Making sense of the feedback experience: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analytic study exploring the lived experience of student mental health nurses receiving written feedback on their written assessments.

by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of providing students with written assessment feedback is to support future development (Carless & Boud 2018; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Pitt & Quinlan 2022; Winstone & Nash 2016). Feedback itself has been identified as having one of the most powerful effects on student learning and development (Hattie & Timperley 2007; Wisniewski, et al 2019). Furthermore, feedback is essential for professional nursing practice, which requires engagement with, and skilled provision of feedback for both patient care and professional development (Nursing Midwifery Council 2018). Feedback is a common source of students' dissatisfaction and thus detrimentally affects their rating on published measures such as the National Student Survey and Teaching Excellence Framework. This in turn negatively impacts the university position on national league tables of performance, which can threaten their economic security (Winstone & Carless 2021; Winstone et al 2021). In an attempt to enhance students' satisfaction and league table position, Higher Education institutions have focused their efforts on consistency and standardisation of assessment feedback practices, yet satisfaction and engagement with assessment feedback remains poor (Winstone et al 2021).

This research explores phenomena from the student perspective, using IPA (Smith, et al 2022) to draw out personal and group experiential themes that capture how second year mental health nursing students make sense of their feedback experience. This thesis considers feedback from an interconnected perspective, exploring the students understanding of themselves and their position in the world of education, and is underpinned by a synthesis of critical realist and hermeneutic phenomenological ontology.

The research identified two key conceptual themes of **educational baggage** and **the mediating influence of relationships** that influence students' fundamental engagement with their academic feedback experiences. The research reveals the ontological significance of feedback for students and provides conceptual clarity that may help develop feedback

literacy. Rather than approaches which game the NSS and TEF metrics, this research highlights the importance of authentic learner centred approaches to assessment feedback. The resulting principles of practice and recommendations offer potential strategies for effective learner centred and emancipatory feedback practice which extend beyond the formal assessment episode.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the students who participated in this study. I thank them for their generosity in sharing their experiences and hope that the insights from their journey will help future students fulfil their potential.

In memory of Monty, my feline companion animal who sat with me in my study for most of the research journey. I am grateful for his calming influence and comforting presence.

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Glossary of terms and Abbreviations

Terms

Term	Definition
Advance HE	A Professional membership scheme for academics, promoting excellence in Higher education. Offering accreditation, fellowships, awards and professional development schemes.
Declarative knowledge	Awareness and understanding of factual information. A piece of information that is stored in memory, it is static in nature and describes things, events, processes, and their attributes.
Domain knowledge	The understanding of a specific discipline, profession, or activity. An area of expertise.
Flat rate	A pricing structure that charges a fixed fee for a service regardless of usage or changes in interest rates.
Meta-cognitive	Awareness of ones thought processes. Thinking about thinking.
Procedural knowledge	Knowledge of **how** to do something e.g. riding a bicycle. Not as easy to articulate as declarative knowledge and we may not be able to explain how we do it.
Relational pedagogy	Emphasises the role of relationships, interaction, communication and connection between people and things in the sociocultural context to enhance learning.
Schema	A cognitive structure that organises and categorises information in order to make sense of it. Meaning making units.
Self-evaluative judgement	The ability to make decisions about the quality of ones own work and that of others (Tai et al 2018)
Transference	A concept first described by Freud relating to a phenomena where the feelings and expectations of one person are unconsciously redirected and applied to another. In therapeutic relationships it is where the clients experience of the therapist is shaped by interpersonal experiences with significant people which are displaced and projected on to the therapist.
Variable rate	A pricing structure where the repayment rate is set annually using factors such as inflation. The amount repaid varies depending on these factors.

Abbreviations

BID	Department of Business Innovation and Skills
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CR	Critical Realist
HEE	Health Education England
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HP	Hermeneutic Phenomenology
GET	Group Experiential Themes
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
NHS	National Health Service
NMC	Nursing and Midwifery Council
NSS	National Student Survey
NUS	National Union of Students
OFS	Office for Students
OHID	Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PET	Personal Experiential Themes
PICO	Population Intervention Comparison Outcome
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
TEF	Teaching excellence framework
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdome
USA	United States of America

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I start with a personal reflection which presents the motivation for undertaking this study. I explore the territory of assessment feedback by firstly engaging with conceptions of feedback, discussing literature pertaining to student perspectives on their academic feedback, and consider the implications of Higher Education (HE) tuition fee and quality assurance contexts over the previous three decades. I then refer to the knowledge gap and identify the niche that this research aims to occupy. I introduce the aim of the research and outline the ontological, epistemological, and methodological position. I then orientate the reader to the thesis structure by introducing each chapter along with a summary of the focus and purpose of each chapter within the overall thesis.

1.2 Personal reflections on student's reactions to feedback

The motive for embarking on the research journey had its origins in my observations and interactions with students on a pre-registration nursing course, and concerned their response to assessment feedback. As an academic contributing to courses that led to both professional registration and academic award, providing feedback to students was an essential activity, both in terms of ensuring support for academic development, quality assurance, and in fulfilling the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) regulatory requirements (NMC 2018).

I'd observed that students varied considerably in their emotional and behavioural reactions to feedback on their academic work. Notably, some students tended to receive the feedback as a personal criticism or viewed comments about the quality of their assessment as a judgment of their overall ability, potential, character, or value. In some instances, negative comments had left the student feeling embarrassed, humiliated and/or angry. This

observation mirrored those found in research exploring the emotional impact of feedback (Begley & White 2003; Hill et al 2021; Shields 2015; Winstone et al 2017; Young 2000). This was of concern, as negative emotional responses can have a detrimental impact on motivation, especially where students have low self-esteem and believe their ability to improve is limited (Dweck 2000), furthermore the impact of such experiences can have detrimental effects on students learning, confidence and emotions that last well beyond the assessment episode (Hill et al 2021).

In contrast, I'd observed some students show a keen interest in the assessor's identification of the faults in their work, and actively seek them out. Such students tended to have a more developmental mindset, viewing the feedback as a means of improving their work, rather than a measure of their value (Dweck 2000). In such instances feedback was not a threat or something to be feared, but rather a gift, and something to help guide them on their journey towards academic improvement. Thus, the student's developmental mindset acted as a mediator, and the students welcomed the critique. Furthermore, whilst some students appeared to favour a direct approach, others preferred a feedback message that was softened, with a degree of "sugar coating" to make the message more palatable. The experience was reminiscent of communication practices in a clinical environment, where I'd adapt the communication style to meet individual needs and preferences. Adapting approaches to communication to meet the needs of patients is also something students are advised to do as part of a person-centred approach to communicating with service users (NMC 2018). Hence, the practice of preference seeking served double duty, as both facilitating the feedback message and modelling good practice. Consequently, when providing formative feedback to students I would ask "how do you like your feedback?". Invariably the replies were in the vein of "be gentle with me" or "just give it to me straight", and so my feedback style adapted to correspond with individual preference. The aim being that this approach would reduce potential emotional barriers, and enable the message to be delivered in a way that facilitated the student's learning and motivation.

Interestingly, the preference for a particular style of feedback appeared to be independent to the quality of work and level of study a student was engaged in. Conversations with undergraduate, post graduate and doctoral students, and colleagues undertaking study, have frequently revealed a sense of anxiety at being negatively evaluated and a fear of being exposed as inadequate, often in the face of substantial achievement and evidence to the contrary. Memories of school, the views of significant people in their earlier life and their experience of previous study would come to the fore when discussing the experience of academic assessment and feedback.

As part of my responsibilities within the university, I received and investigated complaints students made about their course, consequently I had dealt with student complaints about their assessment grading and feedback. Of interest to me, were the strong feelings that were stirred up by comments made in the feedback, when the feedback was clear, balanced, aligned with the learning outcomes and was, to all intents and purposes, good feedback. In such instances, the information contained in the feedback appeared to match a vulnerability in the student that the marker was often not aware of, and as a consequence, the interpretation of the feedback was negatively skewed. Thus, even well written, clear feedback that followed good practice guidelines, did not remove the risk of a negative interpretation that had potentially detrimental impacts on a student's mood, motivation, and development.

Observations in the education setting mirrored observations and experience in my clinical practice as a mental health nurse and cognitive behavioural therapist. In a clinical setting it was routine and good practice to undertake a full assessment of a problem or need, which included consideration of the individual communication needs, and the anticipation of the sorts of events that could activate problematic emotional responses serving as barriers to engagement. Furthermore, the influence of life experiences in the development of beliefs about oneself, others, and the world, that influence the interpretation of events was something I was used to exploring in my practice of CBT. This process of assessment and

formulation is an essential component of nursing and CBT practice, enabling the practitioner to understand problems from the perspective of the person asking for help, and to plan the appropriate approach to take. The similarity between observation in clinical and education roles fuelled my curiosity and desire to explore the phenomena of the feedback experience in more depth. Moreover, given my observations that students experienced distress in response to feedback, I was keen to explore how the process of assessment feedback could be improved and limit the chances of feedback causing harm and impeding development.

1.3 Conceptions of feedback

The aim of written feedback is to improve knowledge, understanding and future work (Evans 2013; Furguson, 2011; Lipnevich et al 2016; Nicol-Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Parboteeah & Anwar 2009). This is a purpose shared with the practice of instruction; however, feedback differs in that it is provided by an agent regarding an aspect of performance or understanding (Butler & Winnie 1995; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Ramaprasad 1983; Sadler 1989). Thus, feedback is post action and follows performance, whereas instruction can precede performance and understanding. Effective feedback has an important role in student learning (Ferguson 2011; Kluger & DeNisi 1996), with large meta-analytic studies pointing to effective feedback having the most powerful effect size for academic attainment (Hattie & Timperley 2007; Wisnierwiski et al 2020).

Models of feedback have changed considerably from the early behavioural paradigms of feedback which position feedback as a reinforcing message, providing a link between actions and a corrective response (Skinner 1938). The 1980’s brought a change in the conceptualisation of feedback, which emphasised an information processing perspective, whereby feedback was conceptualised as information that students could use to correct errors (Hattie & Timperley 2007; Ramaprasad 1989; Sadler 1989; Winnie & Butler 1994). This shift away from behaviourism emphasised that the students were required to use the

feedback for it to be of benefit. To some extent this followed a transmission model whereby the student is provided with feedback by an expert, which reflects a one directional message, positioning the student as receiver. Furthermore, within information processing models, the provider of feedback holds the responsibility, in that there is an assumption that students can learn if provided with the right kinds of feedback (Winston, et al 2021b). Conceptualisations of feedback were further developed to incorporate students' metacognitive abilities, and along with this, an associated emphasis on providing feedback that promoted the student's ability to self-evaluate and internally generate feedback (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006).

In the last decade conceptions of feedback have changed further, positioning students at the heart of the feedback process, with feedback involving multi-source and multi-directional feedback. This is accompanied by a strong emphasis on the student's role in realising the potential of feedback information for their learning and them using it (Carless & Boud 2018; Evans 2013). Furthermore, recent models of feedback incorporate communication and dialogic approaches whereby students' active participation is deemed critical for effectiveness (Boud & Molloy 2013; Carless & Boud 2018; Lipnevich et al; 2016; Winstone & Carless 2019). Pitt and Quinlan (2022) attest that there has been a paradigm shift in feedback research, which have moved from transmission models of feedback to learner centred approaches. However, whilst conceptions have changed towards feedback that position the student's agentic engagement as critical to its success, the role of student from passive to active participant has not been widely adopted, and transmission models of feedback remain pervasive in higher education, which influence feedback practice and effectiveness (Van der Kleij, Adie & Cumming 2019).

It is therefore unsurprising that feedback remains notorious for being a source of frustration for lecturers' and for students (Carless & Winstone 2023). On the one hand lecturers' express frustration that the detailed feedback they produce is not used or read (Carless & Winstone 2023; Mulliner & Tucker 2017; Pitt & Quinlan 2022). In contrast students' express

frustration that they are not getting the feedback they want (Van der Kleij et al 2019; Winstone & Carless 2019). This is a risk where monologic one directional feedback practices are the modus operandi. A culture of responsibility sharing is deemed essential for feedback to be of benefit (Nash & Winstone 2017). This is not facilitated by transmission modes of feedback, where feedback is thwart with problems associated with the student's ability to code the information (Robinson et al 2013), passive recipience (Van der Kleij et al 2019) and an emphasis on grade justification (Pitt & Norton 2017; Winstone et al 2021c). Transmission models tend to treat students as a homogenous group which can overlook individual needs and be a threat to engagement, learning and the student's sense that they matter (Ajjawi et al 2022; Gravett 2020; Pitt et al 2020).

1.4 Student perspectives on written assessment feedback

Studies exploring written assessment feedback from the student's perspective have gained momentum in recent years. Initially these tended to focus on improving satisfaction with feedback and were more concerned with procedural elements such as timeliness, legibility, and accessibility, as opposed to what constituted meaningful and constructive feedback (Higgins et al 2001; Rae & Cochrane 2008). Robinson et al (2013) examined factors which affected students' satisfaction with feedback by asking students to complete a questionnaire on their experiences of written feedback on assignments they had submitted that year. Participants also had an option to provide qualitative information on their experience of written feedback. In the second part of the study, Robinson et al (2013) provided students with a fictitious marked essay. Students were asked to review and rate their satisfaction with the markers' comments. The analysis of the results indicated diverse responses in the degree to which they understood the feedback. The research also revealed that students experienced a negative emotional response to feedback, and these students also reported negative reactions to written feedback prior to entering university. Robinson et al (2013)

hypothesised that this dissatisfaction may have been because the students didn't have the skills to decode the information, so feedback failed to play a critical role in the emotional support of students. The ability to understand feedback and use it effectively has also been cited in later studies as a key influence on student satisfaction with written feedback (Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Patterson et al 2020). Interestingly, the research also revealed that the negative emotional response to feedback was an enduring pattern, perhaps connected to phenomena outside the isolated feedback episode. Later research by Bulut et al (2019) also revealed that students had negative emotional reactions to feedback, even well-crafted feedback that was tailored to student's strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, Rowe (2016) stated that students reported critical feedback comments triggered a lowering of their self-esteem, self-efficacy, were associated with negative emotional reactions. This finding also noted in subsequent research (Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Tracii & Henderson 2018). Though there are exceptions, Pitt and Norton (2017) found that critical feedback comments motivated some students who preferred a high challenge environment.

Yorke (2003) argued that corrective feedback could generate a negative emotional response when students were unable to make a distinction between the product and the person. Consequently, a student believes that they are a failure, rather than that they have not understood what was expected of them. Following research into mature students' feelings about the written feedback on their assignments, Young (2000) posited academic self-esteem as a potential mediating factor. Young noted that that students with positive self-esteem tended to view critical feedback as "helpful" and providing information on what needed to be worked on" whereas students with low self-esteem felt more anxious, vulnerable, and viewed the feedback as having the potential to expose poor academic ability. Interestingly, this was independent of the outcome, and students with low self-esteem but high grades, tuned into negative information and experienced negative emotional reactions despite achieving a high grade. Shields (2015) explored undergraduate student's

emotional responses to first year assignment feedback. Participants commented on difficult educational experiences prior to university, citing that these experiences had damaged their academic self-esteem and confidence in their ability to learn. Students also reported that entering university involved taking a “risk” and described how feedback on their assignments had a crucial role in exposing their (perceived) academic inadequacy. Students with low self-esteem described that they found separation between the assignment and themselves difficult and viewed feedback as “personal”. Moreover, the degree of self-esteem and confidence in themselves as learners shaped their reading of the feedback, with low self-esteem leading to selective attention towards negative information. Young (2000) and Shields (2015) both noted that the students’ perceptions of themselves were independent of their ability. Students demonstrating high academic ability, but low self-esteem remained anxious and had negative perceptions of feedback, even when the feedback was positive. Thus, they demonstrated a fixed idea about their low ability and intelligence, even when presented with conflicting evidence.

Perceptions of feedback can be influenced by the grade achieved. For example, Poorman and Mastorovich (2019) noted that students were more interested in the grade than their learning, and this in turn influenced their views of the feedback and themselves. Interestingly, self-identity was very much tied in with being a high achieving student, and set within a context where their identity and value was tied into achieving an A grade. Pitt and Norton (2017) identified that grade outcome influenced the students processing of feedback and post feedback dialogue with markers tended to focus on grade queries and the mismatch with their grade expectations rather than conversations focused on development. Achieving a perceived good grade is noted as influential in student satisfaction with their feedback (Sultan & Gideon 2021; Winston et al 2017a) furthermore grade improvement rather than learning improvement is cited by students as a key role of feedback (Francis et al 2019).

Some studies exploring student perceptions of feedback have found students viewed their feedback as inconsistent and unhelpful (Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Francis et al 2019; Paterson 2020; Sultan & Gideon 2021). That said, there are some concerns that students' expectations of feedback do not account for their role in the effectiveness of feedback (Winstone et al 2017b). Furthermore, the perception of feedback could be influenced by the student ability to accurately judge the quality of their work and thus accurately attribute the fairness of feedback and grade (Tai et al 2018).

Factors influencing student perception and satisfaction with their feedback are varied, personal and contextual, and may extend well beyond the education arena (Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Shields 2015; Young 2000). Evans (2013) discussed feedback practices in terms of the feedback landscape, whereby students and academics are influenced by peers, and resources inside and outside the learning environment. Furthermore, Lipnevich et al (2016) note that perception and helpfulness of feedback can be influenced by the context in which it is given. Clearly, students' perception of their feedback is influenced by a multitude of practical, contextual, and personal factors, which make the identification of strategies for effective feedback practice challenging. Furthermore, students' perception of and satisfaction with feedback has more recently been influenced by students funding their tuition fees. This change in funding policy commenced in 2006 and affected pre-registration nursing students in 2017 when the government removed the pre-registration training bursaries. Thus, economic policy heralded a consumer-focused Higher Education (HE) sector and has added a consumer dimension to students' perception of their assessment feedback.

1.5 A brief history of UK Higher Education tuition fee and quality assurance policy

The last three decades have been a time of considerable change in the Higher Education (HE) sector. The introduction of the widening participation policy by the Labour government resulted in an increase in the numbers of students in university, and a significant increase in university students from diverse backgrounds with differing educational support needs (Gorard et al 2006). A commitment to widening participation was maintained by both the subsequent coalition and conservative governments, with Prime Minister David Cameron setting a target to double the proportion of people from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing HE by 2020. Gibbs (2010) argued that this shift in policy has resulted in universities educating a wider and more diverse population of students, with corresponding diverse educational needs, which has been largely felt by academics and support services.

The first major change to tuition fee policy followed the Dearing report (1997). Dearing recommended to a Labour government, the introduction of a flat rate tuition fee. These were funded by loans that were to be repaid on leaving the course, where repayment was dependent on achieving a predetermined threshold income. The subsequent Teaching in Higher Education act (1998) announced tuition fees of £1000 per year and abolished the previous system of means tested student grants. In 2003, Labour amended tuition fee policy, bringing in the Education Act (2004) which introduced a variable annual tuition fee which was capped at £3000. This commenced in 2006 and included provision for fees to increase each year in line with inflation. The tuition fees were covered by student loans, which were repaid once salary reached £15,000.

Further changes came in 2010, following the Browne report, which advised the Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition government that the introduction of tuition fees had not deterred students entering university. Browne proposed uncapping tuition fees and the provision of loans to cover both tuition and living costs, which would be paid back when

salary reached £21,000. The subsequent government white paper (Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System (Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2011) adopted many of Browne's recommendations but set a tuition fee cap of £9000 per year, which most universities charged.

The 2015 budget removed imposed limits on the number of students entering university, and the tuition fee cap was increased slightly to £9250 per year. Since the introduction of tuition fees, places on pre-registration nursing programmes were commissioned by Health Education England (HEE) who covered the tuition fees and set a limit on the number of student nurses that universities were permitted to recruit. The 2015 budget announced that nursing midwifery and allied health professional students would no longer be commissioned and would be required to pay tuition fees via student loans (Department of Health / Gummer 2015). Furthermore, the cap on numbers would be removed, allowing greater numbers of students on pre-registration courses. The proposed end of the bursary for nursing and allied health students was envisaged to save the treasury £800 million per year (Glasper 2016).

In 2019 the Kings Fund reported the number of applicants for nursing degree courses in the UK had dropped by 4% between 2016 and 2018 (Beech et al 2019). The Office for Students commissioned research to explore the effect of the abolition of the bursary, reviewing data from six participating universities, they identified mature student enrolment on nursing and allied health programmes had dropped by 15% since the removal of the bursary. Additionally, the Kings Fund Closing the Gap report cited one out of every eight posts in nursing were vacant (Beech et al 2019). The removal of the bursary, also influenced the demographic of applicants for nursing, the numbers of mature students reduced and there was a 10 percent increase in applicants aged 19 (University and College Application System 2019).

In an attempt to increase the nursing and allied health workforce, the government introduced the training grant in 2020. This provided nursing and allied health students with £5000 per

year, and up to £8000 per year for students studying mental health or learning disability fields of nursing, which had typically been more challenging to recruit to. Snee et al (2021) argued that the introduction of the training grant indicated market-based reforms employed to address nursing shortages had been unsuccessful. Furthermore, nursing students had been securely positioned as consumers of education provision and incentivised by the reintroduction of bursaries under the guise of a training grant.

During a period where the narrative was one of growing concern about low quality courses and graduate unemployment (Hickey 2022), the conservative government announced a HE funding review in England. The subsequent Augur review (2019) recommended a reduction in the fee cap to £7500. The government's response to the Augur review (2022) did not reduce fees, but froze tuition fees at £9250 until 2024/2025. Whilst not as severe as Augur's proposal, it had the effect of a real term reduction. The introduction of tuition fees, and a growing discourse on low value courses and graduate salary data emphasised value for money, and placed the student as a consumer of higher education services with associated consumer rights and expectations (Bayless 2023; Bell 2021; Hickey 2022).

The students participating in this study were one of the last groups of students to be commissioned by HEE and have their tuition fees funded. Hence, their position of student-as-consumer is less likely to feature in their experience of feedback. The influence of self-funding on the experience and perception of feedback is therefore a further factor to consider and area for further research. That said the influence of consumer-focused quality assurance policy has been present in nursing education since 2006 when the government introduced the National Student Survey (NSS).

The NSS is a survey completed by final year undergraduate students where they are asked to rate satisfaction with their course. The NSS asks students to rate their satisfaction with eight themes: Teaching on the course; Learning opportunities; Assessment and feedback; Academic support; Organisation and management; Learning resources; Learning

community; Student voice. Prior to the 2023 iteration of the NSS, students were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the course. They completed a five-point Likert scale for each question within the eight themes and overall satisfaction questions. A 2022 consultation with the HE sector resulted in a change to the format of the NSS, the five point Likert scale was changed to a four point scale, the overall satisfaction question was removed, and additional questions were added reflecting the theme of support for student wellbeing.

The NSS is an independent survey focused on the teaching and learning activities of academic staff (Bell 2021). It is managed by the Office for Students (OFS) and carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of regulatory funding bodies in the UK. The results of the survey are published on an annual basis, with the government's aim being that it supports students to make informed choices about where to study their chosen degree based on the previous student evaluations of their satisfaction with the course. The results contribute to university ratings in published league tables. Thus, NSS results have a significant role in the marketing of courses as products to potential student consumers and are posited as an indicator of value in a system where price is not an indicator of quality (Lenton 2015).

Further measures were established in 2016 when the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was introduced by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills as a means of measuring teaching quality in HE.. The stated aim was to encourage excellent teaching in university and to enable students to make informed choices about where they wish to study, based not just on the status and quality of research, but on the quality of teaching in an institution (Su 2022). Initially the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) were responsible for the implementation of the TEF, with assessment and rating based on teaching quality, the learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain (Department for Education DfE 2017). In order to measure these aspects, six metrics were identified. The first three were elicited from the National Student Survey (NSS) and included information about students' ratings of the teaching, the assessment and feedback, and

academic support on their courses. Student outcomes and learning gain were identified via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data on student retention. The final two metrics concern employment or further study, or highly skilled employment or further study. The mix of metrics are assessed alongside a narrative provided by the university, these cover three broad areas of teaching quality. Namely, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain. The collected data and narrative are reviewed, and universities are awarded TEF rating of gold for the highest rating, then silver, then bronze. In 2023 a new level of "requires improvement" was added to the TEF rating. The consequences for universities awarded a requires improvement rating are severe, in that they are required to reduce their tuition fees to £7500 and the rating remains in place for a period of four years.

