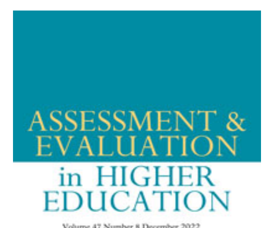

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/caeh20

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To cite this article: Bianka Malecka, David Boud, Joanna Tai & Rola Ajjawi (2022) Navigating feedback practices across learning contexts: implications for feedback literacy, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47:8, 1330-1344, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2022.2041544

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2041544

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ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
2022, VOL. 47, NO. 8, 1330–1344
https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2041544

Navigating feedback practices across learning contexts: implications for feedback literacy

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ABSTRACT
Student feedback practices have been primarily discussed within a context of the particular course or unit of study. Little attention has been paid to how students navigate their feedback practices as they progress through different learning contexts and whether they apply known feedback strategies in new settings. To open exploration of this issue, case studies of five participants were studied over different courses – undergraduate, direct-entry access program and postgraduate - in order to identify how learners' understandings of past and immediate contexts impacted their approaches to feedback. Data were collected through student artefacts which included e-portfolios completed in the direct-entry program and two interviews, approximately one year apart. Thematic analysis of the data indicated influences of learners' feedback histories on the application of feedback in new contexts. The findings highlight the need to consider students' past feedback experiences, as well as identify connections between courses, in order to assist students in applying feedback practices across contexts. Further research exploring how micro transitions between courses and students' lived experiences of interacting with feedback tools and materials influence their feedback literacy is recommended.

KEYWORDS
Feedback practices; feedback literacy; feedback histories

Introduction

Recent interest in the role of learners in feedback processes has highlighted the importance of skills that they need to develop to make the most of feedback opportunities. Student feedback literacy (Sutton, 2012; Carless and Boud, 2018) has been conceptualised as encompassing learners' cognitive and relational capacities to understand the purpose of feedback, make judgements about the quality of work and act on feedback. A more elaborate framework of student feedback literacy (Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2020) identified seven core groups of behaviours which relate to how students can be agents of their own learning from feedback. Feedback literacy is, therefore, seen as imbued with the sense of student agency, which may lead to an assumption that once students develop relevant feedback skills, they will *become* feedback literate.

Yet, as learners navigate their ways through different educational contexts, which may include tertiary preparation programs, foundation studies, diplomas or diverse postgraduate courses, student feedback seeking and utilisation processes are likely to be influenced by various individual and contextual factors, which either enable or constrain the development of their feedback literacy. Students' feedback histories, that is prior experiences of receiving and acting on

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feedback, can also impact subsequent responses to feedback inputs in new contexts. The role of social, material and cultural factors influencing the development and enactment of student feedback literacy has been signalled in emerging conceptual research (Chong, 2020; Gravett, 2020). Recent empirical studies investigating the emergent nature of feedback literacy signal the importance of students' disciplinary knowledge of concepts in engaging with feedback in new educational settings (Li and Han, 2021) and the role of divergent cultures of assessment and feedback in shaping students' utilisation of feedback in different environments (Rovagnati, Pitt, and Winstone 2021).

However, little is known about whether students carry forward feedback strategies between learning contexts and what structural elements, beyond their individual control, determine their feedback approaches in new educational settings. While studies exploring the disciplinary nature of feedback emphasize its domain-specificity (Winstone, Balloo, and Carless 2020), there may be aspects of it that can be transferred across contexts and cultures. Understanding the transferability and application of feedback processes across disciplines is particularly worth pursuing given varying university pathways and the recent global shift to online learning and teaching due to COVID-19.

An initial study is therefore needed to identify the issues involved in applying feedback practices across settings before those of greater scope can be undertaken. This study seeks to understand how learners' feedback histories, their actions and understandings of past and immediate contexts influence their approaches to feedback. It examines a small number of students transiting over a variety of contexts to explore in detail the nature of issues that arise. We use data from these cases, not to draw definitive points about feedback histories, but to illuminate issues for consideration in further research. We shift from the conception of feedback literacy as an individual capability to examine ways in which contexts enable or constrain individuals to use feedback skills acquired and utilised previously elsewhere. We thus adopt an ecological lens (Ajjawi et al., 2017; Chong, 2020) which sees feedback within a teaching and learning ecosystem embedded in a broader social and relational context (Nieminen et al., 2021). In keeping with the ecological perspective, we use the term feedback 'practices' to acknowledge the active construction by social actors structured through interdependent cultural systems and previous events (Penman et al., 2021).

