

**STUDENT NURSES' PERCEPTIONS OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK
AFTER ASSESSMENT AT A UNIVERSITY IN THE
WESTERN CAPE**

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ABSTRACT

Background: Written feedback from lecturers to their students, in higher education institutions, plays an important role in improving students' performance. However, students' perceptions of written feedback on assessments could influence its utilization to improve their performance. Despite the high priority placed on written feedback, to date, insufficient research studies have been conducted on the student nurses' perceptions of written feedback.

Purpose and Objective: The purpose of this descriptive study is to describe student nurses' perceptions of written feedback on assessments at a university in the Western Cape. The objective of this study is to determine student nurses' perceptions of written feedback on assessment.

Methodology: A quantitative descriptive survey research design was employed to conduct this study at a university in the Western Cape. The target population for this study was 106 student nurses registered in the nursing foundation programme for the year 2015. This study employed all-inclusive sampling of foundation student nurses registered in the year 2015. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. A total of 74 participants were available for the study, of whom, 69 submitted their questionnaires, resulting to a response rate of 93.2%. The data was analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and was presented in frequency tables, percentages and bar graphs. Ethics approval was obtained from the Senate Higher Degree and the Senate Research Committees of the institution under study, before commencing. Permission was also obtained from the Dean of Research and Head of the School of Nursing, before the commencement of the study. The purpose of the study was explained, and a consent form was signed, before the questionnaires were administered to participants.

Findings: The findings of this study indicated that students receive feedback on assessment, were in line with the assessment criteria. The study also found that students perceived receiving plenty of quality written feedback in good time to be useful. The results of this study indicated that the inability to understand written feedback, the limited opportunity to clarify feedback and negatively written comments, hinders the use of written feedback.

Recommendations: There is the need for lecturers to provide written feedback that could be useful for students to improve on their performance. There is also the need for written feedback

to be delivered to students electronically. Lecturers need to discuss written feedback with their students after delivery. The need for a qualitative study to be conducted on students and lecturers experiences on written feedback on assessment is recommended.



KEYWORDS

Assessment

Higher Education

Lecturers

Perception

Student nurses

Written feedback



ABBREVIATIONS

AEQ - Assessment Experience Questionnaire

BN - Bachelor of Nursing

CHE - Council on Higher Education

ECP - Extended Curriculum Programme

HEI - Higher Education Institution

M - Mean

Max. - Maximum

Min. - Minimum

NBT - National Benchmark Test

NSS - National Student Survey

RSA - Republic of South Africa

SANC - South African Nursing Council

SD - Standard Deviation

SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UK - United Kingdom

UWC - University of the Western Cape



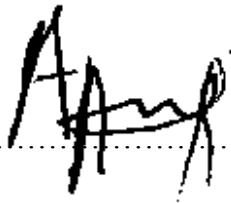
DECLARATION

I declare that the study, *Student nurses' perceptions of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape* is my original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other University. All the sources used or quoted in this study have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Date: November, 2015

Signed:



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Above everything, I thank the almighty God for his mercies and blessings on my life.

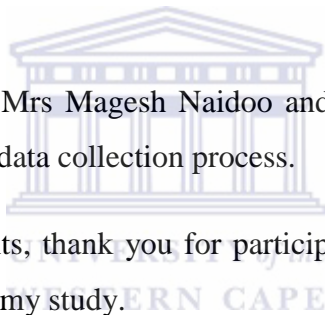
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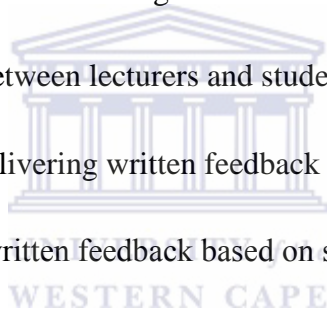


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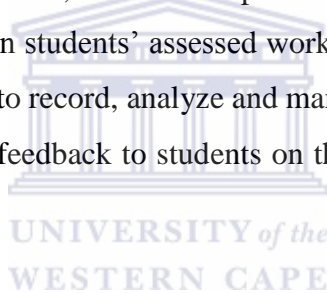


CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The provision of feedback to students is an important skill for lecturers in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) (Geyskens, Donche & Van Pedegen, 2012), as it has powerful influence on student learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback can be defined as an input made by a reader to a writer, with the intent of providing information to the writer for revision (Keh, 1990). Lecturers present feedback to students in various ways, including oral, written communication and computer-generated responses (Brown & Glover, 2005). Lecturers present feedback in marks and grades by using letters or numbers that inform students about a pass or failure in an assessment. Also, feedback is presented by word of mouth, or through handwritten or typed comments on students' assessed work. Computer software and database packages, such as excel, are used to record, analyze and manage students result, and data from these software packages provide feedback to students on their performance (Mogey & Watt, 1996).



Written feedback is presented to students through written communication and refers to comments made by lecturers on students' assessed work, with the intent that students utilize the feedback to improve on their performance. Written feedback plays a major role in students' assessment (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004), and the provision of written feedback on students' assessed work is a key feature of the feedback processes in HEIs (Nicol, 2010). Written feedback helps students to recognize gaps between their actual and desired performance (Brown & Glover, 2005), it enhances the student metacognition through reflection, improves students' academic writing skills (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004) and justifies a given grade (Khowaja, Gul, Lakhani, Rizvi & Saleem, 2014).

Students' perceptions of written feedback after assessment is crucial, as it may influence the way in which they engage with it. Students may passively or actively engage with written feedback to improve on their performance. The passive learners may not engage with written feedback, even if written feedback from lecturers is of good quality and effective. Students'

should be encouraged to perceive written feedback as an aid to improve their performance (Maclellan, 2001) and actively engage on written feedback on assessment.

1.2. Background and rationale for the study

Despite the major role that written feedback plays in students' assessment, research studies on students' perception of written feedback on assessment have not been extensively conducted. In addition, recent studies (Carless, 2006; Weaver, 2006), on students' perception of written feedback, explain that students are dissatisfied and do not utilize written feedback due to reasons, such as timing, clarity, quality, and the manner in which written feedback is presented.

Globally, student surveys in HEI indicate that students are dissatisfied with the written feedback received from their lecturers after assignment (Nicol, 2010). The National Student Survey (NSS) is one of such survey which gathers opinions from mostly final year undergraduate students in higher education institutions across the United Kingdom (UK). The students are required to rate their experience of their degree programmes on a five-point scale, from 'definitely disagree' to 'definitely agree', and covers broad topics such as; teaching and learning, assessment and feedback, academic support, organization and management, learning resources, personal development (Unistats, 2015). For several years, the results indicate that students were dissatisfied with the feedback they received from their assessments (Williams, Smith & Basra, 2014). Although, the type of feedback in the NSS is not specified, the wording of relevant statements indicate that the referent is written feedback on assignments, which has consistently been the least rated in the five-point scale, every year since the survey began (Nicol, 2010). The NSS had a sample of about two hundred and eighty-six thousand (286,000) and three hundred and four thousand (304,000) final year students in 2012 and 2013, respectively. In, both, 2012 and 2013 the assessment and feedback was the least rated with only 68% and 72% of the final year students for each year, respectively, satisfied with the assessment and feedback practice. The results of the students' satisfaction of feedback for 2012 and 2013, respectively, were: promptness of feedback (65% and 69%); detailed comment on work (63% and 68%); and feedback assisted with clarification (56% and 60%) (University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, 2013). However, the NSS questionnaire has few questions on written feedback, which are not enough to ascertain student

engagement with written feedback. In addition, only final year students opinions are sought, which, therefore, cannot be generalized as a perception of students in HEI.

Khowaja et al. (2014) conducted a cross-sectional, descriptive study to identify students' perceptions on the practices of the provision and utilization of written feedback in nursing degree programmes in Karachi, Asia. The results indicate that, of a sample of 379 students, more than half of the students acknowledged not utilizing written feedback. The reasons given were: untimely feedback, which makes it useless; low grades received in assignments; limited opportunities to clarify feedback; disagreement with faculty feedback; and negatively written comments. Also, Carless (2006) conducted a large scale questionnaire survey at eight (8) public universities in Hong Kong, Asia, to examine the notion of written feedback on assignments. The results indicated that the perceptions of the students and lecturers on written feedback were different. The lecturers had positive perceptions about written feedback, in contrast to the students. Out of the sample of four hundred and sixty six (466) staff and one thousand, seven hundred and forty (1740) students, 38.4% of the lecturers, as opposed to 10.6% of the students, thought that students were given detailed written feedback to help them improve on their subsequent assignments. When the participants were asked whether feedback was followed by actions to improve their learning, 37.4% of the students responded that feedback was rarely followed by actions to improve student learning, as opposed to 16.1% lecturers with a similar claim. An open ended question on the questionnaire also enquired about barriers to effective assessment practices. Some of the responses from the students were: written feedback was not detailed; written feedback was incomprehensive; and that they were eager to engage with written feedback from lecturers, but experienced difficulties when attempting to translate comments on particular assignments into helpful suggestions for subsequent assignments of different modules.

A recent descriptive survey study on written feedback in Australia was conducted by Giles, Gilbert and McNeil (2014b), to explore nursing students' perceptions regarding the amount, and type, of written feedback required to enhance their learning. The sample of the study was 362 and 227 third year nursing students at a major South Australian University, in stage one and stage two of the study, respectively. A questionnaire was administered to the students in stage one and stage two of the study. The students were also given a feedback preference form to complete. The findings from the study, with a sample of 362 nursing students in stage one

were as follows: 79.8% wanted to receive written feedback on all their written assignments to help them learn effectively; 89% reported that they made changes on future assignments based on previous feedback; and 56.1% of the students did not often receive suggestions for improvement on their essays. These students also reported that the following factors on written feedback hindered learning: too much critique (43.9%); not being able to read handwritten comments (38.2%); not enough detailed feedback (31.2%); and unclear comments (27.7%). It is evident from these studies that continuous, prompt and adequate feedback is vital for the process of learning, as students benefitted from the feedback given. Most of these studies (Giles et al., 2014b; Khowaja et al., 2014) on written feedback in higher education institutions, mainly focus on the quality and effectiveness of feedback practices, for students to engage with, in order to enhance their learning. However, it does not consider motivating students to perceive feedback positively, in order to actively engage on it.

Harran (2011) reported on a longitudinal study, over four (4) years, in a higher education institution in South Africa. A total of six hundred and one (601) national diploma students, pursuing management in their first and second year of study, were selected for the study. The aim of the study was to ascertain whether the students' approach to writing and performance improved as a result of feedback practices. Results from the study indicate that, out of a total of six hundred and one (601) students, 64% consistently rated their performance as average, 17.5% as good and 13.2% rated their performance as weak, after intense application of lecturers' feedback in the writing process. Only 12% of the students actively used feedback during the writing process and most students associated feedback practices with error correction, rather than guidance to improve their writing. Some lecturers also commented that the students were only interested in grades or marks and did not utilize written feedback to improve on their learning. Also, Chokwe (2015) conducted a qualitative study in South Africa to investigate the students' perceptions of, and the lecturers' practice in, feedback provision with eight (8) lecturers and first-year, English-second-language, university students. Findings from the study indicate that students were not happy with the feedback received because it was insufficient, incomprehensive and not useful to improve their performance. On the other hand, lecturers reported that they provided feedback, which was understandable to the students. The results from these studies clearly indicate that lecturers perceived the feedback they provided to students, more positively than their students did. The lecturers perceived their feedback to be of a good quality and effective enough to improve on students' performance.

There is limited information on written feedback in higher education institutions in the Western Cape Province, and most of the available information is based on anecdotal evidence from observation and informal discussions with lecturers and students. Also, at the selected institution for this study, there is paucity of literature regarding written feedback. Anecdotal evidence from informal discussions with students at the institution indicate that written feedback received from their lecturers on assessment was not always understood and are dissatisfied with written feedback practices.

1.2.1. Nursing education in South Africa

Globally, the primary objective for nursing education is to produce highly competent registered professional nurses (Bruce, Klopper, & Mellish, 2011). In order to produce competent professional nurses, student nurses need to be facilitated, directed, assisted and given the means to learn the art and science of nursing through nursing education, to be applied by them in the nursing of individuals, who need care (Bruce et al., 2011).

The nursing degree programme is mainly offered at HEIs, specifically universities. Nursing education and training at higher education institutions in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) are regulated by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the South African Nurses Council (SANC). The SANC is a statutory body responsible for the setting and maintenance of standards in nursing education (Mekwa, 2000) and the CHE is the statutory body delegated for the quality assurance of programmes in higher education institutions (Klopper & Uys, 2015). The nursing degree programme was first introduced in the RSA at the University of Pretoria, in 1955, and many years later, in 1977, it was introduced at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) (Klopper & Uys, 2015). The Bachelor of Nursing (BN) degree falls under the National Qualification Framework (NQF), is pitched at level eight (8). This degree programme aims to produce professional nurses with a wide range of skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to contribute sustainably and meaningfully to the health services (<http://www.sanc.co.za>). There are two (2) nursing degree programmes; the BN degree programme and the BN foundation programme, which is an extended curriculum programme (ECP). The BN degree programme extends over four (4) years, while the BN foundation programme is offered over a five (5) year period.

1.2.2 The extended curriculum programme

The extended curriculum programme (ECP) is a South African higher education intervention, which extends the duration of the undergraduate degree programme, often by one year (Council on Higher Education, 2013). The ECP is also called the foundation programme in HEI and it creates the curriculum space needed to support talented, but unprepared, students to attain a sound foundation for success in higher education, and mainly provides access to students, who do not meet the institutions' regular admission requirements (Council on Higher Education, 2013). According to the Department of higher Education and Training, the primary objective of the ECP is to improve the academic performance of students, who at risk due to their education backgrounds (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012).

