

Feedback and dialogue: moving the debate on

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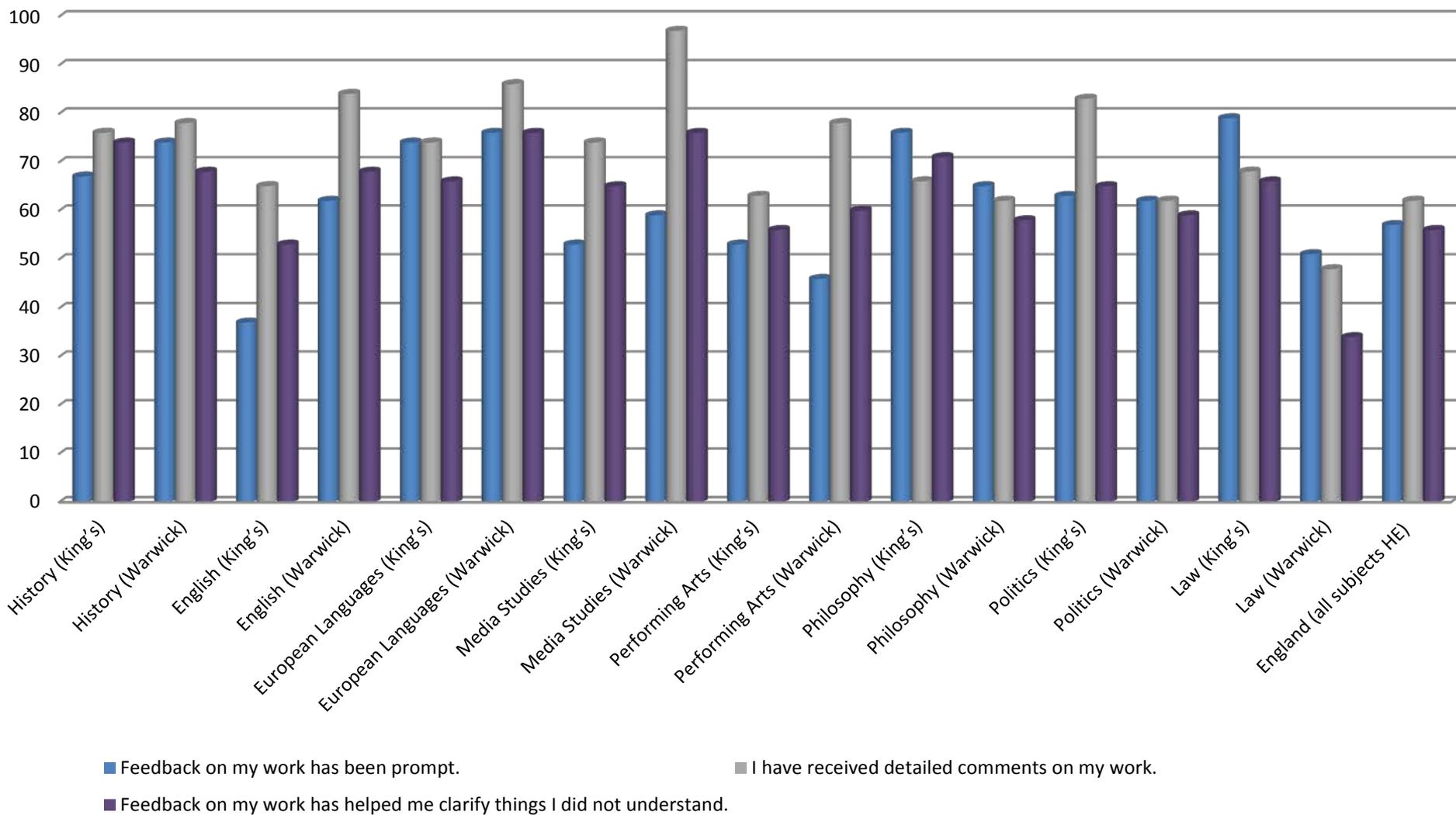
Overview

- The problems...
- Reactions by HEIs
- Feedback and dialogue
- Barriers
- Recommendations for research-intensive universities

