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Students use of exemplars to support academic writing in higher education: An integrative review

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Abstract

Background: Timely and meaningful feedback is essential to promote active learning and student engagement with learning. However, achieving this remains elusive, particularly in undergraduate nursing programs that admit large student cohorts. One strategy to provide meaningful *en masse* feedback is to provide feed-forward support by using exemplars. To date, there has been limited evaluation of the effectiveness of this feedback strategy.

Objective: To review the impact of using exemplars as a feedback strategy to support student academic writing in higher education.

Data Sources and Review Method: A systematic search of electronic databases for original research papers published between 2000 and 2017 that used exemplars to support student's academic writing in higher education. An integrative review methodology was utilised to identify emerging themes.

Results: Ten papers met the inclusion criteria, revealing four themes; 1) exemplars as a tool for structuring and preparing assessment activities, 2) appraising exemplars provided as a teaching and learning activity, 3) the impact of exemplar use on academic performance, and 4) students' satisfaction of exemplars as a learning tool.

Conclusion: Despite the diverse approaches in the use of exemplars, this review highlighted that students value exemplars as a teaching tool. However, the benefits of exemplar use were not always reflected in students' academic performance. Further research is required, particularly in a nursing context, to understand the impact of exemplars on student learning.

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The Use of Exemplars to Support Academic Writing: An Integrative Review

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Exemplars, annotated exemplars, feedback, structure, peer review, tertiary students

Introduction

Assessment is an essential activity in higher education, as it provides evidence of student learning (Hernández, 2012). However, despite being provided with the same instruction, guidance and assessment support, undergraduate nursing students may have a different interpretation of what is required to successfully complete assessment tasks (William, 2011). Such differing interpretations can, subsequently, impact on assessment outcomes.

Assessment in higher education is commonly classified into two broad categories, formative and summative. Whilst formative assessments are used to scaffold learning, summative assessments measure academic achievement (Crisp, 2012). Formative assessment encourages learning as students engage with feedback to self-assess and identify areas to improve (Crisp, 2012). Formative assessments engage students and facilitate them to take ownership of their learning, they can also be diagnostic, as they enable students to reflect (Cox, Irby, & Epstein, 2007), identify gaps in knowledge and correct mistakes (Fluckiger, Vigil, Pasco, & Danielson, 2010). Formative assessments are also used by academic staff to guide their teaching and monitor if they have achieved planned student learning outcomes (Hwang & Chang, 2011). Hence, there is a need to include both formative and summative assessments to ensure nursing students engage with feedback provided to learn beyond what is required to pass and also to consider their overall learning needs (Cox et al., 2007; Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell, & Litjens, 2008).

Feedback is a core element of formative assessment (Fluckiger et al., 2010). Timely and meaningful feedback promotes active learning, deeper understanding and scaffolds student learning (Carless, 2006; Nicol, 2010). Despite its potential value to learning and academic performance (Cathcart, Greer, & Neale, 2013; Yorke, 2003), provision of timely feedback remains one of the most challenging areas from the nursing students' perspective (Scoles, Huxham, & McArthur, 2012).

Using a feed-forward approach is one strategy to provide timely, meaningful and focussed feedback to nursing students. Feed-forward is not a new concept, feed-forward approaches have previously been reported in the literature (Duncan, 2007; Robson, Leat, Wall, & Lofthouse, 2012; Scoles et al., 2012). Feed-forward has been defined as a process where students attempt an assessment task, receive feedback and then apply the new understanding to subsequent assessment items (Carless, 2006; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012). A feed-forward approach using exemplars allows students to make sense of the feedback and how it should be applied to improve academic writing (Quinton & Smallbone, 2010; Rae & Cochrane, 2008). Exemplars are an important tool for clarifying expected standards and quality of work (Newlyn & Spencer, 2010). Students highly value the use of annotated exemplars (Handley & Williams, 2011) and believe them to be an effective mechanism to scaffold student learning because they provide an example of a desired response and information to guide the formation of the assessment item (Bruno & Santos, 2010). For this reason, to fully understand the impact of exemplars to support student's academic writing, it is necessary to review the literature.

