

## **First encounters of receiving summative assessment feedback in audio format: expectations and experiences of final year undergraduate sport coaching students**

Rick Hayman

*Department of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation*

*Northumbria University, UK*

[rick.hayman@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rick.hayman@northumbria.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

Research suggests traditional written feedback may fail to adequately engage significant numbers of current higher education (HE) students. In recent years, university cohorts across wide-ranging disciplines have embraced audio feedback favourably, viewing it as a valuable strategy for enhancing capacity to learn confidently, competently and autonomously. Current understanding of audio feedback effectiveness with sports coaching students is limited, which is surprising considering coaching is an area where effective feedback provision is fundamental to athlete learning, motivation and progression. Employing surveys and semi-structured interviews, this study provides insight into the expectations and experiences of an undergraduate sport coaching cohort at a United Kingdom (UK) university after receiving summative assessment audio feedback for the first time. Student views were positively framed, providing strong evidence of the approaches value in supporting feedback literacy development and feeding forward. Implications to aid future practice and policy are discussed.

**Keywords:** audio feedback; higher education; mp3 file; student experience; undergraduate

### **Introduction**

The importance of students receiving understandable, personalised, accessible and timely summative assessment feedback is undisputed in pedagogic theory (Cann, 2014; Davis & Ryder, 2012; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hayman, 2018; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008; Nichol 2009), and regarded as the most powerful and transformational influence upon

HE learning and achievement than anything else (Brown, 2015; Carless & Boud, 2018; King, McGugan, & Bunyan, 2008; Sambell, 2016). By definition, high quality feedback directly addresses assessment marking criteria, indicates how well students are understanding and engaging with new materials, recommends how future performance may be acted upon and improved, provides constructive criticism when necessary and strengthens students capacities to self-regulate future work (Brown, 2015; Dixon, 2015; Middleton, 2011; Sambell, 2016).

Whilst HE students across wide-ranging academic disciplines have high-expectations and eagerly await summative grades and supporting comments (Brown, 2015; Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2012), their overall satisfaction has been historically low (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Nichol, 2010). This finding is substantiated by a body of work which demonstrates how they typically struggle interpreting and understanding traditional forms of written feedback, thus impacting negatively upon their engagement and motivation levels (Allin & Fishwick, 2009; Dixon, 2015; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Hayman, 2018; Rotheram, 2009). Research further indicates how HE students find it to be challenging in having to act upon then apply written feedback, particularly when perceived as being impersonal, illegible, overly complex and lacking in depth (Duncan, 2007; Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Glover & Brown, 2006; Ryan & Henderson, 2018; Värlander, 2008; Walker, 2009). This general displeasure was recently reinforced in the UK by 2017 National Teaching Survey (NSS) responses where subject disciplines received poorer evaluations of assessment and feedback than any other aspect of the university academic experience. Notably, UK based HE sport students contributed directly to the argument, highlighting their displeasure and unhappiness with the general quality of feedback they received over the duration of their university studies.

As a potential strategy to counter such issues and resistance, HE colleagues have been encouraged to consider alternative ways of producing, communicating and delivering summative assessment feedback which not only justifies grades, but also respects feelings, challenges prevailing thinking, promotes self-esteem and nurtures a positive connective bond and trust between themselves and their students (Chalmers, MacCallum, Mowat & Fulton, 2014; Laughton, 2013; Macgregor, Spiers & Taylor, 2011; Rowe, Fitness & Wood, 2014; Warner & Miller 2015). Over the past ten years, audio has become increasingly championed as a practical alternative which may help to

address feedback timing, content, quality and detail issues commonly raised by student survey results (Cann, 2014; Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016).

For student groups across different settings, levels and disciplines, there is common agreement in the literature on the merits of employing audio feedback to support learning, engagement, critical reflection and achievement (e.g., Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Hayman, 2018; King, McGugan & Bunyan, 2008; Laughton, 2013; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Morris & Chikwa, 2016; Rodway-Dyer, Knight & Dunne, 2011). More specifically, they warmly embrace the approach as a consequence of its supportive, enthusiastic and caring manner, valuing highly its role in supporting them to improve future assignments by considering, reflecting and acting upon feedback conveyed, working autonomously and having the confidence to approach teaching staff for further guidance and advice (Brearley & Cullen, 2012; Cann, 2014; Carless & Boud, 2018; Dixon, 2015; Dowden, Pittaway, Yost & McCarthy, 2011; Jackson, 2012; Knauf, 2016; Lipnevich, Berg & Smith, 2016; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Middleton, 2011; Parks & Fletcher 2017; Rowe, 2011).

