Student self-assessment of submitted work as a form of feedback

Author: Katie Maddock, Keele University

Background: Feedback is an essential component of student learning; this is the mechanism through which they discover whether they are on track to meet expectations. For feedback to be effective, students must engage with it and use it to build upon for the future. A novel method of achieving engagement is through student self-assessment.

Aim: To determine the value to students of self-assessment of coursework in terms of feedback potential.

Method: Third year students completed an integrated case study on the use of drugs used to treat eczema. 50% of the marks were awarded by academic staff and 50% by student self-assessment. A detailed model answer and mark scheme were provided. Students were required to provide a written justification of the marks they awarded themselves; if this was absent the tutor mark stood as the only mark.

Results: 102 students completed the work. The mean tutor mark was 62% (SD = 8.4). The mean student mark was 71% (SD = 15.5). There was a weak positive correlation between tutor and student marks. 86 students completed an evaluation questionnaire consisting of 10 statements assessed using a 5-point Likert scale and a free-text question for further opinions to be recorded. 70% of respondents agreed that they were able to give themselves valuable feedback. 70% of respondents liked having responsibility for their own marks. 88% agreed they gained an insight into how their tutors mark their work. 83% of respondents agreed that marking their own work showed them how they could improve their work in the future.

Discussion: Student self-assessment of work was found to be valuable as a form of feedback and as a method to reinforce learning. "Forcing" students to reflect upon their work in detail appears to have been appreciated by many. A number commented that they had learned more about the subject area as they compared their work with the model answer. There is a risk of grade inflation with student self-assessment of work; this did happen, but not to any significant degree. Peer assessment will be incorporated in 2014 to find a balance.