The Review

Aim

This paper seeks to critically review student perceptions of exemplars and the impact of using exemplars as a feedback strategy to support academic writing in higher education.

Method

The integrative review process described by Whitemore and Knafl (2005) was used to guide this review.

Search Strategy

A three phased search strategy was utilised, consisting of an initial structured electronic database search, followed by searching the reference lists of identified papers, as well as hand searching in relevant journals. The database search sought to identify primary research papers reporting the use of annotated exemplars to support students' academic writing published in the English language between 2000 and 2017. CINAHL, Education Research Complete + ERIC, Informit, ProQuest Central, Scopus, Taylor & Francis and Web of Science databases were searched using search terms including; Feedforward; Feed forward; feeding forward; strategie*; higher education; annotated exemplars; video feedback; interactive feedback and individualised feedback. Papers were excluded if they were not original research, did not evaluate an annotated exemplar intervention, if participants were not studying at a degree level or higher in a tertiary setting, or were duplicate articles of the same research project.

Search outcome

This search initially yielded 55 potentially relevant papers (Figure 1). After checking for relevance and following removal of duplicates, 33 papers remained. A further 20 papers

were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. This left 13 papers which were subjected to full review by two authors. After this review, 10 papers were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria (see Figure 1).

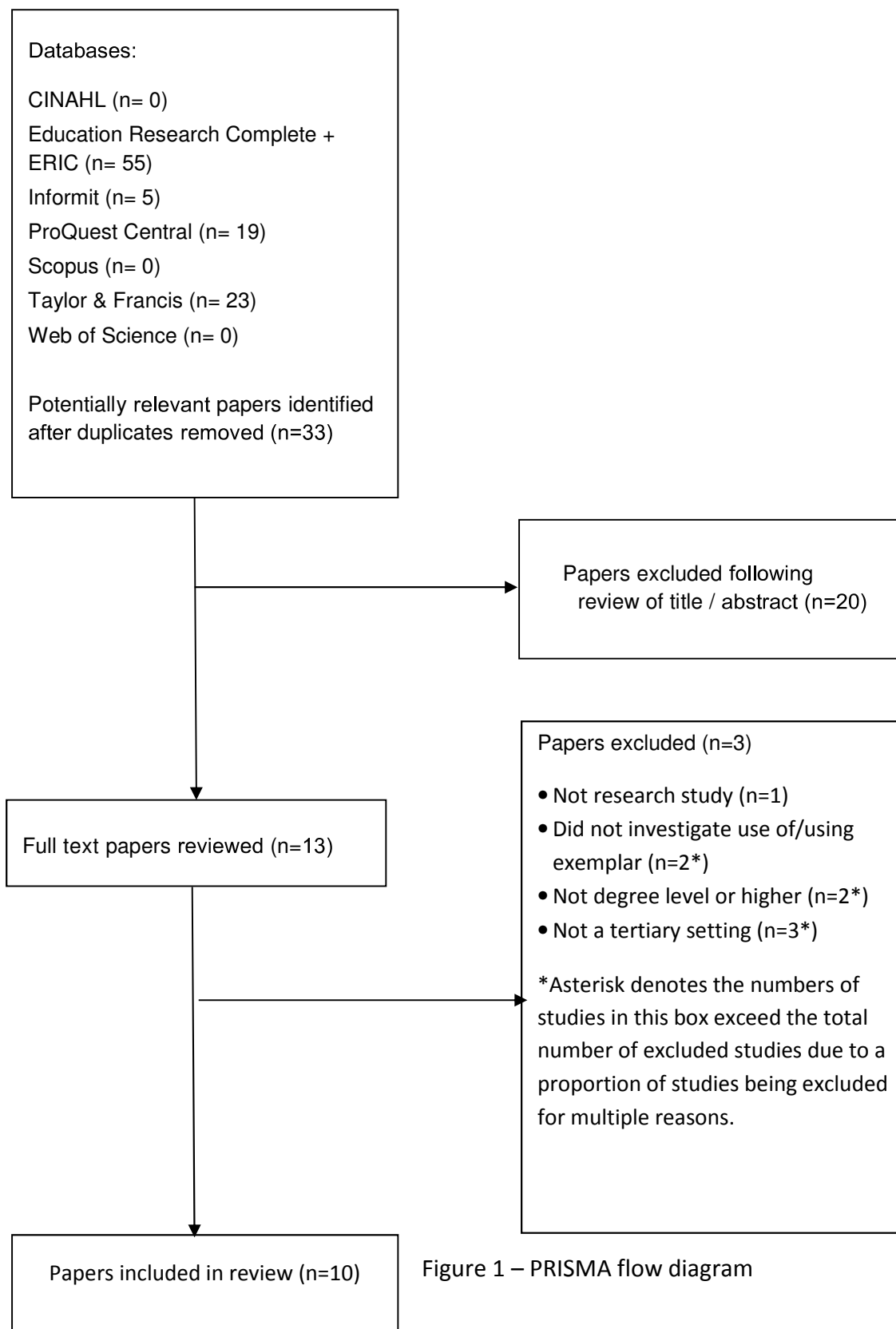


Figure 1 – PRISMA flow diagram

Quality Appraisal

The CASP (2006) template was used to systematically appraise the quality of identified papers. The tool facilitated appraisal of the clarity of the aim, appropriateness of the research design, methodology and data collection and rigour of the data analysis (Table 1). Additionally, the tool revealed whether ethical considerations were addressed, a statement of finding was included and that the research was viable (CASP, 2006).

Table 1. CASP Analysis

Citation	Aim	Methodology	Design	Sample / Recruitment	Data Collection	Relationships	Ethical Issues	Data Analysis	Statement of Findings	How Valuable is Research?
Bell et al. (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Handley and Williams (2011)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Hendry et al. (2016)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Hendry and Anderson (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hendry and Jukic (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hendry, Bromberger, and Armstrong (2011)	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Newlyn and Spencer (2010)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scoles et al. (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wimshurst and Manning (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Yucel et al. (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

