

Speaking Feedback into Being: A Multimodal, Strengths-Based Feedback Practice for Equity in Higher Education. *A Practice Report*

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Abstract

This paper presents a multimodal, strengths-based feedback model that integrates generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) to promote equity in higher education. Grounded in the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching (SoLT), the approach reconceptualises feedback as an interactive process that supports feedback literacy. Implemented in a second-year engineering course, the method combines real-time verbal commentary, rubric narration, GenAI-generated summaries, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to deliver personalised feedback. Drawing on theories of multimodal pedagogy, and equity-focused design, this model fosters deeper engagement and reflective learning. Student feedback indicates increased satisfaction and feedback uptake, while the educator reports enhanced clarity and fairness in assessment. Despite challenges related to digital literacy, and emotional labour, this feedback practice offers a sustainable and inclusive alternative to traditional models. It positions feedback as a transformative tool for learning, engagement, and pedagogical equity in a digitally evolving higher education landscape.

Keywords: Generative artificial intelligence; multimodal feedback; equity; feedback literacy.

Introduction

In the higher education landscape, feedback remains one of the most powerful yet underutilised mechanisms for enhancing student learning. While students frequently report dissatisfaction with the quality, timeliness or usefulness of feedback, educators continue to face challenges in balancing workload with pedagogical intent (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This paper contributes to the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching (SoLT) by exploring a feedback practice that embraces multimodal delivery, leverages generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), and prioritises equity through a multimodal, strengths-based approach.

This practice-based inquiry aligns with SoLT's commitment to critically examining teaching and learning, grounded in practice and informed by theory. As Kreber (2002) argues, SoLT should not only generate new knowledge about teaching but also transform practice through reflective and evidence-informed approaches. The method described here emerged from a longstanding interest in feedback as an interactive and evolving process. It seeks to elevate feedback from a one-way transaction to an active pedagogical exchange that affirms students' capacities and identities while supporting deep learning.

In many institutional contexts, feedback is often framed primarily as a justification of grades rather than as a formative opportunity for growth (Boud & Molloy, 2013). This approach challenges that norm by offering a transparent and dialogic process that invites students into the feedback conversation. Through recorded verbal commentary, rubric explanation, and GenAI-supported summaries, the method provides rich, personalised feedback that enhances engagement and feedback literacy.



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Theoretical Framing

Equity and Inclusive Learning Design

Equity in feedback requires attention not only to outcomes but also to the conditions and processes that shape how students engage with assessment. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a framework for this by encouraging educators to build flexibility and access into their teaching from the outset (Meyer et al., 2014). In feedback, this means offering multiple ways for students to receive and process evaluative information, such as spoken, visual and written formats, to accommodate different cognitive, linguistic and affective profiles.

Ladson-Billings (1995) and hooks (1994) emphasise that educational equity also involves recognising the social and cultural dimensions of teaching. Traditional feedback practices often carry implicit norms that marginalise students who do not share the dominant academic culture. The feedback model presented here seeks to counteract that effect by foregrounding students' strengths, using accessible, conversational language, and providing feedback that affirms rather than alienates. These practices are aligned with culturally sustaining pedagogy and an ethic of care. Additionally, Tai et al. (2018) argue that meaningful feedback must support students' ability to make evaluative judgements about their own work.

Feedback Literacy

The concept of feedback literacy, introduced by Carless and Boud (2018), refers to the capacity to interpret, reflect on and use feedback effectively to improve learning. In higher education, it reframes feedback not as information transmitted from teacher to student, but as a dialogic process that requires both parties to participate. Building feedback literacy involves not only delivering timely, comprehensible feedback but also helping students understand the purpose of feedback and their role in engaging with it.

Ajjawi and Boud (2018) extend this view by highlighting the importance of feedback dialogue and the role of students in making evaluative judgements about their work. Such dialogue is central to developing self-regulated learners who can independently assess quality and take action to improve. Molloy et al. (2020) further emphasise "learning-oriented feedback", which focuses not just on correctness but on building students' capacity to learn from assessment. Additionally, Nicol (2010) argues that effective feedback design should aim to develop students' inner feedback capacities, their ability to compare their work with exemplars or criteria and self-assess accordingly.