To understand feedback practices in relation to the contexts in which they operate, we studied five international students over different courses – undergraduate studies in their respective home country, studies in a direct-entry program (DEP) in Australia and postgraduate studies in Australia. Consideration of students' feedback trajectories across their broader learning landscape, rather than just in a course microsystem of a task, module or program (Ajjawi et al., 2017), enables us to see how approaches to feedback can be applied in new environments. Such knowledge could enable the crafting of effective strategies and scaffolds to further support student learning. It could also help learners be more agentic.

Background

Changing conceptualisations of feedback and their impact on feedback literacy

Recent conceptualisations of feedback have shifted from one-way teacher transmission of information to student-centred processes where learners make sense of information from different sources (Henderson et al., 2019) through comparisons (Nicol, 2020) and knowledge construction strategies. The 'new paradigm' of feedback (Carless, 2015) emphasizes student engagement through eliciting and acting on feedback information to enhance future work. As a result of prioritising the centrality of the student role in engaging with feedback (Winstone and Carless, 2019), student feedback literacy frameworks place the individual learner at the core of the feedback process (Carless and Boud, 2018; Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2020). Learners'

understandings (knowledge) and capacities (actions) determine their meaningful engagement with feedback processes and information to enhance learning.

An ecological view of feedback

Students' agency is central in feedback; yet feedback is also constituted through the interplay of personal, contextual and structural factors across multiple sites and systems (Ajjawi et al., 2017). As a result, some conceptualisations of feedback literacy have adopted an ecological perspective. In this understanding, individuals do not act separately from the conditions in which they are situated, but rather are influenced by their environment or 'ecology' (Biesta and Tedder, 2007). Chong's (2020) feedback literacy model emphasizes that student feedback literacy is shaped by a number of contextual and individual variables mediated by material artefacts. Gravett (2020) claims that feedback practices are entangled with dynamic social, material and spatial factors which influence student engagement with feedback. Space, both physical and online, tools, the design of feedback artefacts as well as time, which is experienced differently by individuals, are all part of the complex ecology that influences feedback practices. Adopting an ecological lens to view feedback practices requires an understanding of how multiple proximal and distant contexts influence the learner and are interrelated in their effects.

Multiplicity of feedback practices

University feedback practices are situated within disciplinary learning and teaching activities. Students need to form a nuanced understanding of the quality of work required within specific contexts and develop a capacity to make judgements (Carless and Boud, 2018). Signature feedback practices refer to the characteristic ways that feedback processes are enacted in specific disciplines (Carless et al., 2020). Productive feedback depends on the relations between the parts of the course and disciplinary practices that shape them. Across disciplines, feedback may be viewed differently, hence studies exploring its disciplinary nature often use the term *literacies* to account for complex, plural feedback practices that are socially situated (Gravett, 2020; Winstone, Balloo, and Carless 2020). The ecological lens on feedback allows for the exploration of the influence of multiple contexts – of the unit, university, profession etc., on the individual. As such, it brings to light the tension between interpreting feedback practices as either generic or domain specific and as individual or collective. Feedback may be culturally defined but there may also be elements transferrable between contexts.

Feedback histories

Similar to learners' prior experiences of learning shaping their subsequent learning, prior experiences with feedback shape their subsequent feedback approaches. Successful past experiences within a subject area generally result in positive feedback seeking behaviours in a new setting (Lipnevich, Berg, and Smith 2016). Such learners report engaging with optional feedback interventions or seeking clarification (Ajjawi et al., 2021). By contrast, prior low achievement may lead to negative feedback behaviours such as avoidance of clarification or additional feedback (Bloxham and Campbell, 2010). Moreover, learners' prior knowledge of feedback approaches can impact their subsequent engagement. The literature that describes students' transition to university suggests that they often come from prescribed and monologic environments (Winstone and Bretton, 2013) where feedback is primarily understood as corrections or grades (Rovagnati, Pitt, and Winstone 2021), and so taking a more active role in feedback processes can be unfamiliar and challenging. Experiences of different operationalisations of feedback are particularly

evident in the histories of international students who have diverse feedback expectations and understandings of their own responsibilities in feedback processes (Tian and Lowe, 2013). Past feedback experiences, therefore, can trigger complex cognitive and emotional reactions in new settings, which can be hindering or conducive to learning through feedback.