Data abstraction & synthesis

Data were abstracted from each paper into a summary table (Table 2). Once extracted these data were examined for common themes using a process of thematic analysis similar informed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Each paper was reviewed and, once familiar with the data, the researchers independently generated initial codes. This process continued identifying themes and subthemes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Once this process was

completed the authors collaborated to discuss their findings and achieve a consensus to reduce subjective bias.

Results

Methodological features

All 10 included studies originate from either the United Kingdom ($n=3$; 30%) or Australia ($n=7$; 70%). Included studies drew on a combination of undergraduate and postgraduate tertiary cohorts, enrolled in a range of diverse disciplines. Despite the diversity of disciplines, the search strategies used failed to yield any articles from nursing education. As can be seen in Table 2, sample sizes varied significantly, ranging from 50 (Hendry & Anderson, 2013) to more than 1100 participants (Yucel, Bird, Young, & Blanksby, 2014). Six studies used exemplars only (Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry, Armstrong, & Bromberger, 2012; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Hendry, White, & Herbert, 2016; Scoles et al., 2012; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012) and four annotated the exemplars to support students' preparation for assessment (Bell, Mladenovic, & Price, 2013; Bird & Yucel, 2013; Handley & Williams, 2011; Newlyn & Spencer, 2010).

Four key themes emerged from the included papers, namely; 1) exemplars as a tool for structuring and preparing assessment activities, 2) appraising exemplars provided as a teaching and learning activity, 3) the impact of exemplar use on academic performance, and 4) students' satisfaction of exemplars as a learning tool.

Exemplars as a tool for structuring and preparing assessment tasks

Five papers (50%) reported that participants believed the use of exemplars assisted them to improve the structure of their assessment tasks (Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry et al., 2012; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Hendry et al., 2016; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012). These studies described a variety of different assessment tasks, including examination answers

(Hendry & Jukic, 2014), essays (Hendry & Anderson, 2013), letters (Hendry et al., 2012) critical reviews (Hendry et al., 2016) and case studies (Wimshurst & Manning, 2012). Additionally, students found using exemplars showed them how to better present their information (Wimshurst & Manning, 2012) and when coupled with the teacher's explanation, provided them with a clearer understanding of expected standards of work (Bell et al., 2013; Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry et al., 2016; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012).

