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Paper

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Increasing the Impact of Feedback from Assessments: The Mexican Hat Model

It is increasingly recognised that the shortness of a semester may be a barrier to student learning since it inhibits the opportunities to learn from feedback on assessments (Yorke 2001 [1]). However it is possible to introduce activities as a part of a teaching programme which direct students towards a more reflective approach (Biggs 1999 [2] Houghton & Dunne 2000 [3]), and thereby increase the impact of any feedback from assessments that is available. The challenge in this area is to identify methods which are scaleable and cost effective. This paper will describe and evaluate the development of such activities across a range of engineering and computing modules at a UK Higher Education Institution. The metaphor of the Mexican hat is used to help describe various students' potential for learning prior to any intervention. Where this approach differs from more commonplace practice is that the process is designed to impact upon the student's perception of their learning as discussed by Marton and Trigwell [4]. In this instance feedback and reflection are generated by the learner and communicated to the teacher rather than the more conventional process of feedback being generated by the teacher for the learner

1 Yorke, M. (2001). "Turn First-Semester Assessments into Richer Learning Experiences." *Innovations in Education & Teaching International* 38(3): 277 - 278.

2 Biggs, J. (1999). *Teaching for quality learning at university: what the student does*. Buckingham, Open University Press.

3 Houghton, A. W. & Dunne, E.: Strategies for teaching mixed-attainment groups in engineering education. *International Journal of Electrical Engineering Education (IJEEE) Special Issue*, Vol. 37/1, Jan 2000, pp. 48-66.

4 Marton, F. and Trigwell, K. (2000). *Variatio est mater studiorum*. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 19, 381-395.