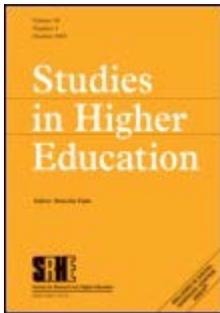


Formative Assessment and self-regulating learning



David J. Nicol & Debra Macfarlane-Dick (2006): Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice, *Studies in Higher Education*, 31:2, 199-218

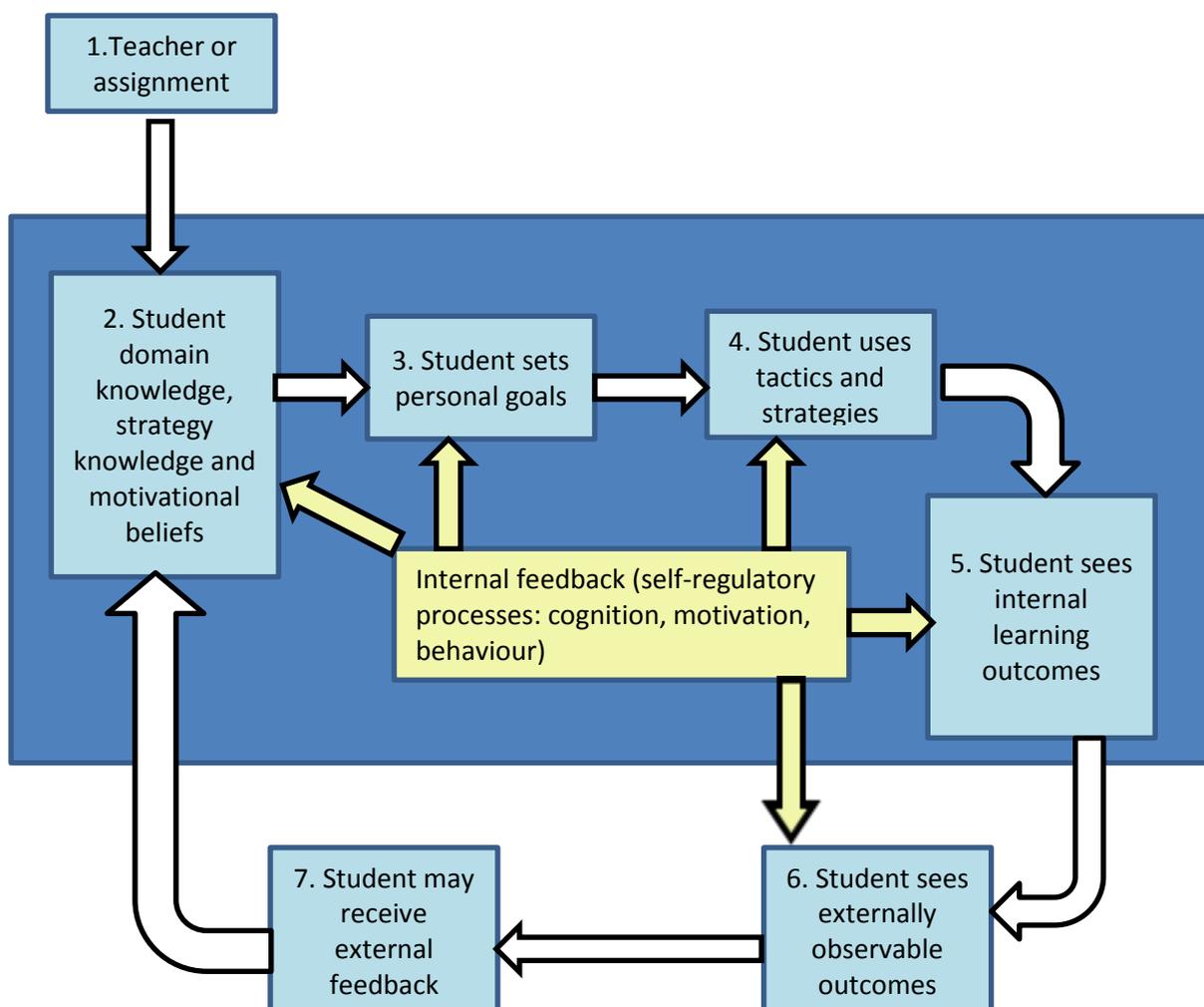
link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572090>

"The research on formative assessment and feedback is reinterpreted to show how these processes

can help students take control of their own learning, i.e. become self-regulated learners. This reformulation is used to identify seven principles of good feedback practice that support self-regulation. ... The shift in focus, whereby students are

seen as having a proactive rather than a reactive role in generating and using feedback, has profound implications for the way in which teachers organise assessments and support learning."