Teacher feedback literacy

While the focus here is on how students navigate their feedback practices across different learning contexts, teachers' feedback literacy, i.e. their knowledge and dispositions to design feedback processes to promote student action from feedback (Boud and Dawson, 2021) may also influence student feedback practices. Teachers' idiosyncratic feedback practices and relationships with students are potential factors affecting whether and how learners engage with feedback (Chong, 2020). Carless and Winstone (2020) emphasize the interplay between teacher and student feedback literacy through shared responsibilities in feedback processes. Part of teacher feedback literacies is knowing the roles of others and how they may be facilitated or constrained in their actions (Tai et al., 2021). To that end, feedback literate teachers can support students through modelling productive feedback behaviours (Malecka et al., 2021) and skilfully managing the interplay between generic and signature feedback practices (Pitt and Carless, 2021). Conversely, teachers' haphazard or poorly designed feedback practices and the absence of opportunities to negotiate feedback may mean that learners need to keep constructing and adjusting their feedback literacy in relation to each environment they encounter (Han and Xu, 2021).

Applying feedback practices in different contexts

Given the factors discussed above, the question arises: how are students deploying feedback practices in new contexts? Research into feedback in the workplace suggests that there is often a dissonance between teacher-led feedback which characterises institutional discourse and students' conceptualisations of feedback-in-practice based on their lived-experiences (Sambell, Brown, and Adamson 2021). It is the informal feedback exchanges, which tend not to be planned for in university courses, that seem to be most relevant and authentic in work-based settings. Yet Noble et al. (2019) report how, following feedback literacy interventions, students applied feedback strategies such as feedback seeking in the workplace and looked for tasks that would allow them to transfer their clinical skills. Indeed, the onus of learning transfer seems to lie with the individual who has to first notice the affordances for transfer and then apply learnt strategies (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström, 2003). To date, there are limited studies exploring how students apply feedback practices in different learning settings. Thus, the current research sought to address the following question: how do learners' feedback practices change across learning contexts?

Methods

The qualitative case study approach is suitable to map students' feedback journeys over quite dissimilar settings because little is known about which contextual and structural elements can assist or deter students from applying known feedback processes. The information gathered through case studies is biographical and relates to retrospective and current events in the individual's life (Yin, 2012). This approach was used to explore how a small group of students responded to and perceived feedback throughout their undergraduate studies (Carless, 2020),

and is relevant to our investigation of individuals' feedback journeys across different learning contexts.

Research participants and context

The participants were five international students at a major university in Sydney, Australia. Four participants were enrolled in postgraduate courses (Professional Accounting, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Commerce) and one participant was enrolled in an undergraduate course (Commerce). Prior to their commencement of university studies, all participants completed a direct-entry program (DEP) at an English language centre affiliated with the university. The purpose of DEP is to prepare international students for their transition to university in Australia through a focus on academic and English language skills. Two participants completed DEP in a face-to-face mode while the remaining three completed DEP online due to COVID-19. All participants commenced their postgraduate studies in an online mode. At the time of the second interview, some of them had returned to their home country to continue studies remotely. Participant recruitment was opportunistic and informed consent was managed by three teachers from the English language centre to minimise perceived coercion. Institutional ethical approval for this study was obtained from Deakin University Human Ethics Advisory Group:19-227.

The research explored participants' feedback literacy in three learning contexts. The first context was undergraduate study (for one participant – secondary studies) in Chinese speaking countries; the second was the DEP program in Australia; the third was that of postgraduate (for one participant – undergraduate studies) in students' respective courses in Australia. All participants had the same sequence of settings. Table 1 provides an overview of participants' backgrounds and current studies. The proportion of study taken online was higher than expected due to the intervention of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data collection and analysis

Data for this study included student artefacts collected during participants' study of the DEP course as well as two interviews, approximately one year apart. Student artefacts comprised writing e-portfolios, completed during five weeks of the 20-week DEP course, which included personal goals, reflections on teacher's feedback and plans for subsequent action. The first interviews were conducted between March-May 2020 and focused on student actions in response to different feedback processes in the DEP course. The provisional data analysis of the first interviews and artefacts informed the subsequent interviews in June 2021 which explored feedback experiences in university courses and the application of the feedback processes that participants were exposed to in the DEP course. Data about participants' experiences with feedback processes during secondary and undergraduate studies in their home countries was collected in both interviews. All interviews were between 30-60 min in length, were conducted

Table 1. Participant overview.