At the institution selected for this study, the admission requirement for applicants, who matriculated from 2008 and now wish to enter the BN programme, is a National Senior Certificate for Bachelor degree study, as well as 30 points (University of the Western Cape, 2015). However, applicants may be considered for the BN foundation programme, if they obtain a level, which is one point below the required level. Applicants are subjected to selection procedures, such as writing the National Benchmark Test (NBT), and must pass, in order to be considered for the foundation programme (University of the Western Cape, 2015). A number of fifty (50) students are selected for the BN foundation programme every year. Students in the BN foundation programme register for the same module as students in the BN programme, However, the first year modules of the BN programme is spread over two (2) years for students for students in the BN foundation programme which makes the programme five (5) years.

Initially, the foundation programme included modules, such as academic literacy and numeracy skills. The understanding, at the time, was that students, who did not meet the requirements to be accepted into the four year degree programme, would need additional support in those areas. However, since 2013, a new model was adopted which saw the implementation of only nursing modules of the BN programme, as opposed to foundation modules as described above (F. Daniels, personal communication, October 30, 2015).

1.2.3 Assessment and feedback in ECP

Assessments (formative and summative) in these nursing modules are in accordance with the university assessment rules and regulations, which apply to all undergraduate programmes at the university. Formative assessments, vary and include assignments, clinical assessments, group presentations, tests and the writing of portfolios. The students also undertake theory and clinical final exams, which form the summative assessments. Students under the foundation programme must obtain a 50% mark for formative assessments to gain entry into the exams, and a 50% mark for summative assessments (University of the Western Cape, 2015).

Students in the BN foundation programme and BN programme are provided with feedback, both verbal and written, after each assessments. According to the policy of the School of Nursing (SoN), UWC, students should be provided with constructive feedback after assessment and feedback should take into account the purpose of the assessment. The feedback should guide the student, to avoid student from making the same mistakes in future and to improve their performance (Jooste, Daniels & Cornellsen, 2015).

Since student nurses following the foundation programme are unfamiliar with the written feedback practices at UWC and it is uncertain whether they are satisfied with the written feedback they receive, on assessment, or utilize it to improve on their performances. There is the need for a study to explore the student nurses' perception of written feedback on assessment.

1.3. Problem statement

Various studies alluded to the importance of written feedback – after assessment, in higher education institutions – to facilitate the enhancement of students' performance. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, although the university has policies in place regarding the process of conducting written feedback, students are not satisfied with written feedback practices. However, it is uncertain whether student nurses, registered in the nursing foundation programme at the selected higher education under study, understand and are satisfied with the written feedback received from their lecturers on assessment, or utilize it for the improvement of their performance. In addition, there is paucity of literature regarding written feedback at the

institution and, hence, the need to ascertain students' perception of written feedback on assessment.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this descriptive research study is to describe student nurses' perceptions of written feedback on assessment at a university in the Western Cape.

1.5. Research Question

What are student nurses' perceptions of written feedback on assessment?

1.6. Objective of the study

To determine and describe students' perceptions of written feedback on assessment.

1.7. Significance of the study

The results from this study will describe student nurses' perceptions of written feedback after assessment and identify the hindrances to students' engagement with written feedback. This could further assist lecturers to develop strategies and policies that would motivate students to actively engage in written feedback. Additionally, since no studies on written feedback have been conducted at the university under study, the results from this study could serve as baseline data for future studies on written feedback.

1.8. Operational definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following terms used are defined below:

- **Student nurses** – In this study student nurse refers to learner nurses. According to *The Nursing Act, no.33 of 2005*, a learner nurse refers to an individual undergoing training or education in nursing (South African Nursing Council, 2005). Student nurses in this study refer to students, who registered for the Bachelor of Nursing (foundation programme) degree at UWC in 2015, in their first and second year of study.
- **Lecturers** – In this study lecturers refer to nurse educators. According to *The Nursing Act, no.33 of 2005*, a nurse educator is a professional nurse with additional

qualifications in nursing education, registered as such with SANC (South African Nursing Council, 2005). Internationally lecturers are referred to as “faculty”

- **Assessments** – Assessments refer to the gathering of data about students’ learning and learning programmes over a period of time, using a variety of approaches and techniques (Bruce et al., 2011). In this study the approach to assessment will be formative assessment, which refers to assignments and tests taken by student nurses during the process of studying the foundation programme.
- **Written feedback** – Written feedback is an appraisal by a person on the performance of another with the intention that the recipient will close a gap in skills and knowledge (Askew & Lodge, 2000). In this study written feedback refers to written responses from lecturers to student nurses, delivered by e-mail or on paper after formative assessment.

1.9. Research design and methodology

A research design is a blue print of how the researcher intends to conduct a study. It guides the researcher in the planning and implementation of the study in a manner that is likely to attain the intended goal/s (Burns & Grove, 2003). The research methodology is the steps, procedures and strategies for collecting and analyzing data in a research study (Polit & Hungler, 1999). In this study a quantitative research method, using a descriptive research design, is used to describe student nurses’ perceptions of written feedback after assessment. The research methodology and design is fully discussed in Chapter Three.

- **Population:**

Population is the aggregate or totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications (Polit & Hungler, 1999). The total population for this study was all student nurses registered towards a BN degree at universities in South Africa. The accessible population for this study are student nurses registered for BN degree at UWC in 2015. The target population for the study was one hundred and six (106) student nurses registered for the BN foundation programme. Foundation programme student nurses were selected because of the uncertainty of their satisfaction and utilization of written feedback to improve their performance.

- **Sample:**

The sample is a subset of the population that is selected for the research study (Burns & Grove, 2003). This study employed an all-inclusive sampling of one hundred and six (106) foundation student nurses, who had registered towards a BN degree programme for 2015.

- **Data collection instrument:**

Data collection is the precise, systematic gathering of information, relevant to the research objectives or questions (Burns & Grove, 2003). The instrument that was used to gather data was an existing questionnaire, adapted from Khowaja et al. (2014) and Gibbs and Simpson (2003).

- **Validity:**

Validity is a measure of the truthfulness of the result of a study or determines if the result of a study measures what it intends to measure (Joppe, 2000, cited in Golafshani, 2003). The validity of this study was established by consulting the experts in nursing science, as well as the supervisor to provide feedback. The researcher also presented the questionnaire to a statistician, the research ethics committee and the supervisor to review and provide input, because of their experience in nursing practice and quantitative research, after a detailed literature review was done. This helped to refine the questions for better meaning, clarity and conceptualization.

- **Reliability:**

The research instrument is said to be reliable if the results from a study can be reproduced under similar methodology (Joppe, 2000, cited in Golafshani, 2003). The reliability of this study was established by using the Chronbach's Alpha coefficient, in consultation with a statistician, to test the reliability of the questionnaires and pre-testing the questionnaire on 10 student nurses, registered in both first and second-year of the BN foundation programme for 2015 at UWC.

- **Data analysis:**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme version 23 was used in the analysis of the data, with the assistance of a statistician. Descriptive statistics were calculated and presented in percentages and bar graphs. Data analysis will be fully discussed in Chapter Three.

- **Ethics:**

Approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Senate Higher Degree Committee and ethics clearance from the Senate Research Committee at the UWC prior to the commencement of the study (see Addendum 1). Permission was obtained from the Dean of Research (see Addendum 3) and the Head of SoN, UWC (see Addendum 5).

1.10. Chapter outline

Chapter 1: presents the background of the study, the research problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, significance of the study and a brief description of the research method and design.

Chapter 2: discusses the literature review on the perceptions of written feedback.

Chapter 3: discusses the research design and methodology, including the selection and the development of the data-collection instrument. The data analysis is also presented and the findings revealed.

Chapter 4: presents and discusses the research findings in-depth.

Chapter 5: Concludes this research study, briefly discusses the limitations and makes recommendations for practice and further research.

1.11. Conclusion

This chapter provided a general description of the background of the study, the research problem, the purpose of the study, research objectives, significance of the study, operational definitions, a summary of the research design and methodology, as well as the ethics.

Chapter Two discusses the literature Review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Providing written feedback in higher education institutions is acknowledged as an essential feature of the feedback process (Nicol, 2010). Additionally, when students have a positive perception of written feedback on assignments from their lecturers, it will influence them to utilize the feedback to improve their performance.

The purpose of a literature review is to systematically and critically review the published scholarly literature on a specific topic (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998). The researcher reviewed articles, published between 1995 and 2015, that were relevant to the research objective and question, in order to gather information on existing knowledge about written feedback. The researcher reviewed literature within this time period (1995 to 2015), because the research of feedback on assessments shifted from information processing, towards the constructivist perspective (Burke & Pieterick, 2010), which proposes that students need to construct their own knowledge, based on previous experiences, beliefs and ways of thinking (De Corte, 1996, cited in Burke & Pieterick, 2010). According to Burke and Pieterick (2010), research on feedback currently focuses on feedback for learning – feedback that can be used by students to improve their performance – and the role of students in the feedback process.

The following databases were utilized for literature search: Academic search complete; ERIC; Google scholar; Medline; EBSCOhost; and CINAHL. The researcher used terms, such as written feedback, student nurses, perception, continuous and summative assessment, to conduct the literature review. This literature review is divided into the following sections: An overview of written feedback; assessment and feedback; perception of written feedback; engaging on written feedback; and effectiveness and principles of written feedback. Much of the literature on written feedback is theoretical, as there is a paucity of empirical studies on student nurses' experiences of written feedback.

2.2. An overview of written feedback

There are several definitions for feedback. Mory (2004) defined feedback as delivering information to students, while indicating the gap between actual and desired performance, which justifies a given grade. Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2007) define feedback as the provision of information by an agent, who could be a teacher, peer or a parent, about an aspect of an individual's performance. Askew and Lodge (2000) also defined feedback as a judgement by a person on the performance of another, and added that feedback is provided with the intention of assisting the recipient to improve his or her performance. Hyland and Hyland (2001) assert that written feedback is a way of channelling advice and reactions to enhance improvement on knowledge, understanding and learning. According to the researcher's understanding, the concept of feedback refers to comments or information provided to a person, after a task has been performed, with the intention of assisting the recipient to improve his/her performance. These definitions clearly suggest that feedback is information about an individual's performance, which aims to assist an individual to improve his/her current performance.

The vital role that feedback plays in teaching and learning has been extensively supported by several authors (Brown & Glover, 2005; Bruno & Santos, 2010; Carless, 2006). Weaver (2006) asserts that written feedback is an important component of the learning cycle, providing reflection and improvement on performance in higher education institutions. Similarly, Giles, Gilbert & McNeill (2014a) state that written feedback is an essential component of the learning and teaching cycle. Furthermore, Hattie and Timperley (2007) assert that feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, and its effect has been well recognized in articles on teaching and learning. However, lecturers provide their students with different types of written feedback on their assignments. These types of written feedback have been classified in order to analyze the quality of feedback (Glover & Brown, 2006).

Hyland (2001) conducted a study to investigate students' beliefs and expectations about lecturers' feedback at the Open University of Hong Kong. Hyland (2001) analyzed written feedback from 77 students' assignments and categorized it into two broad areas; written feedback that focuses on the product (the strength and weaknesses of the students' assignment), and written feedback that focuses on the process of learning (actions and strategies students must take to improve on their performance). Written feedback on product included the content,

presentation, language accuracy and organization, while written feedback on the process of learning included encouragement, reinforcement and suggestions to improve. The results of analysing the feedback focus of the 77 assignments indicated that 83.2% of the feedback comments focused on product, while less than 17% focused on process of learning. Additionally, the results also indicated that the majority (44.8%) of the feedback comments focused on content (message of writing, ideas and information offered).

Brown and Glover (2006) also analysed 4,428 feedback interventions of 112 Open University (OU) students' assignments and 577 feedback interventions of 35 Shellam Hallam University (SHU) students' assignments. The authors categorized written feedback into two categories – type of feedback explanation (content; feedback that facilitated the development of appropriate skills; feedback that encouraged further learning; as well as motivational and de-motivational feedback comments) and depth of feedback explanation. The results indicated that the majority (70% for SHU and 60% OU) of feedback interventions focused on content (use of English, omissions and clarifications) at both universities. The results also revealed that students were given corrective response or feedback, without explanations to the causes of their weaknesses or reasons why their answers were inappropriate (Brown & Glover, 2006). Brown and Glover (2006) suggested that written feedback should focus on the main weaknesses and explain in detail the reasons for those weaknesses. Their findings, therefore, recommend that lecturers focus on providing quality and detailed written feedback on key areas of the assignment, which could be acted on by the students in order to close their performance gap.

2.3. Assessment and feedback

This section focuses on the assessment and feedback practices that are discussed under the following headings: methods of assessment; role of assessment in feedback; modes of communicating feedback on assessment; and assessment rubrics as a means of providing written feedback. The aim of this current study is to describe student nurses' perceptions of written feedback on assessment, and it is, therefore, important to highlight the importance of assessment, and the role of feedback on assessment.

2.3.1. Methods of Assessment

Assessment is the collection of information about students' learning and learning programmes over a time period, using a range of methods and techniques (Bruce et al., 2011). Assessment

is essential in the training and education of nursing students (Oermann & Gaberson, 2009) as feedback is generated through this process, and lecturers are assisted in determining suitable instructional strategies to improve students' performances. Students' learning needs are, therefore, met and the evaluation of the quality of teaching and nursing programme can also be done through the assessment (Oermann & Gaberson, 2009). There are two main methods for assessment, namely, formative and summative assessment. Determining which method of assessment to use depends on the purpose, plan and the context in which the assessment occurs (Bruce et al., 2011). Formative assessment occurs during the learning process (Bruce et al., 2011) in higher education institutions. In the education and training of nurses, formative assessment occurs during the students' 'formative years' of becoming a professional nurse (Bruce et al., 2011). The key reason for the use of formative assessment is to provide students with feedback that assists them to identify gaps in their learning (Bruce et al., 2011).