Multimodal Pedagogy

Multimodal pedagogy refers to the strategic use of different communicative modes, such as visual, auditory, textual and spatial elements, to support learning. In higher education, this approach acknowledges that students interpret and express knowledge in varied ways, and that different modes may support understanding depending on the learner or context (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kress, 2009). Henderson and Phillips (2015) found that multimodal feedback increased students' engagement, particularly when it was personalised and conversational in tone. Ryan et al. (2019) show that digitally recorded feedback is often perceived as detailed, personalised and usable, suggesting that multimodal feedback may make evaluative information easier for students to engage with than text-only feedback. Audio-visual feedback also creates space for emotional nuance, which McCarthy (2015) describes as helping students feel connected to their instructors and better able to receive critique.

Video Feedback

Research on video feedback in higher education suggests that it can enhance students' engagement with feedback, support clearer understanding of assessment expectations, and provide a stronger sense of teacher presence through voice, tone, pacing and screen-based demonstration (Crook et al., 2012; Mahoney et al., 2019). This is particularly relevant to rubric-based assessment, where students may benefit from hearing how criteria are interpreted and applied to their own work. Audio-visual feedback can also support feedback uptake by making comments more personalised, conversational and actionable, especially when students need to understand not only what requires improvement but why and how they might improve it (Cavaleri et al., 2019). The value of video feedback does not lie in adding another mode of engagement alone, but in making feedback more transparent, human and usable for future learning. When combined with a marked rubric and a concise written summary, video feedback provides students with multiple ways to access, review and act on the same evaluative information, while retaining the relational benefits of the educator's spoken explanation (Payne et al., 2023).

Implementation

Design Theory

Research highlights the value of multimodal feedback in improving student understanding and engagement. Ice et al. (2007) found that students perceived audio feedback as more personal, clearer and more motivating than written feedback on its own. Similarly, Borup et al. (2015) observed that audio and video feedback supported a stronger sense of instructor presence and connection in online learning environments. These findings suggest that audio feedback is not just a vehicle for delivering content; it also contributes to students' sense of being seen, heard and supported.

Written feedback, however, offers advantages that audio alone may not provide. It can be easily referenced, quoted and revisited during the revision process. It also supports accessibility for students who may find spoken language challenging, including neurodivergent learners and those for whom English is an additional language (Evans, 2013). Providing diverse formats gives students greater agency in how they interact with feedback and encourages them to develop metacognitive skills through reflection on their learning preferences.

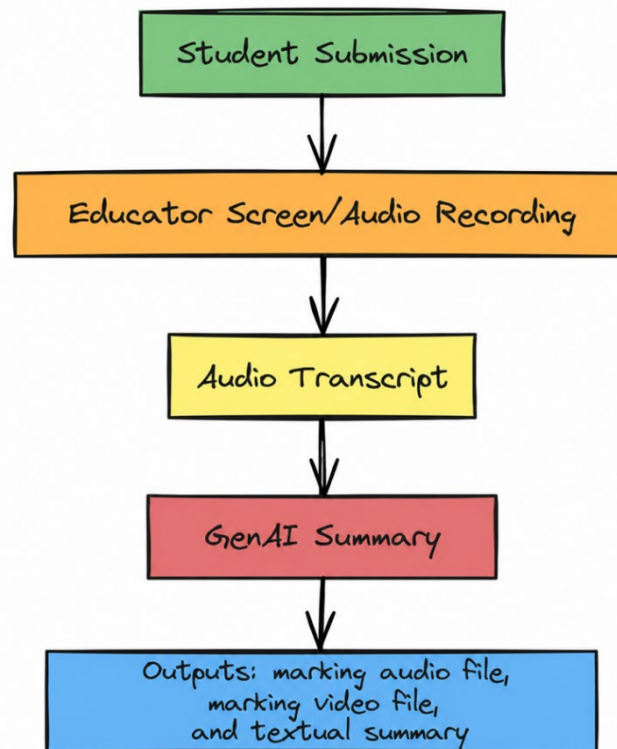
To this end, personalised feedback is critical in online education (Carby, 2023). Relying on a generic GenAI input prompt risks producing feedback that feels impersonal and disconnected from both the student and the task, widening the gap between students and academics. It is therefore essential that any prompt is carefully designed to reflect the specific task and the feedback to be given. Incorporating a recording of the academic providing feedback and grading the assessment further strengthens this personalisation, making multimodal design a crucial element of effective online feedback practice.