Hayman (2018) revealed receiving audio feedback for the first time to be an initially unsettling experience for postgraduate sports students, with all demonstrating a sense of nervousness, apprehension and uncertainty. Initial concerns did alleviate after they revisited the audio several times, with all eventually valuing its effectiveness in providing detailed, personable, clear and understandable feedback devoid of repetitive or complex academic language. Ryan, Henderson and Phillips (2019) found Australian undergraduate students who received audio feedback liked the detail, personalisation and usability of the comments provided. Elola and Oskoz (2016) revealed second language learners preferred receiving audio rather than written feedback for content-related issues whilst Lunt and Curran (2010) revealed how providing audio feedback has the potential to save staff time. Dixon (2015) discussed the benefits audio feedback provides for creating more personal and authentic connections between teaching staff and learners, as well as fostering an increased sense of student self-esteem. Gleaves and Walker (2012) emphasised the relational and intimate qualities that audio feedback can have on student learning.

Lesser supporting audio feedback literature also populates the extant literature base and must be acknowledged. For example, Munroe and Hollingworth (2014) revealed

editing mp3 files as a key barrier to providing timely feedback, whilst King, McGugan and Bunyan (2008) struggled to locate quiet locations to record the audio. From a student perspective, Rodway-Dyer, Knight and Dunne (2011) found first-year geography undergraduates were more likely to perceive audio feedback negatively than their second and third year peers due to its overly severe perception.

Whilst student numbers enrolling upon HE sport programmes continues to rise annually, many embark on their university journey feeling overwhelmed and unprepared to study and complete assessments independently and confidently (Hayman, Allin & Coyles, 2017). It is important to recognise how sport, as a HE discipline, has long grappled with the crucial task of providing summative assessment feedback which successfully engages these diverse cohorts and aids learning. Sport coaching is an area where the provision of effective feedback is fundamental to athlete learning, performance, connectedness and progression (Mouratidis, Vansteenk, Lens & Sideridis, 2008). Feedback from coaches tends mainly to be delivered orally and provides cues about abilities, can be a motivator and impact positively or negatively on self-esteem and perceived competence (Booroff, Nelson & Potrac, 2016; Nelson, Potrac & Groom, 2014). Thus, based on the likelihood they may have greater experience than most of having competed and/or coached across a range of sports at different ages and levels, sport students may be better positioned and more likely to fully appreciate and understand the important role that effective feedback can play in evaluating, judging and developing sporting performance. This assumption led Allin and Fishwick (2009) to suggest how reinforcing the crucial role which feedback has to play in advancing sporting performance may prove a useful analogy to also help sports students recognise the significance of feedback in driving their educational attainment forwards.

There is indication of discipline differences in learning preferences across subject areas (Jones, Reichard & Mokhtari, 2003). For example, evidence suggests sports students enjoy constructivist learning approaches where frequent opportunities are provided to develop academic study skills to support their learning (Groves, Bowd & Smith, 2010; Peters, Jones & Peters, 2008). Most research related to feedback in sport focuses on the types provided to athletes by coaches in training or competitive environments (e.g., instructional, intrinsic or extrinsic) rather than the mode or style used within academic settings. Currently, limited research has explored how summative audio feedback is

perceived and interpreted by sports students and whether they act differently towards this type of feedback compared with what they typically receive in sport (e.g., they may have attempted a specific sport maneuver and been advised by their coach orally).

This study was justified for several reasons. Firstly, sport student specific research is very limited, which is surprising considering the large cohorts recruited annually to HE sport programmes and the potential they may gain from this mode of feedback. Secondly, the study went beyond simplistically evaluating if participants considered audio to be more advantageous than traditional written feedback. Thirdly, much of the existing audio feedback literature is limited solely to quantitative comparisons between small to moderate sample sizes and heavily reliant on single data collection strategies which may restrict the potential to fully unearth and explain meanings of findings. To break new ground and contribute to the existing body of literature, the primary aim of this study was to capture final year undergraduate sport coaching students' expectations and experiences of receiving summative assessment audio feedback within a HE setting for the first time and to determine its effectiveness.

## **Method**

### **Part one: self-report survey**

#### ***Participants***

The sample comprised 50 (male = 40 and female = 10) final year, full-time undergraduate sport coaching students at a North-East University in the UK (mean age = 21.2). Pre data-collection, all were assigned numerical pseudonyms to protect anonymity, informed they could withdraw from the study at any time and provided written informed consent. Once institutional ethical clearance was granted, face-to-face debriefs reinforcing the study aims, objectives and procedures to follow were completed.

#### ***Procedure and data analysis***

Permission was granted to recruit participants and complete the surveys within a compulsory attendance programme talk scheduled in late January 2017. The author undertook a 5 minute presentation outlining the study and procedures to follow and invited all recipients of summative audio feedback (n= 68) for assessment one within a talent identification and high-performance coaching module to participate. In total, 50 of the 68 eligible participants (75% cohort completion rate) volunteered to take part, completing the survey during the final 15 minutes of the event. Participants were asked to complete each section honestly and sincerely, irrespective of summative grade awarded, and to leave any questions blank which they did not fully understand. Hardcopy surveys were distributed and collected personally by the author once completed.