2.3.2. Role of feedback in assessments

The feedback of formative assessment should provide information on the performance gap, and should assist students to take the necessary actions to close the gap between their current and desired performance (Brown & Glover, 2005). Summative assessment, on the other hand, generally, takes place at the end of an academic year or course, and its main concern is on the end result of learning (Bruce et al., 2011). Feedback is, generally, not given during summative assessments.

2.3.3 Modes of communicating feedback on assessment

Irons (2007) asserts that feedback on formative assessment can be communicated to students via traditional and electronic approaches. The traditional approaches to formative assessment feedback includes handwritten comments, face-to face individual feedback, group feedback in the classroom, and print-outs of word processed feedback (Zhu, 2012). The three common electronic approaches for communicating formative feedback are; word processed feedback forms, e-mailing comments and electronic annotations on the student's assessed work (Hatziapostolou & Paraskakis, 2010). Hatziapostolou and Paraskakis (2010) assert that both traditional and electronic approaches for communicating feedback have their advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of using the electronic approach in communicating feedback include: speeding up the provision of feedback; students can respond directly about feedback; and convenience, as it can be delivered to the student at any time and place (Race, 2001). However, the use of the electronic approach in delivering feedback has its disadvantages, namely: the lecturers may not know if the feedback was well understood by the students;

lecturers have to spend lot of time delivering feedback and responding to students, thereby increasing their workload; and also students, to some extent, are pressured, when they receive feedback from their lecturers, because they might only have limited access to networked computers (Zhu, 2012). On the other hand, the traditional approach of communicating feedback has advantages, such as: the provision of feedback can be personalized and directly related to a particular assignment; students can refer to it many times and continue learning from it; and it provides useful evidence for external scrutiny (Race, 2001). The disadvantages for using traditional approaches to deliver feedback includes: it could be difficult to read; it could be slow and time consuming; and it could also be threatening to students when unfavorable, because of its authoritativeness (Race, 2001).

Chang, Watson, Bakerson, Williams, McGoron, & Spitzer (2012) conducted a study with a total of two hundred and fifty (250) undergraduate students at the Mid-western University, United States of America (USA) to explore which form of feedback (handwritten or electronic) undergraduate students preferred, as well as the reasons behind their preferences. Mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative approaches) was used to collect the data. The results of the study indicated that, out of a sample of two hundred and fifty (250) students, 68% preferred electronic feedback, while 32% preferred hand-written feedback. Some of reasons behind the students' preference for electronic feedback were: they felt that it was accessible, because it enabled them to receive feedback effortlessly, and they also felt it was more convenient for their lecturers to communicate feedback to them, using that approach; they could receive and respond quickly, because, as it was typed, they were able to read the feedback without much difficulty. The reasons behind the students' preference for hand-written feedback was mainly centered on the fact that it provided a more personal feedback, than electronic, and enabled the formation of closer rapport with their lecturers. The feedback was also placed closer to the areas that students needed to work on or fix.

Watkins, Dummer, Hawthorne, Cousins, Emmett & Johnson (2014) conducted a study to explore students' perceptions of the timelines, accessibility, consistency and quality of feedback, as well as electronic grading, using Grademark®, an electronic tool available through the plagiarism software provider, Turnitin. Online surveys and focus group discussions were employed to collect the data for the study. A total sample of two hundred and ninety-six (296) and twenty-seven (27) nursing and midwifery, medicine and dentistry students for the online survey and focus group discussion respectively, participated in the study, at Cardiff University,

UK. The results indicated that 80% of the students either strongly agreed, or agreed, that feedback received electronically was accessible; 86% strongly agreed, or agreed, that it was an effective tool for the retrieval of assignments from feedback; and 57% strongly agreed, or agreed, that feedback received electronically was constructive, and helped them to recognize areas where they needed to improve their performance. In addition, 74% of the students either strongly agreed, or agreed, that the electronic tool (Grademark®) should be utilized across all disciplines at the university.

Stone (2014) conducted a research study to uncover factors that could possibly influence medical students to engage with written feedback, delivered via electronic means (online marking tool), in UK. Third-year medical students were invited to complete questionnaires after they had received their written feedback via electronic means. Of the seventy-five (75) medical students, 64% wanted to receive feedback through this electronic means in the future, and 25.3% found it difficult utilizing this electronic approach. A few students had problems utilizing this electronic method of delivering feedback, but most succeeded in dealing with the problem (Stone, 2014). Stone (2014) concluded that students are more likely to engage with feedback, if it is delivered via the electronic means (online media) (Stone, 2014).

Although, the electronic approach has been recommended as the most suitable means of presenting feedback to students (Rae & Cochrane, 2008), other research studies (Budge, 2011; Edeiken-Cooperman & Berenato, 2014) have shown that students also value the traditional approach (handwritten) for feedback delivery. Edeiken-Cooperman & Berenato (2014) conducted a study to explore the area of effective feedback, as well as whether undergraduates preferred electronic or handwritten feedback. The study employed a mixed methodology research design and had a sample of two hundred and thirty-six (236) participants, who were all undergraduate students at the Jesuit Catholic University, in the USA. The results of the study were as follows: 50% of the students preferred electronic feedback and again 50% also preferred handwritten feedback; 69.05% reported that with handwritten feedback, they were able to establish a rapport with their lecturers, as opposed to 30.95%, who preferred electronic feedback; 71.43% of students also reported that when they received handwritten feedback from their lecturers, they were encouraged to read them, as opposed to 28.57% of students, who preferred electronic feedback; and, finally, 83.33% reported that handwritten feedback made them appreciate the lecturers time, as opposed to 16.67%, who preferred electronic feedback. Edeiken-Cooperman & Berenato (2014), therefore, concluded that it is important for lecturers

to consider using the best approach that promotes learning, when delivering written feedback to students.

A study was conducted by Budge (2011) to explore students' perceptions of using the electronic format to provide feedback. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research designs, with sixty-nine (69) participants at a university in Australia. The results from the study indicated that, when students were asked about their preference for receiving feedback on their work, 19 students preferred handwritten and only nine (9) preferred the electronic format. Additionally, when they were asked their reasons for not choosing the electronic format, relative to the clarity of the communication, some of the responses were: lecturers do not answer questions in e-mails; it is not personalized enough; not detailed enough; and less informative. Budge (2011) concludes that in this current age, where technology plays a major part in people's lives, there are human aspects to feedback that is not delivered via electronic means. These human aspects are very highly valued by students, therefore, lecturers should acknowledge this/their preference.

Students' preference for an approach to communicating written feedback, whether traditional or electronic, depends on the quality and timing of the feedback received. Lecturers, therefore, need to consider and utilize the communicating approach of written feedback that is more preferable to their students and that also improves their students' performance.

2.3.4. The assessment rubrics as a means of providing written feedback

Many disciplines in higher education institutions also provide feedback and grades on students' assessed work through the use of assessment rubrics (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). According to Andrade (2010, cited in Reddy & Andrade, 2010), an assessment rubric is a document that communicates the expectations of an assignment, by listing the criteria and describing the level of quality from excellent to poor. There are three parts to an assessment rubric, namely: the evaluation criteria; the quality definition that describes how a student must demonstrate a specific skill to attain a score; and the scoring system (Reddy & Andrade, 2010).

There are several types of assessment rubrics, but the two most commonly used are the analytic and holistic scoring rubrics (Bruce et al., 2011). Analytic scoring rubrics allow for the scoring of separate components of learning performance and forms an integral part of the formative assessment plan (Bruce et al., 2011). In addition, Renjith, George, Renu and D'Souza (2015)

state that analytic scoring rubrics provide students with comprehensive feedback and consistent scores across grades. Conversely, holistic scoring rubrics are mostly used in summative assessment (Bruce et al., 2011), as well as for the evaluation of the overall quality of a process, by scoring the performance as a whole (Moskal, 2000).

Renjith et al. (2015) assert that, in nursing education, assessment rubrics have been used extensively for the evaluation of clinical skills, grading assignments, evaluating clinical competencies and analyzing presentations. Renjith et al. (2015) further state that rubrics not only serve as an evaluation tool, but also as feedback to students. Lecturers cannot provide all the feedback that student's desire on their assignments and, therefore, assessment rubrics could guide students to identify strengths and weaknesses in a text and indicate areas for improvement (Sadler & Andrade, 2004). However, lecturers need to teach their students to develop the skills of utilizing rubrics to assess their performance (Sadler & Andrade, 2004).

2.4. Perceptions of written feedback

Despite the significance of written feedback, recent studies (Duncan, 2007; Carless, 2006) support the fact that students do not have much interest in written feedback. However, students' perceptions and expectations are crucial to their engagement (Bryson & Hand, 2007) with written feedback. Similarly, Rowe, Wood and Petocz (2008) assert that students' perceptions of feedback are linked to their manner of engagement (active or passive learning approach). This section discusses students' and lecturers' perceptions of written feedback under the following headings; perception of written feedback and students' perception on the effectiveness of written feedback.

2.4.1. Lecturers and students perception of written feedback

Various studies (Carless, 2006; Maclellan, 2001) have shown that lecturers perceived written feedback more positively than students. Maclellan (2001) conducted a survey to describe the assessment practices, as they were experienced by lecturers and students in a higher education institution in the UK, with eighty (80) staff and one hundred and thirty (130) third-year students. The results indicated that there were variations in the manner that staff and students perceived feedback. The 130 students perceived feedback in the following ways: 85% as sometimes, or frequently, helpful in its details; 48% as sometimes, or frequently, prompting discussion; 67% as sometimes, or frequently, enabling the understanding of the assessment;

and 87% as sometimes, or frequently, improving learning. The 80 staff members perceived feedback as follows: 93% as sometimes, or frequently, helpful in its details; 93% as sometimes, or frequently, prompting discussion; 90% as sometimes, or frequently, enabling the understanding of the assessment; and 87% as sometimes, or frequently, improving learning.

Similarly, Price, Handley and Millar (2011) conducted a study, with four (4) strands of work, to investigate how to engage students more effectively with assessment feedback. The third (3rd) strand of work investigated students' and lecturers' perceptions and experiences of feedback more comprehensively by utilizing semi-structured interviews. Sixteen (16) students and twenty (20) lecturers, at three (3) universities in the UK, participated in the study. The results indicated that lecturers and students perceived the purpose of feedback, differently. Of the twenty (20) lecturers, sixteen (16) reported that the purpose of feedback was for improvement, and six (6) lecturers also reported that feedback had a benchmark role. To the contrary, students perceived feedback as unspecific and that it did not assist in improving their performance.

However, Rae and Cochrane (2008) assert that assessment and feedback was mostly perceived by students and lecturers as a transmission process, centered on deriving and justifying marks, rather than enhancing learning.

2.4.2. Students' perception on the effectiveness of written feedback

Although students acknowledge the fact that written feedback is useful and enhances their performance, they perceive feedback practices as ineffective (Orsmond, Merry & Reiling, 2005; Murtagh & Baker, 2009). Additionally, Poulos and Mahony (2008) conducted a qualitative study on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of feedback from their lecturers. The population for the study was undergraduate students in the faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney, Australia. The findings of the study indicated that students perceived effective feedback as feedback that is personalized, timely, not only provides information on how to improve grades, but also provides information that could be utilized for their professional practice, after they had graduated. The findings also showed a relationship between the students' perceptions of the provider (lecturer) and the feedback – the students' perceived effective feedback, as feedback being provided by lecturers.

An earlier study by Weaver (2006), at a university in the UK, explored students' perceptions of written feedback, and examined whether the feedback received, demonstrated a student-centered approach to learning. The study sample was 44 students (24 Business and 20 Design) in a higher education institution. The findings indicated that the majority of students acknowledged the fact that feedback improved their learning; however, the practice of feedback was not as effective as they had expected. A number of students did not understand some terms in the written feedback received from their lecturers, as, of the 44 students, only 8% of the business students and 10% of the design students always received written feedback that was clear and easy to read. Additionally, 50% of the students, on average, did not receive guidance on how to utilize and read feedback. The majority of the students perceived written feedback from their lecturers as vague and that feedback comments were not related to the assessment criteria. These studies suggest that students needed to be provided with quality and effective feedback that could positively impact on their performance.

2.5. Engaging students in written feedback

Lecturers doubt and inquire whether students engage in written feedback of assignments that they spend considerable time in writing (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Glover & Brown, 2006). However, students' engagement with written feedback is a skill that needs the investment of lecturers to build on (Orsmond et al., 2005), as the role of lecturers in the enhancing of students' engagement with feedback is vital (Rowe, Wood & Petocz, 2008). Several studies (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick, 2006) have recommended the need to increase students' engagement with written feedback; while several further suggestions have been made by other research studies (Rae & Cochrane, 2008; Price, Handley & Millar, 2011; Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick, 2006) on ways to actively engage students with written feedback. Some these suggestions will be discussed below under the following headings: encouraging and supporting students to be self-regulated learners, referred to in the School of Nursing in this study as "self-directed"; discussions between lecturers and students on written feedback; and providing quality written feedback to students.

2.5.1. Encouraging and supporting students to be self-regulated learners

The development of students' capacity for self-regulation is an essential responsibility of lecturers to persuade students to actively engage with written feedback in higher education institutions (Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick, 2006). Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick (2006) designed

seven (7) principles of good feedback practices that facilitate self-regulation, which are as follows:

- Good feedback should clearly explain, standards, goals and expected outcomes;
- The need to facilitate the development of self-assessment;
- Delivering high quality information to students about learning;
- The provision of information to lecturers that can be used to assist in shaping teaching;
- The need to encourage lecturer and peer dialogue around learning;
- Encouraging positive motivational belief and self-esteem; and
- The provision of opportunities for students to close the gap between the present and desired performance (Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick, 2006).

In addition, Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick (2006) suggest strategies that can be used to implement these principles, which include: engaging students in identifying standards or assessment criteria to be applied to their assessed work; the provision of feedback that relates to pre-defined criteria; the provision of corrective advice; and prioritizing areas where students need to improve (Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick, 2006).