This approach reflects a commitment to student-centred pedagogy. It positions feedback as a dialogue rather than a one-way transmission of information and treats students as active participants in their own learning. By respecting and responding to varied preferences, educators create more inclusive and equitable learning environments. Diversity is not treated as a barrier, but as a central consideration in the design of effective teaching practices. This method also enhances educator reflection. Speaking feedback aloud requires careful attention to tone, clarity and fairness, which reinforces ethical teaching practices. The combination of voice, structure and technology helps maintain consistency while encouraging evaluative integrity. In doing so, it transforms the act of marking into a reflective pedagogical encounter.

Feedback Design

Rather than relying solely on traditional written feedback, this practice report proposes multimodal commentary via a Zoom recording while reviewing each student's submission. This approach ensures that feedback is not only more detailed and transparent, but also more accessible and personalised. It is designed to align with UDL principles, which emphasise multiple means of engagement. The process for generating this feedback is detailed in Figure 1.

The process begins with the educator opening a student's work, whether it be a report or presentation, and initiating a Zoom screen recording with audio narration and screen sharing enabled. As the educator reads the report or views the presentation, they provide verbal commentary in real time. For written work, this involves reading sections aloud at points and marking up the document while explaining the rationale behind each comment. For video assessments, the educator plays the presentation while pausing periodically to comment on content, structure, delivery and alignment with the marking criteria.

Figure 1.*Flowchart of feedback generation method*

Each feedback session is recorded separately for every student. By stopping the Zoom recording between students and beginning the recording again, the educator ensures that every student receives a distinct video file of only their feedback. This simplifies organisation and protects student privacy. Alongside the video commentary, the educator completes a digital rubric using Turnitin's assessment tool. As they score each criterion, they narrate their reasoning out loud. This pairing of verbal explanation with structured scoring improves clarity and makes the assessment process more transparent. Students gain insight into how their work was evaluated, including which elements aligned with expectations and which could be improved.

After the recording is completed, Zoom automatically generates a transcript of the educator's spoken feedback. This transcript is then lightly edited to remove any names or identifying information. The anonymised transcript is copied into a GenAI tool such as Copilot or ChatGPT, using a custom prompt that asks the tool to generate a concise and accessible summary. The GenAI tool produces a short overview of the performance, followed by three or four identified strengths and a similar number of suggested areas for improvement. Although this implementation used Zoom recordings, Turnitin rubrics and GenAI-supported summaries, the process is not dependent on these specific platforms. The same approach could be implemented using any screen-recording tool, an assessment rubric, and an institutionally approved GenAI system.

In this model, GenAI does not determine grades, evaluate student work or generate original academic judgement. The transcript is anonymised and entered into the tool for the limited purpose of producing a concise written summary. All AI-generated summaries are reviewed and edited by the educator before being returned to students. This workflow ensures that GenAI supports accessibility and clarity while maintaining human responsibility, academic judgement and care. Below is an example of shortened versions of the GenAI-generated feedback.

Example:

"Thank you for your submission. This was a clear, thoughtful, and well-delivered presentation. You demonstrated a strong grasp of the technical content and presented it with clarity and professionalism. Below is a breakdown of your performance with comments for continued development. Strengths: Presentation Delivery: Your presentation was well-paced, engaging, and confidently delivered. Foundational Understanding: You showed a solid grasp of the technical concepts, and your explanation of core principles (including semiconductor devices) was handled

confidently. **Structure & Visuals:** Your slides were detailed and well-organised. You included a good number of figures and images to support your explanations, which made the content more accessible. **Areas for Improvement:** **Referencing:** Your reference list was well-developed and showed a clear effort to include a range of sources. However, the formatting was not consistent with APA style, particularly in ordering and structure. In-text referencing or verbal attributions during the presentation were mostly missing. This is especially important when discussing current research or future applications. Including more journal articles, especially for sections like the future outlook, would enhance the academic strength of your work. **Slide Design Details:** In a few places, figures were crowded or slightly hard to read. Consider adjusting image placement or spacing for better clarity. Some visual elements could be positioned closer to the associated text or explanation to improve coherence.”