Pseudonym	Gender	Mode of DEP delivery	Course in Australia	Mode of PG course delivery	Residency during DEP and PG course
Tina	Female	online	Professional Accounting (PG)	Online	Australia/ China
Fu	Male	face-to-face	Electrical Engineering (PG)	Online	Australia
Joe	Male	face-to-face	Mechanical Engineering (PG)	Online	Australia/ China
Ling	Female	online	Commerce (PG)	Online	Australia
Dong	Male	online	Commerce (UG)	Online	Australia

Theme 1: Applying feedback practices in new contexts

- acting on feedback
- grades and feedback
- similarities and differences between home country, DEP and university

Theme 2: Creating opportunities for feedback in new contexts

- course design
- feedback seeking
- feedback processes at DEP and university
- personal goals

Theme 3: Responding to feedback processes in the online context

- online course delivery
- emotional response
- COVID-19

Figure 1. The consolidation of the second level codes into three themes.

via Zoom by the first author of this paper and transcribed. Although the first author of the paper was the participants' teacher for five weeks of the 20-week DEP course, at the time of the interviews the participants were no longer in a teaching relationship with the first author.

The data analysis process consisted of thematic content analysis which identified and interpreted themes in interview transcripts and student artefacts. In the preliminary level coding, we identified 38 codes which were defined in our coding framework with exemplars.

Coding and interpretation were first conducted within-the-case and then across cases to account for similarities, differences and patterns by the first author (Yin, 2012). Following authors' discussion, the preliminary codes were collapsed to 10 s level codes, which were then revised, consolidated and interpreted in three themes (Figure 1). The preliminary data analysis was done by the first author and then discussed and refined by the remaining authors through iterative discussion and sense making of the data. Themes' interpretations were co-produced by all authors. The insider status of the first author as a teacher in the DEP program provided in depth understanding of the contexts of practice, and the remaining researchers as outsiders and experts in feedback scholarship, could disrupt taken for granted assumptions through critical questioning and interpretation.

When referring to the interviews, we use participant's pseudonym initial and the interview number, e.g. T1 – Tina, interview 1. The quotations from participants' artefacts in e-portfolios are reported using the initial of their name followed by A for artefact, e.g. TA – Tina, artefact.

Findings

We first describe participants' experiences in the DEP course as they offer a common point of comparison to later discuss their experiences across contexts. Then we outline the three themes which were identified from data analysis of the case studies – applying feedback practices from previous contexts in new settings; creating opportunities for feedback in new contexts; and responding to feedback processes in the online context.

Responding to feedback design in courses

Tina meticulously completed most e-portfolio tasks in the DEP course which included weekly writing goals, reflection on teacher's feedback, task rewrites and student's action plan (Malecka et al., 2021). Her personal goals, completed prior to weekly writing tasks, showed understanding of literary genres and task requirements, e.g. '*I will write sentences including comparison-contrast*' (comparison-contrast essay). Often, her goals were influenced by the teacher's feedback on the task in a preceding week, as mentioned in interview 1 - '*it's the feedback that guides me to set my goals*' (T1). Tina was also diligent in completing all task rewrites. She made text changes

following the teacher's comments and often highlighted parts which were originally incorrect, as in this example '*Consequently, accommodation becomes an issue which urgently needs to be resolved.*' This suggests care in recording information in an appropriate form (here through highlighting) to remember it. When asked about her understanding of the purpose of feedback, Tina replied

> [feedback] helped me to find out my weakness… it gave me more confidence. It let me think I can pass the course well if I work hard. Finally, feedback also gave me direction to practice. (T1)

In her postgraduate studies, Tina noted that each university course is run by different lecturers who have their distinctive feedback practices, yet, in many courses, she only received a grade, without comments. When asked to recall the most productive feedback experience, Tina mentioned two interconnected tasks in the Economy course – an oral presentation and a subsequent report. The teacher's feedback on the presentation guided Tina to make changes, analyse the problem in more detail, revise, and, consequently, submit improved work. She mentioned that these tasks gave her '*a clear direction to improve*' (T2).

Dong completed all written tasks in DEP but there was no evidence of reflection or action following the teacher's comments on his work. In interview 1, he mentioned that he didn't review his past work or feedback as there were other tasks due – '*I need [to] spend my time to do the other things like this week's essay, the reading logs, and listening logs*' (D1). At the subsequent university course, Dong also seemed to be focused on the assessments ahead and did not examine his performance on the completed task– '*you know you have another assessment coming and you need to focus on another one, so I don't often review the grades and ask for feedback*' (D2). He added that tasks and assessments in most of his courses did not include tutors' comments, but only a grade. At times, he would ask tutors for additional comments, but he did not consider their answers helpful as they '*would just tell me 'you need good structure' but didn't tell me what is good structure* '(D2). He noted that even if he wanted to improve, he had no opportunity as there were no similar assessments.

Ling embraced an opportunity to engage with feedback through the e-portfolio in DEP. She regularly reflected on her task performance prior to receiving the teacher's comments by reviewing it against set goals and task expectations. For example, '*I think that I did achieve my goals, but my sentence may be a little less than I expected*' (week 2). She mentioned that the goals gave her '*direction to compare essays*' (L1). Reflecting on feedback experiences during her undergraduate studies, Ling mentioned: '*there is only one standard to follow and very few spaces for students to argue in China* '(L2).

