



Developing resilience and discernment to feedback

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Presentation abstract

Resilience is an important graduate skill, especially in the context of heavy social media influence (Samari et al., 2022; Sutton, 2024). When any form of writing or media is shared, it has the potential to be subject to feedback or comments. Amidst the affirmative feedback, there may also be a critical element. Whilst potentially constructively intended, those sharing content should be aware of the prospective impact and that these can be irrelevant or harmful (Mercer and Gulseren, 2023).

The significance of resilience in learning is well-documented (e.g., Cassidy, 2015) and includes how students might be affected by feedback (Wu and Bailey, 2018; Zhan et al., 2024). In this context, we often expect students to be able to interpret and apply feedback comments, which is a valuable graduate skill (Dyers, 2023; Cohan, 2024; Leder et al., 2024; Silén et al., 2024).

In examining these issues, our study focused on an assessment which developed two important skills: (1) adopting resilience in receiving feedback; and (2) confidence in evaluating, amongst numerous comments, which may need action and identifying what action.

A group assessment in an Economics undergraduate course was used for this purpose, with a set task to be completed and presented to the class. Once completed, each student was asked to write feedback about two other presentations. Once all peer feedback was given/received, each individual student was invited to write a reflective response to the

feedback they received. Reflection was facilitated by structured questions, which were then analysed.

This session shared reflections on assessment design, explained the process of enabling peer feedback, outlined the reflective questionnaire, and shared the results of the analysis of the reflective responses. The evaluation found that students provided thoughtful peer feedback and used the received feedback effectively. They discerned what aspects to improve on, and which ones to continue. End of course evaluations showed that students appreciated the opportunity to give feedback, reflect on received feedback, and to develop confidence in generating their own inner feedback.

Keywords: feedback; peer learning; presentations; assessment design.

Community response

The presenters in this session highlighted the increasing relevance of student feedback literacy in the context of the immediacy with which digitised content can be shared and thus open to commentary.

Attendees at this session were particularly interested by the way the assessment was designed to encourage students to engage deliberately with feedback and consider its potential for their future development. One participant reflected on the common challenge of students focusing solely on their marks and potentially missing the opportunity to learn from feedback. As Learning Development (LD) professionals, our community obviously and prolifically discourages an isolated interpretation of 'achievement', looking to encourage, instead, wider and more impactful ways of creating connected meaning between concepts, terms, and application of knowledge, understanding, and capability. The approach shared in this session was seen as a promising way to initiate habits that support students throughout their academic journey and in other facets of managing multiple digital identities.

A thoughtful question raised in relation to this session asked whether students 'were supported in understanding what good feedback looks like, so they could provide useful and meaningful feedback to their peers?' This point underscores the importance of not

only receiving feedback meaningfully and in an emotionally regulated way, but compassionately considering the form and impact of one's own feedback on others.

Next steps and additional questions

We recognise the need to clearly articulate our paper, which integrates resilience with discernment – this is a key feature of what we are trying to achieve. Students are not being asked to ignore what makes them feel negative; rather we encourage them to reflect on what they can learn from it. They must develop discernment to identify what is useful, what is irrelevant, and what is harmful. We are also able to reflect on how resilience is reemerging in a 'thriving' sense in educational discourse after its criticism.

Authors' reflection

Our presentation was on 'Developing resilience and discernment to feedback'. We outlined our objective and explained how we aim to achieve it through an assessment design. The objective behind this assessment design was to show students that in a world where we are subjected to so much feedback/personal critique, we must be resilient and also be able to discern what is useful, irrelevant, or even harmful.

In our assessment design, students had to work in small groups and do a presentation to explain several complex economic concepts, using some real life examples they usually encounter. There were three groups and each group presentation was observed by the other two groups, so that everyone would have observed two groups. All students were required to provide some peer feedback to the groups they observed. We then gave a survey questionnaire, requesting each student to reflect on the feedback they received. The responses were analysed and presented at the conference.

There was a suggestion from the audience to explore and reference Michael Unger, who is a leading expert in resilience literature. Indeed, this is a valuable suggestion because we discovered that he leads the centre for resilience and has conducted research and given valuable talks on this area.

An excellent point was voiced from the audience, questioning the value of developing resilience in students. They highlighted limitations of promoting resilience, especially for those from under-represented groups and those who might have experienced trauma. We agreed with their comment and support trauma-informed and inclusive practices. We also think that we must be cautious against simply shutting out negative feedback which makes us uncomfortable. Disruptive learning is about discomfort, but it can lead to a powerful learning experience. Can we harness this possibility rather than turning against it? They also added, 'Surely the aim of engaging with feedback well isn't just shaking off what has made people feel bad but critically engaging with what has been shared, and the nature of responses'. This is valuable feedback and encourages us to explore the literature on the value of disruptive feedback. It highlights the danger of encouraging students to bury their heads against anything that makes them feel bad. This also undervalues unpleasant life experiences.

Reflection from the community queries reiterates the value of guiding students in giving good feedback. Although we did provide some basic feedback etiquette and principles, your comments have inspired us to think how to embed this in our curriculum on the whole.

It is interesting that we are now at the receiving end of feedback. We are both excited and grateful for suggestions as well as constructive critique. It is important not to dismiss credible concerns. We must address them thoughtfully, clarify our focus for readers, offer convincing explanations to support the development of our ideas, and engage with relevant strands of literature which might challenge our paper.

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