Three current postgraduate sport coaching students with experience of receiving summative audio feedback from the author piloted the survey. This confirmed completion time of approximately 15 minutes, with all wording and terminology considered appropriate and understandable for an undergraduate cohort. The survey structure and item-pool was developed by the author and informed by previous audio feedback studies (e.g., Lunt & Curran, 2010). The survey was anonymous with no correct or incorrect answers. Participants provided responses to three separate sections: (A) background information including gender, age and previous experiences of audio feedback, (B) on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), general perceptions and experiences of audio feedback were rated in comparison to traditional feedback methods encountered as undergraduate students (C) additional information such as 'how long do you think the optimal length of audio feedback should last'. The survey can be obtained on request from the author and comprised 26 questions; 4 within section A, 17 within section B and 5 within section C. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all responses.

## **Part two: semi-structured interviews**

### ***Participants***

Ten participants (8 = male and 2 = female) from the part-one data collection sample volunteered to undertake follow-up semi-structured interview to discuss their expectations and experiences further. In all cases, interviews were undertaken at convenient times and locations for the sample over a five-day period during mid-February 2017.

### ***Procedure and data analysis***

Each semi-structured interview began with several open-ended questions which probed participant's expectations towards and emotional responses evoked by audio feedback (e.g., 'explain how receiving summative assessment audio feedback for the first time made you feel'). The second stage examined perceived impact on general engagement (e.g., 'discuss what it was like receiving audio instead of written feedback'). To elicit greater richness and depth to responses, supplementary probes were posed ad-hoc including 'explain further why you felt this way', 'why do you think that influenced your decision', 'what did that specific experience mean to you', 'why did you make that particular choice' and 'why do you believe this was challenging'.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim, ranged in length between 31 and 46 minutes, scrutinised multiple-times over several days and subjected to similar thematic analysis guidelines published by Braun and Clarke (2006). Notes reflecting interesting and pertinent participant comments were placed within margins to unearth and capture the essence of the data. Initial associations and connections based on similarities and patterns between emergent themes were made, resulting in the development of two main categories and four sub categories. Interview extracts representing each theme were selected. The final analysis stage involved developing written accounts from these themes. Four weeks post-interview, six participants undertook a brief member checking telephone conversation with the author, which reduced ambiguity, enhanced accuracy and validity of responses and enabled participants to add things they may have forgot to initially mention (Lincoln & Gubba, 1985).

### ***Audio feedback production and dissemination***

Each participant received circa nine-minutes of personalised audio feedback in mid-December 2016. This was delivered electronically in mp3 format to personal university email addresses and specific to assignment one on a final-year undergraduate sport coaching module. A digital audio-device, with inbuilt universal serial bus port enabling mp3 format recording was used to create all mp3.files. This format is widely accessible and playable on a wide range of modern-day technological devices. All audio files were created, internally moderated, and emailed to participants' university email accounts, ensuring confidentiality and privacy, within 14 days of the assessment submission deadline. For each assessment submission, it took approximately 20 minutes to create an individual audio recording at the desired level of quality. This included time taken to read the assignment, identify key points and take-home messages to be included and save the file in mp3 format.

The audio feedback was produced and recorded adopting the following six-stage format:

1. Participant greeted in welcoming and pleasant manner with process to follow briefly explained.
2. Clarified which assessment the audio feedback related too.
3. Ensured audio was developmentally focussed, supportive and aligned with assessment criteria.
4. Commented logically and insightfully on all assessment sections, emphasising key areas of strength plus future development (even if the work was outstanding).
5. Reiterated key points to feed-forward, provided grade and offered additional support (e.g., opportunity for informal face-to-face follow up meeting).
6. Restated final summative grade then concluded in a friendly manner.

### ***Assessment overview and marking criteria***

The 2000 word assessment required participants to design a research-informed handbook to support the delivery of a continued professional development programme in talent development and identification (TID). Participants were expected to provide a brief introduction which defined TID, then undertake a critical literature review of the subject area. Participants were informed how an excellent assessment would

demonstrate 1). a research-informed approach which identified the relevance and importance of key TID concepts in developing sporting performance, long term-participation and positive well-being, 2). high-quality knowledge, theoretical understanding and application of physical, psychological, environmental and social moderators which contribute to the attainment of elite senior-level sports performance, 3). critical awareness of how the TID process is a complex, non-linear process and 4). accurate reference to seminal and contemporary sources, including academic journals and policy documents.

## **Results and discussion**

### ***Part one: self-report survey***

#### ***Section A: demographic information***

80% of participants were male and 20% female, with 94% aged 20 or 21, 4% aged 22 or 23 and 2% over 30 years. No participant had previously before received summative assessment audio feedback at any stage of their previous secondary, further and higher education careers. All participants (100%) fully listened through to the audio feedback once. A number went on to listen to the feedback several times again, with 24%, 7% and 12% respectively listening on two, three and four or more occasions.