The introduction of tuition fees with students as consumers, coupled with the introduction of published student satisfaction levels via the NSS and the grading of teaching excellence via the TEF have contributed to a marketisation of HE, a shift in student identities to that of consumer and a move from intrinsic to extrinsic approaches to learning (Bayless 2023). This has had implications for the ways in which universities evaluate quality, develop university strategy, and allocate resources. Of notable significance for this research, is that NSS data between 2005 and 2013 has revealed that assessment and feedback receive the lowest levels of student satisfaction (HEFCE 2014). Hence in recent years, research into assessment and feedback practice has grown exponentially (Bayless 2023). Furthermore, whilst feedback has been identified as a powerful means of enhancing learning (Hattie & Timperley 2007), where effectiveness relies on the proactive engagement and application of feedback for learning (Winstone et al 2017a). The use of TEF and NSS reinforce an outdated transmission model of feedback provided by an expert academic to a novice student (Winstone & Carless 2021; Winstone et al 2021). The risk is that this promotes the student as passive recipient, which is a problem for learning, which requires self-regulation, goal setting and assessment literacy (Carless & Boud 2018; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Nicol

& MacFarlane-Dick 2006). Thus, the use of TEF and NSS could serve as an obstacle to the academic quality they seek to promote.

In a review of the TEF submissions for gold rated institutions Su (2022) identified four themes: firstly, there was an emphasis on student engagement in the teaching and learning process; secondly, they emphasised valuing teaching within the institution; thirdly, the submissions were clear on how they ensured the rigour of the teaching provision, and stretched the students to achieve higher levels of attainment; finally, they provided clear articulation of their approach to assessment and feedback. In the TEF submission, the assessment and feedback component were judged by the extent to which assessment and feedback were used effectively to support students' development, progression, and attainment. Su (2022) noted that TEF gold institutions addressed these via increasing the turnaround speed in providing feedback on student assessments, they also demonstrated a variety of methods of summative and formative assessment. Moreover, they adopted standardised, frequently digital approaches to feedback, with the aim of ensuring consistency. Less commonly, TEF gold rated institutions detailed their approach to developing student feedback literacy. In these instances, student feedback literacy was conceptualised as the students understanding of the purpose and practice of assessment feedback and the relationship to learning.

In contrast to the enhancing quality agenda, Adisa et al (2022) interviewed students and academics to explore the influence of NSS within the context of social exchange theory. Social exchange theory posits a give and take approach to a relationship between two parties, where satisfaction is influenced by the economic and social outcomes of exchanges. They identified three concerning themes that had a detrimental impact on education quality. The first being that the NSS was an inadequate barometer of standards and quality, with lecturers citing students' unreasonable expectations that learning should be fun and easy, which were inconsistent with the reality and rigour of university education. Students also stated they completed the NSS based on their own interests and not the university's

expected standards, or their completion was based on the most recent experience or opinion influencers in the student population. Secondly, the "customerization" of students generated challenges, in that students perceived they were paying for a service and were more likely to provide good evaluations if they were treated as customers. Finally, reciprocity behaviour amongst students was identified whereby students were more willing to provide positive evaluations if they received good grades and VIP treatment. This was something understood by both lectures and students and served to undermine the NSS as an adequate measure of academic quality (Adisa et al 2022).

Encouraging students to learn involves engaging them in activity that reaches beyond their existing horizons (Nixon 2008) and reaching out can present an intellectual challenge that may differ from the safe space of familiarity and confidence. Frankham (2017) argues that student's express dissatisfaction at challenging course material and assignments, which are designed to develop ability, and in doing so they unwittingly limit their academic development and employability. Furthermore, nursing students spend half their education in the clinical environment undertaking placements. Whilst this research focuses on the academic aspects of their education, their time and experiences in practice environments are likely to influence students' overall satisfaction with, and assessment of the quality of their course.

1.6 Challenging territory and limited insights

Clearly there is a need to better understand the factors that facilitate and constrain the use of feedback for learning and development in pre-registration nursing education (and higher education more generally). Furthermore, feedback practice and research reside within an interconnected complex system incorporating education and economic policy, pedagogy, educational psychology, clinical practice, culture and lived experience. To date much of the research has focused on the empirical observable aspects of feedback such as feedback

models, strategies, policy, and perspectives on, or satisfaction with. Consequently, whist there has been a proliferation in feedback research in the last decade, what remains unclear are student's more fundamental experience of feedback and how this influences their engagement in and learning from feedback. Hence, this research sets out to explore how students made sense of their experience of receiving feedback on their academic work, in the hope that this reveals important insights. The research aim being to provide an in-depth exploration of nursing student/s interpretations of the experience of written feedback on their summatively assessed written assignments on and undergraduate pre-registration mental health nursing course.

1.7 Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

The research for this thesis has been positioned ontologically and epistemologically by a synthesis of critical realism and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger posits that our concern with the ontic features of our ways of being with things, can cover the more fundamental ontological domains which reveal what is really going on in the experience (Heidegger 1927/1962). Equally, Bhaskar (1978) posited that behind empirical reality there is a hidden real reality which contain the generative mechanisms for what is experienced, observed, and described. Thus, both ontological positions were deemed helpful for this research. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al 2009/2022) was the selected methodology as it aligned with the ontological and epistemological position of the research. Namely, that the phenomenology and ideography of IPA facilitated a close engagement with the students lived experience of receiving academic feedback. IPA helpfully incorporates reflexivity, thus inherent in the methodology was the foregrounding of my existing knowledge and influence, which I viewed as a key feature of the research. Furthermore, the engagement with existing theoretical concepts enabled me to position the findings in context (Smith et al 2022). All of these elements contributed to the knowledge claims made in this thesis.

1.8 Thesis structure

The thesis is presented in chapters which detail a review of the literature, methodological considerations, and the theoretical position of the research. The analysis and results are presented along with a discussion of the findings in the context of existing literature. The thesis concludes with recommendations for feedback design, practice, and further research. An appendices section provides relevant diagrams and tables along with examples of research documentation including participant information and interview questions. Examples of analysis and curated photographs illustrating the iterative process of analysis and ongoing reflexive work are also included. An outline of each chapter presented below.

1.8.1 Chapter 2 Literature review

In chapter two I review definitions of feedback capturing the multifaceted nature of contemporary feedback definitions. I present five models of feedback that have been influential for current conceptions of feedback and associated research. The effectiveness of feedback for learning is discussed, along with conceptual and research literature exploring recent developments in student and teacher feedback literacies. A review of the impact of feedback strategies is presented, along with the authors' recommendations for further work.

The chapter progresses with a narrative review of contemporary feedback research which include nursing students. A protocol for the narrative review is presented, this includes a literature search question, developed using the Population Intervention Comparison Outcome (PICO) framework (Richardson et al 1995). The protocol and associated Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses PRISMA flow chart (Moher et al 2009) and data extraction document are included as appendices.

The resulting ten papers are grouped according to their focus of interest: 1) student perspectives and views on their feedback 2) studies exploring the experience of feedback 3) approaches and innovations in feedback practice. Each paper is appraised within the group

then cross comparisons are made within and then between the groups. This mirrors the process of IPA whereby an individual analysis is completed prior to any cross-group analysis which highlight key themes from the narrative review. The chapter concludes by articulating the knowledge gap and linking this to the focus of this research.

1.8.2 Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter positions the research within its philosophical theoretical and methodological framework. I begin the chapter with a reflection on the research journey, articulating my rationale for changing methodology part way through my PhD. The chapter then presents the aims and objectives of the research and defines the research question. Having considered the ontological position of the research, I claim that critical realism and hermeneutic phenomenological ontology align with the aims of the research and articulate conceptions of feedback and feedback experience from these ontological positions. I then argue that critical realism and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology are compatible and complementary for this research. I present the epistemological underpinning of the research, articulating the need to access student accounts of experience, and acknowledge the process of research as interpretative, and influenced by researcher pre-supposition. I frame this positively, aligning with the Gadamerian perspective that pre-understanding can be helpful in forming a new understanding (Gadamer 1975/1989/2004).

I discuss the methodological implications of these theoretical positions and then evaluate methodological approaches that were considered for this research, articulating the reasons why I decided to use interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). I then present the case for using critical realist, hermeneutic phenomenologically informed IPA, articulating the synergy, theoretical consistency, and helpfulness of this approach for achieving the aims and objectives of the research.

1.8.3 Chapter 4 Methods

This chapter outlines the procedures undertaken, including ethical clearance, sampling strategy, recruitment, interviewing and data collection. The research participants are introduced and the process of transcription and preparation for analysis is presented. I describe the procedures undertaken for case level analysis, then present a summary of the experiential themes for each participant. The chapter continues by illustrating the process undertaken to identify group experiential themes and concludes with the steps I took to ensure the rigour of the analytical process and results. Examples of data analysis processes and procedures are included in the appendices.

1.8.4 Chapter 5 Analysis and Findings

In this chapter I present the group experiential themes in table form, then present each group theme in a narrative format to illustrate the unique contribution each participant gave to the group experiential theme. Two main group experiential themes were identified "Educational baggage" and "Mediating influence of relationships". Each group theme and sub theme is presented along with a description. This is followed by the associated subthemes and linked to excerpts from participants transcript, and a narrative that gives meaning to the selected illustrative sections from the interview data. A full table of the group experiential themes and subthemes, with illustrative quotes mapped against the personal experiential theme table and location in the transcribed data is included as in the appendix section.

1.8.5 Chapter 6 Discussion

This chapter presents the research findings with the accompanying conceptual, theoretical frameworks, and engages in a dialogue with existing research. The chapter starts by

outlining the ontological and epistemological position of the discussion. This is then followed by an in-depth discussion of each theme, the theme of “Educational baggage” is articulated as a metaphor for the referential totality that influence students sensemaking of the feedback experience. Heideggerian concepts of thrownness, care and *being-in-the-world* are discussed, along with the study’s findings in relationship to research exploring contextual influences on feedback.

The second theme of “Mediating influence of relationships” is discussed. Heideggerian concepts of leaping-in and leaping-ahead modes of *being-with-others* (Heidegger 1927/1962) are presented as helpful in revealing important interpersonal and systemic influences on the sense students made of their feedback experience.

The discussion of each theme is followed by a conceptual framing of the group experiential sub-themes, which are in turn discussed in relation to existing theories and research which shed light on the findings. This chapter returns to concepts and models introduced in the literature review and extends the discussion to include the influence of schemas, moods, self-regulation and trauma. The discussion then considers the influence of student’s multiple identities, history and systemic influences of educational policy and practice on the experience of feedback.

The discussion concludes with a reflexive account which positions me within the discussion and foregrounds a parallel process which revealed itself to me during the research journey.

1.8.6 Chapter 7 Conclusion

In this chapter I present a summary of the research process and the main findings. I assert the original contribution to knowledge made in this thesis. These concern the ontological significance of feedback, and the conceptual clarity of the identified group experiential themes. Implications for feedback practice are presented, and I propose two principles of

feedback practice along with 10 practice recommendations. A tabled summary which incorporates the group experiential themes, sub themes, associated concepts, recommendations and existing literature is included as an appendix. The conclusion ends with a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

1.9 Conclusion

In this introduction I outline my motives for undertaking the research in the form of a reflection on my experiences in education and clinical environments, and how they connect with my observations of student's reactions to their assessment feedback. I then discussed conceptions of feedback and feedback research. I referred to a paradigm shift in feedback research which positions students as having a central role in its use. I then discussed the changes to tuition fee policy over the last 30 years and the potential influence of student perceptions and engagement with education and assessment feedback. I then presented changes to quality assurance of higher education in the form of the national student survey and the TEF. I argue that a marketized quality assurance process has the potential to negatively influence the quality of higher education assessment and feedback practices, in that they promote transmission models of feedback and indirectly discourage challenge and development. I argued that feedback resides in a complex system involving multiple influences and systems and that research into feedback requires consideration of this complexity. I then claim that there has been limited research exploring students more fundamental engagement with the feedback experience, and how this influences engagement and learning. I then introduced the purpose of the research, namely, to explore how student nurses make sense of their experiences of feedback on academic work. I then introduced the ontological, epistemological, and methodological position of the research and presented the thesis structure, providing a summary of the content and purpose of each chapter in this thesis.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Having introduced the motivation for wanting to explore the experience academic feedback has amongst student nurses in **Chapter 1**, this chapter presents a review of relevant literature on feedback as a means of building a solid foundation, which clarifies feedback terminology and practice, and presents contemporary feedback research findings, so as to identify a gap in knowledge.

Chapter 2 will firstly define what is meant by the term feedback, and will then present evidence based models of feedback along with the associated recommendations for understanding feedback processes and practice. The chapter then considers recent conceptual models of feedback literacy including applications for students and educator. This is followed by a review of the impact of feedback strategies. Two studies are presented including a large narrative review of global feedback practice (Pitt & Quinlan 2022) and a realist synthesis reviewing context and mechanisms that influence feedback uptake (Ajjawi et al 2022).

The next part of the chapter focuses on feedback research as it applies to nursing education, and outlines the protocol, search terms and results of a database search providing articles for a narrative review. The resulting articles are grouped and presented in terms of their focus (Student perspectives and views on feedback / Experiences of feedback / researching assessment feedback strategies for learning). An analysis of each research article within the group is presented and a summary of the findings and implications of all the research articles are presented. The chapter concludes by presenting the gap in knowledge and the link with the focus of research in this study.

2.2 Definitions of feedback

Behavioural paradigms of feedback focus on the visible behaviour of students, where feedback is a reinforcing message providing the link between stimuli and corrective response (Skinner 1938). The behavioural definition of feedback positions the learner as passive recipient of information. This view has been largely abandoned as a meaningful definition in a higher education setting, as it fails to recognise the involvement of the learner. Moreover, feedback does not necessarily reinforce, and feedback information could be rejected, or modified or accepted by the recipient (Kulhavy 1977).

Feedback definitions more typically incorporate information processing perspectives (Ramaprasad 1983; Sadler 1989 Winnie & Butler 1994; Hattie and Timperley 2007). Where feedback is provided by an agent regarding an aspect of performance or understanding. The term agent is important, as feedback could be provided by a variety of sources such as educator, peer, book, computer, and self. Feedback is considered the *consequence* of performance, and this distinguishes feedback from instruction (Hattie & Timperley 2007). That said, instruction is often a part of feedback. With feedback commonly defined in terms of information about a student's current level of understanding/ performance, the information on the goal of understanding/ performance, and information on how to close the gap between current level and the goal (Ramaprasad 1983; Sadler 1989; Hattie and Timperley 2007). Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that feedback cannot be effective where there is a total lack of understanding, as there is no way of connecting feedback information with what is already known. In such instances, instruction is the better method. Moreover, feedback is not necessarily something that is sought out, and involves both the providing agent and receiver of the feedback information.

Winnie and Butler (1994) define feedback as "information with which the learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is in the domain of knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks or

cognitive tactics and strategies" (p5740). This definition emphasises the internal cognitive and meta-cognitive processes. Moreover, this definition captures the active role of the student.

Within feedback definitions and models of feedback there are variations as to the degree a student takes an active role. Some focus on the development of meta-cognitive processes such as planning, and motivation (Winnie & Butler 1994; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick 2006). Whilst some models embody social-constructivist principles requiring the student's active engagement in the process of feedback as a means of constructing knowledge. Indeed, Molloy and Boud (2013) argue that the information provided is not feedback, but rather feedback is what students *do* with the information.

There are numerous theories definitions and models of feedback, which are helpfully summarised by Lipnevich and Panadero (2021). They developed a feedback definition that captures key elements shared by multiple models. They propose: "Feedback is information that includes all or several components: students' current state, information about where they are, where they are headed and how to get there, and can be presented by different agents (i.e. peer, teacher, self, task itself, computer). This information is expected to have a stronger effect on performance and learning if it encourages students to engage in active processing" (Lipnevich & Panadero 2021 p 25).

2.3 Models of feedback

The models presented in this section have been informed by earlier work from the fields of systems and management, (Ramprasad 1983) and education (Kulhavey & Stock 1989; Sadler 1989). Each model has been chosen because of its influence on current conceptions of feedback and feedback research.

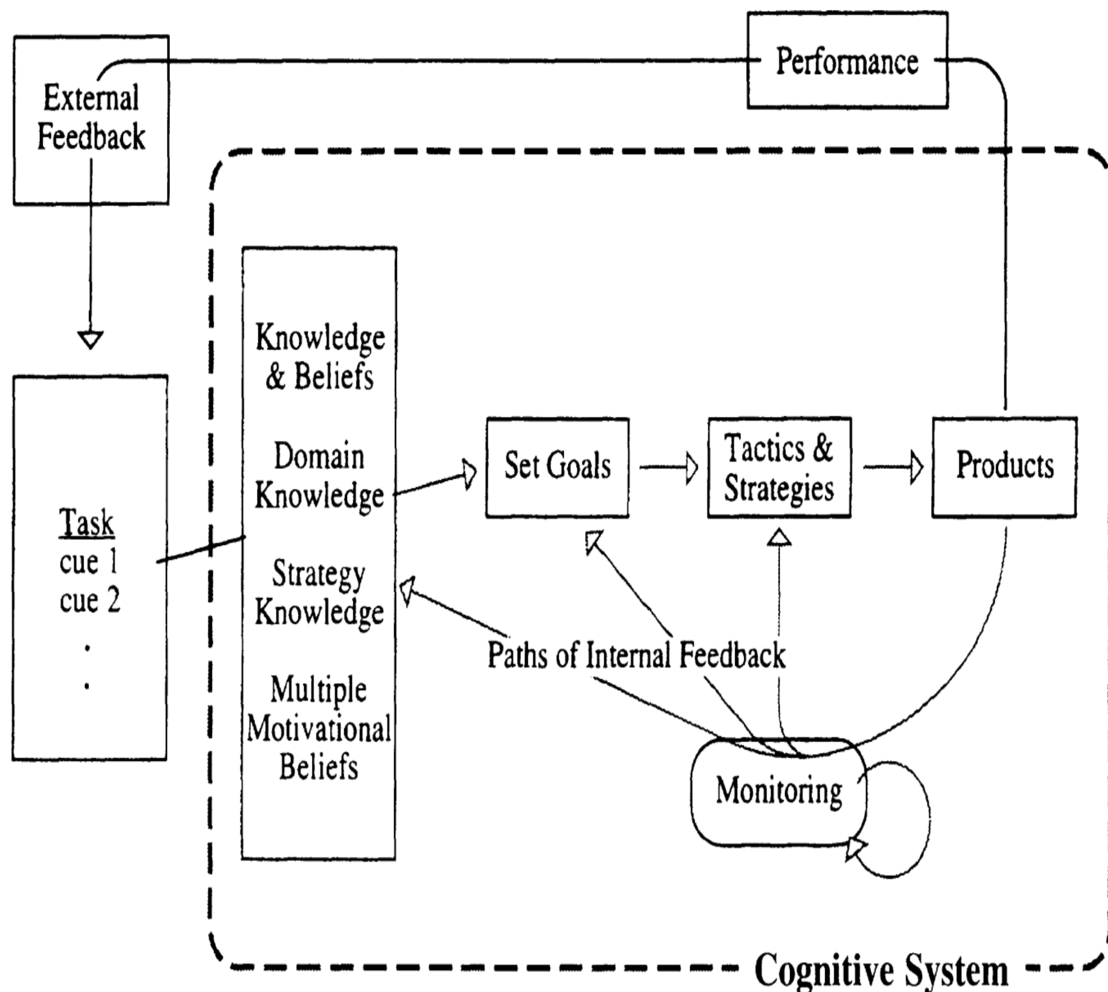
2.3.1 Butler and Winnie (1995) Self-regulated learning model

Butler and Winnie's model provides a conceptual framework and explanation on how internal and external feedback influences student learning. The initial diagrammatic representation is detailed in figure 2.1. The model was later revised to better illustrate the process and is illustrated in figure 2.2. The model describes a process of feedback which identifies antecedent variables (task conditions and cognitive conditions) which affect a student's performance. The task conditions relate to instructional cues, social context, resources and time for the task. The cognitive conditions include the student's knowledge and beliefs, their domain and strategy knowledge, and motivational beliefs. Once the task commences the task conditions are processed through the cognitive conditions and the student goes through four phases of performance.

In phase one they define the task; in the second phase they identify their goal and plan. In the third phase they apply study tactics and strategies via searching, monitoring assembling and rehearsing translating (**SMART**). The fourth phase of performance is adaption. Students also engage in self-monitoring and control throughout the process whereby they engage in internal feedback regarding the success and satisfaction of their endeavour and adjust performance accordingly (**COPES**). The performance may also be externally evaluated, and the internal and external feedback feeds into their internal cognitive conditions (knowledge and beliefs), which in turn influence future performance.

Figure 2.1

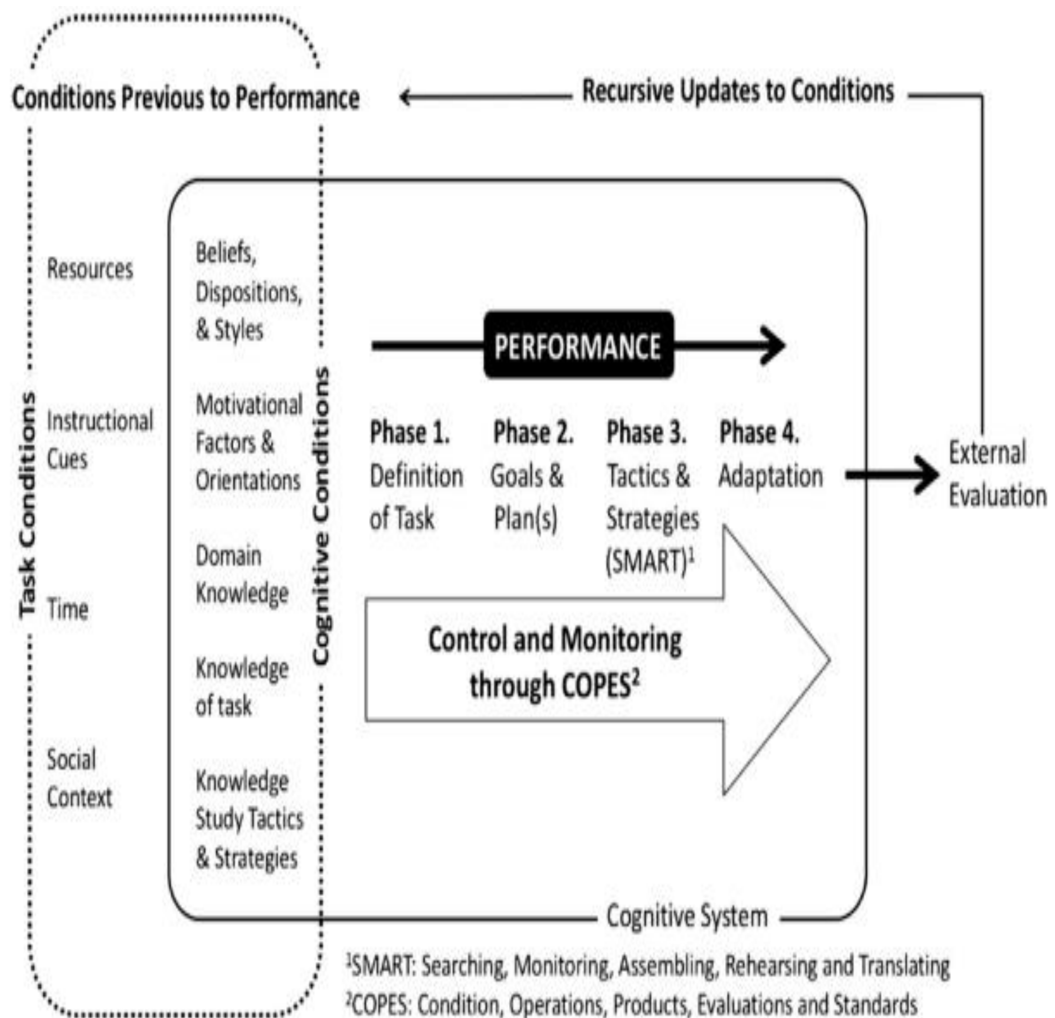
Self-Regulated Learning Model Butler & Winnie (1995)



Note: Figure from Butler, D. L., & Winne, P. H. (1995). Feedback and self-regulated learning: A theoretical synthesis. *Review of Educational Research, 65*(3), p248. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543065003245 Copyright 1995 by the American Educational Research Association.

Figure 2.2

Revised Butler & Winnie Self-Regulated Learning Model



Note: Revised Butler & Winnie self-regulated learning model from Panadero, E., Broadbent, J., Boud, D., & Lodge, J. M. (2019). Using formative assessment to influence self-and co-regulated learning. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 34*(3) p545.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-018-0407-8. Copyright 2018 by Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, Lisboa, Portugal and Springer Nature.