Fu's weekly learning goals in the DEP e-portfolio were directed by the teacher's feedback – '*because of feedback, every week I have a new goal*' (F1), which was evident in a different focus each week, e.g. clear expressions and academic vocabulary (week 2), critical thinking (week 4). In response to the teacher's comments, he regularly completed the reflection on what skills needed further development, for example writing a clear thesis sentence or using passive structures. He also mentioned taking notes of key take-away messages from weekly feedback not to make the same mistakes in his next writing. These actions show his familiarity with identifying his learning needs. Fu didn't identify specific feedback practices in his postgraduate courses other than being guided by the grades – '*the low grade for my lab report made me work harder to get a higher grade next term*' (F2).

Joe didn't systematically complete his e-portfolio tasks in DEP – there was no reflection on teacher's feedback comments and no rewrites. He started to fill in personal goals in the latter part of the course and they were then influenced by the teacher's feedback on previous work – '*while I am writing my essay, I can [hear] the teacher's voice in my head – you need to focus on … sentence structure*' (J1). Joe mentioned that the postgraduate courses which focused on calculations didn't include specific feedback practices other than the grade, while other courses

such as engineering project management required students to review tutor's comments so that they could improve their subsequent task. He found both practices useful.

Next, we describe the three themes interpreted in the data.

Theme 1: Applying feedback practices in new contexts

This section focuses on how students applied feedback practices as they moved to new learning settings – subsequent DEP and university courses.

Ling continued to set her own goals through her subsequent DEP and university courses – '*it has become a custom now and gives [me] a purpose to complete an essay*' (L1). In the university courses, Ling learnt to split her work into smaller sections and considered them her goals for particular tasks, for example, literary research or hypothesis setting. In both interviews, Ling mentioned the value of reviewing past work and feedback as students often make the same errors, so continuous revision became a way to prevent that from happening. Ling appreciated peer cooperation in DEP and mentioned sharing the teacher's feedback with her peers. Ling also mentioned looking at other students' e-portfolios for guidance when she did not know how to complete the task. She noted a different focus of peer feedback in her university courses – in DEP peer feedback was focused mostly on language and grammar, while at university it concentrated more on ideas and perspectives. She mentioned that '*it can bring some more stimulation and self-reflection*' (L2). Approaches to work and feedback were mentioned as the key difference between Chinese and Australian learning experiences:

> Critical thinking… in Australia education is far more important than just one standard to follow [as in China]. We are encouraged to create, discover, and contribute to the specialty area we choose and that is the advantage we should take, compared to the education experience we take in China. (L2)

Tina noted that in her undergraduate studies in China, tutors would provide clear feedback on how the work can be improved, with the focus on '*how each material should be analysed*' (T2). In contrast, tutors in Australia '*tell us what the drawbacks are but not how we can improve and we need to discover it all by ourselves' (*T2). During high school in China, Dong received only feedback input from his tutors who '*told me which part I should improve*' (D2), whereas in Australia, he received peer as well as group feedback.

Having regularly practised goal setting prior to task completion in DEP, Fu continued to set goals in the university courses even though they were not a formal requirement. He mostly applied them to written tasks such as laboratory reports where he would focus on report structure and word limit. For other courses, such as linear algebra, he identified focusing on calculation speed to improve his grade. The focus on grade improvement was also mentioned by Dong who said that in his studying, he was often guided by what grade he wished to get – '*I would set a goal that I want a distinction or high grade for the assessment*' (D2).

At the beginning of his postgraduate studies, Joe was still setting his own writing goals related mostly to grammar but, with time, he stopped doing that because sometimes it was '*too annoying or you just want to finish it before the due date*' (J2). He also realised that his university tutors focused more on ideas and disciplinary knowledge rather than the language, so his grammar goals were of secondary importance.

Theme 2: Creating opportunities for feedback in new contexts

Following Tina's meticulous completion of e-portfolio tasks in DEP, in a subsequent DEP course, she continued to use Google Docs to share own work and give peer feedback with four of her classmates even though this was not a course requirement. The decision to set up the writing

study group with her classmates was due to insufficient feedback comments from the teacher. This reflects Tina's initiative to create opportunities for continued feedback practice and willingness to offer learning support to her peers.