**Section B: perceptions and experiences of audio feedback**

**Table 1.** Participants views on audio feedback

Compared to other forms of feedback recieved throughout your time so far as an undergraduate sports coaching student, audio feedback (n=50)	<b>Strongly Agree %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>No Opinion %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree %</b>
was easier to access	40	52	6	2	0
encouraged greater responsibility for my own learning	34	60	2	4	0
provided more encouraging comments	28	62	6	4	0
was easier to understand	34	58	2	6	0
was better organised	36	52	6	4	2
helped me gain better understanding of current strengths	28	64	6	2	0
identified and corrected errors	30	64	4	2	0
explained what I had done well	36	54	8	2	0
explained any mistakes and what I needed to improve on	28	62	6	4	0
stimulated me to act upon all comments provided	34	54	10	2	0
was more personalised	40	50	6	4	0
was more engaging	42	50	8	0	0
contained less academic jargon	38	50	10	2	0
justified the mark awarded	28	50	12	10	0
encouraged me to feed-forward	32	58	6	4	0
came across more sincere	36	50	8	6	0

provided more advice for future assessments	36	50	10	4	0
---	----	----	----	---	---

### **Section C: additional information**

Every participant listened to their audio feedback off campus, with 70% doing so via their mobile-phone, 26% via a laptop or iPad, and 4% through a desktop computer. Over half (58%) stated an audio feedback only preference on all future undergraduate summative assessments. Approximately one third (36%) favored an equal balance of audio and written feedback. Very few stated a preference for written only (6%). A significant majority (79%) listened to their audio feedback within 60 minutes of receiving the mp3 file via email, with 14% and 7% listening within 24 and 48 hours respectively. In total, 34% considered optimal audio feedback length to be between 3-5 minutes, 62% considered between 6-8 minutes and 4% recommended 9 minutes or longer. The majority (92%) believed the sound quality, pace and volume to be highly appropriate.

### **Part two: semi-structured interviews**

The results of the thematic analysis yielded four themes that were subsequently grouped within two categories.

**Table 2.** Category and theme classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Preliminary expectations, experiences and uptake	Distorted understanding, familiarity and awareness  Emergent intrigue, appreciation and perceived value
Feedback literacy articulation	Elevated self-evaluation and feeding-forward interplay  Catalyst for nurturing academic judgment and affect management

## **Preliminary expectations, experiences and uptake**

### ***Distorted understanding, familiarity and awareness***

For all participants, this was their first encounter as recipients of summative assessment based audio feedback. They were better accustomed and acclimatized to more traditional summative feedback modes and strategies throughout the lifespan of their university studies, including handwritten and typed comments. Due to their restricted awareness and unfamiliarity with a wider repertoire of contemporary feedback strategies, it became clear they were lacking in preparedness for receiving audio feedback and were keen to be reacquainted with normal written feedback protocols. The passages below nicely highlight this initial hesitancy:

*I had never heard of audio feedback before and wondered how it would differ to normal written feedback which I was used to and had been for the whole of my degree. (P6)*

*I was worried about what I was going to have to do differently and I did think to myself that it would be useful to have been told more about what audio feedback was earlier in first year so I think I was wishing we just received normal written feedback like normal. (P7)*

More specifically, all participants discussed having a distorted, conflicted and unclear understanding, grasp and awareness of generic audio feedback principles, how it was produced and disseminated plus the potential learning gains it may support. The thought of receiving audio feedback for the first time was initially greeted with low-level tentativeness, inquisitiveness, nervousness, curiosity and mystique. The majority of participants discussed feeling slightly exposed, alienated and positioned out of their comfort zones in the hours leading up to the distribution of mp3.files. The following quotes emphasise such points:

*I had to force myself like to press the play button because I had a tinge of uneasiness about what was going to be said because I had spent lots of time putting together that assignment. (P1)*

*I was uncertain on the added benefits at first because the written feedback I have been given for all my other modules has been pretty good in that it is clear and easy to understand and helps me to think about how I could improve and how I should go about doing it so If I am completely honest, I would have been happy to receive the normal written feedback like always. (P5)*

### ***Emergent intrigue, appreciation and perceived value***

Despite the early pessimism towards audio feedback, feelings and attitudes progressively diminished with all participants eventually engaging enthusiastically and willingly with their personalised feedback (Lunt & Curran, 2010; Olesova & Richardson, 2011; Rotherham 2009). A range of positive insights and comments emerged, with the approach described as being ‘really personalised’, ‘clear’, ‘insightful’, ‘easy to follow’, ‘caring’, ‘reassuring’, ‘genuine’, ‘real-world’ and ‘motivating’. The passages below illustrate the essence of such comments further:

*I had a mixture of feeling a bit apprehensive about having to listen to somebody talking about my assessment but on the other hand I was looking forwards to receiving something completely different from before, so for me there was an element of going into the unknown but also feeling quite excited about experiencing something new. (P3)*

*I had never before ever received audio feedback for a university assessment before but based on what I know now I think it is a shame we had no option to receive it earlier in the degree on the first and second-year modules. (P6)*

Buy-in, acceptance and willingness to engage were further evidenced through participants discussing an elevated sense of feeling ‘supported’ ‘connected” and ‘taken more seriously’ by their lecturer (Dixon 2015; Knauf, 2016). The following anecdote by participant four reinforces this attitudinal change:

*My hope is that other lecturers who teach on the programme also start using audio feedback with our assessments because for me it is very motivational and am now more likely to revisit it in the future than I would with written or typed feedback. (P4)*

