, helpfulness for future similar tasks, usefulness when preparing the task, and whether feedback was read. Despite widespread academic preference for assessment rubrics, these results indicate no strong advantage for this form of feedback. This finding challenges traditional approaches to providing feedback and calls for further research to examine reasons why the rubric feedback was harder for students to understand, and identify characteristics of feedback that is preferred by both educators and students.

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