Hendry et al. (2012) reported that participants rated the exemplars higher than the marking sheet for guidance. Despite the positive impact of exemplars on the structure of work, two other studies (Bell et al., 2013; Handley & Williams, 2011) found that exemplars and associated resources, such as grade descriptors and marking criteria were not useful in structuring their task as they were 'restrictive' and 'subjective' or limited creativity (Hendry et al., 2016).

Appraising exemplars provided as a teaching and learning activity

Using exemplars as a teaching and learning activity to prepare for assessment tasks received mixed responses. Five studies (50%) explored the impact of students appraising exemplars (Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Hendry et al., 2016; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012; Yucel et al., 2014). These studies reported various strategies including, student appraisal of exemplars only (Wimshurst & Manning, 2012), group appraisal of exemplars and marking classes which required students to discuss and/or determine model answers (Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Hendry et al., 2016; Yucel et al., 2014). Whilst the specific techniques varied between papers, all studies required students to either appraise a peer's work or critically appraise an exemplar.

Appraising exemplars in a class environment led to an increase in group participation (Wimshurst & Manning, 2012), facilitated students understanding of the variable opinions held about exemplar quality (Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry et al., 2016; Yucel et al., 2014) and facilitated learning from each other's errors (Yucel et al., 2014). These class discussion exercises also clarified criteria and/or standards (Handley & Williams, 2011; Yucel et al., 2014) and were helpful to students in improving their own assessment submissions (Hendry et al., 2016; Yucel et al., 2014).

Not all student responses to the use of exemplars were favourable. Whilst appraising exemplars in a class environment was a positive experience for many, some students reported that it was challenging because student interpretations of the quality of exemplars differed (Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Hendry et al., 2016). Yucel et al. (2014) also reported that some participants found these exercises were unhelpful. These participants were also dissatisfied with the quality or quantity of the feedback given, believed their peer was inexperienced or were disinterested in the activity itself.

Impact of exemplar use on academic performance

An improvement in assessment grade is the best indicator of the positive impact of a teaching and learning intervention. However, only six studies (60%) reported an impact upon the grade awarded for the assessment task as an outcome measure (Handley & Williams, 2011; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Newlyn & Spencer, 2010; Scoles et al., 2012; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012; Yucel et al., 2014). Four studies (40%) concluded that exemplars had a positive impact on grades for both undergraduate and post graduate students (Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Newlyn & Spencer, 2010; Scoles et al., 2012; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012). Yucel et al. (2014) found that there was no improvement when exemplars were used for the first time. In fact, students who were provided with exemplars performed

significantly worse than those who were not. However, there was a noted improvement in subsequent assessment tasks; more participants who used the intervention scored higher marks for the second report than those who did not use the exemplar for their first assessment task (Yucel et al., 2014). Handley and Williams (2011) found that there was no increase in grades awarded following use of the exemplar.

Students' satisfaction of exemplars as a learning tool

Eight studies (80%) reported the satisfaction of exemplars from the student perspective (Bell et al., 2013; Handley & Williams, 2011; Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry et al., 2012; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Hendry et al., 2016; Scoles et al., 2012; Yucel et al., 2014). Overall students perceived annotated exemplars as useful when used as a learning tool for class discussions facilitated by a tutor because they improved confidence and developed critical thinking skills (Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry et al., 2012; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Scoles et al., 2012). However, the perceived benefits varied somewhat between the studies.

Students found exemplars useful because they provided standards and clarified expectations (Bell et al., 2013; Yucel et al., 2014). However, in two studies the findings were mixed, a small proportion of participants reported they found annotated exemplars not useful (Bell et al., 2013; Handley & Williams, 2011).