The audio was complimented for being ‘emotive’, ‘convenient to access’ ‘poignant’, ‘understandable’ and ‘free of complicated language’. Depth of expression and tone of voice helped promote emotional closeness, personal connection and approachability

with academic staff (Carruthers et al., 2014; Varlander, 2008). This was the case for participant eight who said:

*This was the first time I had encountered feedback in this way and from it I really took home much more than I would normally from written feedback. It was more than words on paper as you could hear the expression and tone of the lecturer's voice. It pushed my buttons. (P8).*

Participant ten reinforced this attitude in the following passage:

*Written feedback means not so much to me anymore, but the audio was different, especially in creating that personal connection for me with the feedback and also the lecturer. (P10)*

Universally, audio was perceived as being balanced, sincere and developmentally focused. Several discussed the value they placed on audio feedback as a strategy in offering highly personalised advice, direction and making them feel equal, but at the same time encouraging academic ownership, responsibility plus nurturing positive staff and student relationships. They especially welcomed and valued the depth, insight, meaning and volume of detail provided as well as the time and effort placed into the content production. The extracts below nicely elaborate on such points:

*I could tell plenty of time and effort had been put into pulling all the feedback together and speaking on behalf of my classmates, we all appreciate this as it is clearly not just a case of a quick skip through pages and providing generic responses that can appear off-hand. (P2)*

*It was clear that time was spent making the feedback and I think this really helps in terms of relationship building and respect because I am more confident now in coming to speak with you in person than I was previously. (P9)*

## **Feedback literacy articulation**

### ***Elevated self-evaluation and feeding-forward interplay***

It emerged how several participants had not always fully utilised previous written feedback to inform the academic quality and rigor of subsequent assessments. The majority found the audio supported proactive engagement more than usual written

feedback, with some discussing feeling better able to make sense of current strengths and areas for development.

*I spent more time than I ever had before in my time at university thinking how I was really going to take on board the main points. (P3)*

*The feedback was clear in how it said what I had done well and also what I could have done differently to make other sections better standard. It was easier to take the negative in this way. (P8)*

Participant five cited the relaxed, simplified and personalised nature as a key driver for supporting them to start self-evaluating their assessed work more frequently and competently:

*The way in which the audio feedback simply explained how I could go about taking my work to the next level was really valuable and filled me with confidence I need. (P5)*

When asked to elaborate on the perceived benefits of audio feedback, several participants explained how the approach gave them greater confidence and acted as a springboard to competently feed-forward, self-evaluate and take charge of their future learning, something they found challenging but keen to address. They said:

*Providing audio was less of a blunt way of passing on feedback and it was massively personalised and convenient to access so a nice way of doing things and it made me more inclined to actually listen to what was said and think carefully about what was said and how I should go about acting upon it in the best way. (P4)*

*After the feedback was sent through, me and a couple of seminar buddies met up and chatted about the things we had done well and the not so good aspects and we ended up chatting about what we needed to do so we took on board the information for future assessments. (P7)*

In addition, participants mentioned how the experience helped them feel a partial sense of fulfillment and heightened self-efficacy (Dixon, 2015).

*In my case, the personal touch worked great and made me realise how all aspects of the feedback were addressed with my best intentions at heart and for me to go about improving and getting my work better. (P3)*

*I know it is early days, but it has certainly upped my confidence levels and motivation to get better marks and to get my work to first class level more often. (P9)*

Several mentioned how typically grade focused they were and how the audio format helped relinquish their tendency to de-couple summative feedback and mark awarded. The following passages reveal how audio was perceived positively for overcoming this problematic issue, as well as supporting participants to internalise and make greater sense of the feedback provided:

*With written feedback, me and my class mates would always just skim read through some of the comments on the script and then go straight to the grade but this time we were taken on a journey beforehand of finding out our grades which we were made to engage with fully. (P4)*

*Normally, I just look at the grade and I have to say I was wondering from the first moment with the audio what grade I was given but it was pretty useful to listen with as it explained why I was given the grade I was and what was needed to get better in future assignments. (P6)*

Overall, participants valued the lecturers attempts to provide personable and understandable feedback which could help develop evaluative and feed-forward capabilities (Jackson, 2012; Olesova & Richardson, 2011; Robinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

*Rather than having to decode feedback, it just explained what I had done well and also what I could still do to make things better. So, this was the case with advice on my evaluation skills when writing about previous research which was spot on and gave me a good lead up to other assessments. (P3)*

*I took forward the advice I was given about being less descriptive with study detail into my dissertation and have re-drafted sections accordingly and discussed my changes with my supervisor. (P9)*

### ***Catalyst for nurturing academic judgment and affect management***

The approach helped to articulate participant's evaluative judgments concerning the quality and standards of their assessed work. They mentioned feeling more confident and better prepared in being able to competently and constructively interpret, make sense, handle and apply the information provided into future work. The below insights demonstrate how tone, emotion and encouragement conveyed suppressed early concerns towards receiving audio feedback:

*At the start, I could tell from the tone of voice that my work was good level and this helped settle me down and I listened closely and stopped and started it a few times so I could make some notes of my own. (P1)*

*I was surprised at how much easier it was to take feedback telling me how I could improve and do things better. It took a bit of getting used to but I liked having things explained to me orally instead of in writing. (P4)*

The feedback encouraged participant five to try and gauge the academic standing of their work. They stated:

*The audio feedback said where my work was in terms of standing against the marking criteria so when the final grade was disclosed at the end, I could see exactly why I was given that grade and that it was a fair decision. (P5)*

Several participants discussed their preference for receiving lower grades and critical or unsympathetic feedback by means of audio rather than written methods, They explained how it left them feeling less frustrated, disappointed, angry and disengaged when their mark or feedback were not as high as expected (Robinson, Hope & Hoyloak, 2013). For example, participant three said:

*I received a slightly lower grade for the assessment compared to what was my second-year grades average but receiving the audio was a real eye-opener and helped me to get to grips with working on what I need to do to improve. (P3)*

## **Conclusion**

This study restated how the influence of feedback on student learning can be multi-faceted and encompassing of such issues as emotional impact, sensitivity and power relations (Allin & Fishwick, 2009; Brown, 2015; Sambell, 2016). Providing university students with summative assessment audio feedback has grown in popularity over the past decade (Carruthers et al., 2014; Morris & Chikwa, 2014; Munroe & Hollingworth, 2014; Parks & Fletcher, 2017). This study was unique because it was the first to listen to and carefully consider the student voice of an undergraduate sport coaching cohort as to their expectations about, opinions towards and experiences of receiving summative assessment feedback for the first time through audio format.

Generally, views were positively framed, providing further evidence of the positive attitudes held by participants towards the approach. In the hours leading up to its dissemination, participants felt slightly apprehensive, nervous and unsettled. This is unsurprising as all had no previous experience of ever before receiving feedback in this manner within a HE context, as well as a restricted understanding and overall grasp of generic audio feedback principles. Initial restlessness and unease quickly eroded with most engaging proactively, enthusiastically and willingly with their feedback (Gleaves & Walker, 2012; Olesova & Richardson, 2011). Supporting the findings of Ice et al., (2007), Merry and Orsmond (2008) and Moore and Wallace (2012), participants valued and acted upon the audio feedback, describing it as more insightful, personable, easier to understand and intrinsically motivating than written feedback. Replicating the finding from Parkes and Fletcher (2017), participants suggested the merits which audio feedback may offer should be carefully explained to them before dissemination to improve the likelihood of future acceptance, uptake and buy in.

The value and potential that audio feedback has to offer in encouraging and supporting the continual development of student feedback literacy, and ultimately future academic performance and achievement, was a significant study finding. This strongly supports the work of Carless and Boud (2018) who stated high levels of student feedback literacy play a leading role in enhancing learning gains. They described how HE students with well-honed feedback literacy fully appreciate and understand the value of feedback,

recognise their active role within its processes, positively manage affect and take action to build upon comments provided to feed-forward and learn through increasingly independent ways.

A key aspect in sport is that coaches provide feedback to their athletes instantaneously, with the expectation to react immediately. Whilst there is no delay between the action, feedback, and acting on feedback, such interruptions occur in HE (e.g., time between submission of assessment by student and distribution of comments and agreed mark). Therefore, an important avenue of future research is to explore whether this 'delay' has an influence on how sports students may perceive audio feedback, whether they act differently on this type of feedback compared with what that they receive in sport and if so why. Further research exploring the experiences of academic staff that provide their students with audio feedback is also warranted. This study was not without limitations. The survey was positively worded, thus liable to potential response bias. That said, the likert scale provided participants with opportunity to provide either positive, neutral or negative feedback to all questions. Furthermore, the sample only comprised final year undergraduate sport coaching students, thus potentially limiting generalisability of findings to other disciplines and levels.

Several recommendations emerged from the study which may help academics, educational developers and senior management teams support greater student engagement with audio feedback in the future. Prior to receiving, it is crucial that students are well educated about the concept, processes involved and potential emotional impact it may place on them (Hayman, 2018). The early stages of providing audio can prove to be a particularly sensitive time for student buy in. Therefore, balancing negative with positive comments, using informal language, explaining all comments and the grade provided and posing questions to encourage reflection about the work is recommended (Ryan et al., 2019). It is important to offer opportunity for students to discuss their feedback and ensure they have accurate expectations and feel suitably confident, connected, primed and supported on how to go about future assessments (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016). To have academic staff offering brief face-to-face follow up meetings so they can discuss the feedback more openly and intimately may be a worthwhile policy to employ. Academic colleagues are also encouraged to be enthusiastic, empathetic, caring, personable and have access to appropriate technology and equipment when creating audio feedback (Cann, 2014). Colleagues with limited

experience or understanding of the approach should be supported and provided with appropriate professional development opportunities should they wish to learn more about creating and distributing audio feedback to their students (Denton, 2014; Orlando, 2016).