Rae and Cochrane (2008) conducted a qualitative study with eight (8) registered nurses, undertaking a part-time, top-up degree programme at a higher education institution in UK, to capture and interpret students' perspectives of written assessment feedback. The data collected suggested that students fall into two distinct categories – passive and active learners. The active learners actively engage with written feedback to improve their performance, while the passive learners are not committed to learn. Rae and Cochrane (2008), therefore, suggest that lecturers should encourage their students to develop the skill of self-regulated learning, in order to facilitate students' engagement with written feedback, as well as maximize learning.

Orsmond, Merry and Reiling (2005) also conducted a semi-structured interview with sixteen (16) third-year biology students at a higher education institution in United Kingdom, to ascertain students' utilization of lecturers' feedback. The results indicated diversity in the utilization of feedback by students, as follows: 14 students used feedback to enrich their learning environment; 8 students demonstrated that specific lecturers' feedback would influence their utilization of the feedback; and others utilized feedback for clarification and enhancing their motivation. Orsmond et al., (2005) state that lecturers cannot provide all the needs of students with regards to feedback. They further state that the utilization of lecturers'

feedback by students is a skill and, in order to develop this skill, an awareness of the diversity of possible feedback utilization, must be enhanced, in order for students to recognize the fact that individual needs cannot be met. Lecturers also need to provide written feedback of student assessments in a manner that broadens and helps to improve learning, evaluate the effectiveness of their feedback and its utilization by students.

Lecturers need to encourage and empower their students to become active learners, who manage or self-regulate their own learning, as it has been suggested by authors of these studies that self-regulated learners actively engage with written feedback to enhance their performance.

2.5.2. Discussions between lecturers and students

Various research studies (Price, Handley & Millar, 2011; Rae & Cochrane, 2008) have shown that students wish to have discussions with their lecturers on feedback, but lecturers' availability and approachability was a concern to students. Certain studies (Price, Handley & Millar, 2011; Rae & Cochrane, 2008; Murtagh & Baker, 2009) have recommended the need for lecturers to encourage dialogue after written feedback has been delivered, in order to enhance students' comprehension and engagement of feedback.

Murtagh and Baker (2009) conducted an action research study with undergraduate students in a higher education institution in the UK, to explore students' perceptions of assessment feedback and the impact of an intervention to enhance its use. The results indicated that students engage with written feedback when they are encouraged to set goals, and there are one-on-one discussions of feedback with lecturers. Murtagh and Baker (2009) implemented an intervention strategy – one-on-one tutorials with first year students. Firstly, assignments with traditional written feedback were provided to the students. Secondly, students were told to prepare for one-on-one tutorials, by noting questions on the feedback, or next the assignment, that they would want to ask, identifying any of the feedback comments they did not understand, and setting goals for development. Thirdly, the implementation of the intervention questionnaires were distributed to first-year students to assess the effectiveness of the strategy. Of the 158 first-year students, 83% and 38% rated one-on-one tutorials 4 and 5 respectively, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was not at all effective, and 5, was highly effective (Murtagh & Baker, 2009).

The results of a study by Rae and Cochrane (2008) also indicated that student nurses wanted opportunities to discuss the written feedback with their lecturers, in order to comprehend and utilize the written feedback for the improvement of their future work. Rae and Cochrane (2008), therefore, suggest that lecturers should guide their students, who might be having difficulties with the understanding and interpreting of the written feedback, by encouraging, and being available for, face-to-face discussions.

Although discussions between lecturers and students are recognized as essential for the improvement of learning, large class sizes could affect the lecturer's ability to have one-on-one discussions with all their students (Nicol, 2010). Lecturers could, however, arrange tutorials with students after they had received the written feedback. Students could then be assigned to groups where they could share and discuss the feedback (Nicol, 2010).

It is evident from the results of these studies that discussions on written feedback between lecturers and students encourages students to engage with written feedback, which could improve performance, as students get to understand the feedback comments, as well as the reasons behind the grades or marks received.

2.5.3. Consistency in the timing and quality of written feedback

Several studies (Rae & Cochrane, 2008; Weaver, 2006) have shown that students would like to use written feedback to improve their performances. However, anecdotal evidence suggest that negative factors, such as unconstructive, vague, incomprehensive, and undetailed feedback, as well as the timing inconsistency of written feedback delivery, does not help to promote the process.

A research project by Kandiko and Mawer (2013) investigated students' expectations and perceptions of the quality of their learning experience, as well as the academic standards of their chosen programmes, in higher education institutions across the UK, in the years 2012 and 2013. The results indicated that students were unhappy with the inconsistencies in the length, details and effectiveness of feedback received from their lecturers. Additionally, Ghazal, Gul, Hanzala, Jessop and Tharani (2014) conducted a qualitative study at a private university in Pakistan, with 15 graduate students studying medicine, nursing and education. The aim of the study was to appraise the quality of written feedback in the graduate programmes and to ascertain the students' perceptions thereof. The results of the study indicated that there were

differences in the quality, quantity and frequency of the written feedback received. These differences were not only recognized in the programmes, but also in the courses and faculty of the same programme.

Gibbs and Simpson (2004) assert that if feedback is not delivered swiftly enough, it becomes insignificant to the students' ongoing studies, as they would have moved on to a new subject and the effort of the lecturers in providing the feedback would have been wasted. Carroll (1995, cited in Gibbs & Simpson, 2004), described a formative assessment workshop, which consisted of a multiple choice questions test for a class of three hundred (300) medical students. The feedback was provided immediately after the assignment and students were permitted to study for period of time, before moving on to next topic. 85% of the students wanted more such sessions. Although, large student numbers might affect the quick turn-around of feedback to students, Higgins, Hartley and Skelton (2002) assert that the timing of feedback is crucial and suggested that feedback should be returned to students as soon as possible after the submission of an assignment.

Additionally, if lecturers could abide by institutional policy, students could be provided with consistent quality and timely feedback. Rust (2002, cited in Rae & Cochrane, 2008) suggests that, in order to maintain consistency in channeling communication, lecturers need to follow a timely and standardized approach that is guided by institutional policy. Rae and Cochrane (2008) also recommend that, in order for written feedback to be consistent, institutional policy on feedback should be open, clearly explained and accessible to everyone, and lecturers must abide by the time-frame set within the feedback policy. Inconsistencies in written feedback received by students are not only recognized in an individual lecturers' feedback, but also across disciplines. Higgins, Hartley & Skelton (2002) suggest that there is a need for open discussions between lecturers to prevent students receiving inconsistent feedback across disciplines.

2.5.4. Students preference for written feedback

According to Giles, Gilbert and McNeil (2014b), and Glover and Brown (2006), there is a need for lecturers to be aware of their students' feedback preference, as well as their difficulties/weaknesses when they submit their assignments, in order to encourage them to engage with feedback; thereby making feedback effective. Being aware of students' feedback

preferences reduces the likelihood of unproductive feedback comments by lecturers. It also empowers students more than only receiving written feedback, which is based on the lecturers' interpretations of students work (Nicol, 2010)

In a review activity conducted by Giles et al. (2014b) with 248 third-year students in a higher education institution in Australia, a questionnaire was constructed to explore students' preferences for written feedback. Of the 248 students, 73% preferred a grade with written feedback throughout the assignment and marking guide, 26% preferred written feedback with a grade on the marking guide, but not throughout the assignment, and 1% preferred only a grade. The findings suggest that the students were happy when asked about their preferences, and that the majority will choose the particular type and amount of written feedback they want on their assignment, if given the opportunity to do so (Giles et al., 2014b).

Students' preference for feedback has also been linked to the method of engagement. Rowe and Wood (2008) conducted a principal component analysis on a survey that was based on the themes identified in their previous studies, to explore students' perceptions of feedback with undergraduates and postgraduate students from two universities in Australia. The study identified two preference dimensions, preference A and B, and a possible connection between students feedback preferences and learning approaches. Students that fall within 'Preference A' preferred feedback that allows them to understand and reflect on a subject matter. On the other hand, students under preference B preferred feedback that provides answers about the lecturers marking criteria and were less concerned about understanding and reflecting on a subject matter. However, Rowe and Wood (2008) concluded that good feedback practice was more essential than accounting for individual differences.

It is evident from these researches lecturers should inquire about the preference of their students, as it aids them to provide feedback that suit their students' needs.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the literature on assessment and feedback practices, students' perceptions of written feedback and engaging students with written feedback.

Chapter Three (3) discusses the research method and design employed in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this study to achieve the research objectives. It discusses, in detail, the research approach, design and setting, the population and sampling, development of the data-collection instrument, reliability, validity and data analysis of the study, as well as the ethics considered and ensured.

3.2. Research Approach

Quantitative research is a formal, objective, systematic process, in which numerical data are utilized to acquire information about the world (Burns & Grove, 2005). According to Polit and Beck (2012), in quantitative research, a phenomenon is investigated which leads to precise measurement and quantification. The quantitative research approach was selected for this study because the researcher wanted to gather information and generate new knowledge about student nurses' perception of written feedback on assessment.

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3.3. Research design

According to Polit and Beck (2012), research design is the overall plan to address a research question, which includes specifications for enhancing the research study's integrity. Burns and Grove (2003) concurs that research design guides the researcher to plan and implement the research study in a manner that is most likely to obtain the intended objective. This current research study employed a quantitative, descriptive survey design to describe student nurses' perceptions of written feedback, on assessment.

A descriptive research design describes variables with the intention of answering the research question (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2006). Brink et al. (2006) state that, in descriptive research, more information is required in a particular field of study, through the provision of a picture of the phenomenon, as it takes place naturally. According to Burns and Grove (2003), a descriptive research design is useful in generating new knowledge of concepts, on which few or no studies have been conducted. This research design is most suitable for this

study because the researcher has no intention of establishing a cause-effect relationship (Brink et al., 2006), but aims to describe the students perception of written feedback.

According to Burns and Grove (2005), a survey is a data collection technique, in which questionnaires or personal interviews are utilized to collect data about an identified population. Brink et al. (2006) defines a survey as a research study, in which self-reported data are collected from a sample, so that the characteristics of the population will be determined. A survey was employed in this current study because it is a very important source of data, which could also be used in descriptive research (Burns & Grove, 2005), as it is flexible and allows participants to answer a series of questions (Polit & Beck, 2012).

3.4. Research setting

The research setting is the site where a research study is conducted (Burns and Grove, 2003). The research setting for this study was the SoN, UWC, in the Western Cape Province. The SoN, UWC, is one of two universities in the Western Cape, offering the four year undergraduate nursing degree. The SoN, UWC, has the largest number of nursing students registered for the Bachelor of Nursing degree and offers both a four (4) year and 5 year ECP in the Bachelor of Nursing degree programme. The SoN is part of the Faculty of Community Health and Sciences at the UWC (Jooste, 2014)

3.5. Population and sampling

Burns and Grove (2005) defined population as an entire aggregation of cases that meet a designated set of criteria. Sampling is the process of selecting cases to represent a whole population, in order to make inferences about the population (Polit & Beck, 2012).

3.5.1. Population of the study

The population for this study was all student nurses registered towards a BN degree at the SoN, UWC in 2015. There are a total of one thousand and fifty-eight (1058) undergraduate students registered for the Bachelor of Nursing degree programme. The target population, which is the aggregate of cases about which the researcher wants to generalize (Polit & Beck, 2012), in this study was one hundred and six (106) students registered in, both, first (51) and second-year (55) of the BN foundation programme. The foundation programme student nurses were

selected because it is uncertain if these students are satisfied with the written feedback received on assessment and were part of the ECP.

3.5.2. Sample of the study

A sample is a subset of the population that is chosen for a particular research study (Burns & Grove, 2003). This study employed all-inclusive sampling, meaning that all foundation programme student nurses, who had registered towards a BN degree programme for 2015, were included.

3.6. Data collection

Polit and Beck (2012) defines data collection as the gathering of information to address a research problem. Burns and Grove (2003) also defines data collection as the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to address the research objectives of the study.

3.6.1. Data collection instrument

According to Brink et al. (2006), a research instrument is a device utilized to collect data in a research study. The research instrument employed in this study was an existing questionnaire, adapted from Khowaja et al. (2014), as well as Gibbs and Simpson (2003). Polit and Beck (2012) defines a questionnaire as a document that is used to collect self-report data, through self-administration of questions. Permission to use the questionnaire for this study has been obtained from the respective authors (see Addendum 6).

The questionnaire consist of four (4) sections. Section A, B and D are adapted from a questionnaire used by Khowaja et al. (2014) on written feedback in nursing. Section C is adapted from the Assessment Experience Questionnaire, developed by Gibbs and Simpson (2003). Section A elicits demographic data; Section B obtains data about the practice of written feedback and consists of thirteen (13) closed, and one (1) open- ended question; Section C consists of a five (5) point Likert scale, which has two sections – amount and time has six (6) questions, and quality of written feedback has ten (10) questions; Section D is a closed-ended question on how written feedback practices can be improved. There are a total of 31 questions in the questionnaire (see Addendum 1). It required about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

3.6.2. Pre-testing of instrument

Pre-testing of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher with the intention of determining the accuracy in information, time required to complete questionnaire, whether participants understood the questions, and also to ensure that the objectives of the study will be attained. The questionnaire was pre-tested on 10 student nurses, who were registered for the BN foundation programme, and excluded from the main study.

The following questions; 9, 12, 13 and 31 (see Addendum 7) were corrected after the pre-testing. A correction was made on question 9 because the researcher wanted to know the mode of communication for written feedback to the students. Question 12 was amended because the researcher wanted to know the focus of written feedback on the test, and alterations were made on the items under questions 13, to make it easier for the participants to read. Additionally, the researcher wanted to know specific views of students on written feedback process and, therefore, changed it from an open-ended question to closed-ended question. The questionnaire was retested on the same 10 students, who participated in the pre-testing of the instrument, after amending the questionnaire.