Ling noted that in the subsequent DEP course, the teacher offered limited feedback comments on her written tasks. This made her feel disappointed, as '*feedback from teacher is the biggest motivation to complete our essays*' (L1). However, in the absence of teacher's feedback, Ling paired up with one of her classmates and they provided feedback on each other's writing. It was a positive experience – '*when we share [our work] we can share out our mistakes and fix them together*' (L1).

Joe mentioned seeking feedback from tutors in his university courses, especially when he received a low grade for the assessment. He also emailed his tutor asking for help with completing an assignment and noted that '*the tutor gave me some hints how to get the key points*' (J2). Unlike Tina and Ling, Joe didn't seek feedback from peers. In both DEP and postgraduate courses, Joe expressed reticence at providing and receiving peer feedback, especially if his peer was also Chinese. He said: '*I think all Chinese students like to give five points to everyone… and they will just give the rating, not make a comment*', and added '*I seldom make critical comments… because I don't know how to criticise people. Most Chinese students are not willing to accuse someone*' (J2). He also mentioned that working with others was a challenge for him – '*it is hard to cooperate with your partner, especially when you both have the same goal, the same pressure or assessment*' (J2).

Theme 3: Responding to feedback processes in the online context

Fu expressed disappointment with how his university experience turned out to be due to COVID-19, especially since attending face-to-face classes was the main reason why he decided to stay in Australia rather than return to his home country. Not knowing his classmates was disappointing – '*I think some students don't take part in courses, they just watch the recording*' (F2). He was reticent to ask tutors for help or guidance and attributed it to the online context of his studies:

> I don't know how to email my teachers because in China I hardly used email and I don't know what forms to use… In [DEP] I met my teachers in reality but now some of my teachers don't even turn on their cameras… I haven't even seen their faces… and I think some Professors are very busy and they have no time to email me. (F2)

This excerpt reflects three barriers impacting Fu's feedback seeking behaviour – lack of previous experience with email and unfamiliarity with its etiquette; his perception of impersonality and unapproachability of his tutors in a virtual learning environment and his perception of tutors' lack of time.

Ling also mentioned that the online environment hindered her interaction with tutors:

> lacking many opportunities to talk to professors face to face due to the pandemic is a significant drawback, affecting international students' feeling to talk. (L2)

Tina's experience was like Fu's. When she began her course in Professional Accounting, Tina commented on how studying a new course online limited interaction with other students – '*in online courses, there are less chances for us to communicate with our classmates*' (T2), and added that she seldom interacted with them after classes. Surprisingly, when describing her DEP experiences, Tina didn't refer to the mode of course delivery, especially since May 2020 saw her participate in synchronous online classes and use online tools such as Blackboard Collaborate for the first time. She summarised that time as '*a happy experience*' (T1). This may be because she already established connections with her classmates in the previous courses and continued to feel their support.

Discussion

This study explored how five learners applied feedback practices across three learning contexts. Students' experiences of feedback in new settings are affected by their past experiences. Joe's reluctance to participate in peer feedback activities continued in all three contexts, which he attributed to the highly competitive nature of his secondary and undergraduate education as well as his desire to maintain group/peer harmony, which, according to him, could be lost through criticism of peer's work. Yet the findings also suggest that once students become familiar with a variety of feedback practices, they may be able to continue applying the practices considered beneficial. Four participants reported continuing to set personal learning goals in consecutive courses. Tina and Ling appreciated peer and group feedback practised in the DEP course and continued it with trusted peers in consecutive courses. They both mentioned establishing informal personal feedback networks due to unsatisfactory level of teacher feedback or a lack of consistency in feedback processes between courses and individual tutors. This indicates that when collective feedback practices are deficient, students can elicit feedback information from other sources to provide opportunities for learning (Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2020).

Learners' feedback histories can provide insight into how they demonstrate their feedback literacy in new contexts. Tina, who exemplified more methodical feedback practices in the DEP course than other participants, was able to identify nested tasks in one of her postgraduate courses as an opportunity to act on feedback and enhance her performance. Dong, on the other hand, whose participation in feedback activities in the DEP course was unsystematic, expressed his disappointment with the lack of interlinked assessments in his undergraduate courses, which, he claimed, constrained his engagement with feedback. Both students demonstrated one aspect of feedback literacy through identifying either existing or lacking feedback loops in their courses. Both were willing to engage with feedback, yet only one had capacity to do so. This is in line with the previous findings - capacity and willingness must co-exist to facilitate learners' engagement with feedback and the development of their feedback literacy (Han and Xu, 2021). It also reflects the view that individuals act *by means* of their environment, rather than simply *in* it (Biesta and Tedder, 2007). Informed by prior feedback experiences, Tina and Ling set up informal feedback workarounds in an environment of impoverished feedback practice, which is a clear expression of their feedback literacy. Also, developing support networks illustrates students' acknowledgment that feedback is a reciprocal process with learners recognising their roles as both users and providers of information (Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2020).