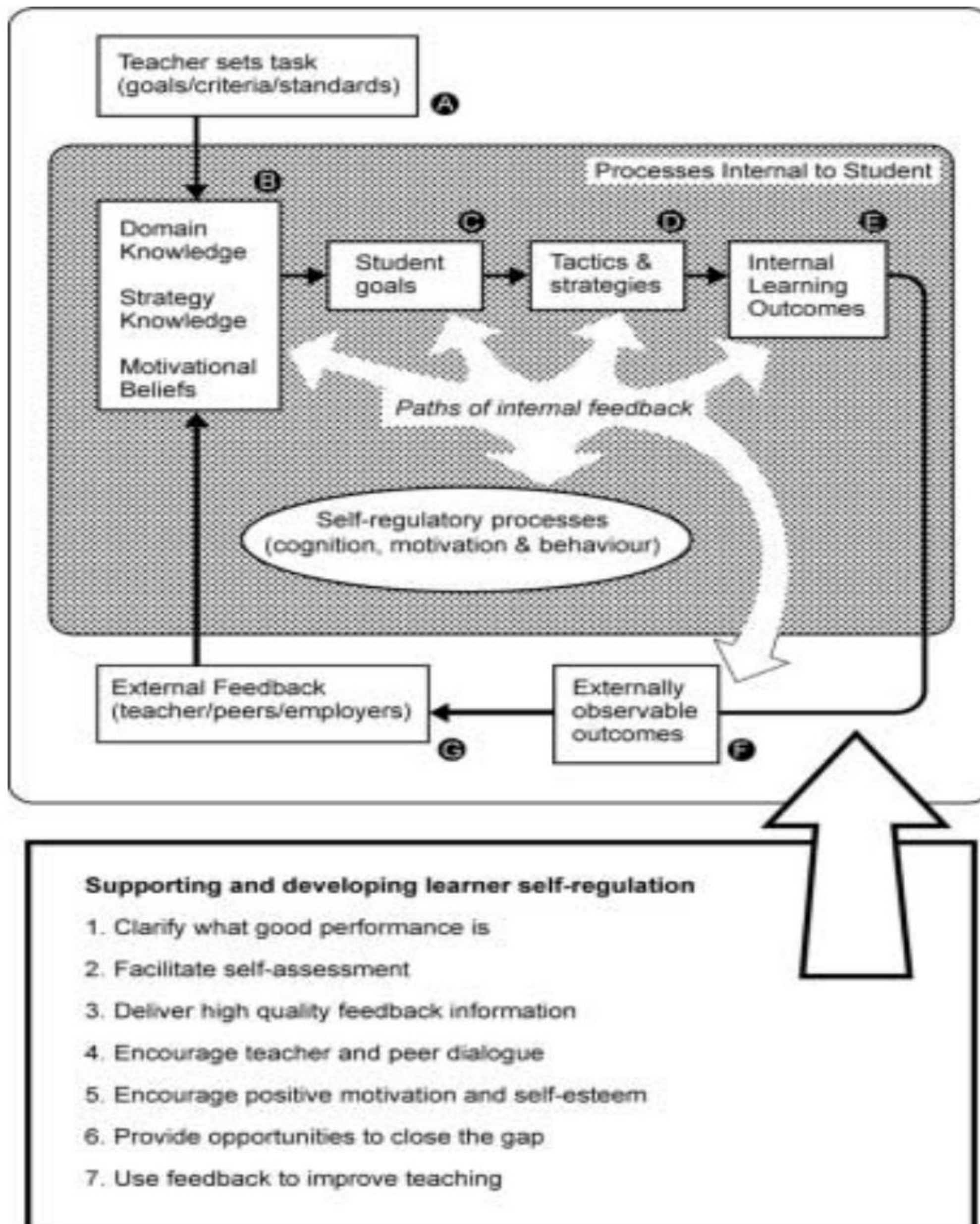
2.3.2 Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) Formative assessment and self-regulated learning model and principles of feedback practice.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick build on Butler and Winnies' self-regulated learning model and link to a number of good feedback practice principles that aim to facilitate learning. The model is illustrated in figure 2.3. In this model, the teacher sets a task (A) which then triggers self-regulatory processes (cognitive, behavioural and motivational). The student's engagement with the task (B) requires them to draw on their knowledge and motivational beliefs to generate an interpretation of the task and what is required of them. This results in the student formulating their own task goals (C). Nicol and Macfarlane note that there is hopefully a degree of overlap between the student and teachers' goals, but this may not the case. The goals help shape the tactics and strategies that the student employs (D) to generate outcomes which could be internal outcomes (E) for example increased understanding, or they may be external outcomes (F) such as the production of an essay. Through monitoring the interactions between the task and the outcomes the student generates internal feedback which helps them identify whether the current strategy is working or if they need to change. The student may receive external feedback (G) which may or may not align with the student's interpretation of performance. However, the student must engage with the external feedback for it to have any impact on the internal processes and add to knowledge (domain and strategy) and motivational beliefs.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) posit that self-regulated learners are more effective learners. Moreover, they argue that students can learn to be more self-regulating (Pinrich & Zusho 2002). They assert that this is more likely in learning environments that make ways of learning explicit via meta-cognitive training, self-monitoring and by providing opportunities to practice self-regulation (Schunck & Zimmerman 1994; Pintrich 1995). Consequently, they advocate seven principles of good feedback practice which facilitate learner self-regulation (figure 3) each of which are underpinned with empirical support.

Figure 2.3

Model of Self-regulated Learning and Feedback Principles (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006)



Note: Figure from Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames), 31*(2), p203.

(https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572090). Copyright 2006 by Society for Research into Higher Education.

2.3.3 Hattie and Timperley (2007) Model of feedback to enhance learning

Hattie and Timperley's model (figure 2.4) was developed following a synthesis of findings from multiple meta-analytic reviews investigating the effectiveness of feedback. The resulting model distinguishes between different forms of feedback and provides recommendations for the types of feedback that enhance learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007) propose that the purpose of feedback is to reduce the discrepancy between current performance and a desired performance goal. The discrepancy can be reduced by students by increasing their effort and by using more effective strategies. Alternatively, they could reduce the discrepancy by abandoning, blurring, or lowering the goal. Furthermore, teachers can reduce the discrepancy by providing appropriate challenges and specific goals and assisting the student to reach goals through the use of effective learning strategies and feedback.

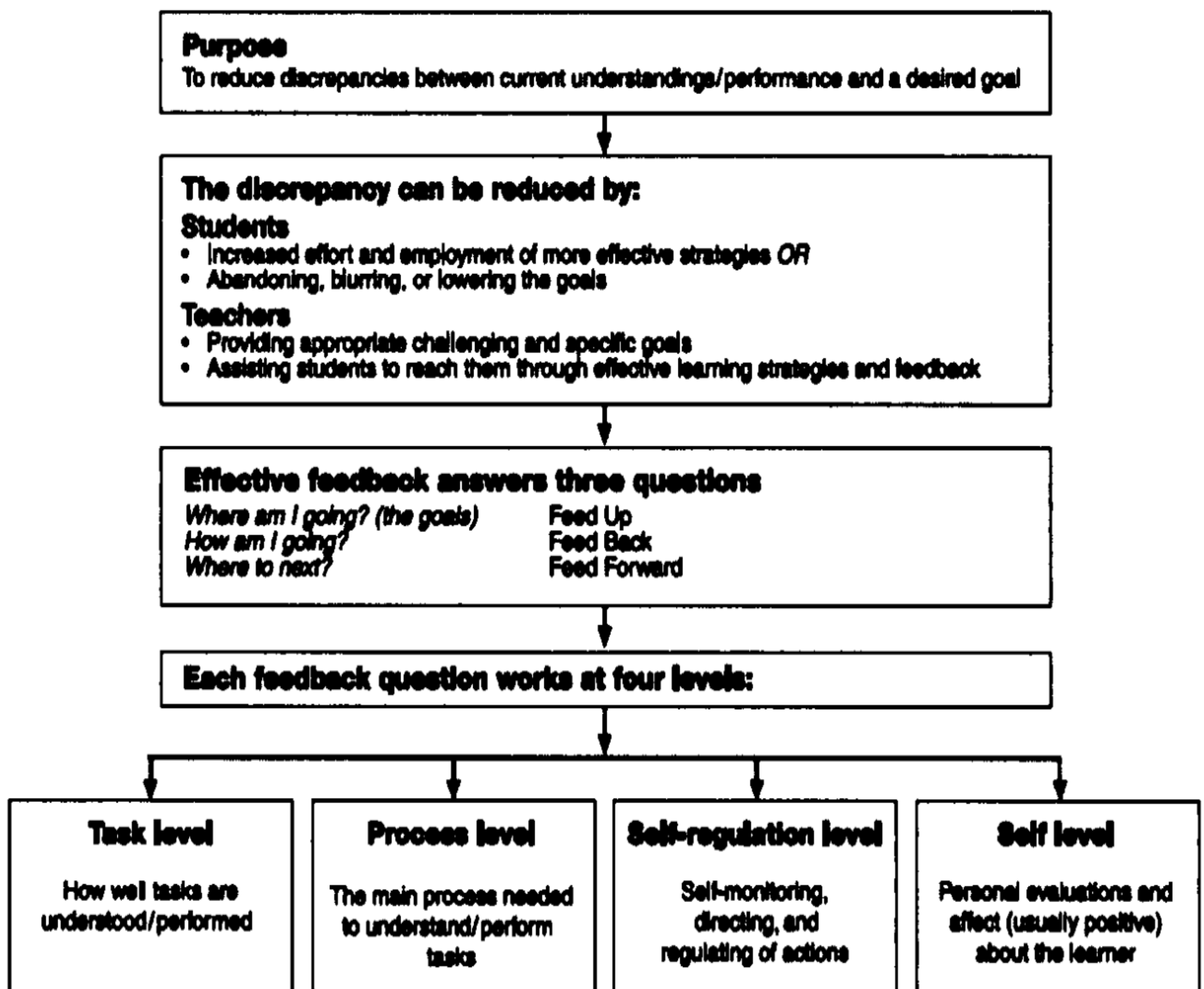
According to Hattie and Timperley (2007) effective feedback answers three questions. Firstly, where am I going? (i.e. the goal), which is the **feed up** component. Secondly, how am I going? Which is the **feedback** component, and finally, where to next? Which is the **feed forward** component. The model proposes that these three feedback questions work across four levels. The task level concerns how well a task is understood or performed, for example whether the work is correct or incorrect. The process level relates to the main processes needed to understand or perform tasks, such as analysing, error detection and transferring meaning to unfamiliar situations. The self-regulation level refers to the way a student monitors, directs, and regulates their actions towards learning goals. Finally, the self-level is feedback about the self as a person e.g. "you're a great student".

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007) the most frequent types of feedback are focused at the task and self-level. Their synthesis of meta-analysis also indicates these types of feedback have the least impact on learning. Whereas feedback focused on the process and self-regulatory level are the most effective.

The model has a robust evidence base, which has since been revisited and updated by Wisniewski et al (2020) with similar findings. However, the feedback model is very much focused on the information that is provided, whereas the other models incorporate more consideration of how the feedback information is interpreted and used by the recipient.

Figure 2.4

A Model of Feedback to Enhance Learning (Hattie & Timperley 2007)



Note: Figure from Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), p87. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487 Copyright 2007 by the American Educational Research Association

2.3.4 Evans (2013) Feedback landscape

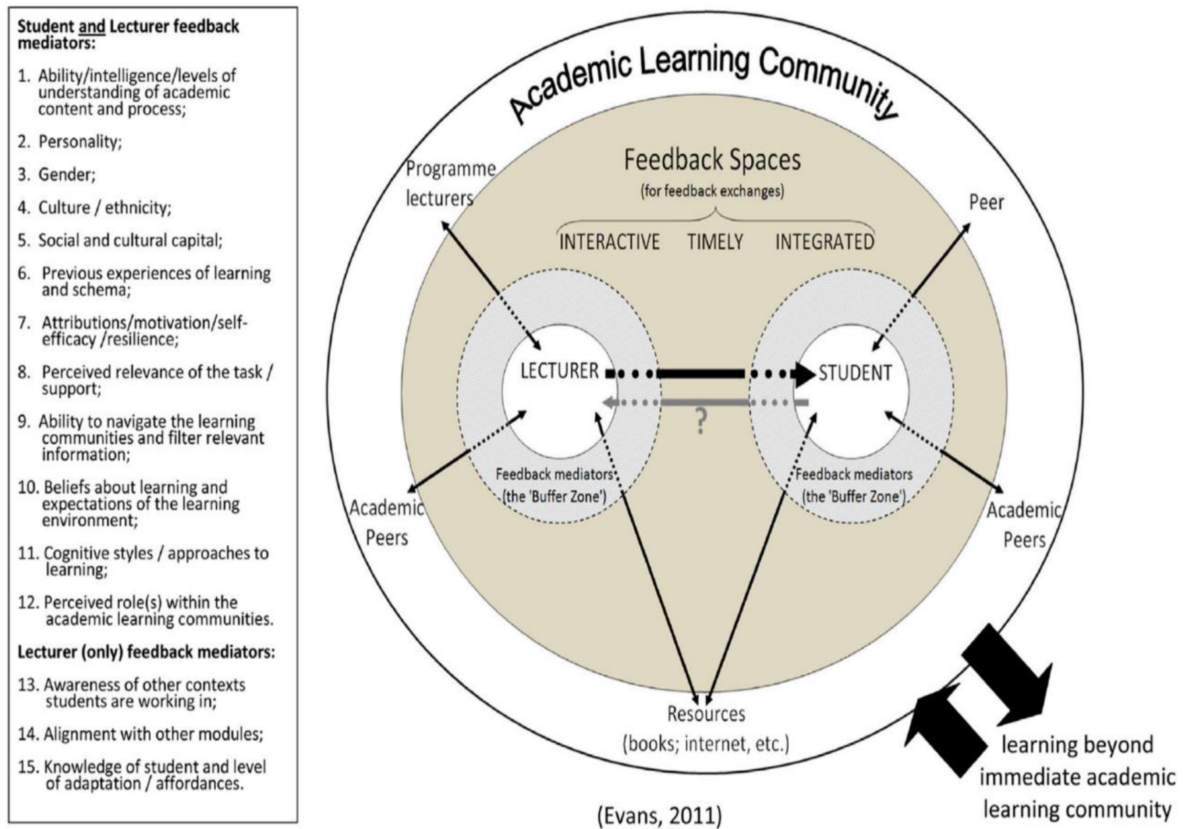
Evans undertook an extensive review of feedback literature to develop a theoretical framework of feedback. Whereas the previous models incorporate information processing and constructivist principles, Evans model also incorporates a socio-constructivist perspective. The model is referred to as the feedback landscape and is diagrammatically represented in figure 2.5. Unlike the previous models, information from outside the learning context is presented as relevant to the feedback experience. This aspect is captured in Evans' definition of assessment feedback as "all feedback exchanges generated within assessment design, occurring within and beyond the immediate learning context, being overtly or covertly (actively and/ or passively sought and/ or received), and importantly drawing from a range of sources" (p71).

The feedback landscape conceptualises a dialogic interaction between lecturer and student, nested in a wider academic and social system. Within the higher education (HE) learning community, feedback spaces exist for feedback exchanges to take place between lecturer and student. The feedback should be interactive, timely and integrated. Furthermore, within the feedback space the lecturer influences, and is influenced by the academic learning community, programme lecturers, academic peers, and resources, which all inform the feedback exchange. The student influences and is influenced by academic peers, peers, and resources. Additionally, both lecturer and student are influenced by learning that takes place beyond the immediate academic community. Evans proposed 12 feedback mediators that influence both student and lecturer. They include personality; social and cultural capital; previous experiences of learning and schema; perceived role(s) in the academic learning community. Three further mediators are identified that apply only to lecturers. These are the awareness of other contexts students are working in; alignment with other modules; knowledge of student and level adaption / affordances. Evans' model includes internal processing and self-regulatory aspects, though these are listed amongst the mediators and the individual processes are not articulated to the same degree as the previous models.

The feedback landscape is a theoretical framework with less direct empirical support for the model than Hattie and Timperley's (2007). However, within the review Evans identifies instructional applications for feedback, and connects these with empirical support. Moreover, Evans summarises 12 pragmatic actions for feedback which include guidance on preparation for assessment, the type of feedback and access to information (see appendix A for all 12 pragmatic actions). Interestingly, Evans highlights several recommendations for research which align with my research. Most notably is the recommendation that "to create effective learning environments there is a need for a greater focus on how students make sense of feedback" (Evans 2013 p96). Evans argued for research that investigates how individual variables interact, and the types of feedback that are most applicable to the task and specific learner variables.

Figure 2.5

The Feedback Landscape (Evans 2011)



Note: Figure from Evans, C. (2013). Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(1), p 98

https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654312474350 Copyright 2013 by American Educational Research Association.

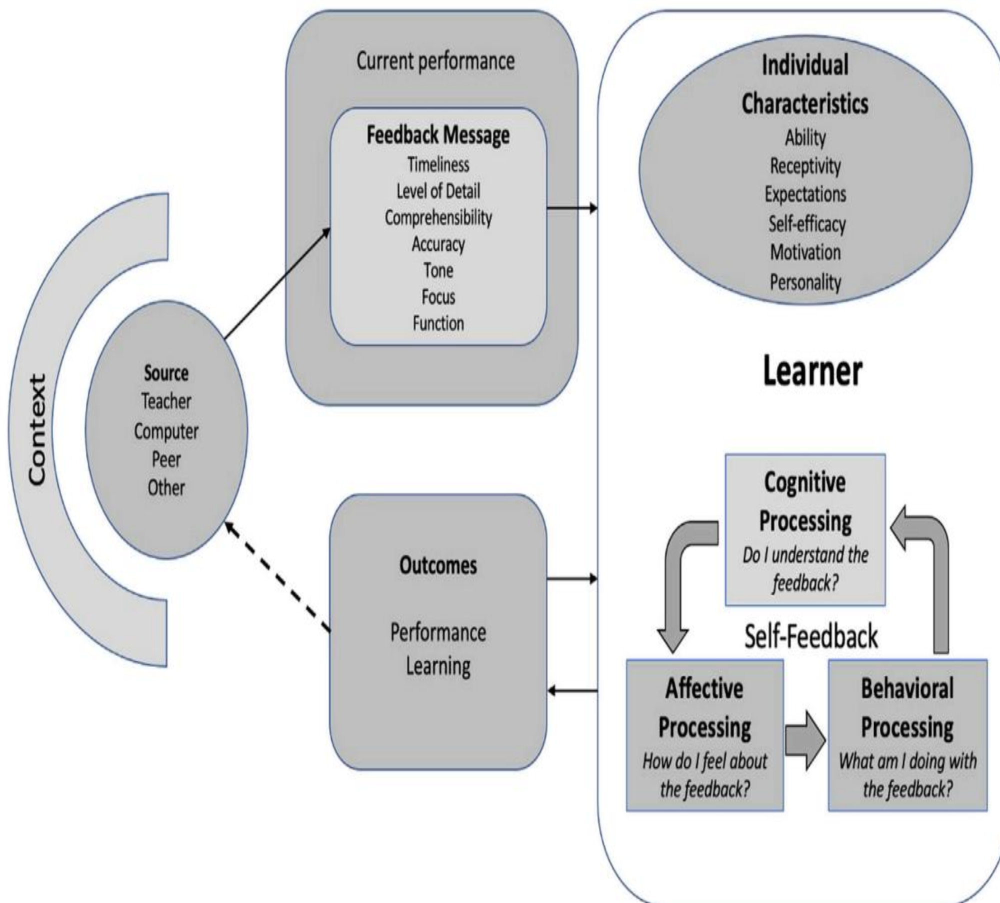
2.3.5 Lipnevich, Berg and Smith (2016) Feedback-student interaction model

This model is informed by feedback literature and incorporates the context, delivery, and processing of feedback. Within this model, feedback is received within a context which may have an influence over the processing of feedback information. For example, the same type of feedback could be processed differently depending on the academic domain or consequential nature of the task (Lipnevich et al 2016). The model is illustrated in figure 2.6 and represents the revised version which includes the addition of context and types of processing (Lipnevich & Panadero revised 2021).

In this model, feedback is delivered to a student from an agent. The feedback message may be varied with regard to the timeliness, comprehensibility, accuracy, tone, focus etc. The individual student may vary in terms of their individual characteristics such as ability, expectations, self-efficacy and receptiveness. The characteristics of both the message and the student influence the processing of feedback. When a student receives the message they engage in processing, which is cognitive ("do I understand the feedback?"), affective ("how do I feel about the feedback?") and behavioural ("what am I doing with the feedback?"). This processing contributes to actions that influence performance and learning. Within this model all external feedback is viewed as needing to be internalised and converted to inner feedback for it to impact on performance and learning. In that sense there are similarities with models proposed by Butler and Winnie (1995); Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) and Hattie and Timperley (2007). Furthermore, the additional element of context provides some scope for considering outside influence on the feedback process.

Figure 2.6

Feedback-Student Interaction Model (Lipnevich, Berg & Smith 2016)



Note: Image from Lipnevich, A. A., & Panadero, E. (2021). A review of feedback models and theories: Descriptions, definitions, and conclusions. *Frontiers in Education (Lausanne), 6* p 19 https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.720195 Copyright 2021 by Lipnevich & Panadero.

2.4 Effectiveness of feedback

There is a wealth of research on the effectiveness of feedback, including numerous large scale systematic and meta-analytic reviews which support feedback as an effective intervention for student leaning (Evans 2013; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Hepplestone et al 2001; Jonsson 2013; Kluger & DeNisi 1996; Li & De Luca 2014; Shute 2008; Winstone et al 2017; Wisnierwiski et al 2020). Whist there appears to be agreement that feedback is beneficial, the reviews highlight differences in effect size, sample groups vary in size and characteristics, and the context and type of feedback vary. In essence, the reviews are not comparing like with like. The feedback type, purpose, and experience in one context, course, university, language, and country may not be comparable to another (Ajjawi et al 2022). Thus, there needs to be some caution in accepting the results.

Feedback tends to be measured in terms of the effect size or measures of student satisfaction (Ajjawi et al 2022). As such, feedback is conceptualised as a product with little consideration of possible impacts on the student's sense making of feedback (Esterhazy & Damsa 2019: Evans 2013). The relative paucity of research on the process elements of feedback is problematic, as feedback is not automatically utilised by students (Winstone et al 2016). Without a deeper understanding of the variables influencing feedback use, any strategies developed are likely to be somewhat of a blunt instrument. Moreover, despite Evans (2013) model of the feedback landscape, sociocultural perspectives on feedback research are rare (Esterhazy & Damsa 2019).

2.5 Feedback literacy

Given the significance of feedback for learning, and that for feedback to be effective it must be used, it is unsurprising that there has been increase in literature and research focused on helping students to make use of feedback. Winston et al (2017a) explored barriers to feedback use along with feedback seeking and recipience. A series of focus groups were run

with psychology undergraduates at a UK university. These focus groups explored the type of feedback students received, along with what they thought lecturers expected of them, their thoughts on how they could make better use of their feedback, and whether they had ideas about interventions that would be helpful. In addition, participants engaged in an activity where they reviewed exemplar feedback and ranked feedback interventions.

A thematic analysis identified four themes representing the psychological processes underlying feedback engagement. 1) **Feedback awareness**: for feedback to be used, it needed to be understood. Barriers to feedback use occurred when students had difficulty understanding the feedback or were unaware of its purpose. 2) **Cognisance**: students needed to know the types of behaviours and strategies that are helpful in implementing the feedback, and without this awareness they were unlikely to use it. 3) **Agency**: students reported disempowerment and learned helplessness, which resulted from previous attempts to use feedback that had been unsuccessful. There was also some discrepancy regarding responsibility for translating feedback into action, with some believing lecturers were responsible for telling the student what they should do next. 4) **Volition**: a lack of volition to scrutinise feedback and a sense of apathy was noted by participants. The use of feedback relies on the student's receptiveness to the information and defensiveness served as a barrier to its use. This was especially evident where students had a fixed idea about the grade they wanted, and the resulting grade fell short. This research represents a useful shift from feedback delivery to feedback reception, and consideration of the factors influencing recipience. The findings led to Winston et al (2017a) recommending that educators provide opportunities for student to engage with activities that enhance awareness, cognisance, increase a sense of agency and volition.

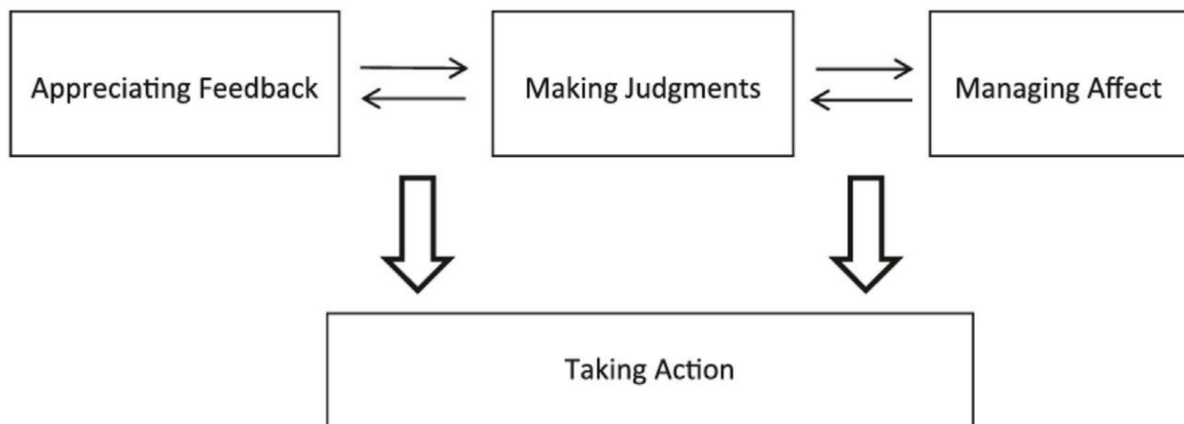
Further consideration of learner characteristics came in the form of a conceptual model of feedback literacy proposed by Carless and Boud (2018). The model is based on social constructivist learning principles where "feedback is defined as a process through which learners make sense of information through various sources and use it to enhance their work

or learning strategies" (p.1315). This definition emphasises the student role in both the sense making and using feedback information to improve subsequent work. Carless and Boud (2018) define the feedback literate student as having "the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning" (p1316). A model of feedback literacy is illustrated in figure 2.7.