3.6.3. Data collection process

The proposal for this study was sent to the University Senate Higher Degree and Senate Research committees for approval. After approval, a letter was sent to the Dean of research (see addendum 3) and the Head of SoN, UWC (see addendum 5) to obtain permission to conduct the study. The researcher began to collect data after permission was granted.

Data collection was carried out from 23rd to 30th September, 2015. The researcher first contacted the coordinator for the foundation classes, after which a date and time was set for data collection. The researcher visited the classes (foundation 1 and 2) before data collection and explained the purpose of the study, the reasons for selecting the foundation student nurses, the rights in, and possible risks of, the study. The researcher also informed the participants that participation in the study was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any stage of the study, and that confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured.

The researcher administered information sheets, informed consent forms and questionnaires to each participant at the end of the class session. Each participant was asked to sign the informed consent form before completing the questionnaire. A total of 74 questionnaires were distributed

as not all the 106 students were willing to participate in the study, and some were absent for reasons, such as sickness. The researcher was available to clarify any misunderstanding and collected the questionnaires after they had been completed by the participants. Sixty-nine (69) of the seventy-four (74) returned questionnaires as some students had left to attend to personal issues.

3.7. Reliability

According to Polit and Beck (2012) reliability is the consistency with which an instrument measures the target attribute. Reliability plays a vital role in selecting scales for use in a research study (Burns & Grove, 2003). Cronbach’s Alpha, was used to test the reliability of the instrument and was done by the researcher with the assistance of a statistician. Burns and Grove (2003) stated that for a newly developed instrument reliability of 0.70 is considered acceptable. The reliability coefficient was, therefore, set at 0.70, in order to maintain the test retest reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 3.1 depicts the case processing summary of the amount of cases that participated in the pretesting of the instrument.

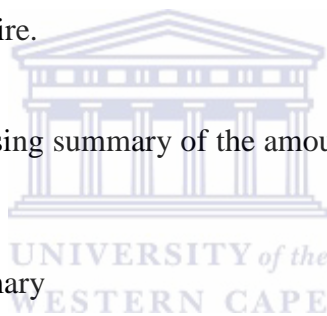


Table 3.1: Case processing summary

Case Processing Summary		
Cases	n	%
Valid	10	100.0
Excluded	0	0.0
Total	10	100.0

Table 3.2 depicts the reliability coefficient of the scale: amount and timing of written feedback.

Table 3.2: Reliability of amount and timing of feedback

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.792	6

Table 3.3 depicts the reliability coefficient of the scale: quality of written feedback.

Table 3.3: Reliability of quality of written feedback

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.738	10

3.8. Validity

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it intends to measure (Polit & Beck, 2012). Face validity basically verifies whether the instrument appears to measure the relevant content that it purports to measure (Burns & Grove, 2003). Face validity was established in this study by consulting the experts in nursing science and the supervisor to provide feedback about the validity of the instrument.

Content validity refers to the extent to which an instrument covers that scope and range of information that it sought (Brink et al., 2006). Content validity was established by means of the researcher presenting the questionnaire for review by the statistician, the research ethics committee and the supervisor to provide input, because of their experience in the practice and quantitative research.

3.9. Data Analysis

According to Polit and Beck (2012), data analysis refers to the systematic organization and synthesis of research data. Data analysis is carried out in order to reduce, organize and give meaning to data (Burns & Grove, 2003). In this study, descriptive statistics were used to

analyze and describe student nurses' perceptions of written feedback on assessment. According to Polit and Beck (2012), descriptive statistics are used sometimes to directly address the research question in studies that are primarily descriptive and also to help set the stage for the understanding of quantitative research evidence.

The questionnaire were divided into the following sections: demographic data; practice of written feedback; the amount, time and quality of written feedback, and the improvement of the written feedback process, to facilitate the presentation of the results. Questions under the practice of written feedback were grouped into sub-categories, such as; assessment and feedback, focus of written feedback, improvement of performance and factors that prevent the use of written feedback. Questions under the amount, timing and quality of written feedback were grouped under two scales, namely, amount and timing of written feedback, and quality of written feedback. The mean for the items in each scale was calculated (See Table 4.5 and 4.6).

The completed questionnaires were counted and coded to facilitate the capturing and auditing of the data after data collection. Next, the data was entered into the computer software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 to collect basic descriptive statistics on student nurses' perceptions of written feedback, on assessment. Nominal data was measured and ordinal data was ranked. Nominal data was obtained from question 1, 3-14 and 31 (see addendum 7), question 2 (see addendum 7) which was a scale. Question 14 to 30 (see addendum 7) generated ordinal data. Nominal and scale data were analyzed by means of descriptive analyses.

Section C of the instrument had two scales (see Addendum 7), namely, amount and timing, and quality of written feedback, that were ordinal data. The data was analyzed by scoring the items in each scale from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree) (Gibbs, 2010). However, items marked with (*) in Table 4.5 and 4.7 were scored in the opposite direction (1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree) (Gibbs, 2010). The average (mean) student rating was calculated for each question, in a scale, and next the average score for all the questions in each scale was calculated (Gibbs, 2010). The mean scale scores for this study were compared with the typical range of scores for each scale in Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet (Gibbs, 2010). The range of the mean scale score for 'amount and timing' and 'quality of feedback' was as follows: the lowest programme mean scale score (2.58) and the highest programme mean scale score (3.76) (Gibbs & Dunbar-Goddet, 2007). Lastly, the mean scale scores for both scales were

calculated to determine the overall students' perceptions of amount, timing and quality of written feedback.

The data was presented in percentages, frequency tables and bar graphs (see Table 4.1 and 4.2).

3.10. Ethics

The approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Senate Higher Degree Committee and the ethics clearance from the Senate Research Committee at the UWC (see Addendum 1) before the study commenced. Permission was also obtained from the Dean of Research (see Addendum 3) and the Head of SoN, UWC (see Addendum 5). The following ethical principles were ensured in the study:

- **Principles for respect of persons**

The participants were not forced to participate in the study and had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study, without prejudice. The participants' information sheets (see Addendum 9) and consent letters (see addendum 8) were administered to all the participants, explaining the purpose of the study, ethical considerations and guidelines for participation.

- **Principle of beneficence**

Polit and Beck (2012) state that the principle of beneficence imposes responsibility on the researcher to minimize harm and maximize benefits. The researcher ensured that the questionnaires were carefully structured and devoid of sensitive questions, which posed the risk of causing harm or discomfort to the participants. Furthermore, the necessary arrangements were made, by the researcher, to refer the participants to an experienced counsellor at the university, in the event of emotional distress as a result of participating in the study.

- **Principle of Justice**

The principle of justice involves the participants' right to fair treatment and privacy (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher selected the participants for the study with fairness (Brink et al., 2006), by selecting all the students in the ECP to participate in the study and treating all participants equally. The researcher respected all agreements made with the participants, such as the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without being penalised.

- **Right to Privacy**

The researcher ensured that the right to privacy of the participants was respected throughout the study. The participants had the right to determine the degree to which their information was shared or withheld (Brink et al., 2006). All the participants' information was held in strict confidence and they could decide the extent to which their information should be shared.

- **Anonymity and confidentiality**

Brink et al., (2006) state that anonymity is the researchers' act of keeping participants' identities secret. Anonymity is the most secure means of protecting confidentiality (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher ensured that questionnaires did not contain information that would identify the participants as only codes were placed on the questionnaires. In addition, completed questionnaires were secured and locked in a cabinet. A password was assigned to the captured data.

- **Informed consent**

Informed consent refers to the participants' having adequate information about the research study, understanding that information and having the ability to consent or willingly decline participation (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher ensured beforehand that participants were well informed about the research study, and were given opportunities for clarification. The participants had to sign the consent forms before participating in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any stage of the study, without prejudice. However, none of the participants withdrew from the study.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research method and design used in the study. The following was also discussed: research setting; population; sampling; data collection process; and the ethical considerations.

Chapter Four discusses the results of the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This study sought to determine and describe the student nurses' perceptions of written feedback after assessment. In this chapter the results of the study is described under the following headings: Demographic data; Practices of written feedback; Amount, timing and quality of written feedback; and Improvement of written feedback processes. Additionally, the key findings of the study are discussed. A total of 74 participants were recruited for the study, of which 69 submitted questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 93.2% (n=69).

4.2. Section A: Demographic data

This section covers the gender distribution, age distribution, nationality, home language, medium of instruction prior to enrolling in nursing, and the academic performance of the participants. Table 4.1 depicts the demographic data of the study participants.

Table 4.1: Demographic data

Demographic data		n=69 (%)
Gender	Male	15 (21.7)
	Female	54 (78.3)
Age	18 -19	25 (36.2)
	20 – 21	34 (49.3)
	22 – 25	10 (14.4)
Nationality	South African	68(98.6)
	Other nationality	1 (1.4)
Home language	English	14(20.3)
	Afrikaans	12(17.4)
	IsiXhosa	37(53.6)
	Others	6(8.7)
Medium of instruction before enrolling in nursing	English	49(71.0)
	French	1(1.5)
	Afrikaans	10(14.7)
	IsiXhosa	9(13.2)
Academic performance	Below average	2(2.9)
	Average	26(37.7)
	Good	37(53.6)
	Excellent	4(5.8)

The sample of this study consisted of 78.3% (n=54) females and 21.7% (n=15) males. The age groups of the participants ranged from 18 to 25, with almost half, 49.3% (n= 47) of the participants between the ages of 20 and 21 years.

Most of the participants were South African, 98.6% (n=68), with more than half, 53.6 % (n=37), speaking IsiXhosa as their home language. English was the medium of instruction at school for the majority of the participants, 71% (n=49). More than half of the participants, 53.6% (n=37), rated themselves as good, based on their academic performance at the university.

4.3. Section B: Practice of written feedback

This section covers the mode in which written feedback was communicated to the participants, the focus of written feedback received from the lecturers, and the factors that prevented the use of written feedback. The following questions were posed to the participants: (i) Do you receive assessment criteria before assignments?; (ii) Do you receive feedback after assignments and tests?; (iii) Does the feedback received reflect the assessment criteria?; (iv) How often do you receive written feedback from your lecturers? (see Table 4.2).

4.3.1. Assessment criteria and written feedback

Table 4.2 depicts the assessment criteria and written feedback that the participants received from their lecturers.

Table 4.2: Assessment criteria and written feedback

Variables	n=69 (%)	
(i) Do you receive assessment criteria before assignments?	No	2 (2.9)
	Yes	67 (97.1)
(ii) Do you receive feedback after assignments and tests?	Yes	69 (100)
(iii) Does the feedback received reflect the assessment criteria?	No	6 (8.7)
	Yes	63 (91.3)
(iv) How often do you receive written feedback from your lecturers?	Never	2 (2.9)
	Sometimes	27 (39.1)
	Always	40 (58.0)

The responses showed that most 97.1% (n=67) of the participants receive assignment guidelines or criteria from their lecturers before written assignment whilst all 100% (n=69) of the participants received feedback after assignments and tests. Most 91.3% (n=63) of the participants responded that the feedback received reflect the assignment criteria provided by the lecturer. More than half 58% (n=40) of the participants responded that they always received written feedback from their lecturers, whilst less than a third 39.1% (n=27) of the participants responded that they sometimes receive written feedback from their lecturers.

4.3.2. Communication of feedback

Figure 4.1 depicts the participants' responses regarding the mode of communicating feedback.

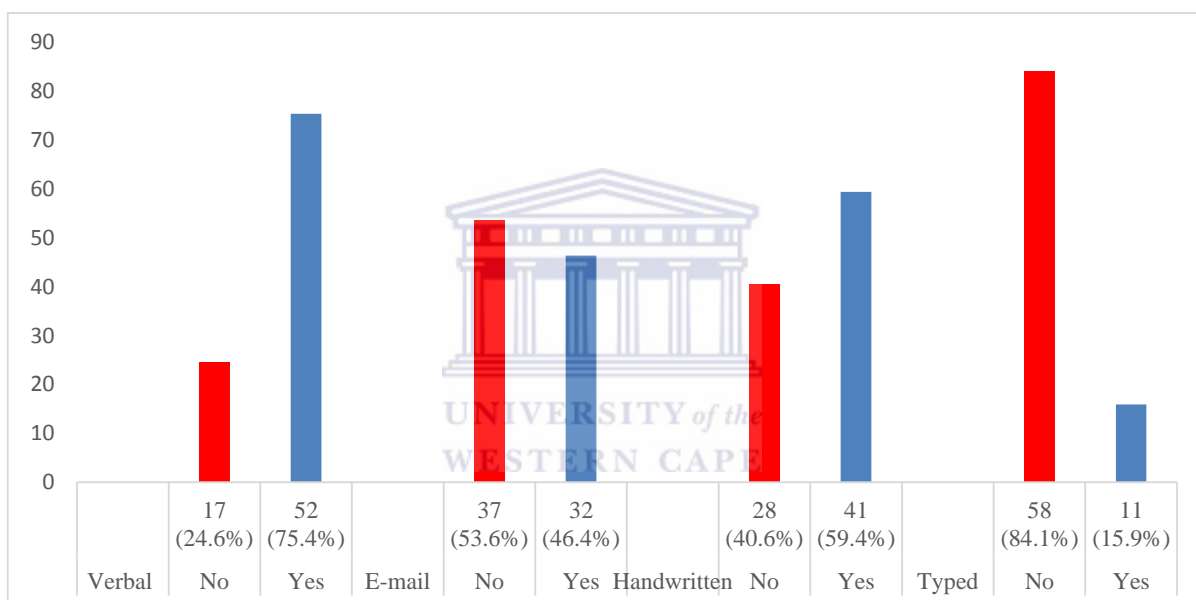


Figure 4.1: Communication of feedback

The students were assessed on the various modes of receiving written feedback (see figure 4.1). The responses showed that less than half of the participants, 46.4% (n=32), received feedback via e-mail, while more than half, 56.4% (n=41), received handwritten feedback, and only 15.9% (n=11) received typed feedback. Additionally, most of the respondents 75.4% (n=52) revealed that they receive feedback through verbal communication.