Discussion

This review has shown that, in higher education, exemplars are an important tool for clarifying expected standards of assessment (Hendry & Anderson, 2013; Hendry et al., 2012; Hendry & Jukic, 2014; Hendry et al., 2016; Wimshurst & Manning, 2012). Using exemplars as a learning tool is further enhanced when supported by class discussion because it allows for clarification of criteria and standards (Handley & Williams, 2011). Students used exemplars

for a variety of reasons but many used them to provide structure or as a template for the assessment task; providing specific information on the layout and structure before they started writing the assessment (Li & De Luca, 2014). In addition to providing a guide or framework the review highlighted that participants believed they had a clearer understanding of the topic when teachers discussed the exemplars with students (Hendry et al., 2016). This is supported by To and Carless (2015) who describe how discussion was helpful for students to support understanding of the task requirements.

This review has demonstrated that exemplar appraisal activities lead to an increase in engagement with the task and subsequently group participation. This is similar to the finding of Nicol (2010) who reported greater engagement with a task when peer to peer feedback is carried out. Peer discussion is useful in allowing students to generate ideas and negotiate meanings (To & Carless, 2015). Exemplars as a learning tool has the potential to improve a student's confidence and critical thinking skills but this depends on other factors, for example, the way the teacher explains how to use exemplars to critically evaluate their work or how the exemplar is used by the student (Sadler, 2010). Peer feedback and appraisal activities are also important in practice disciplines such as nursing, because they prepare participants for feedback and performance management processes in the workplace (Agius & Wilkinson, 2014).

Mixed findings of improvement in academic performance highlighted in this review may indicate that the use of exemplars is only one strategy and may not be the solution for all students. Bell et al. (2013) reported a small number of students believed exemplars may stultify creativity because they were too restrictive. Whilst Yucel et al. (2014) found participants who used exemplars did not demonstrate an improvement in academic performance the first year, both Yucel et al. (2014) and Newlyn and Spencer (2010) found

those who used the exemplars for the first assessment task performed better in the following assessment task than those who did not. This is not dissimilar to another study by Vardi (2013) who investigated the impact of feedback using exemplars. Vardi (2013) found there was no demonstrated improvement in grades when participants first used exemplars but grades did improve the following year. Further, these results differ from Wimshurst and Manning (2012) who noted an improvement in report marks awarded to students who used the exemplar. Furthermore, Scoles et al. (2012) and Wimshurst and Manning (2012) cited many participants who used exemplars achieved a higher mark; however, this increase was not represented across all assessment tasks, only those where the exemplar was provided, thereby questioning the transferability of skill to other assessment tasks and subjects (Wimshurst & Manning, 2012).

Traditional approaches of assessment feedback remain limited in effectiveness for a variety of reasons; students do not read feedback and if they do, they do not know how to optimise its use (Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010). Furthermore, students also may misconstrue feedback, particularly when insufficient explanation for the feedback was provided, or misconstrued the intended feedback (Nicol, 2010). This review underscores the usefulness of exemplars as a tool to enhance students' understanding of assessment requirements through the provision of concrete examples and elaboration of marking guides (Hendry & Anderson, 2013).

Implications and recommendations for Nursing Education

This review demonstrates that despite the limited evidence around the use of exemplars in higher education in general and nursing education specifically, students' value exemplars and using exemplars can positively impact upon academic performance. As such it highlights

a gap in our understanding of the potential for exemplars to be used to support improved assessment outcomes.

Limitations

This review used a systematic search strategy developed in conjunction with a University Librarian. However the lack of consistent terminology in the topic area hampered the search process. It is unclear why all papers emanate from the UK and Australia, this geographical constraint may impact on the generalisability of findings. The variation between papers in terms of the course disciplines, level of study and types of assessment items makes comparison difficult. The absence of nursing education research in the area means that consideration needs to be given to the transferability of findings from other disciplines into nursing education. Additionally, the convenience sampling, various methods of measuring the impact of the intervention and use of non-validated data collection tools impacts on the validity of findings.