Model for self-regulated learning



Supporting and developing learner self-regulation:

1. Clarify what good performance is
2. Facilitate self-assessment
3. Deliver high-quality feedback information
4. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue
5. Encourage positive motivation and self-esteem
6. Provide opportunities to close the gap
7. Use feedback to improve teaching

Ad 1. students very often have different conceptions of assessment criteria or order of the criteria than teacher, and do not know yet what a good performance is. Therefore: provide clear written statement about assessment criteria with good performance indicators (rubrics); in addition, give examples of mediocre and good performance; increase discussion and reflection on criteria in class; involve students in assessment of / feedback on each other's work; workshops where students make their own assessment list.

Ad 2. self-assessment (when suitably organised) can lead to significant enhancements in learning and achievement. Self-assessment with integrated tutor feedback leads to best results in learning. Important to engage students in identifying standards as well as in making judgements on how own work relates to these standards. Option is to give opportunities to student to evaluate and give feedback on each other's' work; or to create frequent opportunities for reflection by students. In addition: let students ask for specific feedback when handing in work; let students make SWOT of own work in relation to standards when handing in; reflect before task on achievement milestones and reflect afterwards on progress and forward on next stage of action.

Ad 3. Good quality feedback is information that helps students troubleshoot their own performance and self-correct. Make sure that feedback is related to the predefined (and limited number!!) of criteria; provide timely feedback (= before handing in); provide corrective advice, not just strengths/weaknesses; limit amount of feedback so that it will be used; prioritise areas for improvement; provide online tests.

Ad 4. Students not always understand feedback (e.g. 'essay not sufficiently analytical', what is meant by analytical?), therefore discussion with student on meaning of feedback (= feedback as dialogue). Peer feedback might help as well: students are often better able to explain something they just learned (appropriate language), it gives students alternative perspectives, by commenting on work of peers they can relate to own work, can be motivational, sometimes peer feedback is easier accepted than teacher feedback. Suggestions: provide feedback on one-minute paper; review feedback in tutorials, e.g. students discuss with peers feedback received; let students indicate comments they found useful and let them explain how these helped; let students give each other descriptive feedback according to criteria before handing in assignment; group projects where students have to discuss criteria and standards at beginning of project.

Ad 5. Grades do not lead to better learning; students will compare themselves (ego-involvement) rather than focus on difficulty of task (task-involvement). Only giving feedback leads to better learning (even better than when giving marks + feedback, as students than only pay attention to the mark). Teachers should praise effort and strategic behaviour and focus students on learning goals through feedback, leads to higher achievement than praising ability or intelligence. Motivation and self-esteem of students are more likely to be enhanced by a course with many low-stakes assessments, rather than high-stake summative assessment with only info on success or failure (e.g. grade). Other suggestions: only give marks after students have responded to feedback comments; allocating time for students to rewrite selected pieces of work; drafts and resubmissions.

Ad 6. Feedback should stimulate students to complete the feedback loop: task - performance - feedback - improve task. Only then we can see that students have learned something. Thus, resubmission of assignments seems natural. Some suggestions: provide feedback on work-in-progress and give opportunity for resubmission; introduce two-stage assignments where feedback on stage 1 helps improve stage 2; give a model/structure when giving a new assignment; specifically provide 'action points' alongside normal feedback; involve students in identifying own action points after receiving feedback.

Ad 7. Assessment and feedback given is also a source of information to the teacher about how much (and what) the students have learned. A one-minute paper might help with this. Other suggestions: let students ask for specific feedback when handing in a paper; let students indicate what they think is very difficult when handing in work; let students in group identify 'a question worth asking', based on prior study, that they would like to explore in the next meeting.