4.3.3. Focus of written feedback

Figure 4.2 gives an account of participants' responses regarding the focus of written feedback

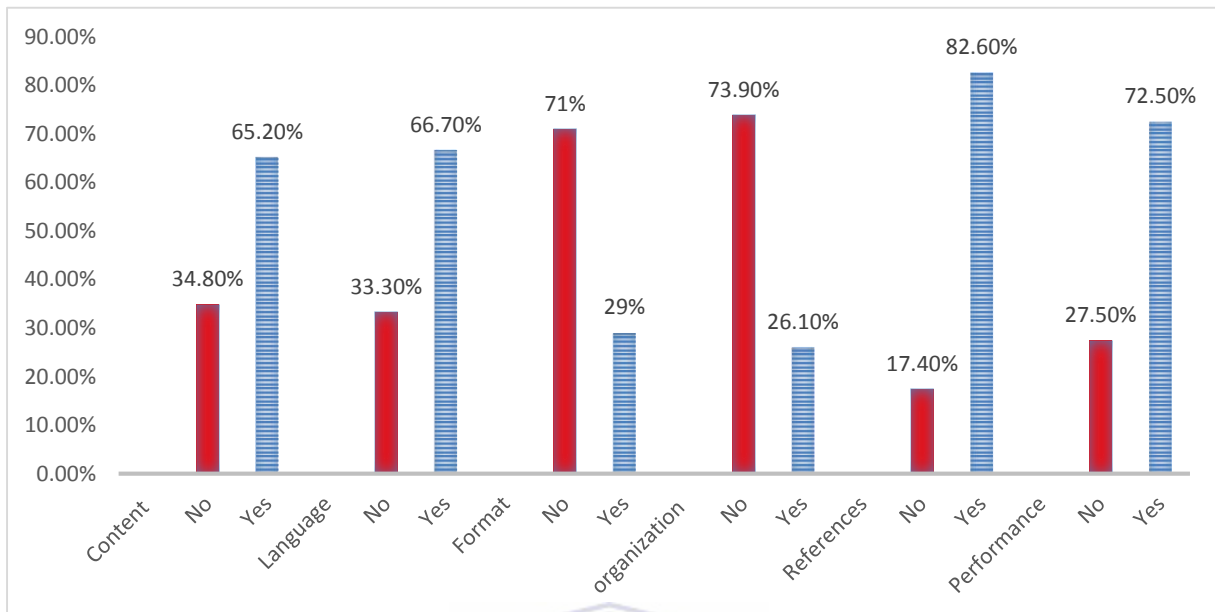


Figure 4.2: Focus of written feedback

The majority of the participants, 82.6% (n= 52), responded that the written feedback received focused on referencing, while over half, 72.5% (n=50), reported that the focus of written feedback was on performance. More than half, 66.7% (n=46), reported that the written feedback focused on language, while 65.2% (n=45) reported receiving written feedback that focused on the content of the paper (see Figure 4.2). It is important to note that a participant could select more than one focus of written feedback, when they responded to this question.

4.3.4. Improvement of performance

Table 4.3 gives account on participants' responses regarding improvement of their performance on learning outcomes on Fundamentals of Nursing.

Table 4.3: Improvement on performance

Variables		n=69 (%)
Management of persons' hygiene needs	No	13(18.8)
	Yes	56(81.2)
Interacting sensitively with individuals from diverse cultural groups	No	15(21.7)
	Yes	54(78.3)
Basic concepts on ethical and legal codes of nursing	No	15(21.7)
	Yes	54(78.3)
Providing health education	No	6(8.7)
	Yes	63(91.3)

The participants were assessed for improvement of performance on selected learning outcomes of one module (Fundamentals of nursing) after receiving written feedback from their lecturers. The findings showed that the majority, 91.3% (n=63), reported that their performance on providing health education had improved due to written feedback, while 81.2% (n=56) responded that management of persons' hygiene needs had improved due to written feedback received. Most of the participants, 78.3% (n=54), admitted that interacting sensitively with people from diverse cultural groups had improved, while 78.3% (n=54) responded that basic concepts on ethical and legal codes of nursing had improved due to written feedback.

4.3.5. Factors that prevent the use of written feedback

Table 4.4 depicts participants' responses on factors that prevent the use of written feedback.

Table 4.4: Factors preventing the use of written feedback

Variables		n= 69 (%)
Low grade received on assignment	No	53(76.8)
	Yes	16(23.2)
Negatively written comments	No	51(73.9)
	Yes	18(26.1)
Inability to understand the comments	No	46 (66.7)
	Yes	23 (33.3)
Disagreement with feedback	No	50 (72.5)
	Yes	19 (27.5)
Limited opportunity to clarify the feedback comments	No	39 (56.5)
	Yes	30 (43.5)
Delayed feedback	No	58 (84.1)
	Yes	11 (15.9)

Most students indicated more than one factor that prevented them from using written feedback (see Table 4.4). Less than half of the participants, 49% (n=34), indicated that achieving low grades and negatively written comments were common hindrances, while 43% (n=30) indicated that delayed, and disagreement with, feedback prevented its use. Less than half of the participants, 43.5% (n=30), responded that limited opportunities to clarify feedback comments was an obstacle and 33.3% (n=23) indicated that the inability to understand feedback comments prevented the use of written feedback.

4.4. Section C: Amount, Timing and Quality of Written Feedback

This section covers participants' accounts of the amount, timing and quality of written feedback that they received in Fundamentals of Nursing Science.

4.4.1. Amount and timing of written feedback

Table 4.5 depicts the mean participant rating for each of the items under the amount and timing of written feedback received in Fundamentals of Nursing Science.

Table 4.5: Mean ratings for amount and timing of written feedback

Amount and Timing of Written Feedback	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
There is hardly any feedback on my assignments and tests, when I get them back*.	69	1	5	4.12	.993
On assignment, I get enough written feedback on how I am doing.	69	2	5	4.25	.755
I receive written feedback within a 2 week period, after my assignment.	69	2	5	3.39	.911
Written feedback comes too late to be useful*.	69	2	5	3.88	.963
When I get things wrong or misunderstand them, I don't receive guidance in what to do about it*.	69	2	5	4.16	.779
I would learn more, if I received more written feedback*.	69	1	5	2.17	1.175

Question 16 (see Addendum 7) that asked the participants to rate from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' whether they received enough written feedback on assignments, had the highest mean of 4.25, while question 20 (see Addendum 7) that required a response on whether they would learn more if they received more written feedback, had the lowest mean rating of 2.17 (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.6 depicts the mean scale score for the amount and timing of written feedback.

Table 4.6: Mean scale score of Amount and timing of written feedback

Scale	n	M	Range		SD
			Min.	Max.	
Amount and timing	69	3.66	3.60	3.73	.525

The mean score for all the items on amount and timing of written feedback was 3.66 (see Table 4.6).

4.4.2. Quality of written feedback

Table 4.7 depicts the mean participant rating for each item on quality of written feedback for Fundamentals of Nursing Science.

Table 4.7: Mean participant rating for quality of written feedback

Quality of feedback	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Written feedback mainly tells me how well I am doing in relation to others*.	69	1	5	2.81	1.275
Written feedback shows me how to do better next time	69	3	5	4.52	.559
Written feedback helps me to understand things better	69	2	5	4.52	.633
I can hardly see from the written feedback what I need to do to improve my performance*.	69	1	5	3.32	1.207
Once I read the written feedback, I understand why I got the marks I received.	69	1	5	4.04	.812
I do not understand some of the written feedback that I receive*.	69	1	5	3.42	.991
Written feedback encourages me to improve my performance.	69	2	5	4.33	.657
I can easily read the written feedback received on assignment.	69	2	5	3.90	.910
Written feedback received on assignment is too brief to be helpful*.	69	1	5	2.09	.887
Written feedback on an assignment can be useful in subsequent assignments.	69	3	5	4.12	.654

The highest mean rating was 4.52 for questions 22 and 23 (see Addendum 7) that required responses to whether the written feedback received, presented ways to improve future assignments, and whether the written feedback aided better understanding and comprehension, respectively (see Table 4.7). Additionally, the lowest mean participant rating was 2.07 (see

Table 4.7) for question 29 (see Addendum 7) that required participants to rate, from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, whether the written feedback received, was perceived to be beneficial.

Table 4.8 depicts the mean scale score for the quality of written feedback for Fundamentals of Nursing Science.

Table 4.8: Mean scale score for quality of written feedback

Scale	n	M	Range		SD
			Min.	Max.	
Quality of feedback	69	3.71	3.67	3.75	.324

The mean scale score for all the items on quality of written feedback was 3.71 (see Table 4.8).

4.4.3. Overall mean score for Amount, timing, and quality of written feedback

Table 4.9 depicts the overall mean score for the amount and timing, and quality of written feedback on Fundamentals of Nursing Science.

Table 4.9: Overall mean scale score

Scale	n	M	Range		SD
			Min.	Max.	
Amount, timing and quality of feedback	69	3.68	3.64	3.73	.370

The overall mean scale score for the amount, timing and quality of written feedback was 3.68 (see Table 4.9).

4.5. Section D: Improvement of Written Feedback Process

This section covers suggestions that could improve the written feedback process of assignments and tests.

Table 4.10 gives an account of participants’ suggestions that could improve the written feedback process.

Table 4.10: Improvement on written feedback process

Variables		n=69(%)
Delivery of written feedback within a two week period	No	24 (34.8)
	Yes	45(65.2)
Understandable written feedback	No	14(20.3)
	Yes	55(79.7)
Written feedback that relates to assessment criteria/assignment guidelines	No	20(29)
	Yes	49(71)
Discussions between lecturers and students	No	15(21.7)
	Yes	54(78.3)
Written feedback delivered through an electronic approach	No	44(63.8)
	Yes	25(36.2)
Handwritten feedback	No	31(44.9)
	Yes	38(55.1)
Provision of written feedback based on students' preference	No	47(68.1)
	Yes	22(31.9)

Most of the participants, 79.7% (n=55), and 78.3% (n=54) suggested that understandable written feedback and discussions with lecturers on feedback could improve the written feedback process, respectively. The majority of the participants, 71% (n=49), responded that the written feedback process could greatly improve, if the written feedback related to the assessment criteria/assignment guidelines. More than half of the participants, 65.2% (n=45), responded that the delivery of written feedback within a two week period could also improve the written feedback process. In addition, 36.2% (n=25) suggested that written feedback delivered through an electronic medium could improve the written feedback process, while 55.1% (n=38) were of the opinion that handwritten feedback could improve the written feedback process. Finally, 30.9% (n=21) believed that written feedback that is based on students' preferences could improve the written feedback process. However, it is important to note that a participant could select more than one suggestion on improvement of the written feedback process.

4.6. Discussion of the findings

This section discusses the key findings of the study under the following headings; the practice of written feedback and factors that improve the written feedback process.

4.6.1. The Practice of Written Feedback

This sub-section is further sub-divided into the following sub-headings: Assessment criteria and written feedback; Communication of feedback; The focus of written feedback; factors that prevent the use of written feedback; Amount and timing of written feedback; and The quality of written feedback.

4.6.1.1. Assessment criteria and written feedback

The results of this current study revealed that most of the participants received assignment criteria or guidelines before their written assignments and that these assignment criteria reflected the feedback received. In addition, the majority of the participants received feedback that reflected the assessment criteria or guidelines. These findings are similar to those of a study by Khowaja et al. (2014), in which 96% (n=364) of the participants indicated that they received assignment criteria before written assignments and 84% (n=314) of the participants reported that the assignment criteria reflected the feedback that they received.

However, the findings in this current study contradicts the qualitative findings of a study conducted by Weaver (2006) with n=22 students who were studying Business and Design, which showed that the feedback received was not related to the assessment criteria. The results also indicated that students were given suggestions about what constituted a good work and not specific assessment criteria. In addition, the results of a study by Glover and Brown (2006) indicated that students viewed assessment criteria as vague, and did not understand how the assessment criteria related to feedback. The results of that study also indicated that students were not always given assessment criteria before an assignment.

The similarities between the results of this current study and the study of Khowaja et al. (2014) could be that the participants were nursing students, and their lecturers (nurse educators) valued the provision of assignment criteria before assignments because they focus on human science as opposed to management science (Business) and therefore ensured that the feedback given, reflected the assignment criteria.

4.6.1.2. Communication of feedback

The findings of this study indicated that all the students received feedback after assignments and tests. The results suggest that the students in this study knew what feedback was about and that the provision of feedback was a common practice. Similar findings were reported by Orsmond et al. (2005), in which all participants, 100% (n=16), reported that they receive feedback on their coursework. Additionally, the results indicated that feedback was communicated to the participants via various means, as the majority of the participants disclosed that they received feedback verbally, while more than half of the participants revealed that they received handwritten feedback, with more than a third responding that they received written feedback, via e-mail. These findings concur with a statement by Brown and Glover (2006) that students received feedback from their lecturers in a variety of forms, which could be computer-generated, orally, written and through grades or marks. Additionally, Orsmond et al. (2005) study in UK, indicated that feedback was received in various forms, as all participants (n=16) admitted receiving written feedback, and 3 participants also admitted to receiving verbal feedback.



4.6.1.3. The focus of written feedback

The findings of this current study revealed that the written feedback received, focused more on referencing, than content, language and organization, as disclosed by the majority of the participants. This finding contradicts the findings of a study by Brown and Glover (2006), in which a total of 4,428 feedback comments from 112 Open University students' assignments, as well as 577 feedback comments from 35 Shellam Hallam University students' assignments, after analysis, indicated that most feedback comments focused on content. Over half of the feedback comments analyzed at both, Open and Shellam Hallam, Universities focused on the use of the English language and omissions, and were classified under content, while the feedback comments on reference, was only 0.7%. Additionally, the findings of a study by Khowaja et al. (2014) indicated that most of the written feedback received, focused on content rather than references.