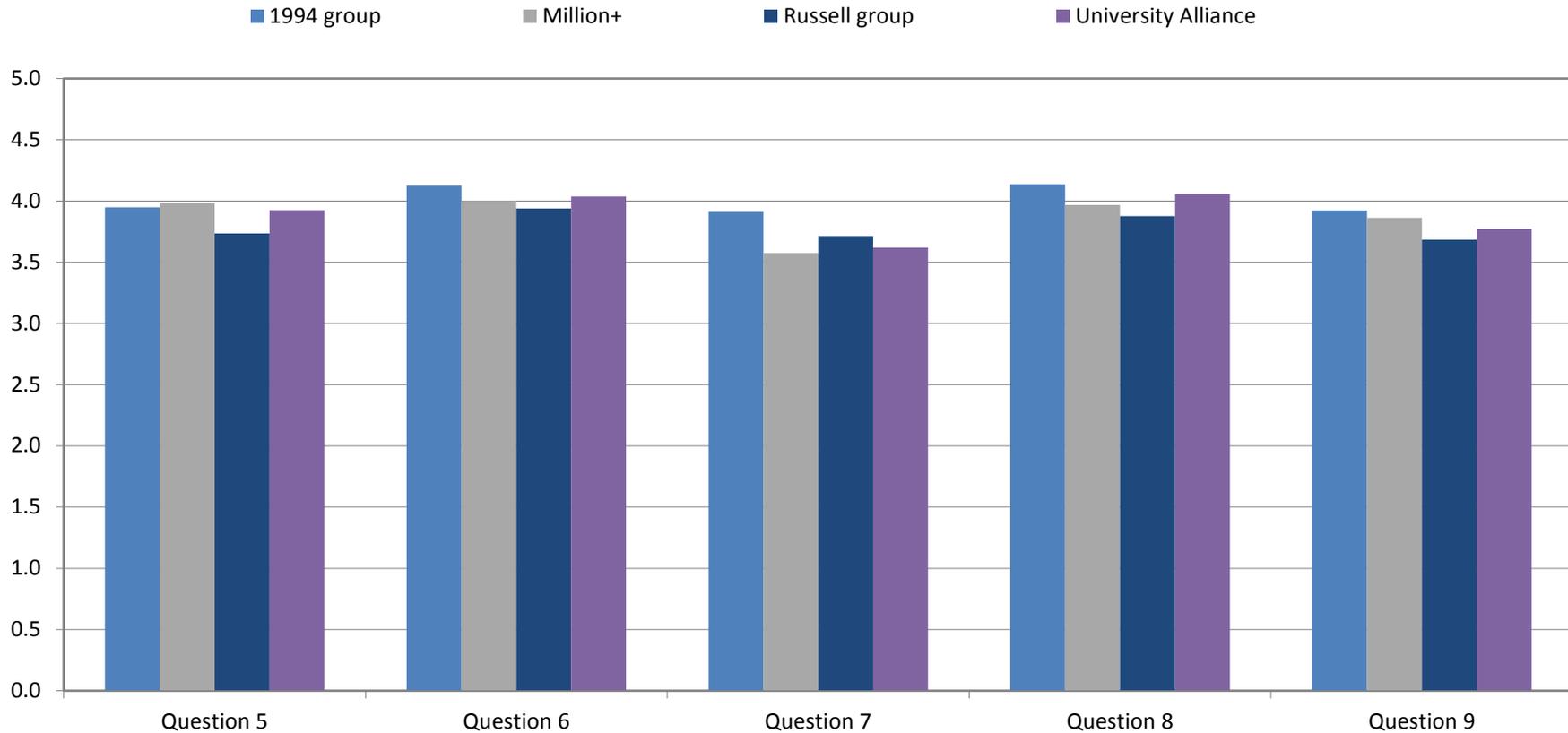
The problems...

- NSS survey has highlighted feedback as a general area for improvement
- Changing assessment practices
- Concern about quality and standards: eg plagiarism; rising number of first class/2(i) degrees
- Pressures on academic time particularly research/teaching/admin balance
- Changing HE context

King's-Warwick NSS Scores (Arts & Social Sciences)



History NSS Scores 2010



Q5: The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.

Q6: Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.

Q7: Feedback on my work has been prompt.

Q8 I have received detailed comments on my work.

Q9: Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.

Reactions by HEIs

- Standardisation (eg cover sheets; regulated response times)
- Feedback statement banks/reports:
'It is college policy to provide students with generic feedback (based on the performance of the whole cohort) on unseen written examinations'
- Assessment tasks retreating into traditional forms
- Feedback 'Tsars' developing whole-institution response from top

Student enhanced learning through effective feedback (SENLEF)

Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning	Delivers high quality information to students about their learning
Encourages teacher and peer-dialogue around learning	Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards)	Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching
Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired learning	

Charles Juwah, Debra Macfarlane-Dick, Bob Matthew, David Nicol, David Ross and Brenda Smith, *Enhancing student learning through effective formative feedback* (2004)

King's-Warwick Project

- Academic literacy should not simply be viewed as the means of transmission or communication, but as firmly embedded within the discipline and student learning... Assessment was discussed in terms of the opportunities for dialogue between students and academic staff concerning the nature of writing and other communication practices that it can encourage
- Formative feedback was viewed as fundamental in enhancing academic literacy and there was a call for the exploration of alternative forms of assessment beyond traditional essay assignments, providing space for ongoing formative feedback and collaborative work between students and staff e.g. student presentations, peer mentoring. However, the quality assurance procedures governing policy at both institutions were felt to be potentially restrictive on the use of alternative assessment methods.
- ...a clarification of marking criteria was called for in order to emphasise the importance of this curriculum characteristic This also emphasises that assessment needs to be appropriate to the disciplinary context and that formative feedback should be more embedded in the curriculum.
- Clear strategies for enabling more opportunities for formative assessment and dialogue around literacy practices through feedback, such as peer mentoring, were also called for.

Creating a 21st Century Curriculum: The King's-Warwick Project (2010)

Feedback and Dialogue

replacing a simple 'transmission' model of feedback, which is linked very closely to student grading, with a model of feedback linked directly to learning and reflection. The approach will encourage dialogue between academic staff and students which enables discussion, reflection, internalisation and action. A system of peer-feedback will also be developed to familiarise students with the language and practice of feedback.

Labs/Practical
sessions

Group work

Assignment
return

Tutorials

Lectures &
seminars

Written
E-mail
Audio
Web 2.0
Verbal

Performance-
based
sessions

Student-
student
conversations

What are the barriers for encouraging opportunities for feedback-dialogues (both tutor-student and student-student) in your institution?

Recommendations

- Mixed economy of feedback (Web 2.0; audio; written; face to face)
- Grade anonymously but personalise feedback
- Contextualise: give specific examples
- Explicitly state there should be a dialogue and when/where that will happen (don't stick to rigidly to idea that feedback only takes place on essays or in tutorials)
- More variety of assignments
- Academic literacy and discipline-specific practices recognised
- Mechanisms for effective time management of sessions and clear structures
- Exploit peer to peer opportunities and build these into the curriculum
- Have mission statements to help staff/students understand the culture of feedback dialogues
- Study groups/student conferences/workshops on peer feedback
- Putting in opportunities for the first year so feedback-dialogue becomes part of the culture
- Attention paid to needs of joint honours students