Conclusion

This integrative review critically appraises the available literature of the use of exemplars in higher education. Despite the paucity of available research to provide evidence of the effectiveness of and students' engagement with exemplars, this integrative review has identified that exemplars are potentially an important tool for scaffolding student learning. Additionally, the review highlights the value placed on exemplars by students as they give students confidence to write better answers and clarify marker expectations. Whilst students value exemplars, success measured by improvement in grade awarded was mixed. It is unclear if this is because the intervention was not effective or because it was not implemented effectively. Therefore, further research is required to determine the impact of using exemplars as a feedback strategy to support nursing students' academic writing in higher education.

Table 2. Summary of Included Studies

Citation	Country	Sample	Assessment / Intervention	Method & Data Collection	Results	Limitations & Comments
Bell et al. (2013)	UK	119 (45% of enrolled students) of 1 st year UG accounting students	Assessment: Group and individual written assignment with group presentation on an ethical issue from a newspaper article. Intervention: Annotated exemplar and grade descriptors provided in Week 1	1. Written student reflection embedded within assessment task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87% found resources helpful • Resources found to be useful when seeking precise guidance, and in providing the standards required, including an indication of lecturers' expectations. • Resources provided a framework, assisted with their learning and assisted them achieved the desired marks • A few participants reported the resources to be restrictive, unnecessary and not helpful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collected as part the assessment - impact negative feedback. • Evaluation of the assessment was global (i.e. included other resources beyond the annotated exemplar).
Handley and Williams (2011)	UK	2 nd year UG business students (n=400 Semester 1; n=325 Semester 2)	Assessment: Written assignment to be completed by student pairs Intervention: Exemplars used sourced from previous students (similar in structure but different topic), and annotated with feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participants' hit rates of exemplars 2. Online survey 3. Informal conversations with participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High hit rates of > 4 per participant on the of the annotated exemplars on the eLearning platform • 73% of participants found the exemplars to be very useful • Open-ended survey questions showed that participants valued the exemplars highly • No group differences were detected between participants who used and those who did not use the exemplars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low (15%) response rate from the online survey. • Positive, but weak ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$) correlation between participant hit rates and coursework marks.
Hendry et al. (2016)	Australia	81 2 nd year UG animal science students	Assessment: Critical review of scientific paper. Intervention: Two de-identified exemplars of previous student's critical reviews of a different	1. Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants reported they learned the structure of a good essay • Discussion of the essay exemplars gave participants more confidence to write their assignment • Teachers explanation of expected standard was useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response rate was 49% • Feedback from participants obtained after the grades of assessment has been made known to participants, which was likely to influence their responses • Positive correlation between

Citation	Country	Sample	Assessment / Intervention	Method & Data Collection	Results	Limitations & Comments
			article. Students asked to grade exemplars then discuss in class. Tutor facilitated in class discussion.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants with higher grades reported that the exemplars made it easier for them to be creative with their own assignment than those who achieved lower grades. 	participants perception of usefulness of exemplar marking and discussion, and participant's achievement in the assessment task ($r = 0.56, p < 0.001$)
Hendry and Anderson (2013)	Australia	24 UG education students and 26 PG Master of Teaching students	<p>Assessment: Written essay</p> <p>Intervention: Students given exemplar essays to grade before class using marking guide. Then held class group discussion about essay and grades. Tutor facilitated in class discussion</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Paper survey Individual interviews Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemplars assisted participants to learn about how to structure their essay and teacher expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small sample sizes despite the 100% response rate No difference in assessment performances as indicated by distribution of grades, compared to students from previous years.
Hendry and Jukic (2014)	Australia	26 UG & 47 PG students in a nutritional assessment subject	<p>Assessment: Final exam</p> <p>Intervention: Exemplars of previous students. Participants given a high and a low scoring exemplar to mark. Tutor then marked both exemplars in class and provided rationale.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both UG and PG cohorts achieved significantly higher scores in exams than the previous year's cohort ($p < 0.001$) Marking class led participants to think about the quality of their exam answers Participants reported thought that they learned the structure of a good exam answer Teacher's explanation found to be the most useful aspect of the marking class One thirds found discussing in groups differences of interpretation challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response rate of 25% Small participant numbers in focus groups Focus group undertaken after results final exam results known and may have biased responses