Students are provided with several feedback resources. The first is the full video, which they can watch at their own pace. The second is the GenAI-generated text summary, which offers a clear and succinct version of the same feedback. Lastly is the marked rubric itself. Providing feedback in both written and audio formats aligns with the principles of UDL, which promotes multiple means of representation to support diverse learner needs. Students differ not only in how they prefer to receive information, but also in how they process and engage with learning materials. By offering a written summary alongside spoken feedback, educators are better able to accommodate a broader range of learners. Some students appreciate the clarity and structure of written comments, while others benefit more from the tone, pacing and nuance of audio, which can help convey meaning and support more personalised communication.

Implementation Context

The feedback practice was implemented in 2025 in a single second-year engineering unit at a regional university. The unit included two combined cohorts: pre-service teachers and engineering students. Approximately 40 students were enrolled in the teaching period. The practice was embedded in the unit’s major multimodal assessment task, which required students to prepare a presentation with an accompanying script and slide deck. The unit was delivered in a blended format, with workshops offered online only and tutorials offered both online and in person across two campuses. One academic was responsible for delivering and marking all classes and assessments.

Reflections and Anticipated Outcomes

This feedback practice highlights the role of feedback not only in supporting assessment performance but also in preparing students for future study and their professional careers. Given the well-established influence of feedback on learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), the design of feedback processes should be treated as a central concern in higher education rather than as an administrative task attached to marking.

A key value of this model is that it makes assessment judgement more visible. Rather than receiving only a grade, a rubric score, or a short written comment, students can hear the educator explain how the criteria have been applied to their work. This aligns with feedback literacy research, which positions feedback as a process requiring student interpretation, judgement and action rather than the simple transmission of information from educator to student (Carless & Boud, 2018). It also reflects Ajjawi and Boud’s (2018) emphasis on feedback dialogue and the importance of helping students make sense of evaluative information. Although the feedback is not dialogic in the sense of a live conversation, the recorded explanation creates a more conversational and transparent account of assessment reasoning than written comments alone.

Providing students with video feedback, rubric-based feedback and a written summary helps normalise the complexity of feedback and gives them practice in interpreting feedback across different formats. The use of multiple feedback formats also supports inclusive learning design. Students differ in how they process information, revisit critique and respond emotionally to assessment judgement. Some may benefit from hearing the educator’s tone and explanation, while others may prefer to return to a concise written summary or the marked rubric.

As GenAI becomes increasingly embedded in workplaces and educational settings, students need examples of its careful, bounded and ethical use. In this model, GenAI is not used to replace academic judgement or automate assessment. Instead, it supports the communication of feedback after the educator has completed the evaluative work. The model aligns with emerging work on GenAI in higher education, which emphasises the need for ethical, scaffolded and human-centred approaches to GenAI integration (Quince & Nikolic, 2026). It also reflects the broader principle that GenAI can support educational practice, but should not displace academic responsibility, professional judgement or care.

From the educator’s perspective, the practice supports greater transparency and consistency in assessment. Speaking through feedback requires the educator to clarify their reasoning, align comments with criteria and attend carefully to tone. This can

strengthen the quality of feedback while also producing a record of assessment judgement that may be useful for moderation, review or self-reflection. In this way, the process supports both student learning and assessment integrity. While recording and uploading feedback may appear time-consuming, the additional work is relatively contained in this pilot context. The GenAI-supported summary adds approximately 1 minute per student, and this time investment may be justified given the recognised importance of feedback for learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When investigating students' uptake of this feedback, more than 80% had viewed the video recording. Whilst this is not direct evidence that students had benefited, it can be shown as a form of engagement in this pilot. The approximately 1 additional minute in the workflow of marking was offset by the reduced number of mark queries. For this single-assessment-item pilot, there was only 1 student inquiry. Typically, for this type of assessment, the author has experience with 15-50% of the cohort. As such, the extra 35 to 40 minutes of work involved in this process would be truly offset if each inquiry lasted even 15 minutes. The unit feedback provides another point of comparison that this pilot was helpful for students, with a score of 4.21 (5-point scale), which is higher than the institution's average. Whilst these measures are not direct, they do indicate that the process was helpful to students. Further work to categorically investigate the usefulness of this practice, and the individual components of the feedback will be needed.