The model contains four interrelated elements. The first being that the student appreciate and value feedback for improvement, along with an acknowledgement of their active role in the process. The feedback literate student recognises the different sources and forms of feedback and uses technology for access and storage or feedback information. Secondly, that the student makes judgements about their work and the work of others. This includes making use of peer feedback opportunities and an ongoing refinement of self-evaluative capacities. The third element concerns managing the affect that feedback can trigger. That they avoid defensiveness, are proactive in seeking suggestions from others, and strive for improvement noting internal and external feedback. The final element being that they act on and respond to feedback, by drawing on information from a range of feedback sources, to facilitate continuous improvement and develop a range of strategies for action.

Figure 2.7

Feedback Literacy Model (Carless & Boud 2018)



Note: figure from Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: Enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 43*(8), p1319 . https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354. Copyright 2018 by Carless & Boud.

The concept of feedback literacy was further developed and supported by Molloy et al (2020) who developed an empirically supported learner centred framework for feedback literacy. Analysis of a large data set of student's views of feedback from two universities determined the characteristics of feedback literate students. Qualitative data from survey results (n=4514) and five focus groups (n=28) were analysed via thematic analysis revealing 31 characteristics of the feedback literate student. The 31 characteristics were themed and aligned within seven different groupings. These groupings were 1) Commits to feedback as improvement; 2) Appreciates feedback as an active process; 3) Elicits information to improve learning; 4) Processes feedback information; 5) Acknowledges and works with emotions; 6) Acknowledges feedback as a reciprocal process; 7) Enacts outcomes of processing feedback information.

Whilst the research adds some empirical weight to the feedback literacy construct, the research did not ask direct questions about feedback literacy, and so infers what students believe feedback literacy to be. Consequently, important literacy characteristics may have been missed (Molloy et al 2020). Additionally, the engagement in the survey and focus group was likely to be from students who are relatively feedback literate, thus may be describing characteristics that are not representative of the broader student population (Molloy et al 2020).

2.6 Teacher feedback literacy

The move from a view of feedback that is provided by educators for students to use, to one of a shared process requiring active engagement (Carless 2015) means that both students and teachers involvement should be considered. To that end, Carless and Winstone (2020) proposed the concept of teacher feedback literacy. This is defined as “the knowledge, expertise and dispositions to design feedback process in ways which enable student uptake of feedback and seed the development of student feedback literacy” (Carless & Winstone 2020 p4).

This has broader scope than the provision of well written feedback, whereby knowledge includes the understanding of feedback processes and practices; expertise relates to pedagogic skills a capability required to design effective research informed feedback systems, and disposition is the drive to develop productive feedback processes for students in challenging environments. Three dimensions of teacher feedback literacy are proposed. The feedback literate teacher designs assessment environments that promote effective feedback (design dimension); attend to the relational aspects of feedback with students (relational dimension); and are pragmatic in how feedback practicalities are addressed within the context of resourcing and priorities (pragmatic dimension).

Support for teacher feedback literacy came from Boud and Dawson (2023) who developed an empirically derived competency framework for teacher literacy using transcribed interview and focus group data taken from two previous studies on good practice in assessment and feedback (Bearman et al 2017; Henderson et al 2019). The interview and focus group data came from 62 teachers across five universities in Australia. Analysis of the transcripts identified 183 competencies. Inductive thematic analysis of the competencies identified 19 clusters which were split across three levels, which align with the scope of teacher responsibility. The macro level concerned responsibilities related to programme design and development. It included competencies such as "plans feedback strategically" and "uses available resources well". The meso level concerned course module/unit design and implementation, such as "organises timing, location and sequencing of feedback events" and "designs for feedback dialogues and cycles". The micro level refers to feedback practices relating to individual student assignments and includes competencies such as "identifies and responds to student needs" and "differentiates between varying student needs". A full list of feedback literate teacher competencies is included in **appendix B**. Boud and Dawson's framework is consistent with Carless and Winstone's feedback literacy concept, but also acknowledges the different roles and responsibilities teachers have. For example, not all educators are involved in the resourcing or design of courses and thus have limited influence in these arenas.

The studies limitations are similar those found in Malloy et al (2020) in that the data was derived from interviews and focus groups which were not designed to identify teacher feedback literacy competencies. As such there is a degree of inference in the interpretation that risks missing important criteria There is also an acknowledgement by Boud and Dawson that the data is derived from educators in Australian HE context which may have localised systems and practices. This is an especially important consideration as the roles and responsibilities aligned with the competencies may not be transferable to universities in different countries.

2.7 Impact of feedback strategies

Pitt and Quinlan (2022) completed a comprehensive review of the impact of higher education assessment and feedback policy and practice. The research was commissioned by Advance HE and formed part of a series of updated evidence reports aligning with Advance HE's Essential Framework for Student Success (Advance HE 2019). The review identified literature on assessment and feedback from 2016 – 2021 to address three questions: "1) What is the state of the field of assessment and feedback in HE and what are the emerging trends and open questions? 2) What demonstratable impact have specific assessment and feedback policies and practices had on student outcomes (e.g. student performance, progression, engagement, satisfaction, skill acquisition and/or self-confidence)? 3) How do these identified areas relate to and move forward assessment and feedback practice?" (Pitt & Quinlan 2022 p 6).

Their literature search yielded 3091 sources, all of which were screened. Once exclusion criteria were applied and duplicates removed 481 full text peer reviewed empirical articles remained. Of these, 201 concerned feedback and 64 were focused on peer assessment or feedback. The review highlighted new directions in feedback research. These included research on how feedback was delivered (Mahoney et al 2019); what students do with their feedback and its impact of future learning (Henderson, et al 2019); and the sociocultural dynamics of feedback exchanges (Esterhazy & Damsa 2019).

The narrative review highlighted several key findings that were indicative of high impact practice. They also noted the dominant practice of feedback was feedback following the submission of a summative assessment. Several studies identified students expected high quality personalised information and guidance, without considering their role in the process (Sparrow et al 2020; Van der Kleij et al 2019; Winstone & Carless 2019). Feedback for grade improvement rather than learning was a frequent expectation from students, and a lack of dialogue or opportunity to apply feedback to improve the grade was viewed as a failing in the

system (Ali, et al 2018; Francis et al 2019). The provision of a grade with feedback reduced engagement with feedback (Boud & Soler 2016, Pitt & Norton 2017) and affected the processing of feedback information, especially where there was a lower than expected grade.

The importance of relationship building within the feedback process was highlighted, with anonymous marking having a limiting impact (Pitt & Winstone 2018). Whereas student-initiated feedback request cover sheets increased the student's sense of agency, and the resulting feedback was deemed more personal, with students reporting a closer connection with the lecturers (Keshavararz & Koseoglu 2021). Better written formative and summative feedback was not sufficient to improve student performance (Milne et al 2020) however, the timing and frequency of feedback was noted in several studies, all indicating that multiple opportunities and repeated interaction types were beneficial (Esterhazy and Damsa 2019; McKay 2019; Milne et al 2020; O'Malley et al 2021; Uribe and Vaughn 2017).

Emotions about feedback were noted in several studies, with students reporting positive affective engagement with feedback when they felt genuine support from supervisors, (Han & Hyland 2019; Molloy et al 2019). With some research noting cultural influence on emotions connected to perceived critical feedback (Hansen & Mendzheritskaya 2017; Ryan & Henderson 2018).

Academic self-efficacy featured in research by Adams et al (2020) and Winstone et al (2017a) with high academic self-efficacy mediating perceptions of feedback and grade outcomes, and was associated with greater ability to accept challenging feedback. Studies reviewing the use and impact of audio and video feedback showed favourable outcomes, with audio and video being evaluated as helpful, personalised, and engaging (Anson et al 2016; Mahony et al 2019; Mayhew 2017; Stannard and Mann 2018; West and Turner 2016; Woolstencraft & de Main 2021). Moreover, Cavaleri et al (2019) noted video feedback doubled the likelihood that the feedback would be used and had the largest beneficial impact for students with grades in the lower grading brackets.

The use of exemplars illustrating how others have responded to the assessment and using these to understand assessment criteria and required standards was evaluated. When discussed amongst peers and educators, these contributed to the development of evaluative judgement. This strategy was best if it was used early, repeated as part of a scaffolded learning approach (Carless & Chan 2017; Nicol 2021).

Following the narrative review Pitt and Quinlan (2022) provided several recommendations based on their findings. The first being that educators aim to shift the culture of feedback to support students use of it. Feedback should be viewed as an ongoing positive relationship rather than a stand-alone event. Educators should increase opportunities for peer assessment and peer feedback, and should evaluate educational technologies and the educational goals they support. For policy makers, Pitt and Quinlan recommend institutions review their assessment and feedback policies in light of their review; that assessment and feedback questions be included as part of student evaluations of teaching. Furthermore, they advise that policy makers create quality assurance codes to encourage education practitioners to implement the recommendations. They encouraged professional bodies to engage with higher education providers to reconsider assessment formats, with a specific aim of reducing the reliance on written knowledge testing and engaging with authentic and alternative assessment. The final set of recommendations encourage feedback researchers to move beyond satisfaction-based surveys and to develop robust measures for engagement related outcomes. They advise researchers to use multiple data sources in order to develop a more sophisticated mapping of learning behaviours. Finally, they ask researchers to consider equity and inclusivity in their research, as very few studies considered the possible different impacts of their interventions for historically disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

The report is far reaching, bringing together a large body of international research with recommendations for feedback practice, policy and research. They note the challenge of presenting collective evidence and recommendations, in that the context of original

intervention is lost. They acknowledge a risk that the context may have influenced the success of the feedback intervention, and in losing this- the active ingredients are invisible. A significant concern is the limited body of research examining mediating factors of success or impacts of feedback for historically disadvantaged groups. This represents a concerning gap in the knowledge and potential biasing of evidence.

As can be seen from the definitions, models and evidence presented so far, understanding what constitutes effective feedback is complex. However, one consistent picture is that effective feedback requires student engagement. Research exploring the facilitators and barriers to engagement highlight both motivation and self-regulation as key factors (Winstone et al 2017a). Acknowledging the limits of meta-analytic research on feedback effectiveness and building on Winstone et al's (2017a) research, Ajjawi et al (2022) produced the first realist synthesis of feedback interventions.

Realist research methods are used where interventions are complex (Pawson 2013). Inherent in realism is the notion that the success of an intervention may be context dependent. Underlying processes and structures (social), which are referred to as mechanisms, operate in a particular context and can bring about the outcomes of interest. Hence to understand the complex intervention of feedback one needs to identify relevant mechanisms and contextual factors that explain the success or failure of an intervention. Realist enquiry seeks to identify patterns of context-mechanism-outcome configurations that help explain the relative success of interventions in different contexts. In contrast to narrative reviews, realist reviews are a theoretically driven synthesis of previous literature. They involve the selection of a theoretical framework and a review of existing literature against the framework to establish whether the framework is relevant and helpful in furthering understanding. Additionally, a realist synthesis aims to extend knowledge so as to incorporate insights about conditions that support or constrain an interventions success (Pawson et al 2005).

Ajjawi et al (2019) identified Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci 2000) as the theoretical framework for their realist synthesis. The rationale for SDT lay in research highlighting the importance of motivation (Winstone et al 2017a), and that SDT was a well-researched and established theory. SDT theory posits that motivation involves internal and external motivating forces. Self-determination is increased via actions that lead to an internal locus of control and are decreased via actions that focus on a more external locus of control (Deci et al 2001 p33). Ryan and Deci (2000) posit that individuals are more likely to be internally motivated to engage with feedback when their psychological need for relatedness, competency and autonomy are met. Conversely, externally motivated behaviours are performed because they are valued and or prompted by significant others and are less likely to be maintained in the absence of external input. Ajjawi et al (2022) therefore propose that engagement in feedback is more likely when the feedback process is designed to promote relatedness, competency, and autonomy. Thus, these three criteria were coded as mechanisms along with engagement with feedback, evaluative judgement, self-efficacy and performance.

Literature sourced for the review was screened and appraised, and the resulting 59 studies were included in the realist synthesis. All studies were coded for context (year of study, country, discipline, student achievement level and self-efficacy) and interventions were categorised.

The synthesis identified four context-mechanism-outcome-configurations relating to perception of relatedness, competence, autonomy, and emotions, and four feedback theories were proposed. Firstly, motivation to use feedback is enhanced by students feeling recognised and known by teachers. Secondly, students' perception of mastery and autonomy enhances feedback engagement. Thirdly, feedback interventions leading to positive emotions and a sense of competence enhance engagement. Finally, a student's prior level of achievement provides context for engagement with feedback. With higher

achieving students mobilised by the type of feedback that would immobilise lower achieving students.

The research indicates the importance of knowing the student, pitching feedback at the right way for each student, and promoting a sense of mastery. There is clear indication that a one size fits all model of feedback is unlikely to succeed. However, limitations of the study can be attributed to the difficulty in separating external and internal motivation when most research used included feedback *and* grading, both of which could be sources of external motivation. That said the review is an important first step in providing empirical support for significant contextual factors and mechanisms in the feedback process.

2.8 Feedback research in nursing education

As discussed, there is a plethora of feedback research covering diverse subject disciplines and educational settings. Less is known about impact of context and specific requirements of students given the potential variation in situational and student variables (Ajjawi et al 2022; Esterhazy & Damsa 2019; Evans 2013). This research focuses on pre-registration nursing students on an undergraduate course in the United Kingdom (UK), regulated by the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) (NMC 2018). Students on pre-registration nursing programmes in the UK, receive feedback from a variety of sources. Professional regulatory requirements (NMC 2018) mean in addition to feedback on their academic work, students also receive feedback on their pre-registration nursing practise from health and social care practitioners. Additionally, the NMC include the requirement to ascertain feedback from individuals, families and carers that are in receipt of the student nurse's care. The diverse range and nature of nursing feedback, means that whilst they share common experiences with other students, they also experience additional feedback that may influence the overall experience of feedback. Nursing students differ in terms of the age and identified gender profiles, with UK Nursing students having a lower proportion of male applicants (11 percent) in comparison to UK undergraduate courses (42 percent). Mature students also take up a

higher proportion of undergraduate student nursing applicants (60 percent) in comparison to the overall rate of mature students applying for undergraduate programmes in the UK (24 percent) (UCAS 2021). Considering the course and demographic differences, I focused a literature review on the experience of feedback amongst student populations, where nursing students were all or part of the population group studied.

2.9 Protocol Search terms, results

A literature search question was developed using the Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome (PICO) framework (Richardson et al 1995). The PICO framework enables researchers to develop research questions enabling a systematic literature search of relevant data bases (Booth et al 2016). Having originated in the field of epidemiology, PICO is a widely used strategy for evidence-based practice and systematic reviews (Cook et al 2012). The framework is considered best suited to sourcing quantitative research (Cook et al 2012) and the sensitivity to elicit research sufficient for a reliable qualitative synthesis has been questioned (Cook et al 2012). Given that the focus of this research is experiential, research of interest is more likely to be qualitative and so modifications to the standard PICO are required. Qualitative research methods tend not to have a comparison group so in this case the **C** was removed. Additionally, complementary methods such as citation searching were an important part of ensuring relevant research is identified. A scoping search was undertaken to identify the appropriate data bases and the volume of literature (Booth et al 2016). Additionally, I consulted the subject librarian to ensure the protocol included appropriate data bases, search terms and follow up searches. Alternative search frameworks more suited to qualitative research were considered and employed as part of a scoping search, but the PICO method was the most effective for accessing the range of research methods addressing the search question.

A search protocol was developed (see **appendix C**) for the search question " What are student nurses' experiences of receiving written feedback on academic assessments?" Key search terms using synonyms, truncation symbols, and Boolean operators (AND OR) were used. The scoping search refined the limiters, inclusion, exclusion criteria and data bases for the search. The final protocol searched CINAHL, MEDLINE, Academic search complete EBSCO host (which includes Psyc Info, British Education Index, ERIC data bases) and Web of Science. The search terms were P "student* nurs*" OR "nurs* student*", I "written feedback" OR feedback OR "assessment feedback", O experience* OR perc* OR view or interpret*. Literature published since 2016 ensured currency and a feasible volume of results for the screening stage. Peer reviewed full text research published in English, limited the field to accessible research of publishable quality. The inclusion criteria included the presence of key words, empirical research where the experience of feedback as a main or only focus, and that the participants were in higher or further education. Articles were excluded on the basis that the feedback focused entirely on clinical skills, that student experience was not the primary focus, and that the research focused on peer feedback in the absence of feedback from academics. Articles were excluded where the sample did not include nursing students. However, articles were included if nursing students were part of a sample that included other undergraduate students. Excluding all papers where non nursing students were part of the sample would not have yielded sufficient research papers of the required quality for the review. Moreover, studies that included both nursing and non-nursing students highlighted nuance that applied to the nursing students within the sample. Thus, the inclusion of these articles was deemed beneficial for the narrative review.

To facilitate transparency of process, the results of the search, screening, inclusion, and final selection for appraisal are illustrated using a flow chart (see **appendix D**). The format of which is based on the Preferred Reporting System for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) (Moher et al 2010). The result of the process identified 13 research

articles for appraisal and of those, three were removed and 10 articles form the basis of a narrative review.

The included articles along with the study and key participant information is summarised and appraised in a data extraction table (**appendix E**). In summary, the research included was undertaken in domestic and international student contexts in higher education institutions in Australia, Pakistan, Tasmania, United Kingdom, and United States of America. Thus, they represent the influence of varied education systems, policies, and practices. All the appraised research included student nurses as participants, either as the entire population of interest or alongside participants from other fields of study. The research includes evidence gathered during different years of academic study, and both undergraduate and post graduate populations are represented. All of which influence the applicability of findings.

2.10 Narrative review

After reviewing the research, I grouped the studies according to their focus of interest, to bring together similar research findings. The first group included research where students were surveyed to provide a perspective on the feedback they received, these tend to be cross sectional or mixed methods research containing some descriptive numerical data (Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021). A systematic review of student's needs, and perspectives was also included in this grouping (Patterson et al 2020) as the research had a similar focus. The second group included research that explored the feedback experience of students within the feedback process. These studies yielded qualitative, experiential data (Hill et al 2021; Poorman & Mastorovich, 2019; Sieminski, et al 2016). The final grouping included research focused on approaches and innovations in feedback practice (Henderson et al 2022; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021). This group of research incorporated mixed method and integrative review designs. Each piece of research is presented chronologically within the corresponding group. The aim being to present the developing picture of research in the field. Each grouping contained

research of varying quality, though all generated important findings worthy of consideration for this research.

2.10.1 Student perspectives and views on their feedback

Douglas et al (2016) employed a mixed methods design with the aim of discovering whether students in their university actively seek feedback, and whether they perceive feedback as being something of value to their education. The research employed a short paper-based survey which was developed for the study, and comprised of open-ended questions. The design was informed by feedback literature and developed by the research group. Whilst the questionnaire is included in the publication, there is no discussion of attempts to assess reliability. That said, the survey has face validity, and the concepts and questions are clear and conceptually aligned to the research questions.

The survey asked students to list the forms of feedback, activities where they believe feedback should occur, and whether they actively sought feedback. They are also asked to include any associated circumstantial detail. Students participating in the research were first- and second-year students from three different campus sites in Tasmania and New South Wales and included health science, education, and nursing students. The education and health science students were in one of the three sites, nursing students were located across all three. Notably, one site included a large number of nursing students who were international students of Nepalese origin. Gender and age ranges varied.

The survey was distributed in class time by lecturers, who advised that completion was voluntary. The survey would be anonymised at the point of analysis, and participation would have no influence over grades. The survey yielded 321 responses (out of a possible 587). Student response numbers were converted to percentages and illustrated on a graph with the corresponding question number. Qualitative data from the survey was coded by the researchers, via an iterative process whereby researchers independently coded and then

exchanged notes and discussed until the themes were agreed. The codes were then validated by revisiting the original statements to cross reference.

Douglas et al (2016) argued the results indicated that feedback on essays and assignments were the most identified form of feedback. Summative assessment was most frequently identified as the learning activity where students stated feedback should occur, and over 50% gave an ambivalent or negative response as to whether their feedback was timely. The presentation of the quantitative data indicated some basic trends in the sample, but no information in relation to the site, year of study, trends in particular subject areas or difference in relation to demographics or status as an international or domestic student. Whilst the research did not aim to address these questions, the information gained from students could have been influenced by these factors.

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed four key themes, **1) Forms of feedback**: the survey responses showed that feedback tended to be linked to summative assessment and other sources of feedback such as peer, formative, self-evaluative were not recognised. The exception being nursing students who recognised feedback in the clinical environment. **2) Student seeking**: students viewed their lecturers as being in control of feedback and most students reported seeking additional feedback, either via email or in person in order to clarify feedback they had been given or offer guidance. **3) Feedback perception and awareness**: students demonstrated they were largely unaware of and did not understand the feedback on their programmes of study, importantly the authors commented the responses showed no indication of self-evaluative learning in the answers. **4) Educational value**: feedback was noted as being helpful for learning by most participants, with some advising they were undecided as to the helpfulness and some reporting feedback as discouraging and unhelpful. Douglas et al (2016) posited that students were naïve to feedback and the different sources of feedback available to them. Furthermore, that their feedback seeking behaviour could be connected to misunderstanding feedback or that they received inconsistent feedback, they also highlighted the importance of personalised feedback for

students. Consequently, they recommended programmes providing sessions for students that highlight the value of using feedback and orientate to potential sources of helpful feedback. Additionally, they advised development activity for academics to enable the provision of specific and advisory feedback.

Whilst the study presents some interesting findings, there are several limitations that impact on validity. Firstly, a pilot of the survey or an attempt to measure the reliability of the instrument would have enhanced the credibility of findings. In particular, the conclusion that students showed no awareness of self-reflective/ evaluative practice may have been connected to the wording of the survey rather than the student's awareness. Moreover, survey method is vulnerable to recall and response bias and there is limited discussion on attempts to mitigate or acknowledge the influence of these aspects. Of note is the distribution of a paper-based survey by lecturers in class, which were then *de-identified* prior to analysis. This indicates students in class completed the form with their name on and submitted the results to the lecturer. This is likely to have increased the likelihood of response bias, where concern about an honest response being seen by their lecturer may influence the answer given.

In contrast Carey et al (2017) utilised a closed question self-report survey utilising a Likert scale format to gather student attitudes to assessment feedback at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). The purpose of the study was to capture data that could inform university assessment and feedback policy with a view to enhancing student satisfaction. The survey was distributed by lecturers in class time, though in this instance the surveys were completed anonymously. The sample included students from biological sciences (n=564) social science (n=363), law (n= 312) and nursing (n=268). Students were mostly full time (95.7%), the minority were over 24 (16.9%) and were mostly in the first year of study (year one n=41%, year two n= 28.6% and year three n=27% discrepancy due to non-complete surveys). In total 1409 questionnaires were returned. The data was double entered into a spreadsheet then analysed via statistical package for social science (SPSS) (Bryman &

Cramer 1990). Significant associations of variance were identified using a chi-squared test for nominal data and analysis of variance for original data. The resulting analysis provided general information on the views and attitudes of students toward assessment feedback in LJMU at a point in time. The results indicated that just under half those that completed the survey doubted whether feedback helped improve their performance, and a large majority of students cited verbal feedback being as important as written (80%). Carey et al (2017) posited these results as an indicator that students had a holistic view of feedback. Though two thirds of responses indicated they viewed the final grade as the most important aspect.

Students indicated they received feedback at the same time as the grade (70.1%) with indications that students viewed feedback and summative grading as linked together. There were limited variations in views of feedback between the subject groupings, except for nursing students who were more likely to view assessment as unevenly distributed throughout the year. The analysis of variance demonstrated relationships between course work collection and students understanding of and trust in the assessment process. Student agreement was lowest on the feedforward aspect of feedback, indicating this aspect of feedback was experienced the least. Students were asked to rank the usefulness of feedback and the responses demonstrated a clear preference for one-to-one discussion with the module tutor, followed by one-to-one discussion with the personal tutor. Written comments on the feedback sheet ranked third and was followed by annotations on the assessment. Individual email with specific comments ranked fifth. General feedback, either given to the whole class, by email ranked in the lower half of preferences, with peer feedback as the lowest rated.