## **Acknowledgements**

The author thanks all consenting participants who completed surveys and interviews for their generosity, insight and time.

## **References**

- Allin, L., & Fishwick, L. (2009). *Engaging sport students in assessment and formative feedback. learning and teaching guides*. Higher Education Academy Network for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism.
- Booroff, M., Nelson, L., & Potrac, P. (2016). A coach's political use of video-based feedback: a case study in elite-level academy soccer. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 34, 116-124.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Brearley, F., & Cullen, W. (2012). Providing students with formative audio feedback. *Bioscience Education*, 20, 22-36.
- Brown, S. (2015). *Learning, teaching and assessment in higher education: global perspectives*. London: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Cann, A. (2014). Engaging students with audio feedback. *Bioscience Education*, 22, 31-41.
- Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43, 1315-1325.

- Carruthers, C., McCarron, B., Bolan, P., Devine, A., McMahon-Beattie, U., & Burns, A. (2014). I like the sound of that: an evaluation of providing audio feedback via the virtual learning environment for summative assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40, 352-370.
- Chalmers, C., MacCallum, J., Mowat, E., & Fulton, N. (2014). Audio feedback: richer language but no measurable impact on student performance. *Practitioner Research in Higher Education*, 8, 64-73.
- Davis, C., & Ryder, A. (2012). Using an old technology in a new way or using a new technology in an old way? exploring the use of audio feedback post teaching observation. *Middlesex Journal of Educational Technology*, 2, 30-40.
- Denton, D. (2014). Using screen capture feedback to improve academic performance. *TechTrends*, 58, 51-56.
- Dixon, S. (2015). The pastoral potential of audio feedback: a review of the literature. *Pastoral care in Education*, 33, 96-104.
- Dowden, T., Pittaway, S., Yost, H., & McCarthy, R. (2011). Students' perceptions of written feedback in teacher education: ideally feedback is a continuing two-way communication that encourages progress. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher education*, 38, 349-362.
- Duncan, N. (2007). Feed-forward: improving students' use of tutors' comments. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32, 271-283.
- Elola, I., & Oskoz, A. (2016). Supporting second language writing using multimodal feedback. *Foreign Language Annals*, 49, 58-74.
- Fawcett, H., & Oldfield, J. (2016). Teaching in higher education: investigating expectations and experiences of audio and written assignment feedback in first-year undergraduate students. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21, 79-93.
- Gibbs, G., & Simpson, C. (2004). Conditions under which assessment supports student learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 1, 3-31.
- Gleaves, A., & Walker, C. (2012). Richness, redundancy or relational salience? a comparison of the effect of textual and aural feedback modes on knowledge elaboration in higher education students work. *Computers and Education*, 62, 249-261.
- Glover, C., & Brown, E. (2006). Written feedback for students: too much, too detailed or too incomprehensible to be effective? *Bioscience Education*, 7, 1-16.

- Groves, M., Bowd, B., & Smith, J. (2010). Facilitating experiential learning of study skills in sports students. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 34, 11-22
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77, 81-112.
- Hayman, R. (2018). Using audio for summative assessment feedback: experiences of work-based postgraduate sport coaching students. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 6, 13-21.
- Hayman, R., Allin, L., & Coyles, A. (2017). Exploring social integration of sport students during the transition to university. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 5, 31-36.
- Hepplestone, S., Holden, G., Irwin, B., Parkin, H., & Thorpe, L. (2011). Using technology to encourage student engagement with feedback: a literature review. *Research in Learning Technology*, 19, 117-127.
- Higgins, R., Hartley, P., & Skelton, A. (2002). The conscientious consumer: reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27, 53-64.
- Ice, P., Curtis, P., Phillips, D., & Wells, J. (2007). Using asynchronous audio feedback to enhance teaching presence and students sense of community. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 11, 1-5.
- Jackson, M. (2012). Improving the assessment feedback experience: a case study. *Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences*, 4, 1-7.
- Jones, C., Reichard, C., & Mokhtari, K. (2003). Are students learning styles discipline specific? *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 27, 363-375.
- Knauf, H. (2016). Reading, listening and feeling: audio feedback as a component of an inclusive learning culture at universities. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41, 442-449.
- King, D., McGugan, S., & Bunyan, N. (2008). Does it make a difference? replacing text with audio feedback. *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 3, 145-163.
- Lau, L. (2008). Use of audio feedback to foster a sense of care in learning progress in an online module. *Higher Education Academy*.
- Laughton, D. (2013). Using audio feedback to enhance assessment practice: an evaluation of student and tutor experiences. *Student Engagement and Experience Journal*, 2, 1-20.

