



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

What form of interim feedback most motivates students? A study of teachers' perceptions of the impact of assessment

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Abstract

Secondary school students receive various forms of interim feedback on their progress, including predicted and mock examination grades, classroom test results, and teacher feedback on class work. Where courses have a modular structure, module grades are further performance indicators. Interim feedback can have a motivational impact on students. For example, it may be formative, showing students how to improve their work and offering further learning opportunities. Negative feedback can surprise under-achieving students, spurring them into action.

The aim of this research was to investigate how effectively teachers believed various forms of feedback motivate students. As part of a wider empirical study of A level teaching and learning in England, two research questions were posed:

- i. What forms of interim feedback do teachers believe most motivate students?
- ii. Do teachers' perceptions vary across subjects and school types?

The research focused on three contrasting A level subjects: Economics, French and Mathematics. Questionnaires were sent out to teachers at 400 schools/colleges. The sample represented the complete A level population for the subjects investigated in terms of social deprivation, academic achievement and school type, as measured by indicators derived using data from the National Pupil Database. The teachers were asked a series of questions about the effectiveness of different types of feedback for motivating their students. They were also asked about whether they were teaching linearly or modularly, to see whether this had an effect.

20% of schools responded, returning 86 questionnaires in total. Initial findings, explained in detail in this paper, revealed some interesting differences in the teachers' responses. French teachers valued different types of feedback to Mathematics and Economics teachers. There were also differences in the responses from different types of schools. The findings have implications for teachers and assessment professionals seeking to improve classroom practice and learning through assessment.