The authors acknowledged that the survey outcome raised some challenges with regard to the feasibility of providing the preferred method of feedback, namely individual face to face feedback. However, there were some interesting conclusions and recommendations which mirror some of the recommendations made by Douglas et al (2016). Carey et al (2017) advised that all students should be offered individualised commentary on their work, that is

designed to inform future improvement. Rather than adopt a policy of one-to-one in person feedback, Carey et al posit that actions focused on how students engage in the process of assessment would be of likely benefit. For example, facilitating student sessions that focus on understanding the assessment criteria and marking process as a means of enhancing student satisfaction.

Overall, the survey is an attempt to explore attitudes to understand the universities performance on the assessment and feedback criteria of the National Student Survey (NSS). Consequently, the approach and recommendations are more geared towards understanding attitudes and identifying potential strategies to raise satisfaction, than on enhancing learning experience and pedagogy. The large sample size and comparable student population make this an interesting study, along with a recurrence of the theme of the importance of student's awareness and use of feedback. Both elements have relevance to my research, which explores the experience of nursing students in a similar post 1992 university. However, a weakness of this research is in the conclusion. There are some clear indicators of students' preference for relational and bespoke feedback, and recommendations aligned with these insights are largely absent. Moreover, the authors acknowledge the potential response bias within the survey results, in that students who completed were more likely to engage with feedback. They report this as a potential reason as to why the survey response indicated students collected their assessment feedback when the anecdotal reports from lecturers were that assessment feedback were rarely collected.

Arguably, there is an indication that the findings did not match expectation, so rather than making clear recommendations on the findings, the importance is downplayed. From reading the study and results, a logical recommendation would be to explore efficient pedagogical methods that enhance the student experience of person-centred feedback within the bounds of the university resource.

On a much smaller scale Sultan & Gideon (2021) employed a cross sectional design to explore undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of educator feedback. The sample

included 38 nursing students who were in the fourth year of study at a private college of nursing in Pakistan. Students were aged between 20 and 26 years of age and 68% of the participants identified as male. Student responses were via self-report completion of an adapted Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ) (Gibbs and Simpson 2003). The AEQ is a self-report instrument using a Likert scale (0-5) to endorse agreement or disagreement with statements and a score of 2 being the halfway point (reliability demonstrated by Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.74- 0.87). The measure contains four subscales relating to 1) quality and timing, 2) quality, 3) utilisation and 4) type of feedback. The authors state the scale was modified for use in Pakistani context by nurse educators, and pilot tested. A copy of the final amended document was included in the publication. Results of the survey were submitted to SPSS and descriptive statistics calculated; these were percentage rates of responses to each question along with standard deviations (SD) from the mean.

The results indicate an overall lack of satisfaction with feedback as the margin of agreement in three out four criteria scored at the halfway point or lower. Quality and timing criteria were the worst performing with a mean score of 1.8 (SD 0.49). Within this category student responses indicated that feedback was not specific, brief, hindered improvement, was delivered too late to be helpful and student threatened self-esteem. The quality of feedback criteria responses averaged at 2.09 (SD 0.39) with endorsements indicating students didn't find the feedback helpful for improvement or understanding. Type of feedback criteria results showed 89% advised they received verbal feedback as opposed to written. The utilisation of feedback criteria scored 2.14 (SD 0.51) and with students reporting they didn't read the feedback (58%), this category received the most neutral answers responses.

Overall, the information presents a negative view of feedback practice, however the sample size is small, and given the specificity of the sample (mostly male, fourth year nursing undergraduates on one course in one nursing college in Pakistan) the findings are not generalisable. Additionally, it isn't clear that the amendments to the AEQ were assessed to check whether they resulted in reduced reliability.

Sultan and Gideon (2021) recommend that educators should receive training and guidance on how to provide feedback. Indeed, as a piece of research, this reads as an evaluation of the feedback practices on a course, and thus the recommendation that educators on the course receive training on how to provide feedback is logical. The research itself, lacks some coherence and consistency in that there is no clearly articulated question. Moreover, the title and abstract indicate the research is focused on students' perceptions of educator feedback whereas the AEQ appears to be an evaluation tool. The key issue here is that perception focuses on making sense of something, and evaluation involves making a judgement about it. In this case students are being invited to endorse statements of judgement about the feedback they have received. With regard to generalisability and validity of their results, Sultan and Gideon (2017) indicate they recognise the limitations in their research by recommending further research following more robust design. That said, there are aspects of this research that are worth noting. Specifically, that recommendations for feedback focused development activity for the academics involved in feedback is also a recommendation from Douglas et al (2016) and Carey et al (2017).

In a more robust study, Paterson et al (2020) employed a systematic review design to investigate the research question "What are students' needs and preferences for feedback in higher education?". The research team provided a clear audit trail of the process by which research papers were accessed, screened, and appraised using the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al 2009). All papers meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria up to 2018 were included. The screening of titles and abstracts was completed independently by two researchers, as was the data abstraction. Once complete, the researchers compared results to reach agreement on the final selection for appraisal any disagreements were resolved by discussion or the involvement of a third review author. The comparison and verification are an essential part of the review process, as selection involves judgement and is vulnerable to bias. A data extraction tool was developed and piloted by reviewers. Paterson et al (2020) illustrate the quality appraisal of each paper in tabular form and reference the appraisal tools

used for qualitative, quantitative research (Dixon-Woods et al 2005) and mixed methods research (Pluye et al 2011, updated Hong et al 2018).

Following selection and appraisal, 36 studies were included in the systematic review of which six included nursing students as at least part of the sample. The sample size of the 36 studies ranged from n=10 to n= 1409. Interestingly the Carey et al (2017) is the study with the largest sample. Douglas et al (2016) is also included in the review. The remaining studies involving nursing students were prior to 2016 so do not feature in the narrative review for this research. One notable exception being Schellenbarger et al (2018) which I reviewed as part of the narrative review. However, the research concerned the development of a self-assessment tool and did not focus on feedback from academics. As such, it did not meet the inclusion criteria for my narrative review.

The evidence synthesis included a narrative synthesis and tabulation of the results. The narrative synthesis component followed guidance from Whittemore and Knafl (2005) and incorporated a process of data reduction, based on the levels of evidence and alignment with the review question. Subsequently, data comparison was undertaken as an iterative process making comparisons between papers and identifying relationships. Finally, the researchers engaged in conclusion verification.

Patterson et al (2020) noted a general picture that the research in the area was not methodologically robust, with most failing to report the reliability or validity of the instruments they used. Studies often didn’t disclose the relationship with the participants and three studies had small sample sizes. Generalisability was affected in studies where students were recruited from a single education institution. Additionally, several studies provided no demographic data on participants and five studies were appraised as lacking transparency regarding the qualitative methods used. However, despite the methodological limitations three themes emerged from the review.

The first theme concerned students' **preferences for feedback.** This included timeliness, a balance between positive and negative comments, direct feedback on content, linguistic clarity and legibility, grade justification, and feedforward comments. The second theme concerned **psychological impacts** of feedback. This incorporated the emotional impact on students, and the influence on their confidence, motivation, and ability to cope. Interestingly, Patterson et al (2020) noted that six of the 36 studies reported that imbedding student preferences into their feedback helped motivate and encourage students. A final theme of **multimodal feedback** was identified, whereby a combination of different forms of feedback were of value to students. This included face to face, audio recorded, digital approaches. Verbal feedback was viewed as more detailed and students valued discussion and the opportunity to clarify points, whereas electronic feedback was generally perceived as less personal.

In conclusion, Patterson et al (2020) argue the findings indicate that students value multi modal approaches to feedback, and that irrespective of the mode, there is a need for feedback to be personalised and unique to the student. They also advise that educators consider the emotional impact of their feedback on the student. Three main recommendations are made, firstly that educators should incorporate the student preference in the feedback provided. They should include a balance between positive and negative comments, feedback should be direct, linguistically accessible, and legible, be helpful for their progress and personalised. Secondly, educators should be mindful that their feedback can invoke powerful emotions, impacting on levels of confidence and motivation. Finally, that educators provide multimodal feedback, which may include audio, written and face to face approaches.

The review is comprehensive and Paterson et al (2020) acknowledge the results and recommendations are limited by the methodological issues of research included in the narrative synthesis. The diversity in location, measure, type of student, and approaches complicates the evidence synthesis. Moreover, the international context of the research

included means differing educational polices, systems and cultures will be influencing student expectations and preferences. However, the result indicating the importance of individualised, understandable feedback that considers the emotional impact on students appears to be an emerging evidence base, and a reasonable recommendation for good feedback practice. Paterson et al (2020) conclude with a recommendation that future research explore the role demographic variables have on students' needs for feedback at different points in their development.

2.10.2 Experience of feedback

Research questions concerning student experience of feedback lend themselves to qualitative research methods. Such methods facilitate an in-depth understanding of a phenomena but tend to be less generalisable. The following three studies use qualitative research methods in order to tune into the experience of feedback from the student's perspective. Each vary in size and scope, and philosophical approach but all use the students' own words as the data source.

Whilst not specifically focused on a feedback question, Sieminski et al (2016) employed a case study method to explore aspects that helped struggling students succeed. What transpired were accounts of experience which highlighted the importance of feedback for each participant interviewed. The participants were Open University (OU) students who were selected on the basis that they had received a first assessment borderline pass (40-45 percent) and then went on to improve their grades in subsequent assessments. Undergraduate students in this position were contacted by letter and invited to be interviewed (n=33). Seven students agreed to be interviewed, three from nursing programmes and four from social work programmes. All participants identified as white British women, their ages ranged from 37 to 59 and were all widening participation students who had been previously out of education for a long period. All students were sponsored to undertake the course by an employer. Students were interviewed over the phone by two of

the research team. The interviews were transcribed which was followed by a thematic analysis of the information provided in each case. Thematic analysis was undertaken by the whole research team. The study focused on exploring how these students had sustained motivation and improved academic attainment, and so the findings are not generalisable.

The results provided an ideographic account of each student including information on their outside responsibilities, home, and work life, along with confidence and motivational aspects. The thematic analysis identified four themes emerging from the seven student accounts. **1) Feedback:** students valued discussions with their tutors, they reported internalising and applying their insights from the feedback in subsequent assignments. However, for this to occur, feedback needed to be accessible and understandable. **2) Social learning**: students engaged with their peers and colleagues, creating communities of practice for learning (Wenger 1998). All students reported learning activity beyond what was formally provided, and they were proactive in seeking this out. **3) Sponsorship:** the financial investment from a sponsoring employer along with the provision of study time was a motivating and facilitating factor. Two students referred to the support from partners and family, in that they were able to relinquish some home responsibilities to create space and time for study. **4) Emotional vulnerability**: in all cases students had been reluctant to speak to tutors before submitting their first assessment. Sieminski et al (2016) proposed the reluctance was motivated by a fear of exposing perceived deficiencies. Emotional vulnerability was displayed by all participants with each stating that feedback had invoked strong emotions for them.

Whilst acknowledging the case study findings were not intended to be generalised, a number of recommendations are made. The first being that tutors **proactively support engagement** rather than wait for an approach from students. Secondly, that tutors **be alert to potential anxiety and emotional vulnerability** among students and be sensitive to this in their style of feedback. Third, that feedback is provided in an accessible and intelligible format for students. Finally, that even with well written feedback, for some students this is not sufficient for learning and a **social setting for learning** needs to be in place. In line with social

constructivist perspectives on learning (Vygotsky 1978), which recommend creating and encouraging opportunities for students to engage in social learning with peers and colleagues. Interestingly Evans' (2013) feedback landscape model is also reflected.

The notion of a social setting and the external influence of work and home life for learning is absent from the other studies presented in this section. As student learning does not exist in a vacuum, it seems reasonable to consider the external factors influence on the students experience of learning and engagement, and consideration of this is perhaps precluded when the research question focuses on the nature of feedback or the students preference for feedback approach. The advantage of a more open exploratory approach to research enquiry is that influencing variables that have not been previously considered can be revealed and then be explored further. Moreover, the research conveys a similar message about the importance of providing personalised accessible feedback and the importance of considering the emotional impact of feedback (Carey 2017; Douglas et al 2016 Paterson et al 2020).

The weakness of the case study includes the lack of information concerning the process by which themes were developed, the presentation of the information makes it difficult to establish the degree of bias at the interview, interpretation and write up stages. Consequently, the accuracy of what is presented cannot be established. However, the research has opened an area for further study, namely consideration of the external factors that could influence the feedback experience.

Poorman and Mastorovich (2019) employed Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology to explore the meaning of assessment grades to nursing students. They interviewed students (n=46) from 20 nursing programmes in 14 nursing schools in the USA. The sample included Baccalaureate (n=18) Masters (n=15) and Doctoral (n=13) students. The interviews were face to face and each student was asked to "Tell us about a time that stands out for you when you were graded? Now reflect on your story and describe what this means to you". Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and anonymised. The researchers met on a

regular basis to read, re read and write individual interpretations of each narrative with the aim of revealing the meaning of the experience.

The main theme identified was **Needing an A**, which occurred across all participants regardless of the level or location of study. Poorman and Mastorovich (2019) provided excerpts from the interpreted narratives, which illustrate the theme and the associated experience. In some cases, needing an A stemmed from childhood experience of being rewarded by family, criticised, or compared to others. In some cases, personal identity was connected to being an “A student”, and falling short meant letting themself and others down. Many students reported that any assessment that was graded led to anxiety and some reported physical symptoms such as chest pain.

There was a sense in many narratives that the grade was more important than the learning. One notable exception included a student who had focused on the development of their nursing practice and as their confidence grew the grade mattered less.

No generalisations or conclusions were drawn from the research, instead points were raised for educators to consider. Firstly, that educators should consider the power of words on students, as many had reported negative feedback experiences that stayed with them. Additionally, educators should consider how best to help a student who believes they need an A and consider helping students consider grades from different perspectives. Poorman and Mastorovich (2019) recommend using narrative pedagogy, sharing stories, and listening to the issue of grades from other perspective in order to develop empathy for the student experience.

Despite being Heideggerian HP this research provides little insights into the Heideggerian concepts revealing the interpreted construct. An exploration of the meanings alongside concepts such as authenticity, conforming and care would provide further transparency of the interpretive process. That said, there are some interesting insights, not least a continuation of the theme that summative assessment and feedback experiences are

emotionally laden. Similar to the findings in Sieminski et al (2017), wider personal history and social influences are present in the student narratives. However, assessments and grading in the American nursing education system are different to the UK. An A grade tends to be linked with a mark of 90 percent or above and marks contribute to a grade point average which can be influenced by class attendance; hence caution is exercised when considering transferability of meaning to a UK student experience.

On a much larger scale, Hill et al (2021a) investigated emotions encountered by undergraduate students in relation to their feedback and presented associated implications for educators. The research gathered qualitative data from undergraduate students from three universities. Namely, first year health science students from Indiana University Purdu University Indianapolis USA (n=19); second year geography students from University of the West of England (n=6) and third- and fourth-year nursing students from MacEwan University, Canada (n=5). In total 30 students participated. The objective of the research was three-fold. Firstly, to identify the nature, strength, and persistence of emotions after receiving instructor feedback. Secondly, to explore whether the emotional reactions informed attitudes to future assessments. Finally, to examine whether emotions influenced their learning overall.

The data was gathered via small group semi structured interview and reflective diaries. The small group interviews were facilitated by research assistants. The aim being to reduce the chance of teacher familiarity influencing the discussion. The group interviews lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. There were between three and four students in the group and three quarters of group participants identified as female. The interview questions were piloted in one of the groups and then six groups (including pilot) took place (total participants in small groups n=24). Six students maintained an electronic personal diary to capture key reflections. The diary was maintained over the duration of the module in the student’s own time. Diaries were voluntary and anonymous; all diaries were completed by female students between the ages of 18 and late 20’s.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis guidance (Braun & Clark 2013). The researchers also acknowledge that the interpretation was influenced by the researcher's knowledge of concepts related to the focus of study. All researchers undertook pre analysis coding to confirm inter-rater reliability. This involved all researchers reading one transcript and manually coding phrases as units of analysis. A calibration phase involved the identification of themes which were agreed by the whole team, then the remaining scripts were coded by two researchers using the constant comparative method (Straus & Corbin 1994). Once coded, the whole team reviewed and finalised the identified themes. The same process was applied to the reflective diaries.

In relation to the nature strength and persistence of emotions following feedback, the results indicated negative feedback tended to invoke negative emotions. The researchers noted a pattern of overthinking and a sense of failure conveyed by students, especially in the early years of a course. Negative emotions had a hard impact, were burdensome and tended to linger. This was most prominent in students in the earlier years and students showed signs they adapted their response to negative feedback and could process negative emotions faster as the course progressed. Positive feedback evoked largely positive emotions with students expressing that they felt cared about. Positive feedback was easily received and invoked positive emotions which were more fleeting than the negative emotions invoked by negative feedback.

Data relating to the consequences of emotions showed negative emotions were described as hindering improvements by demotivating or reducing self-confidence. This was more prominent in the early years of a course with student responses indicated this had a detrimental impact on faculty-student relationships. Some students indicated resilience by seeking direction and dialogue with instructors, but this tended to be students in the later years of study. Positive emotions enhanced self-efficacy, self-esteem and the ability to plan and organise work. Whilst motivating for some, positive emotions of relief and pride reduced the desire to act on feedback. Feedback was taken personally by most students which had

an impact on learner identity. This in turn affected the broader learning experiences, both positively and negatively.

Hill et al (2021a) concluded that feedback has an emotional impact that is long lasting (in the case of negative feedback) which can be detrimental for self-efficacy and motivation and extends beyond the assessment episode. Students are particularly vulnerable to this in the early years of a course. The proposed implications for instructors, advising that feedback should be expressed carefully to support the emotional preparedness of the student. They advise a balance of negative and positive comments that offer clear direction for improvement and acknowledge the student's effort. They recommend *feedback rich low-stakes* assessment environments with a focus on improving student literacy in the early part of the course. Additionally, they advise improving feedback literacy amongst academic staff via instructional policy and training programmes.

This research specifically focuses on the emotional impact of feedback and supports previous research findings that feedback has an emotional impact and an influence on student self- esteem, efficacy and confidence (Carey et al, 2017; Douglas et al, 2016; Patterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021).

The research provides additional insights into the impact on future assessments and learning which are important considerations for educators. They also cite clear limitations to the research, such as the risk of recall bias and a tendency for students to answer questions in particular way. Specifically, the potential influence of being interviewed in a group, whereby individual responses could be influenced by other group participants. Hill et al (2021a) consider the risk that some participants may lack reflective capacity and were unable to provide reflective accounts. All participants volunteered to attend an interview or maintain a diary, as a result the information captured is likely to have been from those most motivated to provide feedback on their experiences and important information held by less motivated students was missed. Moreover, researcher interpretation of the participants

articulated thoughts adds an additional subjective lens which could bias the information. To this end, there was an attempt to reduce bias by all researchers reading all transcripts, and the use of triangulation across group interview and diary data.

The research highlights the power academics have to influence students' emotions and learning. The suggested recommendations tend to align with a hierarchical view of education and development, with academics taking the lead in changing their practice and guiding students, and limited consideration of outside influence. Importantly, the results point to students being more able to cope in later years, and there is no discussion or mention of data indicating the role academics play in this transformation. The observed change in coping could for instance be influenced by familiarity with course, assessment process, faculty personnel or the university systems. Moreover, the change may be the result of influence from communities of practice, or from outside the academic environment.

Participants came from three universities located in different countries with very different educational systems and assessment processes. The international sampling frame was presented as a positive element of the research. However, there was limited discussion of the difference, and this is especially important given that each university and course included students from different years of study. The research outcomes are presented developmentally, as though year one health students in the USA would develop along similar lines to the year two geography students in the UK and student nurses in the final two years of study in Canada. The data was taken within one year of a course, and the students journey through the feedback on their respective programmes may have been too different to warrant the presentation of collective outcomes. Importantly, the third- and fourth-year students who were most expedient in processing negative feedback were all nursing students who will have received multiple episodes of feedback whilst on clinical placement. Consideration of placement learning feedback as an influencing variable in the acclimatisation to feedback was not sufficiently discussed. Moreover, there is no discussion of the potential influence of peers and wider social network have on the, which was such a

feature of findings in the Sieminski et al (2017) case study. Though this is likely because consideration of the student within their wider social system was not part of the research aims.

2.10.3 Researching assessment feedback strategies for learning

In recent years there has been a move to research assessment feedback strategies that promote active student participation and feedback literacy (Pitt & Quinlan 2022). The following three studies explore different assessment feedback strategies that aim to improve learning and attainment. Mackintosh-Franklin (2021) used a mixed methods design to evaluate formative feedback and its impact on undergraduate student nurse academic attainment. First and second year nursing students in an English university (n=353) were offered the opportunity to submit a 500-word draft to an online portal for review, with just under a third (n=115) submitting a draft.

In addition to the number of drafts, the amount and characteristics of formative feedback provided was collected from the academics providing feedback (n=12). Academic achievement was taken from an exam board spreadsheet enabling comparison of attainment between students who did and did not submit a draft. Additional data capture included academics marking workload on the module. This was calculated as the total number of formative drafts and total number of summative assessments marked, and the number of words each member of the feedback team provided on the draft submissions. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-squared test.

A thematic analysis of the feedback comments using six stage thematic analysis (Braun & Clark (2006) was undertaken. This included an initial familiarisation with the material followed by coding. In contrast to other studies presented, there was no reference to any other researcher, supervisor or peer verifying the resulting themes. Mackintosh-Franklin noted a variation in the style and format of feedback provided. One academic did not provide

any individual feedback, but rather sent a generic email to students, some feedback was made of generic statements that were copied to all the drafts reviewed, and some academics provided lengthy detailed individualised feedback.

Three qualitative themes were identified in the feedback provided, the first of which was **factual correctional feedback.** This was the most prolific form of feedback, most of which was supportive, with some characterised as “somewhat blunt”. **Dialogue with individual students** was the second identified theme. Some students included questions in their drafts, which were answered in the feedback, and some academics posed developmental questions to the students. The final theme was **encouraging feedback**, which nearly all markers included in their feedback to students. Two of the 12 did not include any encouraging feedback and two use encouragement inconsistently, with some identified as including “less than encouraging critical feedback”.

Within the quantitative results, students who submitted a draft were more likely to achieve an A grade (21% compared to 12%) and none failed (compared to 6%). Achievement scores from the formative group tested against the non-submission group showed high significance ($p= 0.003$). There was no significant difference in performance of the formative group in relation to the individual marker and amount of feedback they were provided with ($p=0.28$). When academic achievement of all students was tested using chi squared test for trend against individual markers, no significant difference was identified ($p=0.562$).

In conclusion, whilst the students who submitted a draft were significantly more likely to attain a better grade and less likely to fail, this was independent of the formative feedback provided, or the marker who provided it. The submission of the draft, rather than the feedback from the draft was the mediating factor in attainment. Whilst acknowledging that the finding should be viewed as an evaluation of formative assessment on a specific course; Mackintosh-Franklin used the findings to query the evidence base for formative feedback, suggesting that the picture may be more nuanced. The characteristics of those who submit a draft may better account for higher attainment. The findings are positioned with other

research which highlights the qualities of self-efficacy and self-regulation as being of greater importance in determining higher academic achievement (Hattie and Timperley 2007; Orsmond and Merry 2013).

The research introduces ideas that could influence assessment strategies in reducing the amount of written feedback, especially in a climate where the academic resource is challenged. There are however several limitations to the study that need consideration. Firstly, Mackintosh-Franklin identifies the limitation in that the data capture methods did not facilitate identification of domestic and international students, age group or other external factors that could have influenced submission of a draft and student outcomes. Hence, the conclusion that individual student characteristics such as self-efficacy and self-regulation are the key mediator for achievement is far from clear.

The difference between students who achieve higher grades and those who don't may also be connected to pressures on time, resource, and social support. The identification of themes was the weaker part of the research, with limited information on the verification process involved in identifying each theme. A discussion of the themes was largely absent from the discussion section, and there was no commentary on whether the feedback was geared towards developing students' motivation and self-efficacy. Indeed, once the quantitative results were presented the significance of the qualitative data diminished and a somewhat pessimistic view of the value of formative feedback prevailed.