The emergency transition to online teaching and learning due to COVID-19 imposed an additional contextual layer on feedback practices. For most participants, it proved challenging to build rapport with tutors and peers through online platforms. Participants did not form strong connections with domestic students and tended to rely on other international students who may lack some local understanding of context for feedback sharing. Moreover, international students are reported to lack confidence to seek feedback more than domestic students (Ryan and Henderson, 2018), and the changing life and study circumstances due to pandemic likely exacerbated that. Transitions between contexts, whether virtual or offline, are generally complex and international students may need longer to establish new feedback practices.

Student feedback trajectories highlight different ways that the context influences students, with some learners making use of the affordances of the context, and others not. The DEP course, completed by all participants, exemplifies this most clearly. The participants reported exposure to predominantly examination-oriented and transmission-focused approaches to feedback in their undergraduate studies. Peer feedback, personal learning goals, reflection on task performance and teacher feedback as well as action planning in the DEP course were largely unfamiliar learning-focused approaches to feedback. Tina, Ling and Fu embraced these opportunities, while Dong and Joe used them sparingly. When the participants moved to new courses, they were exposed to new feedback opportunities and practices, influenced more directly by

their respective disciplines. While there were examples of students taking responsibility to generate and act on feedback, there was also evidence of relative passivity in seeking or engaging with feedback, especially following tasks only with grades.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that learners move through various learning settings where different disciplinary, institutional and pedagogical contexts influence students' feedback practices