The differences in the results could be that the Brown and Glover (2006) and Khowaja et al. (2014) studies were not conducted in Africa, but rather in the UK and Asia, respectively. It is

unknown what the educational purpose of the use of feedback as applied by these two institutions used in these studies. According to literature (Brown & Glover, 2005; Giles, Gilbert & McNeil, 2014a; Weaver, 2006), written feedback is an important component of learning cycle and its purpose is to provide information about the gap between student present and desired performance, and help student to take an appropriate action to close the gap.

4.6.1.4. Factors that prevent the use of written feedback

Gibbs and Simpson (2004) state that when students do not receive feedback promptly, by the time it arrives, students might have moved on to a next topic and the feedback, therefore, becomes irrelevant. Surprisingly, only a few participants in this study reported that the delay in the provision of written feedback impeded its use. This result indicates that most of the students did not acknowledge delayed feedback as useless or irrelevant, and still made use of it. The reason for the feedback use, even when delayed, could be because participants in this study valued written feedback and its importance in improving their performance.

Additionally, participants in this current study selected more than one factor that prevented the use of written feedback, as less than a third of the participants indicated factors, such as the inability to understand feedback comments, low grades and negatively written comments. Additionally, less than half of the participants indicated that the limited opportunities to clarify feedback comments prevented the use thereof. These results are in line with the results of a study conducted by Giles et al. (2014b) in which 43.9% and 27.2% of a total of 362 participants, indicated that too much critique (negatively written comments) and unclear comments were hindrances in the use of feedback, respectively. The results of a qualitative study by Carless (2006) indicated that some barriers to the use of feedback by students included, low grades and the inability to understand and translate feedback comments.

4.6.2. The Amount, Timing and Quality of Written Feedback

This subsection discusses the amount, timing and quality of written feedback.

4.6.2.1. Amount and timing of written feedback

Gibbs and Simpson (2003) inform that on the Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ), a high score of quantity and timing of feedback indicates that students are satisfied with the amount and timing of feedback, while a low score indicates that students perceive feedback as

insufficient and too late to be useful. In this current study, the results showed a high mean score of 3.66, which indicated that students perceived that they were receiving enough feedback, fast enough (within a two week period) for it to be useful (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003). This finding, therefore, suggests that the students received feedback within the time frame set under the university policy on assessment, which is, two weeks. Additionally, this result indicates that the amount of feedback received was enough to be useful, supported learning and improved performance.

This result contradicts with the findings of a study by Weaver (2006), in which the majority of the participants 96% (n=21) in Business, and 75% (n=16) in Design, strongly agreed that the feedback provided by lecturers was not enough.

4.6.2.2. Quality of written feedback

The findings from this current study indicated that the participants perceived written feedback as understandable and useful, as the mean scale score (3.77) for quality of written feedback was high. However, one of the items (written feedback is too brief to be useful), under quality of written feedback, showed the lowest mean scale score of 2.07, which indicated that the participants did not perceive written feedback received, as detailed enough.

Some of these results differ from the NSS results on feedback that showed a lower rating than other course features since the survey started, and its items on feedback focused mainly on quality (Nicol, 2010). For example, in 2012, out of the 286 000 participants, the satisfaction of feedback was as follows: 53% were of the opinion that feedback assisted in clarification, 69%, that feedback was a detailed comment on work, and 65% were impressed with the promptness of feedback (University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, 2013)

The differences between the current study findings and the NSS results could be due to the fact that the participants for NSS were final-year students, while those of this current study were foundation student nurses. In addition, the participants in this study were in the foundation programme, and providing quality written feedback would help students to have a strong foundation, in order to succeed in the nursing degree programme. According to literature (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003), students are more likely to engage on written feedback to improve on their performance when they are provided with quality written feedback, which is sufficiently detailed and well understood.

4.6.3. Improvement of Written Feedback Process

This sub-section will be discussed under the following sub-headings: Delivery of written feedback within a two-week period; Assessment criteria relating to written feedback; Understandable written feedback; Discussions between lecturers and students; Methods of delivering written feedback; and Provision of feedback based on students' preferences.

4.6.3.1. Delivery of feedback within a two-week period

Feedback is timely, when it is received by students, while it still matters, and in time for them to act on it, in order to improve their performance (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). The results of this current study indicated that more than half of the participants suggested that delivery of written feedback, within a two week period, can improve the written feedback process. This result suggests that students perceived feedback received within a two-week period, which is the period stipulated in the university's policy on feedback, as timely (early enough) and useful for the improvement of their performance. This result is aligned with the findings of a study by Poulos and Mahony (2008), which concur that participants perceived timely feedback as effective, impacting their performance as it could be acted upon.

According to literature (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2002) the timing of feedback is crucial and therefore feedback should be timely, that is, should be delivered to students as early as possible after submission of assignment. However, these studies do not allude to the duration in which feedback needs to be delivered to students, which is vague because timely can be perceived differently to different students.

4.6.3.2. Understandable written feedback

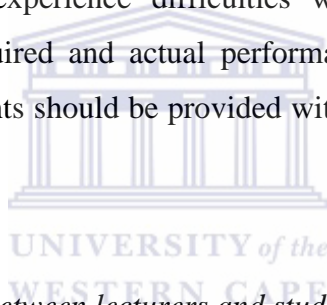
The results of this current research study indicated that most of the participants recognized the provision of understandable written feedback as a factor that could improve the written feedback process. This also suggests that students perceived understandable written feedback as an effective feedback practice, which resonates with a suggestion by Gibbs and Simpson (2004) – when feedback is understandable, feedback becomes effective and there is the possibility for students to act on it, in order to improve on their learning and future work.

The results from this current study also concur with the findings of a qualitative study by Rae and Cochrane (2008), in which most of the participants, overwhelmingly, expressed the need

to be provided with clear, constructive and informative feedback comments that they could easily interpret. Additionally, Rae and Cochrane (2008) also state that when feedback is understandable (meaningful explanation) it could encourage students to engage in reflection of their work and promote self-managed learning.

4.6.3.3. Assessment criteria relating to written feedback

In this current study, the majority of the participants suggested that assessment criteria relating to written feedback could improve the written feedback process. This finding concurs with a statement by Gibbs and Simpson (2004) – feedback that relates to the purpose of the assessment criteria is likely to improve students’ performance and learning. Gibbs and Simpson (2004), also suggest that students’ assessment criteria should be clear and comprehensible, so that students would understand the reasons behind a high or low grade. Similarly, Nicol and Macfarlene-Dick (2006) assert that when students are unable to connect the assessment criteria with the feedback, they will experience difficulties when attempting to evaluate the discrepancies between their required and actual performance. Nicol and Macfarlene-Dick (2006) further suggest that students should be provided with written documents that describe the assessment criteria.



4.6.3.4. Discussions between lecturers and students

In this current study, the results indicated that the majority of the participants considered discussions between lecturers and students on written feedback as vital to the improvement of the written feedback process. This result is aligned with the results of Rae and Cochrane (2008), in which focus group discussions with students (n=8) revealed that most students would welcome discussions with their lecturers, after they had received written feedback, in order to understand the written feedback and use it to improve their performance.

This current study’s result also concurs with an assertion by Price, Handley & Millar (2011) that students acknowledge the need for discussions with their lecturers as a way to fully engage with feedback. Price et al. (2011) added that dialogue (discussions) that support the relational dimension of feedback, creates scope for developing understanding and re-working staff-student relationships, engendering a high level of engagement. Additionally, Nicol and Macfarlene-Dick (2006) state that discussions with lecturers on feedback, assist students to

develop an understanding of the expectations and standards to be met, correct misunderstandings and obtain immediate responses to problems.

4.6.3.5. Methods of delivering written feedback

The results of this current study indicated that more than half of the participants suggested that handwritten feedback as a method of delivering feedback, which is a traditional approach, could improve the written feedback process. About a third of them suggested the electronic approach. The results are surprising, given the era in which these students are born, millennial generation (born after 1980), where students are exposed to and use digital technology.

These findings concur with a statement by Budge (2011) that in this era, where technology plays a major part in people's lives, there is a human aspect to feedback that is delivered via non-electronic means, which is highly valued by the students. Additionally, this current study's findings are in line with the results of a study conducted by Edeiken-Cooperman and Berenato (2014) which revealed that of the 236 participants, 50% preferred the electronic approach, while the remaining 50% preferred handwritten feedback.

The results of this current study, however, contradict the findings of Chang et al. (2012), in which more than half of the participants (68%) preferred the electronic approach, while 32% preferred handwritten feedback. This current study's findings also contradict the findings of Stone (2014), in which 65% of 75 students preferred the electronic approach. However, the reason for the contradiction could be because the participants in this current study do not frequently receive feedback delivered electronically. This statement is supported by the results of this current study that 59.4% (n= 41) of the participants received written feedback as handwritten, while 46.4% (n= 32) received feedback via e-mail.

4.6.3.6. Provision of written feedback based on students' preference

The findings of this current study showed that the participants did not perceive the provision of written feedback based on students' preference as a means of improving the written feedback process, as less than a third of the participants responded in affirmation. This result contradicts the result of a study by Giles et al. (2014), which suggested that students were pleased when questioned about their feedback preferences, and that the majority would select a specific type and amount of feedback, if given the opportunity. However, the reason for the differences of these results could be because students in this current study were assessed on their perception

of the provision of feedback, based on their feedback preference generally. The study of Giles et al. (2014) assessed students' perceptions of specific preferences, that is, the type and amount of feedback.

In summary, this research study described student nurses perception of written feedback on assessment. The findings of this research study has highlighted some effective written feedback practices and areas which needs to be improved in order that the role of written feedback, as improving students' performance can be actualized. According to Gibbs and Simpson (2004), written feedback becomes effective and is likely to improve students' performance if it is timely, sufficient, detailed enough, link to the purpose of the assessment criteria, understandable and support learning. Findings of this study indicated that students perceived written feedback received as timely (within 2 week period), understandable, in line with assessment criteria, supporting learning and useful to improve their performance. However, students indicated that written feedback was not detailed and the focus of written feedback was mostly on referencing. Students' also indicated that written feedback was communicated via handwritten (traditional) than via e-mail (electronic) and also students perceived handwritten feedback (traditional) as improving written feedback process than electronic feedback. Although, various studies (Stone, 2014; Watkins *et al.*, 2014) has alluded that students perceive electronic feedback as an effective feedback practice and recommended its use.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of this current study. The results of this study indicated that, after assessments, students received feedback that was related to the assessment criteria provided before the assessments. The findings of this study also revealed that written feedback on assignments, mostly focused on references, rather than content. Additionally, the identified hindrances to the use of feedback were as follows: the inability to understand written feedback; and the limited opportunities to clarify feedback comments. Finally, the results revealed that students perceived the amount, timing and quality of written feedback received, after assessment, as adequate and conducive to performance improvement.

Chapter Five (5) concludes the study, briefly discusses the limitations and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary on this study's findings, limitations, conclusion, as well as recommendations. The purpose of this study was to describe the student nurses perceptions of written feedback on assessment. After a detailed literature search, the researcher became aware that there has not been a study conducted on student nurses' perceptions of written feedback at the institution under study. In addition, there was limited information pertaining to this subject. The researcher, therefore, employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to address the research question of this study.

5.2. Summary of findings

5.2.1. Assessment criteria and written feedback

Nicol and Macfarlene-Dick (2006) assert that when students are unable to connect assessment criteria with feedback, they experience difficulty in evaluating the discrepancies between their required and actual performance. The majority of the participants in this study acknowledged that they had received assessment criteria before formative assessments, and that the assessment criteria related to the feedback received.

5.2.2. Communication of feedback

Students receive feedback from their lecturers in various forms, namely, orally, computer-generated, written or through grades and marks (Brown & Glover, 2006). All the participants in this study acknowledged that they had received written feedback after formative assessments. The feedback was mostly communicated verbally and/or written – via e-mail, handwritten or typed.

5.2.3. Focus of written feedback

The results of this study revealed that the written feedback comments mostly focused on referencing, rather than content. However, in previous studies (Brown & Glover, 2006; Khowaja et al., 2014) the results indicated that most written comments focused on content.

5.2.4. Factors that prevent the use of feedback

The participants in this study indicated that the inability to understand feedback, limited opportunities to clarify feedback and negatively written comments, were hindrances to the use of written feedback.

5.2.5. Amount and timing of written feedback

The results of this study showed a high mean score for the amount and timing of written feedback, which indicated that students perceived receiving plenty of feedback; early enough to be useful, aided the feedback process (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003).

5.2.6. Quality of written feedback

The overall mean scale score for quality was high, which indicated that the participants perceived the written feedback received, as understandable and useful as it explained the significance of good and bad grades; was free of misunderstandings; and offered hints on how to improve future assignments (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003). However, students did not perceive the written feedback as detailed enough.

5.3. Factors that can improve the written feedback process

The participants in this study acknowledged that the mode of delivering written feedback, namely, the traditional approach (handwritten) and the electronic approach (e-mail, electronic annotations on students' work) could improve the written feedback process. However, the majority of the participants perceived handwritten feedback as a better means of improving the written feedback process, as opposed to the electronic approach.

Additionally, more than half of the participants suggested that the provision of understandable written feedback, encouraging discussions between lecturers and students, assuring that the assessment criteria relates to the written feedback and delivering written feedback within a two (2) week period, were factors that could improve the written feedback process.

5.4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study.

5.4.1. Mode of delivering of written feedback

Lecturers should take advantage of using electronic approaches to deliver written feedback. Although delivering feedback electronically might have its own disadvantages, it has been recommended as the best suited means to meet students needs (Rae & Cochrane, 2008). However, students do not often receive their written feedback electronically, and, therefore, do not have much experience with it.