In considering how Macintosh-Franklin's research links with wider educational research, there are studies indicating that the provision of better formative and summative research are not in themselves sufficient for better performance (Caress & Boud 2018; Milne et al 2020; Molloy et al 2020; Winstone et al 2017). But equally there are studies that indicate feedback rich environments, formative assessments and the opportunity to enact feedback led to improved performance (Esterhazy & Damsa 2019; McKay 2019; O'Mally et al 2021; Uribe & Vaughn 2017). The feedback issue is complex, and an additional feedback

opportunity is likely to produce the “Mathew effect” (Boud et al 2019) of providing further benefit for those that are likely to do well anyway.

The research presented so far include varying perspectives on the degree of responsibility in the feedback relationship, with Mackintosh-Franklin (2021) weighting towards the learner and Hill et al (2021a) and Douglas et al (2016) weighting towards the academic. What appears to be emerging from this review is the importance of partnership between educators and students in understanding the process and impact of feedback along with a move towards supporting students to develop their self-evaluative capabilities (Ajjawi et al 2022; Molloy et al 2020; Winstone et al 2017a; Winstone et al 2017b). Ilangakoon et al (2022) explore the relationship between feedback and evaluative judgements in nursing and midwifery education via an integrative review of the literature. Evaluative judgement is a relatively recent term in higher education research and is defined as “the capability to make decisions about the quality of work of self and others” (Ajjawi et al 2018 p7). The term evaluative judgement is not found in nursing and midwifery education prior to 2020, but the practice and evaluation of pedagogy aimed at developing evaluative judgement is likely to be present in the literature albeit under a different heading. Identifying these papers was an attempt to provide an evidence base for practices aimed at developing evaluative judgements in nursing and midwifery education. The integrative review (Ilangakoon et al 2022) searched data bases for relevant nursing and midwifery education literature since 1989 until 2020 and provided information on the search strategy (including data bases and search terms). Eligibility criteria (inclusion and exclusion) were used to identify studies where evaluative judgement may have been part of the research. All were presented in table form. 1408 articles were retrieved, 856 titles and abstracts were screened and 36 appraised for quality using the Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Primary Research Papers (Kmet et al 2004). Each study was assessed by two researchers independently and any difference in scoring was discussed with the whole team until consensus was reached. 18 papers met the threshold for inclusion in the analysis and the procedure was illustrated via a PRISMA

table (Moher et al 2009). One third of the studies were coded individually then the research team met to verify and agree the coding framework. This was then used by the lead researcher to code the remaining studies and checked by the team. Findings were presented thematically and included illustrative quotes for verification. Of the 18 papers, 12 were qualitative, two were mixed methods and two were quantitative, and the students were from different universities across the globe (one from the UK). Most studies in the integrative review focused on clinical or simulated environments, the inclusion of studies focused on academic assessment feedback led to my including Ilangakoon et al (2022) in this narrative review.

Seven themes were identified from the data synthesis, 1) **Conceptions of feedback varied:** most defined as a both feedback on performance and a dialogic process (10), less commonly studies described feedback as either the provision of general information about performance (n=7) or a dialogic process (n=7). One study defined feedback as the transmission of information from educator to student. 2) **Purposes of feedback**: most studies described the purpose as learning and improved performance (n=15), with some referring to the integration of theory and practice (n=10). Feedback as a form of validation of performance aimed at motivation and grade justification was the next most frequently identified purpose (n=8). Feedback as a means of reassuring by confirming existing knowledge and boosting confidence was the least cited purpose (n=1). 3) **Sources of feedback:** were noted most frequently as coming from educators (n=16), from peers (n=9) and from patients and families (n=3). Educators were the preferred source of feedback, concerns were raised about summative feedback from peers, but peer feedback valued in formative assessment activity. 4) **Modes:** included written feedback via rubrics, marking criteria, frameworks, assessment instruments and written textual comments. Written feedback was considered the most informative. Verbal feedback in the clinical environment was commonly perceived as vague and was the most frequent mode of feedback by peers, patients, and their relatives. Visual feedback, which included reviewing videos of oneself, or

peers was deemed helpful in developing insights into errors and witnessing alternative approaches. Haptic feedback was also identified as a helpful mode in clinical procedure simulation. 5) **Concepts of evaluative judgements** were identified as reflection in some studies (n=9), self-assessment against standards, rubrics, or assessment instruments were helpful in promoting self-reflection on performance. The use of problem-based learning and simulation were also useful strategies for facilitating evaluative judgements. The presence of both self-assessment and reflection were thought to be essential for the students to effectively assess the quality of their work and the work of others. 6) **Purpose of evaluative judgements** was identified as supporting personal growth, preparing for clinical practice, and supporting independence. Additionally, the development of evaluative judgements enabled students to integrate and transfer their knowledge, which included transferring knowledge to practice. 7) **Relationship between feedback and evaluative judgements**: in all eighteen studies Ilangakoon et al (2022) identified an apparent relationship between evaluative judgements and feedback. This occurred when students were engaged in learning experiences that were perceived as meaningful and those where they engaged in self-assessment against criteria. Students reported being unable to use educator feedback when they were unable to relate to or understand the information, consequently the feedback didn't inform evaluative judgements.

Ilangakoon et al (2022) conclude that concepts of evaluative judgements exist as a process and outcome in nursing and midwifery education literature. Moreover, they recommend that students should have an active role in the feedback process for evaluative capabilities to develop. This research is an important step in understanding and developing effective feedback strategies, though there are limitations to the study. The concept of evaluative judgements is new and so the identification has relied entirely on the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation that the construct is present under a different guise. This risks researcher selection bias and there may be important studies that were missed. Moreover, it is difficult to discern the causal connection between feedback and evaluative judgement. The

students showing evaluative judgements may have these prior to the feedback endeavour, it could be part of their ability and aptitude profile (Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Orsmond & Merry 2013). Additionally, students exist in a social world and there may be external factors at play which are not yet identified or understood (Evans 2013).

The research provides a potential theory as to why feedback does not always achieve its effective purpose. The key ingredient to successful feedback may be the degree to which it enables students to develop evaluative judgements. To this end, students need to value, understand, and actively engage with feedback, and educators are required to design programmes that facilitate active engagement (Ajjawi et al 2022; Boud & Dawson 2023; Carless & Winstone 2020).

The final study in this review investigates the use of consensus marking as a grading method for development of evaluative judgement (Henderson et al 2022). The study employed a mixed methods parallel research design. The aim being to explore post graduate emergency nursing students' perceptions of oral viva examinations using consensus marking compared to traditional assessor judgement. The research deviates from my search question which aims to explore experiences of receiving *written* feedback on written work, in that much of the feedback in this study is oral, however the study examines a dialogic approach to providing feedback on written academic work to examine whether this has an influence on the development of evaluative judgement. Thus, this study was considered relevant for inclusion in that it contributes new knowledge to the experience, which may have implications for the practice of written feedback.

The research explored the perceptions of the learning experience and the relationship with the assessor, and the difference in student anxiety and satisfaction between the grading methods. The sample were post graduate students undertaking an emergency nursing module (n=56). A descriptive generic qualitative approach was used, and the consolidating criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) was used to guide the qualitative component of the study. The research included two conditions for the viva assessment. The

first viva took place online during week six of the course and was judged and assessed by the academic responsible for teaching. The grade was guided by a marking rubric and the process took approximately 10 minutes. The second viva took place online 13 weeks into the course and used consensus marking. This involved the same assessor engaging the student in a reflection and evaluation of their performance against required standards and guided by a rubric. Before the mark was given, a feedback conversation took place between the student and assessor, whereby the student and assessor measured the student's knowledge against the expected standard. A consensus between the student and the assessor was achieved and the grade awarded. The process took approximately 15 minutes. Following the assessments all students were invited to an online interview about their perception of the viva examinations. The interviews were completed by researchers who were not involved in teaching or assessment on the module. Of the 56 students invited, 13 agreed to be interviewed.

The interviews were transcribed and anonymised and then coded by all researchers on the team using Braun and Clark (2006) six stage thematic analysis. The researchers engaged in an iterative process to identify codes which were inductively conceptualised to form themes. Two of the researchers then reviewed the transcribed interviews to verify the codes and themes.

Anxiety was measured by the Exam Anxiety Scale (EAI) (Bedewy & Gabriel 2013) which was administered three days before each viva. Satisfaction was measured by the Satisfaction in Oral Viva Assessment Scale (SOVA) (Salamonson et al 2016) immediately after both vivas. Anxiety and satisfaction results were tested for normal distribution using Shapiro-Wilk test. The test found that familiar test anxiety endorsements were unlikely to be the result of normal distribution on the first viva. Negative self-concept and autonomic response along with familiar test anxiety endorsements were unlikely to be the result of normal distribution in second viva. Incomplete questionnaires were removed resulting 46 out of a possible 53 were included in study (82%).

Six themes were identified, 1) **Accountability for learning:** 10/13 said a viva assessment compelled them to learn and made them feel accountable. 2) **Authentic assessment that translates to clinical practice:** 8/13 expressed that the oral viva with consensus marking reflected the realities of work life where they were expected to debrief following incidents. 3) **Feedback dialogues and immediacy:** 11/13 stated that consensus marking gave immediate and detailed feedback and facilitated their understanding of where they needed to improve and where they did well. 4) **Reflection and understanding:** 8/13 appreciated the opportunity to reflect and elaborate their performance, and that it assisted them in identifying future learning needs. 5) **Test Anxiety:** 12/13 said the viva caused them anxiety, one had increase in anxiety in consensus marking condition as they were nervous about the prospect of marking themselves. Most said their anxiety reduced in consensus marking viva. 6) **Voice shifting and power dynamics**: 9/13 used words indicating their involvement and influence in consensus marking (justify, explain, discuss, rationalise) with some reporting that the ability to have a voice in the process reduced the degree of stress. The Anxiety tests showed significant reduction in consensus marking $p=0.001$. Satisfaction increased with consensus marking $p= 0.01$.

Henderson et al (2022) conclude that consensus marking facilitated student-centred learning and was similar to a clinical debrief in the work environment. The approach promoted self-evaluative judgement and students reported less anxiety and greater satisfaction. However, they note important limitations within the study. Firstly, the assessor's involvement with the research could have influenced students' disclosure during the interviews. The consensus marking took place during the second assessment and so the reduction in anxiety may be the result of familiarity rather than the method. To that end, further research investigating student perceptions of the assessment where the viva using consensus marking took place first, and the traditional assessor judgement took place second, may provide valuable insights. The number of students interviewed was a small proportion of the group. The

students who volunteered may have done so because they had something they wanted to say and may not represent the prevailing views of the group.

In addition to the acknowledge limitations, there are further points to consider. The students were post graduate nurses on an emergency nursing module. The interviewed participants refer to using clinical debrief in their practice. As such it is likely that the students already possess self-evaluative judgement capabilities, consequently it is difficult to establish if the approach evidenced what was already established, developed these as a result of the approach or extended the evaluative judgement to a new area. The reduction in anxiety is an unremarkable finding that could equally be attributed to familiarity or an increase in confidence related to having completed more of the course. The transferability of the research is limited given the participants came from one course in one university located in Australia.

However, the research is pioneering in its exploration of the experience of consensus marking in a viva assessment. This may lead to further research exploring the impact of interactive feedback processes across undergraduate and post graduate nursing education. Furthermore, it adds to the evidence base for the use of authentic assessment and the development of evaluative judgements (Pitt & Quinlan 2022). Both aspects are likely to be helpful in developing nurses that engage in lifelong learning (Boud et al 2019).

2.10.4 Critical appraisal summary

The literature included in the narrative review was subject to critical appraisal using either an appraisal checklist from Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) or the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), (Hong et al 2018). The appraisal revealed variation in the focus, type, and quality of research which was recorded in a data extraction table (see **appendix E**).

In summary, all the studies in the review provided a contribution to knowledge and recommendations for future feedback research (Carey 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Paterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021). Several of the studies provided comprehensive reviews of related literature providing a clear rationale for their research (Douglas et al 2016; Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Paterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sultan & Gideon 2021).

In all but two cases (Carey et al 2017; Sultan & Gideon 2021) the research questions were clear, and the research method chosen was appropriate to answer the question. The data collection methods were clearly outlined in all studies (Carey 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Paterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021), and findings were supported by the data in most studies reviewed (Douglas et al 2016; Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Paterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sieminski et al 2016). The exception being Carey et al (2016) where the resulting conclusions and recommendations did not match the data; and Mackintosh-Franklin (2021), where the approach of marking a 500 word draft was conflated with providing formative developmental feedback.

The systematic review and integrative review studies provided clear details on the inclusion and exclusion criteria of papers and the critical appraisal tools used for analysis (Ilangakoon et al 2022; Patterson et al 2020). Verification of thematic analysis was explicit in several studies (Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Patterson et al 2020) and unclear in Franklin-Mackintosh 2021). Two studies used measures where the validity or reliability of the measures were unclear (Douglas et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021). Most studies included small samples (Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021) though the small size was

appropriate for the methodology. Studies varied in terms of the population studied with some including students studying in different countries and educational contexts (Hill et al 2021; Illgankoon et al 2022; Patterson et al 2020) representing a heterogenous sample which enhanced the generalisability of the research but limited the ability to identify important contextual features influencing feedback perception and experience. All studies provided an account of the limitations of their research and made recommendations for further research (Carey 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Paterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021).

2.10.4 Emerging themes from narrative review

Several interesting themes emerge from the narrative review. For example, multiple studies cite that there were **varying conceptions of feedback** amongst students and academics (Carey 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Ilangakoon et al 2022; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Paterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021). Inevitably differing conceptions are likely to result in different expectations of the feedback process which in turn influence the perception of fairness and quality. The difference in ideas about the format and purpose of feedback is noted in the wider educational research on feedback. The provision of good feedback is identified by students as the biggest necessity on a course (Winstone 2019), which students say they use and act on, but educators say they don't (Mulliner & Tucker 2017). Further research identifies that students expect high quality feedback without considering their role in the process (Van der Kleij et al 2019; Winstone & Careless 2019). Whilst McKay (2019) highlights a student preference for a more relational and dialogic approach, with students' expressing dissatisfaction with a system where feedback is something institutions do to them rather than with them. The absence of a shared understanding of feedback purpose and practice is at

odds with the conditions that enable effective feedback (Henderson et al 2019; Winstone et al, 2017b). It is therefore unsurprising that one of the themes identified across the research is that students (including nursing students) require **support to recognise and use feedback effectively**, and that this is especially important in the first year of study (Douglas et al 2016; Sieminski et al 2016; Carey et al 2017; Hill et al 2021). This links with wider educational research citing the importance of supporting students to develop feedback literacy skills (Carless & Boud 2018; Molloy et al 2020) and to provide support to make the transition to feedback practices in HE (Molloy et al 2020) and scaffold learning (Ajjawi et al 2022). By contrast, Poorman and Mastorovich (2019) conceptualise the issue differently, instead proposing that educators engage in conversations with students with the aim of hearing each other and developing empathy for each other's experience. Through dialogue and understanding, students are supported to fulfilling potential. This would align with research advocating for a relational approach to feedback (Ajjawi et al 2022).

Several studies identified **inconsistent and poor feedback practice**, which hindered the opportunity for learning and development (Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Hill et al 2021; Paterson et al 2020; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2019). Feedback in these studies tended to be perceived as unhelpful, unbalanced, not personalised, difficult to understand and lacking guidance for development. These studies recommended educators develop their feedback skills via institutional policy and training. There are however broader considerations, in that institutional standard, curriculum design, resourcing and the workload capacity of educators may have a part to play in the provision feedback (Boud & Dawson 2023). Moreover, it is not clear that better written feedback in itself is sufficient for better academic performance (Milne et al 2020). To that end support for educators to develop their feedback literacy may provide more fruitful (Boud & Dawson 2023; Carless and Winstone 2020).

The **emotional impact of feedback** was a key feature in six of the ten studies reviewed (Henderson et al 2022; Hill et al 2021; Patterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019;

Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021). With feedback comments associated with negative emotions, reduced confidence and motivation that extended beyond the bounds of the assessment episode. The findings in the studies reflect those found in wider educational research where critical comments reduced self-esteem, self-efficacy and increased negative emotional reactions (Rowe 2017; Sheild 2015; Tracii & Henderson 2018; Young 2000). There are some exceptions within the literature in that negative feedback served as a motivator, spurring some students (Pitt & Norton 2017). Moreover, Dweck (2000) and Young (2000) identified that where students view feedback as a springboard for improvement rather than a measure of finite ability, the negative comments had greater value. The impact of culture on the perception of feedback and associated emotions has been identified, along with perceived differences between domestic and international student populations. So, whilst it is clear that emotional impact should be considered in the feedback process, an understanding of why students respond differently remains unclear. Previous academic achievement and competence may be the contextual factors indicating whether the feedback is motivating or immobilising (Ajjawi et al 2022). However, research in this area is in its infancy and further exploration of the underpinning and contextual mediating factors is required.

The requirement for **personalised, holistic and multimodal feedback** was identified in three of the studies (Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Patterson et al 2020), with each citing student preferences for personalised feedback that met their individual needs. In all but one of the studies the main mode of feedback was written, and the search strategy aimed to focus on written feedback, however student preferences indicated individualised verbal feedback on their academic work to be most helpful. The final point is interesting given findings from broader educational research indicating that video and audio feedback is evaluated as more personalised, caring, and clear by students (Anson et al 2016; Mahony et al 2019; Mayhew 2017; Stannard & Mann 2018; West & Turner 2016). Much of the research provided recommendations for the inclusion of specific criteria such as a balance between

negative and positive comments, acknowledgement of effort and feedforward advice (Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Hill et al 2021; Patterson et al 2020, Sultan & Gideon 2021). There is an inherent tension between recommendations that educators provide feedback that include standard characteristics and the provision of individualised feedback that aligns with individual student preference. The perception of relatedness as a mediating mechanism for feedback engagement is relevant, in that engagement is facilitated if the student perceives that their lecturer knows them and cares about their learning (Ajjawi et al 2022). The inclusion of standardisation is the antithesis of relatedness. Moreover, personalised feedback is especially difficult where the prevailing approach is anonymous feedback on summative assessment (Pitt & Quinlan 2022), often to large groups of students. A move to multimodal approach may increase the chances that students are provided with feedback in their preferred format some of the time.

A further theme within the studies was the recommendation that students needed to have an **active role within the feedback process** for it to be effective. Where feedback involved students in a passive recipient role it was largely unsatisfactory, unsuccessful, and learning did not extend beyond the assessment episode (Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Sieminski et al 2016; Sultan & Gideon 2021). By contrast, active involvement in the process, especially in the form of self-assessment and reflection on quality, promoted evaluative judgement and authentic learning which students then transferred to future assessment and workplace practice (Henderson et al 2022; Ilangankoon et al 2022; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019). These findings align with educational research on the importance of feedback literacy (Careless & Boud 2018 Carless & Winsone 2020), the conditions for effective feedback practice (Henderson et al 2019; Winstone et al 2021b; Winstone et al 2021c) and the critical role of evaluative judgement in academic and workplace success (Boud et al 2018).

The final theme emerging from the review is the **influence of outside factors** that are not part of the assessment or feedback design or intervention. These include the social,

psychological and cultural aspects that influence the student feedback experience. In general, outside influencing factors have not been the focus of the research, though have been identified in studies that have open exploratory aims (Sieminski et al 2016; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019). In these students the influence of social support, responsibilities, cultural expectations, and personal goals were revealed as influencing the experience of feedback. They have also been posited as of possible explanation for results that don't reflect accepted practice (Mackintosh-Franklin 2021) or as a recommendation that further research explores the influence of peer and social relationships (Patterson et al 2020). Interestingly, these link with Evans (2013) model of the feedback landscape.

2.11 The knowledge gap

Returning to the literature review question "What are student nurses' experiences of receiving written feedback on academic assessments?" unsurprisingly, the answer is complex. There are varying conceptions of the construct of feedback, the recognition and use of feedback is inconsistent, and the quality of feedback is varied, but frequently poor. There are consistent findings that feedback has an emotional impact, but the reason for variation in emotional impact and response remains unclear. Students seek personalised feedback in their preferred mode and active participation in the process appears helpful for learning. What remains unclear is the influence of context. Feedback and significance of feedback is different in different contexts (Ajjawi et al 2022; Esterhazy & Damsa 2019; Evans 2013; Lipnevich & Panadero 2021; Winstone et al 2016). So, whilst research and scholarship has focused on models and approaches that are applied to maximise the benefits of feedback, this has moved ahead of an understanding of the contextual issues and ontological dimensions of feedback that could undermine any well-intentioned evidence-based strategy.

As such, the aim of this research was to focus how students make sense of their experience of feedback with the aim of revealing what lies beneath the observable and ontic of the experience. In doing so the research aims to reveal ontological dimensions of the feedback experience that could influence the application of models and interventions applied as part of feedback practice.

2.12 Conclusion

Chapter 2 introduced the definition of feedback accepted for this research, furthermore an exposition of evidence-based feedback models was presented, along with recommendations for feedback practice. A discussion of the effectiveness of feedback was presented, which included a review of global feedback practice (Quinlan & Pitt 2022) and a realist synthesis which identified contexts and mechanisms that influenced feedback use.

The chapter moved to consider feedback in nursing education and presented the protocol, search terms and results of a literature search to identify relevant articles for a narrative review. The research was presented and discussed, firstly as a piece of research in its own right, and then in terms of its contribution to an area of research (student perception/ student experience/ assessment and feedback strategy), and then as a contribution to knowledge on feedback on written assessments in nursing. Finally, the chapter summarised the implication of the findings and identified a gap in knowledge, which was identified as research exploring the nuance and contextual features that could influence the sense students made of the feedback experience. Exploring an appropriate methodology to explore the gap in knowledge is the focus of **Chapter 3** where the research question, the theoretical underpinnings, the identified research methodology and the methods used will be presented.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to position the study within its philosophical, theoretical, and methodological framework. Having reviewed the literature in **chapter 2** it became possible to identify a methodological approach that explored the identified knowledge gap. Namely, that in comparison to research concerning models and approaches to feedback, there was limited research exploring contextual and ontological dimensions that influenced how student nurses made sense of the experience of receiving feedback on their academic work.

This chapter begins with a reflection of the PhD journey and the influence this had in changing the methodological focus of the research. The chapter then presents the studies research aims and question along with the ontological positions of critical realism and hermeneutic phenomenology. The epistemological position of the research is then presented followed by consideration of methodological approaches that align with the research question and associated theoretical position. To conclude, the chosen methodology of IPA is presented.

3.2 Reflections on the PhD journey and the implications for methodology

> "*It is perfectly true, as the philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards" (Kierkegaard 1813- 1855).*

The PhD research journey is one characterised by a series of decisions made around topic, methodology and theoretical foundations (Janssen 2019). At the outset one is called to develop a proposal for research programme approval. This includes a statement on the aims

and objectives of the research, along with the proposed methods required to explore the topic of interest. At this point one is also required to take a position on the underpinning ontology and epistemology of the proposed research. These decisions are made at the beginning of the research journey, at a point intime when one is less able to benefit from the insights gained from deep engagement with the research process and associated knowledge landscapes. Consequently, decisions may need to change as the project and the researcher's context evolve (Goward 2015, Janssen 2019).

This was certainly the case on my PhD research journey, whereby the scope of the research, the ontological position and methodology changed in response to the nature of the interview data, supervisory, and transfer viva discussions. Hence, the initial part of the methodology chapter illustrates my early methodological thinking and how this changed and evolved as the research progressed. By presenting the reasons and decisions made during initial and later phases of the research, I aim to position the central role of reflexivity within the research process. Namely, that the research, and products of research are affected by the personal and process of doing research (Davis 2010).

As discussed in **chapter 1,** my interest in exploring the experience of feedback had its origins in the observation that student's responses to similar feedback was varied and appeared to have little to do with the content or quality of feedback provided. This observation mirrored clinical CBT whereby reactions to events were largely connected to the interpretation of events, rather than the events themselves (Beck 1976). Consequently, the initial aims of the research were to explore the student's perceptions of feedback, and to examine the relationship between written feedback and self-esteem. I set out with several objectives which included interviewing students to explore their perceptions of written feedback, and thematic analysis of the interview data to identify themes that could inform the development of a questionnaire. The resulting questionnaire would detail different types of feedback along with a range of responses which students would endorse as being most similar to their own. This questionnaire would be administered alongside a measure of self-

esteem (Rosenberg 1965) and I would use statistical means of assessing the relationship between self-esteem scores and responses to feedback.

The proposed methodology for the research was exploratory sequential design, a phased mixed methods approach whereby the researcher gathers qualitative data to explore a topic in depth. The qualitative data is used to inform the development of an instrument which is then applied in the final quantitative phase. The approach is considered useful where the researcher does not know which constructs are important, and relevant quantitative measures are not available (Cresswell & Plano Clark 2011). My initial proposals were for the qualitative phase to form the MPhil stage of the research and the quantitative phase would be implemented following transfer to PhD. At this point I'd envisaged the qualitative phase aligned with constructivist paradigms where the epistemological considerations focus on meaning making of the individual mind (Crotty 1998). The quantitative phase of exploratory sequential design aligned with Post-positivist theoretical position (Cresswell & Plano Clark 2011; Khun 1970) where by the research aimed to identify variables influencing students perceptions of feedback. The overall approach for both the qualitative and quantitative phase reflected a critical realist ontology (Bhaskar 1978) requiring an exploration of the phenomena and the underpinning generative mechanisms. Furthermore, I considered that combining multiple sources of information would facilitate a better understanding of the phenomena of the perceptions and experience of feedback.