The use of GenAI has been helpful, but it requires careful human oversight. In most cases, the summary can capture key feedback points and present them in a student-friendly tone. However, GenAI may occasionally omit nuance, simplify complex evaluative reasoning or shift emphasis in ways that do not fully reflect the educator's intention. This reinforces the need for review and editing before returning feedback to students. The educator remains responsible for the accuracy, tone and pedagogical value of the feedback.

Although this paper does not present a formal empirical evaluation, the practice offers a theoretically grounded and professionally relevant approach to feedback design. Its value lies in connecting feedback literacy, digital capability, ethical GenAI use and professional communication. For students, the model provides richer guidance on interpreting and acting on critique. For educators, it offers a practical workflow for making feedback more transparent, relational and aligned with the kinds of evaluative communication students will encounter in professional contexts.

Transferability for Practice

Although this practice was implemented in a second-year engineering unit, its broader value lies in the transferable design principles that underpin it. The model could be adapted across disciplines where students are required to interpret criteria, respond to critique and improve their work over time.

The approach is transferable as it does not depend on a single platform. While this implementation used Zoom recordings, Turnitin rubrics, and GenAI-supported summaries, the same principles could be applied through other educational tools. The specific technology is less important than the pedagogical intention: to make feedback more transparent, relational and useful for future learning.

The use of GenAI is transferable only if its role remains carefully bounded. In this model, GenAI does not assess student work or replace academic judgement. It supports the communication of feedback that the educator has already generated. This distinction offers a cautious and ethical way for educators to experiment with GenAI while maintaining responsibility for assessment decisions.

Challenges and Limitations

While this feedback practice offers a promising approach to multimodal and GenAI-supported feedback, it is important to acknowledge that it may not suit all learners, educators or institutional contexts. No feedback method is universally applicable, and reflective practice requires attention to the conditions that sustain an approach.

A key limitation concerns workload and scalability. Although the GenAI-supported summary adds only a small amount of time per student in this pilot context, the overall process still requires recording, uploading, transcript checking and educator review. In larger cohorts, this could become difficult to continue without institutional support, workload recognition or streamlined workflows. The approach also requires confidence with digital tools and the ability to speak clearly while marking.

Student access and preference must also be considered. Some learners may prefer detailed written feedback that can be annotated and revisited line by line, while others may experience cognitive load when presented with multiple feedback formats. Students with limited internet access may also find it difficult to download or view video-based feedback. For this reason, multimodal feedback should provide options rather than impose a single preferred mode of engagement.

Institutional infrastructure can create further barriers. Learning management systems may limit file size or format, and existing moderation processes may not easily account for recorded feedback. The use of GenAI also requires clear ethical guidance, particularly around privacy, anonymisation and human oversight. These limitations do not diminish the value of the model, but they highlight the need for thoughtful implementation rather than simple adoption.

Conclusion

Feedback remains one of the most powerful yet inconsistently applied elements of higher education. This paper has presented a practice-based model that reimagines feedback as an inclusive, relational and multimodal process. Whilst a formal, empirical evaluation has yet to be undertaken, combining real-time commentary, structured rubric evaluation, and AI-generated summaries may provide much-needed guidance for online students. Grounded in equity-focused pedagogy and informed by the principles of Universal Design for Learning, this method supports diverse learners in meaningful and accessible ways.

The integration of GenAI, while not without its limitations, has been identified as a valuable tool for improving efficiency and communication without compromising academic judgment. The use of video and transcript-based feedback creates opportunities for deeper reflection for both students and educators, while making the assessment process more human, intentional, and ethically grounded.

As universities seek to support increasingly diverse student cohorts and embrace digital transformation, this model offers a practical and scalable approach to enhancing feedback practices. It potentially demonstrates that, with thoughtful design and the reflective use of technology, feedback can move beyond mere justification of marks to become a powerful catalyst for learning, growth, and equity.

Declaration

The author has declared there are no conflicts of interest or competing interests. This work was undertaken with the aid of GenAI tools for drafting, conceptualisation, feedback and editing.

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