Citation	Country	Sample	Assessment / Intervention	Method & Data Collection	Results	Limitations & Comments
Hendry et al. (2012)	Australia	181 1 st UG Law students. Five tutors	<p>Assessment: Legal letter</p> <p>Intervention: Students are asked to grade 3 past papers (fail, credit & distinction) using marking criteria.</p> <p>Tutors led class discussion providing a rationale for grades.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus groups 2. Survey 3. Individual interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in confidence to write a quality letter was reported • Exemplars provided participants with a guide for the style of language to be used and assisted with structuring their letter • The discussion of exemplars in class with teacher was reported to be helpful • Those with the tutor who did not discuss the exemplar scored lower on the assessment than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response rate was 37% • Variability in the using exemplars in class the teaching approach in using the exemplars was inconsistent.
Newlyn and Spencer (2010)	Australia	UG Business Law Students. Summer 2008/09 (n=95) & 2009/10 (n=30)	<p>Assessment: Final exam</p> <p>Intervention: 5 past exam papers annotated with comments uploaded onto eLearning portal (fail, Pass, Credit, Distinction & High Distinction)</p>	Exam marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact on students' performance as reflected in students' final exam results, compared to students' performance in previous years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True sample size unknown. Exemplars were downloaded by 212 students in 2008/2009 & 84 students in 2009/2010 but this exceeded the number of students enrolled at the time.
Scoles et al. (2012)	UK	UG & PG students (n=520) enrolled in 12 modules of life sciences	<p>Assessment: Final exam</p> <p>Intervention: 3 past exam papers annotated with feedback and comments uploaded onto eLearning portal (average, good & excellent quality)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students' access to exemplars 2. Exam marks 3. Group interviews with students 4. Individual lecturer interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who used the exemplars performed better in the final exam than those who did not (mean: 54.8% versus 48.7%) • Interviews revealed that exemplars were received positively by participants • Student participants reported that the exemplars help them understand assessment requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interviewees were self-selected and may not be representative of students across the performance spectrum. • A high-achieving student and several international students participate in the interviews, hence, not representative of the overall profile of student cohort

Citation	Country	Sample	Assessment / Intervention	Method & Data Collection	Results	Limitations & Comments
Wimshurst and Manning (2012)	Australia	97 UG Youth Justice students	<p>Assessment: 1) Case study report with two parts (Parts A & B), and a final exam.</p> <p>Intervention: Exemplars were used as an activity for Part A of the case-study assessment</p> <p>Feedback on Part A performance before submission of Part B of the case study assessment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student characteristics including GPA 2. Case study and exam marks 3. Optional submission of students' reflection of the activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated better performance of case-study assessment compared to previous cohort • No significant difference in exam performance compared to previous cohort. • Participants found exemplars increased awareness of expected standards • Participants reported exemplars showed them how to integrate descriptions and observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' higher performance in the case study assessment compared to previous cohort could also be contributed by the class and individual feedback provided, in addition to the support received from engaging with the exemplars.
Yucel et al. (2014)	Australia	1 st year UG biology students 2009 (n=373) 2010 (n=403) & 2011 (n=488)	<p>Assessment: Submission of two scientific reports.</p> <p>Intervention: Two exemplars (very good and average).</p> <p>Students asked to mark two exemplars (very good and average) and justify marks awarded as a group activity.</p> <p>Students required to bring draft report for blinded peer marking before final submission.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Report marks for 2010 cohort 2. Survey for 2011 cohort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who were provided with exemplars performed significantly worse (i.e. 2010 cohort) than those who did not have the exemplars (i.e. 2009 cohort), despite similar academic entry score of the two cohorts • Students with exemplar support (i.e. 2010 cohort) improved their assessment performance in the second report; this was not the case with the 2009 cohort (i.e. those who did not receive exemplar support) • Survey respondents reported marking and discussion of exemplars clarified expectations and were helpful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marker bias may have adversely affected report results in 2010 • The authors did not report on the academic performance of students in 2011 cohort, who also received exemplar support, but only reported on students' feedback on the use of exemplars in this subject.

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