During the first phase of research, I considered the sample frame for the qualitative interviews, I developed questions for the semi structured interviews and considered my approach to interviewing and the ethics of interviewing students. The participant information documents were developed in readiness for submission to the university ethics committee. The interview questions aimed to elicit the student's perception of feedback and were purposefully open so as to facilitate open expression of experience. Equally the participant information sheet described that the purpose of the interview would be to gather student's perceptions of feedback. Perception was constructed as the identification, organisation, and

interpretation of information (Hood et al 2015). The subsequent interviews generated rich and varied experiential data, illustrating powerful personal experiences associated with assessment feedback. At this point, I began to doubt that my proposed method and methodology would capture the meaning and significance of the idiographic experiential interview data. This also coincided with a change in the supervisory team, whereby the director of studies encouraged in-depth analysis and engagement with the qualitative data and advised that I commence a reflexive journal throughout the research process.

The initial aims and objectives of the research reflected my professional background, which had been characterised by the application of generalisable (idiosyncratically applied) psychological models and measurement used to facilitate personal insights, learning and development. I entered the research with presupposition that self-esteem was a likely generative mechanism underpinning the student's perception of feedback. However, my approach lacked deeper theoretical foundations.

At the point of MPhil transfer, I used the viva as an opportunity to explore a methodological shift from mixed methods to qualitative to enable an in-depth exploration and analysis of the qualitative data. Given that the interview data concerned to the student's perceptions of the feedback experience, I was encouraged to consider phenomenology. Moreover, that I would need to provide a robust account of why I had not used phenomenology if I decided against doing so.

Phenomenological research is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual experiencing the phenomena of interest (Smith & Nizza 2022). Thus far the information given to participants, the interviews, and the resulting interview data all sought to gather experiential information were methodologically consistent with phenomenology. However, phenomenological research includes many approaches, each with different ontological and epistemological positions informing the methodology (Dibley et al 2020). Thus, I embarked on a review of existing literature to identify the approach that best reflected the ontological and epistemological position underpinning this research prior to undertaking

formal analysis of the interview data. The decisions made as a result of this review are presented in **chapter 3**.

Enhanced engagement with reflexive practice and an exploration of phenomenological ontology and methods resulted in a refinement of the research question. Whilst the theoretical underpinnings of constructivism and critical realism remained throughout the research, post-positivism no longer fitted with the philosophical stance of the research, and were superseded by phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography. In reflecting on the process, the shift in approach was largely the result of reflexive engagement with the research process, and specifically viewing reflexivity as epistemological (Dowling 2006). As the research progressed, I considered my internal responses to what I read and heard, and considered my relationship to the focus of research, with the participants, and their experience. This in turn directed philosophical engagement with the research which enabled ontological, epistemological, and methodological congruence.

3.3 Knowledge gap and research question

As discussed in **chapter 2** feedback research has focused on the development of models and approaches to feedback, whereas the understanding of the contextual and ontological phenomena that influence how student's make sense of their feedback experience has afforded less attention. The aspirations of this research are to generate new knowledge that furthers understanding of the influences on student's interpretations of the feedback experience.

3.3.1 Research aim

The aim of the research is:

To provide an in-depth exploration of nursing student/s interpretations of the experience of written feedback on their summatively assessed written assignments on an undergraduate pre-registration mental health nursing course.

3.3.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the research are*:*

1) *To provide a rich description of student's personal experiences of feedback*
2) *To reveal the student's interpretations of their feedback experience*
3) *To reveal underlying influence/s that contributes to the student's interpretation of the feedback experience*
4) *To make sense of the student's interpretations in light of relevant philosophical, educational and psychosocial theories*
5) *To inform pedagogical theories and practice*

3.3.3 Research question

How do mental health nursing students who have received written feedback on their written academic work make sense of their experience of receiving written feedback?

3.3.4 Qualitative research

The research focus requires a qualitative approach to research practice, as the aims and objectives concern an in depth interpreted understanding of the phenomena of feedback experience (Ritchie et al 2014). Qualitative research is an umbrella term encompassing varying approaches, each with different philosophical influences (Ritchie 2014). In considering the appropriate qualitative method for this research I considered my ontological,

epistemological position on the issue of feedback experience. This in turn provided justification for the methodology and methods chosen (Crotty 1998).

3.4 Ontological considerations

Ontology is the study of being, of what it is to *be* and the nature of existence (Crotty 1998). In this research I considered my ontological position on reality, and whether reality is something that exists outside human perception. The ontological considerations were an important theoretical consideration in determining the appropriate methodology and method.

This research concerned individuals within an open social system and research in the "wild" as opposed to research in a controlled laboratory environment. In that a student receives feedback from an academic within a social system whereby the perception of the feedback could be influenced by multiple factors such as self-esteem, experience, social networks and cultural expectation. To fulfil the aims and objectives, this research attempted to explore how a student made sense of the feedback experience within this open social system. Thus, the research required a method that facilitated access to student accounts of their experiences, and their interpretation of experiences. Additionally, the research needed to consider the influence of culture and environmental factors. Importantly, given my position as a fellow actor in the social system of education, the research needed to account for my role and influence within the research process and subsequent knowledge claims.

Having given serious consideration to the ontological position of the research I aligned with critical realism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, each of which will be discussed in turn.

3.4.1 Critical realism

Critical realism is a philosophy of science perspective that emerged from criticisms of the legitimacy of positivism and empirical realism in social science (Archer 1995, Bhaskar 1978,

Bhaskar 2014). Critical realism is routed in a realist ontology and a subjective epistemology. Thus, critical realist philosophy posits that whilst the *being* of things are real, there isn't a direct link between the *being* of things we perceive and our knowledge of them (Buch-Hansen & Neilsen 2020).

A tenet of critical realism is that reality constitutes three domains of reality, the empirical, the actual and the real (Bhaskar 2008, Buch-Hansen & Neilsen 2020). The domain of *empirical* reality concerns observable experiences that can be measured. The domain of *actual* reality includes events that are observed and unobserved, and the events occur when the generative mechanisms are activated. The domain of the *real* reality is where generative mechanisms reside, they are not visible, but they cause and explain events in the actual domain (Bhaskar 1978, 2008). The point is articulated clearly by Buch-Hansen and Nielsen (2020 p30) who state, "experiences that are observable in the empirical domain do not necessarily reflect what they actually and really are".

Critical realist research focusses on the generative mechanisms underlying the phenomena of interest. According to Bhaskar these mechanisms are the things that make something happen (Buch-Hansen 2005). Generative mechanisms are defined by Blom & Moren (2011) as a trans-empirical but real existing entities, explaining why observable events occur. However, the fact that an entity has powers to bring about events, does not in itself mean that those powers will be activated, and the activation is linked to the conditions that apply in a particular context (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen 2020; Sayer 1992). By way of example, the fact that feedback has the power to improve a student's academic ability, does not in itself mean that this power will be activated, and context may influence the outcome of feedback. Blom & Moren (2011) posit that mechanisms are concealed and are only possible to grasp indirectly by analytical work on observed empirically observable data. Which, in this research are the students accounts of their interpretation of the feedback experience.

In considering the theoretical identity, Rutzou (2016) argues that there is no unifying theory of critical realism, but rather there are critical realists who, like a family, have resemblance to

each other but are not identical. What critical realists have in common is a belief that reality exists independent of human attention. They also acknowledge a socially imbedded and fallible nature of scientific enquiry and that our knowledge of the world is culturally, historically and socially situated. In essence, there is an external reality, which is independent of our engagement with it, but we are involved in the process of knowing and that influences what is known. Thus, in adopting a critical realist position for this research I acknowledge that by analysing students experience of feedback, my sense making is fallible and contingent on my history, culture, and social psychology.

Critical realists argue that an understanding of the underlying, explanatory, generative mechanisms are helpful, as they go beyond what appears and can improve our knowledge of the world, even though that knowledge is contingent (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen 2020; Dalkin et al 2015; Pawson & Tilley 2008; Sayer 1992). This has relevance to this research which seeks further knowledge about the underlying mechanisms of the student's sense making, and lived experience of the feedback process in an assessment context.

Applying the domains of reality to the student feedback phenomena, a student receives feedback on an assignment and displays an emotional response (observable empirical domain), they make sense of the information within the feedback (knowable actual domain) as a result of, for example, the underlying beliefs they have about themselves, or the cultural context (real domain which is not apparent). The same style of feedback delivered to different students could result in different empirically observed realities because the feedback activates generative mechanisms that steer the perception and meaning of the information received.

Critical realism is a meta-theoretical position concerned with providing a philosophically informed account of social science which can inform empirical investigations (Rutzou 2016). This way of understanding a perspective of what exists provides a framework for when the phenomena of interest are messy, complex, and when issues of causality are not clear, but a further understanding of the generative mechanism could provide a contribution to

knowledge. The issue of feedback has been subject to research, though most research has focused on practical strategies and useful approaches to improve satisfaction and helpfulness. As discussed in chapter 2, what has not been considered to the same degree are the mechanisms, context and meaning of feedback to the student. This may be of significance in learning from the endeavour. Personal observations over years of working in an educational environment are that the system of feedback and the students experience of feedback is complex. The relationship between feedback and the student's response is not one of direct causality where good feedback results in a favourable student reaction. Students react differently to the same feedback, and students can react negatively to accurate and detailed feedback that other students find helpful. This indicates a perceptual or difference in meaning between students.

The process of giving and receiving feedback to students is influenced by multiple factors and is multi directional, so it is unsurprising that there is a continuing high rate of dissatisfaction with feedback, despite significant efforts amongst academics and scholars to improve the quality of feedback to students (Carless & Boud 2018, Evans 2013, Hattie & Timperley 2007, Lipnevich et al 2016, Molloy et al 2020, Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006). Within this research I searched for insights into the complex phenomena of how students make sense of the feedback experience so as to understand why students perceive feedback differently. Furthermore, whilst I do not believe that there will be a feedback method that will work for all, I hoped to develop insights and knowledge that could inform principles of practice that will have a positive impact on feedback practice with undergraduate student nurses.

One of the features of critical realist ontologically underpinned research is methodological eclecticism (Sayer 1992). Critical realist informed research puts ontology before method, using any method that may help to better explain the phenomenon. Hence research data can be analysed using any methodology, as long as one stays true to the ontology (Bhaskar 2014). In this research I hoped to capture some of the mechanisms and meanings that

underpin the student's interpretation of the experience of feedback. Exploratory qualitative interviews are a means of capturing rich data that could be of help in achieving this aim. However, Bhaskar (2014) argues that the researcher cannot use one research method and expect it to be sufficient, and critical realist research often involves the use of mixed methods to triangulate information and gain a fuller picture of the phenomena. This aspect will be explored in later sections of this chapter.

3.4.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology

A second ontological position informing the research is Heideggerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology. Martin Heidegger (1927/1962) argued that western philosophy embraced a substance ontology in metaphysical investigations into the nature of reality but in doing so had omitted to consider the meaning of "being" (Polt 1999). Heidegger argued that philosophy had followed the substance ontology proposed by Ancient Greek Aristotle (384-322 BC) that a being or a thing is a substance with properties, and that a human being is a self-sufficient substance. Heidegger argued that this position remained until the 17th century when the French philosopher Descartes (1596 - 1650) posited the concept of substance dualism, in that while the body is material (corporeal), the mind is immaterial (incorporeal). Descartes presented an explanation of the mind, the soul, and argued that the ability of humans to understand the world was through the power of their mind and their ability to think about things (Kenny 2010). In considering existence Descartes argued that that humans are "intentional thinking things" and that our minds are self-sufficient substances. This continuation of a substance ontology of human existence, and the idea that an understanding of the world is based on rational thought, remained accepted truth (Dreyfus & Wrathall 2007). Heidegger argued that a substance ontology did not accurately capture the "meaning of beings". Consequently, metaphysical questions and investigation had been built

on unstable foundations, and in the absence of a pre ontological understanding of beings, namely, the *Being* of beings.

In 1927 Heidegger published his magnum opus Being in Time. The book represented Heidegger's ontological focus, exploring the meaning of "being". In contrast to a substance ontology, of separate objects and substances, Heidegger took an alternative perspective arguing that beings and things could not be interpreted in terms of substances and properties (Dreyfus & Wrathall 2007). He presented an interconnected perspective whereby beings are set in a culture, environment, and time, and are connected to other "beings" (Harman 2007). By way of exposition, Heidegger provided the example of a hammer, and asked "what is the way of being of a hammer?". Whilst a hammer has a clear shape and is identifiable, the way of being of a hammer is that is used to hammer nails for a purpose. Thus, a hammers way of being is that it couldn't be a hammer without the nails or people to use the hammer. Furthermore, the hammer is culturally defined as being something that can be used as (amongst other things) a tool to knock in nails for a purpose, such as putting up a shelf or building a house. Hence a hammer is a *being* that has a place in culture that is related to the goals of those using it. In short, the being of the *being* of an entity is not purely an issue of its substance, but rather something that is connected to its activity and purpose (Dreyfus & Wrathall 2007).

3.4.2.i Modes of being

Heidegger refers to three modes of being. Firstly, the mode of being *present-to-hand,* which are substances and entities that are not *us* and not used by us in that moment. The second mode of being is *readiness-to-hand*. These are beings which are *for us,* useful to human existence and include equipment that we may use to engage with activity and fulfil goals. The third mode of being is Heidegger referred to as Dasein, which are human beings. The translation in German is 'existence', but etymologically it means 'being-there' (Polt 1999).

Heidegger uses the term to apply to humans who are entities who have an understanding of "being" and takes its own *being* as an issue for itself, ostensibly Dasien is a "being" concerned for its own existence (Dreyfus & Wrathall 2007). Dasein thinks about what it is to be in the world, and thinks about their own existence. Dasein engage in activity in the world and Dasein's way of *being* is qualitatively different from a rocks way of being (present-to-hand entity), the hammers way of being (readiness-to-hand entity) (Polt 1999). Dasein are beings that are capable of meaningful engagement with the world, they use equipment and act in a world and give themselves an interpretation of what it is to be a human being, a human in a particular culture, and context for example as a mother, student or teacher (Polt 1999).

3.4.2.ii Being in the world

In considering Dasein's existence in the "world" Heidegger refers to different and multiple types of worlds. For example, the geographical world, the world of nursing, the world of motherhood or the world of education. Heidegger posits that Dasein have a sense of what they understand of themselves as participants of that particular world. For example, they will have a view on how a mother, an educator or nurse should be. Moreover, the world will contain cultural references on how to be in that world, and Heidegger argued that this is pre-cognitive, in that before we think and analyse, we have a style of existing in our world (Dreyfus and Wrathall 2007). In the everyday environment, Dasein experience things in relation to other entities, and the world is essentially already made of rules and practices that are established before they enter, and they are they socially conditioned to become part of that world. For example, the way of using equipment (that is ready-to-hand) and the awareness of equipment is informed by reference to Dasein's human community. The community provides reference points on how to *be*, and make sense of the world. For example, the way I drive a car, takes into consideration, that I should drive on the left and

that a red light means stop (Polt 1999). Heidegger (1927/1962) posits that without inherited interpretations of the world, we would not be Dasein, we would be animals without culture, language, or norms. Thus, our past is active in our present, making it possible for us to operate as Dasein (Heidegger1927/1962).

Applying these ideas to the focus of the research, student mental health nurses will make sense of the world of higher education, assessment and feedback, based on a sense of themselves in that world, and a sense of what it is to be a student. Their previous experience and culture provide reference points for them, and for the sense they make of the feedback they receive on their academic work and the meaning that experience has for them.

3.4.2.iii Care and care structures

In describing how Dasein is in the world Heidegger (1927/1962) refers to *care*, which is the structural totality of being in the world. Dasein care about being in the world, and the care structure represents what is of most importance to the Dasein, and exposes what they are concerned about or care about (Harman 2007). The care structure is presented in three temporal primordial notions representing past, present and future. Rather than these being presented as chronological time Heidegger presented time as the future, to past, to present. For example, we can imagine a future that may or may not occur, we can ruminate about the past and consider how we may do things differently, which in turn influences our current action. Heidegger asserts that Dasein project future possibilities for themselves through their understanding of things, themselves and others, and in doing so they may actively choose to pursue goals that reflect their full potential for *being,* which Heidegger terms **authentic existentiality.** However, it is more likely that they will project possibilities and make choices that falls short of their full potential for being, and conform to what others do, this is termed **inauthentic fallenness.**

Dasein's projected possibilities are influenced by what Heidegger refers to as **thrownness** and **facticity**. Heidegger's concept of facticity describes the limits and givens of what is possible for Dasein to become. Thrownness, refers to Dasein being metaphorically *thrown* into the world without their choosing. Specifically, Dasein are born in a particular time, and into a particular culture with characteristics and limits, that influence how they are in the world.

Heidegger posits that when we are guided by "what one normally does", conforming to the usual practices advised by others, this limits our potential to live authentically. Authenticity in this sense does not mean genuine or truthful, but rather that we make choices and act in ways that lead us towards the being best we are capable of being in that context. The term Heidegger uses for this conforming public influence is *Das man*, which is translated as "the they" or "the anyone". As such, Das man represents an anonymous social dynamic where we fall away from our deeper possibilities and potential. Following the well-trodden path of others means we do not take the time to explore for ourselves, we use routine and passing interest and avoid committing to clear choices about who we are and what we are doing (Polt 1999). Heidegger viewed this as the general tendency of Dasein and the human condition (Polt 1999). Conforming with social norms and following the routine and ordinary may mean we feel safe and comfortable, but Heidegger argued that this leads to inauthentic living. In contrast making positive, purposeful choices that we commit to, moves us toward fulfilling our potential promotes authenticity and the unique possibilities of our being. Heidegger argued that authentic existentiality requires us to stray from societal expectations, to take risks and be single minded in our pursuit of authenticity.

This has some significance for the research in that in order to engage fully with assessment and academic development by way of feedback, the student has a choice to commit to actions that help them fulfil their potential or fall away from becoming the best version of themself in the world of nursing education they can be. The path taken may be influenced by the student's way of being and their perceived facticity in relation to education and

attainment. Furthermore, assessment and feedback within a system of education inevitably requires some conforming to predetermined standards (Trubody 2015). Being part of the world of education as a nursing student undertaking assessments therefore includes conditions that constrain the potential for authentic existentiality.

The Heideggerian perspective on the written feedback students receive on their academic work, is that it can be ontologically considered as *being* in the domain of ready-to-hand or equipment. Feedback is a potentially useful tool for students, it is equipment that can be used in-order-to do the work of academic development and learning, in-order-to fulfil the potential of Dasein existing authentically in the world of nursing education. The student may experience fallenness, in that they don't engage with feedback, "go through the motions", fear it, or are annoyed by it. Alternatively, they could use it as a means of competing with others rather than equipment to help fulfil their potential. The feedback itself may be communicated in a way that promotes conformity rather than development (Das man).

In order to study the being of Dasein in a way that does justice to its existence, Heidegger argues we much catch ourselves in *everydayness*, in that which is ontologically closest (Heidegger 1927/1962). Consequently, to understand the phenomena of a mental health student nurses experience of academic feedback, one is required to ask the student about their experience. Moreover, one needs to explore the *being* of Dasein in context the world of a mental health student nurse and consider the interrelatedness of the student, ready to hand equipment and other Dasein in their worlds. This includes the context of temporality, namely their predictions and goals, their reflections on the past and culture and how this informs the present (their perception and the choices they make).

Heidegger posits an interconnected perspective on being the world, in that we *are* that within which we operate (Heidegger 1927/1962). Thus, the student, their engagement with equipment of feedback, their sense of themselves in the world of education and their world that they share with others are all interconnected. Thus, an attempt to make sense of the student's interpretation of the feedback experience as constructed in this research requires

an approach that accounts for these ontological concepts of being in the world, of using equipment that is part of that world, and being with others who share the same world. An interpretation of the student's whole experience and the parts of the experience (history and hopes, use of equipment, fallenness and potential) parts may serve to reveal the meaning of the feedback experience for the student.

3.4.3 Critical realist and hermeneutic phenomenology synergy

Whilst the concepts outlined by critical realism and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology are different, there is some synergy in their respective ontological positions. In referring to the *being* of beings in the world Heidegger is referring to "something" that exists. This reveals a realist ontological orientation. Furthermore, the interconnected temporal perspective on being in the world, and the influence this has on Dasein shares some similarities with the subjective epistemological position of critical realism. Indeed, Dreyfus (1991) presents Heidegger's ontological position as that of a minimal hermeneutic realist. Describing that Heidegger argued that reality itself is not determined by human perception, but that human action plays a central role in the meaning of reality. Equally Polt (1999) refers to Heidegger's hermeneutic realist position, in that although existing outside human perception, things are not revealed until they are encountered, and meaning is applied. Thus, both ontological positions were deemed compatible and complementary for the research.

3.5 Epistemological considerations

In hermeneutic phenomenology there is a commitment to interpretation (Finlay 2014). Heidegger developed the analytic of Dasein by their encounters with entities in the world and advocates exposing Dasein's everydayness of being in the world (Horrigan-Keller et al

2016). The aim of the research is to explore the everyday student experience of receiving feedback from their perspective to reveal meaning. Accessing meaning requires some sort of exchange with students that enables them to communicate the meaning of their experience. There is synergy with the critical realist, ontological concept of an underlying real reality that informs the actual and empirical domains of reality. Access to the real requires a method of eliciting the student's interpretation of the experience. Thus, the purpose of the research is to reveal the real, bringing this into light so it shows itself as itself. In keeping with the theoretical underpinning of critical realism and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, the position of this research is that access to the students experience of feedback is an interpretive process, and as such, is subject to the influence of the researcher's pre-suppositions.

3.5.1 Hermeneutics

Gadamer (1975, 1989) provided a helpful theoretical underpinning for framing the approach taken to interpretation in this research. Gadamer built on Heidegger's notion that we cannot engage in pre-suppositionless interpretations, and that we bring our current and previous situation to the interpretation of experience, events and text. Gadamer posited that understanding can only be possible with historical awareness, and therefore understanding carries with it the prejudice of historical traditions. Gadamer frames prejudice of tradition positively, as ideas based on previous learning, passed down through generations. From a Gadamerian perspective, we are inextricably bound to a tradition that has prejudices in common, which make understanding possible.

For example, we knew that being clean was helpful in preventing illness, well before we were aware of the existence of germs, but this helped us understand and identify germs, and the role in disease and disease prevention. In an educational and nursing context, there is a tradition in using assessment and feedback to inform development. Over time this tradition

has helped identify key principles and processes that have been used to develop concepts and modules of learning and feedback that further our understanding (Ajjawi et al 2020; Benner 1984; Carless & Boud 2018; Winstone & Nash 2017).

The term prejudice, whilst having negative connotations in the present, is more helpfully considered in today's context as *pre-understanding* (Flemming et al 2003). Hence Gadamer argued that we have a pre-understanding of the topic in question, and it is only through this pre-understanding that understanding is possible, and without pre-understanding there is a risk that we fail to understand, or misjudge meaning (Flemming et al 2003). Thus, from a Gadamerian perspective, my entering the research endeavour with pre-understandings in education, nursing, feedback and psychological processes may be helpful in understanding the phenomena of interest.

With regard to the epistemological position of the hermeneutic process, Gadamer (1989) argues that we are products of our own time, and we cannot establish a completely objective interpretation, because how we interpret events and experience is influenced by our time in history and our interaction with the subject we are interpreting. This has relevance for the interpretive process, as whilst I can acknowledge and foreground my pre-conceptions at the outset of the research, I will also be influenced by the student's accounts, which may bring forth further pre-conceptions which in turn influence the interpretation. Hence, I acknowledge the dynamic and multifaceted approach to the hermeneutic process, and in doing so, decided to document accounts of my reflexive process as a means of promoting the rigour, reliability and validity of interpretation (Darawsheh 2014; Smith et al 2009, 2022).

Whilst we can never be completely objective, Gadamer also argued that the knowledge acquired through interpretation is never completely subjective, because we are all part of the same historical horizon/ culture. When people look back and interpret history, they pull together defining characteristics of that age. Thus, we are far more our prejudices than our difference (Gadamer 1975, 1989). For example, when we look back to a particular decade,

we see the culture of fashion, music, and politics of that time, more than we see individual difference, and according to Gadamer, this becomes historical reality.