- Lipnevich, A., Berg, D., & Smith, K. (2016). Towards a model of student response to feedback In *Human Factors and Social Conditions in Assessment*, edited by G Brown and L Harris, 169-185. New York, Routledge.
- Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2008). Feedback on assessment: student perceptions of quality and effectiveness. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33, 263-275.
- Lunt, T., & Curran, J. (2010). Are you listening please? the advantages of electronic audio feedback compared to written feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35, 759-769.
- Macgregor, G., Spiers, A., & Taylor, C. (2011). Exploratory evaluation of audio email technology in formative assessment feedback. *Research in Learning Technology*, 19, 39-59.
- McClery, S., & Wilkie, J. (2009). Pastoral support to undergraduates in higher education. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 8, 23-36.
- McFarlane, K., & Wakeman, C. (2011). Using audio feedback for summative purposes. *Innovative Practice in Higher Education*, 1, 1-20.
- McGarvey, D., & Haxton, K. (2011). Using audio for feedback on assessments: tutor and student experiences. *New Directions*, 7, 5-9.
- Merry, S., & Orsmond, P. (2007). Feedback via mp3 audio files. *Centre for Bioscience Bulletin*, 5.
- Merry, S. & Orsmond, P. (2008). Student attitudes to and usage of academic feedback provided via audio files. *Bioscience Education*, 11, 1-11.
- Middleton, A. (2011). Digital voices: making stronger connections with the recorded voice. *Educational Developments*, 12, 6-8.
- Moore, C., & Wallace, I. (2012). Personalizing feedback for feed-forward opportunities utilizing audio feedback technologies for online students. *International Journal of e-Education, e-Business, e-Management, and eLearning*, 2, 6-10.
- Morris, C., & Chikwa, G. (2016). Audio versus written feedback: exploring learners' preference and the impact of feedback format on students' academic performance. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 17, 125-137.
- Mouratidis, A., Vansteenk, M., Lens, W., & Sideridis, G. (2008). The motivating role of positive feedback in sport and physical education: evidence for a motivational model. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 30, 240-268

- Munroe, W., & Hollingworth, L. (2014). Audio feedback to physiotherapy students for viva voce: how effective is the living voice? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39, 865-878.
- Nelson, L., Potrac, P., & Groom, R. (2014). Receiving video-based feedback in elite ice-hockey: a player's perspective. *Sport, Education and Society*, 19, 19-40.
- Nichol, D. (2009). Assessment for learner self-regulation: enhancing achievement in the first year using learning technologies. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34, 335-352.
- Nichol, D. (2010). From monologue to dialogue: improving written feedback process in mass higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35, 501-517.
- NSS (2017). National student survey results 2017. Accessed July 5<sup>th</sup> 2018.  
[www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/nss/results/2017/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/nss/results/2017/)
- Olesova, L., & Richardson, J. (2011). Using asynchronous instructional audio feedback in online environments: a mixed methods study. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 7, 30-42.
- Orlando, J. (2016). A comparison of text, voice, and screencasting feedback to online students. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 30, 156-166.
- Parks, M., & Fletcher, P. (2017). A longitudinal quantitative study of student attitudes towards audio feedback for assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42, 1046-1053.
- Peters, D., Jones, G., & Peters, J. (2008). Preferred learning styles in students studying sports-related programs in higher education in the United Kingdom. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33, 155-166.
- Price, M., Handley, J., Millar, B., and O'Donovan, P. (2010). Feedback: all that effort, but what is the effect? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35, 277-289.
- Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to teach in higher education*". 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London, Routledge.
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. (2012). Should online doctoral instructors adopt audio feedback as an instructional strategy? preliminary evidence elements of an effective learning experience in online education. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 245-25
- Rodway-Dyer, S., J. Knight, & E. Dunne. (2011). A case study on audio feedback with geography undergraduates. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 35, 217-231.

- Rotheram, B. (2009). Sounds good: using audio to give assessment feedback. *Assessment, Teaching & Learning Journal*, 7, 22-24.
- Rowe, A. (2011). The personal dimension in teaching: why students value feedback. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 25, 343-360.
- Rowe, A., Fitness, J., & Wood, L. (2014). The role and functionality of emotions in feedback in university: a qualitative study. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 41, 283-309.
- Ryan, T., & Henderson, M. (2018). Feeling feedback: students' emotional responses to educator feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 880-892.
- Ryan, T., Henderson, M., & Phillips, M. (2019). Feedback modes matter: comparing student perceptions of digital and non-digital feedback modes in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50, 1507-1523.
- Sambell, K. (2016). Assessment and feedback in higher education: considerable room for improvement? *Student Engagement in Higher Education*, 1, 1-14.
- Sipple, S. (2007). Ideas in practice: developmental writers' attitudes toward audio and written feedback. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 30, 22-31.
- Van der Kleij, F., Adie, L., & Cimring, J. (2017). Using technology to enable student voice in assessment feedback. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 48, 1092-1105.
- Värlander, S. (2008). The role of student's emotions in formal feedback situations. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13, 145-156.
- Walker, M. (2009). An investigation into written comments on assignments: do students find them useful? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34, 67-78.
- Walsh, C., Larsen, C., & Parry, D. (2009). Academic tutors at the frontline of student support in a cohort of students succeeding in higher education. *Educational Studies*, 35, 405-424.
- Warner, R., & Miller, J. (2015). Cultural dimensions of feedback at an Australian university: a study of international students with English as an additional language. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34, 420-435.