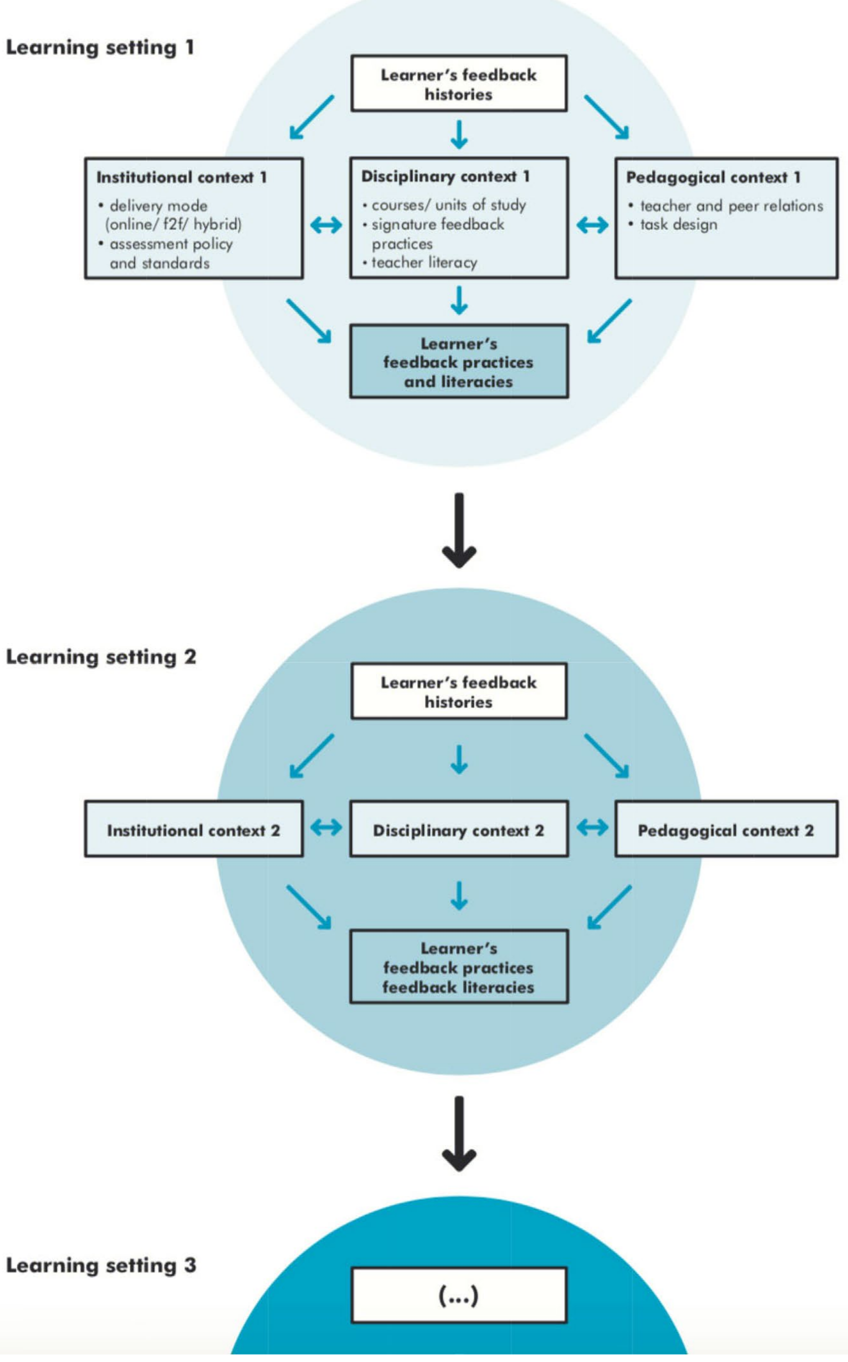

Figure 2. Learner's journey through multiple feedback contexts.

and literacies. Different courses, units, signature feedback pedagogies, tutors' feedback practices, relational dynamics between teachers and peers as well as institutional policies create invitations for feedback opportunities which learners engage with or ignore. Learners use old and establish new feedback practices in and through these contexts. As feedback practices in many learning settings often lack cohesion (Ajjawi et al. 2017), some learners draw on their feedback histories to create more learning-focused feedback conditions, thus exhibiting higher levels of feedback literacy. Learners' feedback histories, therefore, are composed of a range of influences over an extended period of time and their temporal and iterative nature aligns with the understanding of feedback literacies as complex, dynamic, nuanced and situated system of practices (Gravett, 2020). Figure 2 illustrates the learner's journey through multiple feedback contexts.

Implications for practice are suggested by this research. Learners adjust and construct their feedback literacy based on past and current experiences, and they do that through comparing feedback opportunities and encounters between settings. What we, as educators, see reflected through learners' engagement with feedback is not only the effect of our current practice but also the influence of learners' prior idiosyncratic feedback experiences. Therefore, when designing feedback opportunities in our courses, we should acknowledge the non-homogeneity of learners' feedback histories and not expect equal participation and engagement.

Our discussion highlights the need for open dialogue between students and teachers about learners' feedback histories. Such exchanges are common when gauging students' knowledge and skills and should also be acknowledged in our feedback practices. We echo the call for dedicated classroom time to discuss students' expectations of feedback (Rovagnati, Pitt, and Winstone 2021) to account for the nuances in learners' feedback approaches. Accordingly, when constructing feedback opportunities, we advocate for the space to accommodate a variety of student responses. While it is understandable that educators tend to focus on their immediate microsystem when constructing feedback opportunities (Ajjawi et al., 2017), a greater dialogue is needed between tutors and curriculum writers to consider feedback across courses. Initial inroads can be made at a program level through identifying overt connections between the courses to enable students to connect feedback from assignments often perceived as unrelated. Lastly, we encourage educators to highlight the challenges which may be experienced in transitions between contexts to aid students calibrate their expectations of feedback more flexibly (Ajjawi et al., 2017).

Limitations and future directions

Such an exploratory study is clearly limited. First, as it focused on how students applied feedback practices following two major transitions of context – from undergraduate through direct-entry to postgraduate studies, it didn't capture the nuances of micro transitions that students experience between courses or different assignments within the same course. The differences in feedback practices between courses at one university may be as substantial as those between educational systems in different countries. It would be worthwhile to investigate these micro transitions as they could inform the design of more collaborative models of feedback beyond the immediate task, thus assisting students in applying already practised feedback processes in new contexts. Second, our study explored how students adapted their feedback practices as they navigated different settings through responding to, applying and creating opportunities for feedback through interviews and artefact analysis. Longitudinal and ethnographic research which specifically investigates students' lived experiences of interacting with feedback materials, tools and instructions in different contexts would offer insider perspectives that would be of value to teachers keen to critically examine their own feedback practices. This, in turn, would enrich our understanding of how ecologies comprising human and nonhuman actors influence feedback practices. Third, a greater range of feedback cultures

need to be encompassed in future studies. Cultural diversity of feedback conventions, different educational systems and disciplinary traditions can result in learners' diverse literacies which are worth investigating to capture collective feedback practices in higher education.

Conclusion

Our study adds to the nascent literature exploring how learners' feedback histories shape engagement with feedback in new contexts. Before implementing any feedback intervention, the manifold feedback practices experienced by students need to be acknowledged and dialogue initiated about their impact and relevance in the current context. Supporting students through transitions and their own translation of feedback strategies can help develop their independence in navigating feedback practices across contexts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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