5.4.2. Focus of written feedback

Nicol and Macfarlene-Dick (2006) suggest that to increase the quality of their feedback, lecturers must provide corrective advice to students, and not just a record of strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, lecturers need to highlight areas for improvement, when providing feedback to students (Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick, 2006). It is, therefore, important that lecturers provide written feedback, based on the individual students' needs, instead of focusing on a specific aspect of formative assessment for all students. Also, written feedback should contain advice that students can use to improve their performance and that will encourage them to be self-regulated learners (Nicol and Macfarlene-Dick, 2006).

5.4.3. Discussions between lecturers and students on written feedback

Students acknowledge the need for discussions with their lecturers to fully engage with feedback (Price et al., 2011). Lecturers should create a rapport with their students and be accessible for discussions on written feedback, after they had been delivered. However, large class sizes might make individual discussions with students difficult, therefore, students could be placed in tutorial groups to discuss their feedback collectively, and lecturers could address the groups, rather than the individuals.

5.4.4. Future studies

A qualitative research study should be conducted on lecturers' and students' perceptions of written feedback, on assessment, at the same institution under study.

5.5. Limitations

This study focused only on foundation nursing students registered for the year 2015, and, therefore, cannot be generalized as all student nurses' perceptions of written feedback.

5.6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to describe student nurses' perceptions of written feedback after assessment. The results indicated that students received feedback after assessments that related to the assessment criteria. In addition, students acknowledged that the amount, timing and quality of written feedback positively aided the feedback process. However, there is the need to provide written feedback that improves the performance of students and meets their needs. Finally, the need to provide feedback electronically has been strongly recommended.



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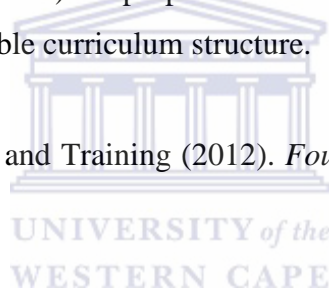
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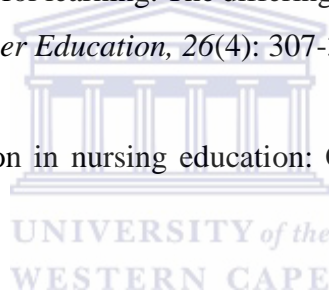
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ADDENDUMS

Addendum 1: Ethics letter



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

OFFICE OF THE DEAN DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

08 September 2015

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:
Ms A Amuah (School of Nursing)

Research Project: Student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape.

Registration no: 15/6/15

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Josias'.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

Addendum 2: Letter seeking permission from Deputy Registrar

33 Charl Uys Street
Parow Valley
7500.

Deputy Registrar
University of the Western Cape
Bellville, Cape Town.

Dear Madam,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

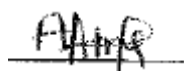
I am a postgraduate student, doing my Masters in Nursing Education. I wish to conduct a research study with the Foundation students at School of Nursing, University of the Western Cape in order to successfully complete my Masters' degree. The title for the research study is "Student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape".

Ethics approval to conduct the research study has been obtained (registration number: 15/6/15). Data will be collected by administering questionnaire and participants will not be forced to participate in the research study. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured throughout the study. This study will provide useful information on students' perception of written feedback after assessment and also assist lecturers to develop strategies and policies which will motivate their students to actively engage on written feedback.

Please find copies of proposal, ethics clearance letter, questionnaire, informed consent and information sheet for your scrutiny.

Hope to hear from you soon. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,



Abigail Amuah.

(E-mail address: 3474615@myuwc.ac.za).

Addendum 3: Permission granted to conduct study at the University

Re: Fwd: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Inbox x



Ahmed Shaikjee <ashaikjee@uwc.ac.za>

Sep 14 ☆



to me ▾

Dear Abigail

We have received your submission to conduct research at UWC and you are approved to do so in terms of conducting your survey. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards

Dr Ahmed Shaikjee

Manager: Student Administration

Student Administration – Office of the Registrar - University of the Western Cape

Tel : +27 959 2110/2295

Fax : +27 959 2345

Email : ashaikjee@uwc.ac.za

mamos@uwc.ac.za (Admin Assistant)

Student Administration

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17, Bellville 7535, South Africa



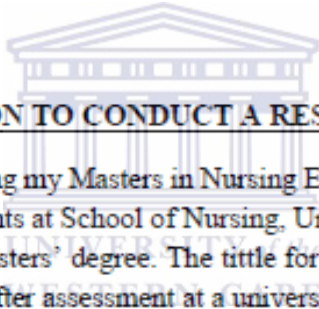
FROM DEED TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Addendum 4: Permission letter from the Head of School of Nursing

33 Charl Uys Street
Parow Valley
7500.

The Director
School of Nursing
University of the Western Cape
Bellville, Cape Town.

Dear Madam,



PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

I am a postgraduate student, doing my Masters in Nursing Education. I wish to conduct a research study with the Foundation students at School of Nursing, University of the Western Cape in order to successfully complete my Masters' degree. The title for the research study is "Student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape".

Ethics approval to conduct the research study has been obtained (registration number: 15/6/15). Data will be collected by administering questionnaire and participants will not be forced to participate in the research study. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured throughout the study. This study will provide useful information on students' perception of written feedback after assessment and also assist lecturers to develop strategies and policies which will motivate their students to actively engage on written feedback.

Please find copies of ethics clearance letter, questionnaire, informed consent and information sheet for your scrutiny.

Hope to hear from you soon. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,



Abigail Amuah

Addendum 5: Letter granting permission to conduct the study at School of Nursing



SCHOOL OF NURSING
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271
E-mail: kjooste@uwc.ac.za

PERMISSION LETTER

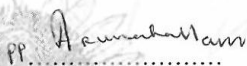
3 November 2015

Mrs A Amuah 3474615

Title of Research Project: Student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape





You are granted permission to conduct your study at the School of Nursing. You have to arrange the data collection with the appropriate level coordinator(s) for a convenient time. During this phase you have to adhere to the ethical principles outlined in your study.





I wish you success with your studies.




PP
Prof K Jooste
Director
School of Nursing

Addendum 6: Permission from the authors to use questionnaire

Permission  Inbox x   


 **ABIGAIL AMUAH** <3474615@myuwc.ac.za> Mar 19   





to Tansy.jessop 


Dear Mr. Jessop,

I am currently doing my Masters in Nursing Education in University of the Western Cape. Please, i will like to use the Assessment Experience Questionnaire by Dr. Gibbs for my research study on written feedback. Please i have been told that Dr. Gibbs is retired. Please can you help me in getting permission to use the scale in the questionnaire. Thank you.

Best regards,
Abigail Amuah.



 **Tansy.Jessop** <Tansy.Jessop@winchester.ac.uk> Mar 19   

to me 

Dear Abigail

You are welcome to use it. It is open source. We are developing a revised one but it's not quite ready.

From a fellow Western Capey!

Tansy

*Dr Tansy Jessop
Head of Learning and Teaching
TESTA Project Leader
<https://j.mp/TansyJessop>
www.testa.ac.uk
www.fastech.ac.uk
seed-research-centre.com
01962-826439
Skype call: Tansy.Sharpe*

Addendum 7: Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape.

Questionnaire code: **Date of collection:**

Section A: Demographic data

1. Your sex/gender Male Female
2. Your age Please specifyyears
3. Your nationality South African others, please specify
4. Your home language
 English French Afrikaans IsiXhosa other, please specify.....
5. What was the medium of instruction in the school you attended before enrolling in nursing?
 English French Afrikaans IsiXhosa other, please specify.....
6. Based on your academic performance how would you rate yourself as a student?
 Excellent Good Average Below average

Section B: Practice of written feedback

7. Do you receive assignment guidelines or assessment criteria from lecturers before your written assignments or test on fundamentals of nursing science? Yes No
8. Do you receive feedback after assignments and test? Yes No
9. If yes to 8, how is it communicated to you? Please tick (√) yes or no

	Yes	No
Verbal		
Written		
Email		
Handwritten		
Typed		

Other.....

10. Does the feedback received reflect what is in the assignment guidelines or assessment criteria?

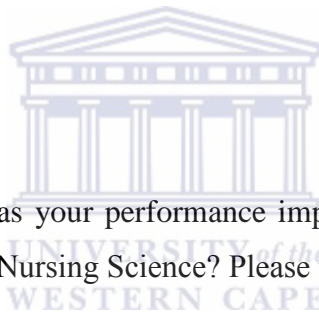
- Yes No

11. How often do you receive written feedback from your lecturers?

- Always Sometimes Never

12. On which of these categories do you receive written feedback on assignments and test? (You can tick more than one)

- Content of the paper (e.g. quality and depth of information)
- Language (Grammar /Spelling error/ Organization of thought)
- Format/ Style
- Organization of information
- References
- Performance



13. On which of the following has your performance improved due to written feedback on assignments for Fundamentals of Nursing Science? Please tick (✓) yes or no

	Yes	No
Management of persons' hygiene needs		
Interact sensitively with individuals from diverse cultural groups		
Basic concepts on ethical and legal codes of nursing		
Providing health education		

14. What factors prevent you from using the feedback you receive about your assignments or test? (You can tick more than one which seems true to you)

- Low grade received on the assignment
- Negatively written comments
- Students' inability to understand the comments

- Disagreement with feedback
- Limited opportunity to clarify the feedback comments
- Delayed feedback
- Others, please specify.....

Section C: Amount, time and quality of written feedback

Please answer every item in this section. Tick (✓) the appropriate (Box) to show your response to written feedback on Fundamentals of Nursing Science.

No	Amount and time	Responses				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	There is hardly any feedback on my assignments and test when I get them back					
16	On assignment, I get enough written feedback on how I am doing					
17	I receive written feedback within a 2 week period after my assignment					
18	Written feedback comes too late to be useful					
19	When I get things wrong or misunderstand them I don't receive much guidance in what to do about it.					
20	I would learn more if I received more written feedback					
	Quality					
21	Written feedback mainly tells me how well I am doing in relation to others					

22	Written feedback shows me how to do better next time					
23	Written feedback helps me to understand things better					
24	I can hardly see from the written feedback what I need to do to improve my performance					
25	Once I read the written feedback I understand why I got the marks I received					
No		Responses				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26	I do not understand some of the written feedback that I receive					
27	Written feedback encourages me to improve my performance					
28	I can easily read the written feedback received on assignment					
29	Written feedback received on assignment is brief to be helpful					
30	Written feedback on an assignment can be useful in subsequent assignments					

Section D

31. Which of the following suggestions do you think can improve written feedback process on assignment and test? (You can tick more than one suggestion)

- Delivery of written feedback within a two week period after assignment and test
- Understandable written feedback
- Written feedback which relates to assessment criteria/assignment guidelines

- Discussions between lecturers and students on written feedback
 - Written feedback delivered through an electronic approach (e.g. E-mail, Word-processed feedback forms, electronic annotations)
 - Handwritten feedback
 - Provision of written feedback base on students' preferences
- Others, please specify

Thank you for participating in this study.



Addendum 8: Consent form



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2271, Fax: 27 21-959 2274
E-mail: amaamuah@yahoo.com

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

Addendum 9: Information sheet



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2271, Fax: 27 21-959 2274
E-mail: amaamuah@yahoo.com

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Abigail Amuah at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are registered for the Bachelor of Nursing Foundation programme at the University of the Western Cape in 2015. The purpose of this research project is to describe student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment at a university in the Western Cape.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

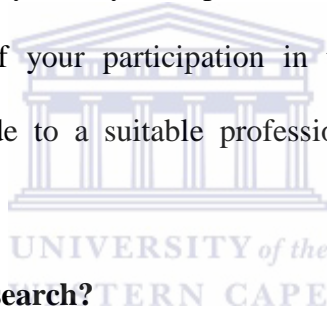
You will be required to complete a questionnaire will be administered to you by the researcher at the end of a class session at the School of Nursing, University of the Western Cape. It takes 15minutes to complete the questionnaire and it will be collected after you have completed. The questionnaire has four (4) sections; section A: Demographic data, section B: Practice of written feedback, section C: Time and quality of written feedback and section D: an open-ended question on how written feedback can be improved.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

Your identity and personal information will be kept confidential. To help ensure confidentiality, your name will not be included in the questionnaire and a code will be placed on the questionnaire. The questionnaire will not contain information which will identify you. The completed questionnaires will be secured and locked in the cabinet and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the questionnaires. Also, a password will be assigned to computerized files containing data.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study. All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional at the university for further assistance or intervention.



What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of student nurses perception of written feedback after assessment in higher education institution.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Abigail Amuah, at School of Nursing at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Abigail Amuah at:

Address: 33 Charl Uys Street, Parow Valley, 7500

Telephone number: +27743574322

E-mail address: amaamuah@yahoo.com

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department:

Prof. Karien Jooste

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Telephone: 021-959 2274

E-mail: kjooste@uwc.ac.za



Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences:

Prof José Frantz

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

E-mail: chs-deanoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

Addendum 10: Editorial Certificate

30 November 2015

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Editorial Certificate

This letter serves to prove that the thesis listed below was language edited for proper English, grammar, punctuation, spelling as well as overall layout and style by myself, publisher/proprietor of Aquarian Publications, a native English speaking editor.

Thesis title

STUDENT NURSES' PERCEPTIONS OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK
AFTER ASSESSMENT AT A UNIVERSITY IN THE
WESTERN CAPE

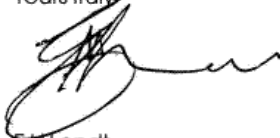
Author

Abigail Amuah

The research content or the author's intentions were not altered in any way during the editing process, however, the author has the authority to accept or reject my suggestions and changes.

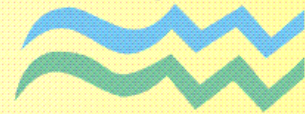
Should you have any questions or concerns about this edited document, I can be contacted at the listed telephone and fax number, e-mail address or website.

Yours truly,



E H Londt
Publisher/Proprietor

Idea Corporation t/a



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