Habermas (1983) cautioned against Gadamer's stance on historical reality, stating that some traditions come into being through the act of oppression and discrimination. Habermas argued that an in-depth hermeneutic process must also search for hidden stories and acknowledge that the established tradition may involve a collective aversion to seeing oneself / one's society as oppressive which my serve to distort history. This was a point of significance when considering my hermeneutic approach to the research. Specifically, the experience of nursing students, and students from historically disadvantaged groups who have not been as visible in the historical tradition of university education. Whilst graduate education nursing has been present since the 1960's (Sheilds & Watson 2007), it wasn't until 2013 that all pre-registration nursing education programmes were required to be at graduate (or post-graduate) level. In a recent systematic review of assessment feedback research, Pitt and Quinlan (2022) state that very few studies consider the effect or success of feedback practice with historically disadvantaged groups, and recommend researchers consider equity and inclusivity in their future research. An additional consideration for this study is that students pre university educational experience may have been influenced by marginalised and oppressive practices, which could have relevance to the meanings attributed to experience.

Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics involve the process of acknowledging that there is not an isolated horizon in the past and an isolated horizon of the present but rather a fusion of the two horizons. Gadamer posits that during the process of reviewing an event we experience a clash, because the prejudice or pre-understanding of an event is different to our own. But for Gadamer, this is something we should attend to, as this is the point where we learn and broaden our horizon of understanding.

Gadamer believes the interpreter should meet the text/ dialogue/ experience with the awareness that they do so with bias. The hermeneutic consciousness merges the horizon of

the past and the present. A condition of our understanding is that for hermeneutic consciousness to take place, it must have a historical context (Austgard 2012). Therefore, the task of hermeneutics is not to reject all pre-understanding/ prejudice, but to recognise that some of the pre-understanding creates the condition for understanding.

Thus, in interpreting the information provided by students when they describe their experience I aimed to attend to the similarities and differences between their historical perspective, their perceptions, and my own. By approaching the interpretation with an awareness of my bias and prejudice I aimed to seek out clashes and difference as opportunities to broaden the horizon of understanding of the phenomenon. The aim is not to relive the past but to learn something new. Thus, Gadamer provides a theoretical framework for bridging the tension between the individual student experience which will be interpreted, and the generation of knowledge that will hopefully enhance student feedback.

3.5.2 Methodological implications

Hermeneutics is both a theory and methodology of interpretation. As a branch of philosophy, hermeneutic philosophers consider the nature of understanding, and may study how our traditions shape our understanding life as a whole. As a methodology hermeneutics is the “art and science of interpretation” (Ezzy 2002 p24). It is the process of understanding written or verbal communication and establishing rules for their interpretation (Zimmerman 2015). Hermeneutic phenomenological approaches to research are aimed at understanding the way in which people interpret their world (Cohen et al 2000). This requires an in-depth investigation of the individual experience of a phenomena that is of interest to the researcher. Furthermore, an acknowledgement that the researcher cannot completely bracket away their traditions and culture (Heidegger 1927 and Gadamer 1989). Hence, hermeneutic phenomenology informed research requires the researcher brings their prior experience, assumptions, preconceptions, and perceptual apparatus to the research. Thus,

looking at new information in context of prior experience, tradition and culture (Smith et al 2009). Therefore, the examination of one's own beliefs, judgements and practices are an important part of the research endeavour. This process is termed *reflexivity,* and it plays an important role in becoming aware of preconceptions and the influence on the research that inform interpretation.

Hermeneutics and the hermeneutic cycle offer a method of analysing the students reported experience that derive meaning and interpretation with consideration of the participant and the researcher's presuppositions' perceptual apparatus and the fusion of horizons. In the hermeneutic tradition, to understand a given part of experience one must examine the whole, and to understand the whole one must examine the parts. Neither the whole nor its parts can be fully understood in isolation, hence it is a circle (Zimmerman 2015). Consequently, as a researcher there are several considerations. Firstly, an understanding of the lived experience of the student receiving feedback on their assessment requires careful engagement with the research participant to elicit important contemporary and historical information, along with an in-depth analysis of the content and context of the experience from the participants and researcher's perspectives. Thus, as a researcher I am required to move between an examination of qualitative data in its parts and as a whole as both are required for understanding (Dibley et al 2020; Smith et al 2022; Zimmerman 2015).

The concept of Dasein and the interconnectedness with the world is significant, as the research the question aims to capture the meaning of the experience of receiving feedback. In order to do so we need an understanding of the students experience of being-in-the-world of a student mental health nurse at that moment, with their history and their hopes for the future along with their thrownness, fallenness and potential, along with their perceived strengths and limitations. In doing so the research flows through a double hermeneutic, as I aim to make sense of the sense students attribute to their experience of receiving feedback (Smith et al 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022).

The research process involves bringing something forward that may be latent and not in the participant or researcher's awareness (a process of un-concealment,), (Dibley et al 2020). Additionally, the researcher cannot avoid looking at new experience in light of their own prior experience. Smith et al (2022) argue that this revealing of the researcher's fore-structure can become a challenge to interpretation, as the fore-structures precede the phenomena being interpreted, but the researcher is not necessarily aware of their preconceptions in advance of the interpretive analysis. Therefore, engaging in continuous reflection and reflexivity is an important part of the interpretative process (Smith et al 2009; Smith & Nizza 2022), which I aim to address by documenting my reflexive insights.

3.5.3 Insider/ outsider positionality

This research took place in the world of higher education and nursing, which is a space shared by the participants and myself as researcher. Furthermore, by virtue of my being a student on a PhD programme in the same faculty, we shared the identity of being students who receive feedback from academics who reside within the same institution. We also shared an understanding of the language, jargon and acronyms used by this community. As such, I had a connection with the population I studied and was researching from *inside* this community. Whilst I acknowledge this intersection with the students in the research, I was also *outside* this student community, in that I was employed as an academic with a leadership role, and a position that afforded greater power than the participating students I interviewed.

Blaikie (2007) argues that social researchers are required to choose the kind of relationship they wish to have with those they are researching, and the role that they will take in the research. Outsider researchers stand back from the phenomena they are investigating, they study a group where they are not a member. Conversely, insider researchers conduct research in populations of which they are also a member, they are thoroughly immersed and

use personal experiences as the basis for understanding (Blaikie 2007; Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Dibley et al 2020)

The position as outsider or insider researcher and the associated benefits and disadvantage they afford has been the subject of much discussion and debate (Chavez 2008; Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle 2009/ 2018; Fay 1996; Kanuha 2000; Mercer 2007; Serrant-Green 2002). Advocates of insider research argue that this position gives the researcher some legitimacy, facilitating the participants acceptance of the researcher, leading to open disclosure and rich interview data (Dibley et al 2020; Serrant-Green 2002). They argue against the feasibility of separating the researcher from the research, viewing them as inextricably linked and an essential aspect of knowledge creation (Dibley et al 2020; Serrant-Green 2002). Kanuha (2000) asserts that questions about the authenticity and objectivity of insider research stem from the researcher being too close or too similar to those they study. Moreover, that it may be difficult for insider researchers to distinguish between the interpretation of the actual phenomena or a projection of their own needs on to the participant.

The multilayering of my identity as student, academic and researcher means I was an outsider in some respects and an insider in others, and throughout the research this position was likely to shift. The notion of researcher positionality as fluid has been posited by researchers who argue that by adapting positionality, the researcher can offer a more nuanced understanding and move through researcher positions contingent on their multiple identities (Chavez 2008; Chhabra 2020). Furthermore, Corbin-Dwyer and Buckle (2008) oppose the dichotomous perspective and argue that qualitative researchers occupy the space in between, being both insider and outsider. They argue that it is not the insider or outsider status that makes for good qualitative research, but rather the "ability to be open, honest and deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants and committed to accurately representing their experience" (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle 2008 p 59).

In this research I aimed to encourage the students to connect with me as a fellow student by being clear that I was meeting with them in my capacity as a student on a research degree. I

also make explicit in the **methods**, **analysis and results**, and **discussion** chapters how my multiple identities as a fellow student, academic, leader, nurse and therapist influenced the gathering of interview data and my interpretations. The central role of reflexivity within the research, along with my engagement in research supervision, are thus critical aspects of navigating the positionality within the research process and are discussed throughout this thesis.

3.6 Methodology

Hermeneutic phenomenology can be a philosophy and or a methodology. There are various approaches and traditions of hermeneutic phenomenologically informed research (Cohen et al 2000, Dilby et al 2020, Thomson et al 2011). I reviewed a number of approaches, in order to establish a methodology approach that shares coherence with the aims and theoretical underpinning of this research. I present this review by way of demonstrating my methodological considerations and the rationale for the eventual decision to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

3.6.1 Descriptive phenomenological method (Georgi)

The first to be considered is the Descriptive Phenomenological Method developed by Georgi (1997). This method closely aligns with Husserl's classical phenomenology (Zahavi 2019) which strives to systematically remove the researcher's natural attitude/ prejudice and preconceptions in order to arrive at a true description of a phenomena (Moran 2000). This process is referred to as "bracketing". Georgi's approach aims to provide a faithful description of the essential features of the phenomena, it is descriptive rather than interpretive and concerned with identifying a general picture and essence of the phenomena. The process is three-fold, the first of which is phenomenological reduction, whereby the research focuses on the described incident with the researcher bracketing away their own

pre-conceptions and prejudice. Secondly, the researcher *describes* the phenomena and does not interpret or explain. Finally, the researcher seeks the essence of the phenomena. In order to do this Georgi posits the researcher reads the whole description of the phenomena to get a sense of the whole, then breaks down the whole into smaller meaning making units, and then seek to identify the psychological significance of each of the units.

The descriptive phenomenological method was deemed incompatible with the aims of this research. Firstly, this research seeks an interpretive account of experience rather than a descriptive one focused on establishing essence. Furthermore, the use of bracketing is at odds with the theoretical position of the research (Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology and critical realist). The aims and research question seek to explore the sense students make of the feedback experience, and to make sense of these experiences in light of relevant philosophical, psychological and educational theories. Additionally, the theoretical position of the research requires an approach that incorporates reflexive discussion of preconceptions. Descriptive phenomenology is more compatible to research where the researcher wants to describe pure phenomena (Reiners 2012) Thus, I considered the descriptive phenomenological method to be too phenomenological and not sufficiently hermeneutic for the research I hoped to undertake.

3.6.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen)

The second approach considered was Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology (1990, 2014). Van Manen draws on and connects phenomenology and hermeneutics in understanding peoples lived experience in the context of their *lifeworld*, a term used for the world of a persons every day lived experience (Van Manen 2014). Van Manen argues that the study of the phenomena as it presents itself is essential, and that the researcher should aim to become aware of the presuppositions that influence their access to phenomena. Moreover, that full examination of the phenomena is accomplished by identifying existing

beliefs and bias, so they can be considered as part of the research endeavour. Van Manen (2014) outlines phases within and philosophical underpinnings to phenomenological research and refers to five existential themes that he argues are to be found in the lifeworld of all humans These existential themes are a helpful focal point for phenomenological analysis. They are Temporality (lived time), spatiality (lived space), corporeality (lived body), sociality (lived self-other) and materiality (lived things).

Van Manen advocates the removal of a-priori theory as an essential component of the practice of phenomenology. This objection to a priori theory is captured by the statement "theory can be an addictive substance that that induces a cognitive amnesia" (Van Manen 2014 p14). Theory is deemed as an obstacle to the practice of phenomenological research, hindering the phenomena of interest to show itself as itself. Furthermore, whilst providing focal points and some guidance in the earlier work Researching lived experience (Van Manen 1990) the later work, Phenomenology of practice (2014), provides no technical methodological instructions, instead encourages the researcher toward thorough and careful consideration of ontology and epistemology as a guide to their actions. Moreover, Van Manen guards against the use of prescribed methods, encouraging an approach to research that "does not get trapped in oversimplifying schemas, schedules and interpretations of what is supposed to count as "true" phenomenological inquiry" (Van Manen 2014 p15-16).

These two principles encouraging the removal of a-priori theory and limited guidance on method were problematic on epistemological grounds. The removal of theoretical pre-understanding is a considerable challenge given that one of the reasons for commencing the research was based on observation that students responded to feedback differently, and my initial thought that there may be underlying mechanisms that may influence the perception and response. Consequently, before active engagement in the research I was aware of the theories and experience that prejudice my thinking, which I considered to be positive, in that it has stimulated my curiosity. In this view, I concur with Gadamer (1967, 1989) who presents the researcher's prejudice in a positive sense by stating that research questions

arise from prejudice, without prejudice the inquiry would not commence. My experience as a mental health nurse, academic and of using cognitive behavioural formulations to make sense of idiosyncratic responses had a significant impact on my thinking and were the reason for wanting to explore the phenomena in the first place. Put simply, I am not able to unknow what I know, and some of that knowledge is theoretical. However, to learn something new I am required to be open to the new and recognise when my knowledge interferes and facilitates the research enquiry. Consequently, reflexivity and discussion of the theoretical positions that are part of my fore-structure are integral to the research. I was, and continue to be interested in the sense students make of the feedback experience, and how this connects with educational and psychosocial theories. Thus, I hoped to identify a methodology and methods that facilitated this aspect of the research.

Zahavi (2019) criticizes Van Manen on the basis that whilst the phenomenology of practice text is presented as accessible for researchers who are not themselves philosophers (Van Manen 2014 p 18), the text presents reasonable ideas in philosophically confused and verbose discussions. Furthermore, as a novice researcher, I found the absence of guidance on method rendered the approach less accessible than alternatives. This experience has also been captured by Caelli (2001) who noted that the apparent reticence of proponents of phenomenology to clearly articulate methodology and method has rendered some new researchers floundering as to how their project might be achieved. There have been attempts to distil Van Manen's methodological suggestions into an outline of research activity aims and methods (Errasti-Ibarrondo, et al 2018). However, it was clear that the approach would not sufficiently facilitate the exploration of associated pedagogic, psychosocial theories, or the critical realist ontological underpinnings of the research. It is for those reason Van Manen's (2014) approach for this research was discounted.

3.6.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin)

The final approach for consideration was interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al 2009/ 2022). IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences (Zahavi 2019). Originating in qualitative psychology research, it offers a structured approach to exploring lived experience, and rather than being a method for analysing hermeneutic phenomenological research data, it is a methodology in its own right (Dibley et al 2020).

IPA provides a methodological framework underpinned by phenomenology and hermeneutics, in that the researcher attends to the way in which things appear to the individual in their experience, and uses interpretive activity to understand the participant/s' lived experience. This takes place via a double hermeneutic whereby the participant makes sense of their experience, and then the researcher makes sense of the participant/s' sense making (Smith & Nizza 2022). The final theoretical orientation of IPA is ideography, where there is a commitment to explore individual cases in depth to gain insights into individual lived experience. The detailed examination of each participant's experience of phenomena, facilitates cross comparison between participant cases to identify group experiential themes. Personal individual and group themes are considered in the context of external theoretical and conceptual frameworks, to discover what is new, enlightening, or how what has already been discovered can shed light on the research findings (Smith et al 2009). Hence while there is a commitment to ideography there is potential for a contribution to nomothetic research (Smith et al 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022).

The appeal of IPA is that it provided me with a comprehensive method for detailed examination of the sense student's make of the experience of receiving written feedback on their written assessments. Moreover, IPA offered a framework for connecting the idiographic information from the individual student interpretations to the interpretations of other research participants enabling an exploration of group experiential themes. The epistemological

position of IPA as one that aims to access and understand the lived experience of the participants, and to make sense of it in light of relevant theory (Smith et al 2009, 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022) was appealing in that it provided methodological capacity for dialogue with the wider theoretical underpinnings and motivations for the research (Smith et al 2009, 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022). It was this synergy between the IPA and the aims and theoretical underpinning of the research, coupled with a structured framework that spoke to my pragmatic preference for a plan to help me achieve my aims led to IPA being the methodology selected for this research.

The aim of IPA is to capture a particular experience as experienced by particular people (Smith, et al 2009/ 2022). In this case the aim was to capture how student/s studying for a degree in mental health nursing make sense of the experience of receiving written feedback on their written academic assessments. The research was not aiming to elicit the essence of the experience, but rather the interpretation of the student's meaning making activity. There is an epistemological assumption that the data gained from personal experiential accounts of experience can tell the researcher something about the participant's orientation to the world and how they make sense of it (Smith et al 2022).

The IPA method follows the hermeneutic circle in that to understand the given part of the experience one must examine the whole and to understand the whole one must examine the part. Thus, the interpretive process moves between an analysis of the specific aspects of experiential data and the totality of experience in order to reveal meaning (Nizza et al 2021; Smith et al 2022). This was deemed helpful in that I'd considered that Heidegger's concept of *thrownness* could be important in understanding the student's experiences and their orientation to the world of education and feedback. In that the students (Dasein) are thrown into the world not of their making, and that their being-in that world is perceptual, temporal and always in relation to something (Heidegger 1927/1962; Smith et al 2009, 2022). Thus, part of the IPA endeavour required the capturing of the student's experience, consideration of the student's experience of receiving feedback in that instance, and their perception and

how this connected to their history and future in an educational, professional and personal and interpersonal context.

As an approach, IPA has faced criticism, Tuffour (2017) discussed whether IPA accurately captures experience and meaning of experience or merely an opinion on it. Capturing the experience and meaning is dependent on the accounts provided by the participants and the experience of the researcher (Tuffour 2017). A discussion on the information gained from participants and the potential influence of my own experience, is something I aim to include in the process of analysis and discussion of findings in context. However, in this research the students' status as graduate students and my own experience as a nurse and academic with extensive interviewing experience provides some mitigation for inadequate reporting of the students' experience.

Wilig (2008) argues that IPA does not sufficiently recognise the role of language or seek to understand why people experience things the way they do. Smith et al (2009) argue that the process of meaning making takes place within narratives and discourse which are essentially language. Furthermore, they argue that IPA's use of ideographic, hermeneutic, and contextual analysis supports the cultural expression of people's experience. The influence of Heideggerian and Gadamerian principles mean that the sense making process in the research will include a consideration of the participants' (and researcher's) history, culture and perceived potential, and impact on their lived experience. So, this provides some potential to explore conditions that can influence why students experience things the way they do.

Van Manen (2017) has argued that IPA is not sufficiently phenomenological and too therapy orientated and psychological to be considered Phenomenology. Smith (2018) provided a rebuttal, stating that given the complexity and multiplicity of phenomenology, no one person has the authority to prescribe rules as to what constitutes phenomenology. Smith argued that it is possible for research to be both phenomenological and psychological and moreover that this is considered a strength of good IPA research (2018 Smith). The notion that IPA

can be inclusive of psychological and phenomenological is helpful for the aims of this research and sympathise with Smith's (2018) call for discourse on research that can celebrate connectivity and respects difference.

3.7 Critical realist, hermeneutic phenomenological IPA

The approach taken with this research incorporates several theoretical positions, each of which provide an important, theoretically consistent contribution. Critical realism, hermeneutic phenomenological and IPA approaches all require social science research inquiry that takes place in an open world. This is based on the premise that closed systems are not representative of human and social action (Buch-Hansen & Nielson 202; Sayer 1992; Smith et al 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022). In this case it means examining the students' experience of feedback in its everydayness of assessment and feedback practices of university life, so as to explore the ontological significance, which may have been hidden by the everyday ontic of feedback and assessment practices.

The synergy between critical realism and IPA exists in that the inherent acknowledgement that people interpret the world differently, does not negate that the phenomena being interpreted has independent ontological status (Budd et al 2010; Budd 2012). Furthermore, Budd et al (2010) argues that the questions used in IPA point to a phenomenon such as experience and shared experience or meaning, that has an ontological status, thus pointing to something "real". The ontological structure would be there, whether the participant gives an account of it to the researcher or not. IPA and critical realism also share territory in the epistemological assumptions that are inherent in both. Specifically, that the participant gives an account, and the researcher acknowledges that the account and interpretation of the account is not neutral or objective. This epistemological modesty, which is informed by epistemological relativism, is present in IPA and critical realism (Willig 2016). In this research context, I want to get close to experience but acknowledge the influence of the participants

and my interpretation on the outcome, and that the information gained, and new knowledge is always situated in context.

As discussed in the earlier part of this chapter Bhaskar (2014) argues fervently for triangulation as a means of achieving a fuller understanding of the phenomena. This is in part addressed by the epistemological underpinning of IPA methods which: 1) reveal and synthesise an interpretation of lived experience; 2) foreground of the researcher's existing knowledge, and influence and 3) consider points 1 and 2 in light of a thorough engagement with associated existing theory and research. Thus, engaging with multiple internal and external data sources to promote rigour, reliability and validity in revealing how students make sense of the feedback experience, and hopefully generates knowledge that can be used to guide future research and practice.

3.8 Conclusion

In **Chapter 3** I have presented a reflection on the PhD journey to articulate the reasons for a change in philosophical and methodological direction part way through the research. I emphasised that the decisions were based on the nature of the data, a change in supervisory team and the influence of reflexive practice. I then presented the research question along with the aims and objectives of the research. I discussed the research as being based on the foundations of previously constructed theoretical frameworks. Whereby I articulated my position on the nature of *being (*critical realist, hermeneutic phenomenological *and* knowing (hermeneutic, interpretive, reflexive, and considered in light of existing knowledge and research). The theoretical underpinning of the research served as justification for the chosen approach: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which I considered to be the most suitable methodology for the analytical and interpretative requirements of this study. Furthermore, I discussed the theoretical consistency of hermeneutic, phenomenological, and critical realist positions, proposing a research

approach of critical realist IPA. In **Chapter 4** I will present the research methods employed for this study.

Chapter 4 Methods

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 I provide a detailed description of the methods used in the research and associated rationale. This includes an account of the ethical approval process, along with the approach and rationale for the sampling strategy and data collection methods used. I introduce the research participants, and then illustrate the process of analysis that led to the identification of personal experiential themes and group experiential themes. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the approach taken to ensure trustworthiness of the analysis. The findings of the research are presented in narrative form in **Chapter 5.**

4.2 IPA research process

This section outlines the IPA procedural methods undertaken in the research.

4.2.1 Data collection in IPA research

Answering the research question required a data gathering method that could capture the students' narrative accounts of the sense they made of the feedback experience. I considered that individual in-depth interviews with student nurses on an undergraduate pre-registration mental health nursing programme would best serve this purpose. In-depth one to one interviews are generally considered the most appropriate method for data collection in IPA research (Nizza & Smith 2022). Smith& Nizza (2022) advise that the interviews are done in person where possible to fully attend to the researcher's duty of care, especially in situations where the topic for discussion is sensitive. Additionally, a one to one interview format provides the conditions to develop rapport and allow the participant time to think, speak and be heard (Reid et al 2005). Furthermore, the interview context enables the researcher to probe where needed to encourage the participant to provide more information

on important aspects of experience (Smith & Nizza 2022). This approach facilitates close engagement with the experience of the phenomena (Cohen et al 2000) and the generation of rich data (Brinkman & Kvale 2015; Smith 2022). Whilst rich data is a subjective term, in this research, the term is used to refer to the in-depth data gathered from participants who were encouraged to reflect on the question, answer freely, and encouraged provide a detailed account of their experience and the sense they made of their experience.

4.2.2 Ethical approval

In keeping with research governance, and in consultation with my supervisory team, I developed a research proposal along with drafts of a participant information sheet, proposed interview schedule and questions, consent forms and data collection. These were submitted on the ethics application form to the university ethics panel for scrutiny prior to commencing the data collection phase of the research. The feedback from the panel was considered and resulted in minor stylistic changes to the participant information sheet (**appendix F**) and further clarification on the safe storage of interview data. Furthermore, I had planned to collect data on whether participants had a disclosed learning difficulty and whether they had their compulsory education outside the United Kingdom. I was advised to remove these criteria on the basis that they were not required for the research and only data essential to the research should be collected and stored.

4.2.3 Sampling strategy

The sampling strategy aimed to provide a sample of people who could report on their experience of the phenomena of concern (Cohen et al 2000) thus a purposive sample was deemed appropriate (Ritchie et al 2014). A full and in-depth appreciation of each participant's account is a key concern in IPA (Pietkeiwicz & Smith 2014), consequently

sample sizes tend to be small, typically ranging between three and twelve (Smith et al 2009, 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022). The study population for this research were students on an undergraduate Pre-registration nursing mental health programme. The students studied under the NMC 2010 education standards, prior to the introduction of the Standards for pre-registration nursing education in 2018 (NMC 2018). The student population during this time were commissioned by HEE and did not fund their tuition. The mental health nursing student population were selected because demographic information for this field indicated the population had more varied age, gender, and routes of entry to higher education in comparison to adult and child fields of the BSc pre-registration. Thus, the students shared the same experience of receiving feedback, but I'd considered they were likely than the other fields to provide insights into a wider range of contextual influences on their experience. The university where the research took place did not provide learning disability pre-registration nursing at the time of data collection.

First year students were excluded from the study on the basis that they were unlikely to have had much exposure to written feedback in the university context, especially if they were in their first semester. Furthermore, findings from feedback research indicated the negative emotions invoked by feedback were at their strongest, and the impact on motivation and self-esteem to be greatest in the first year of university study (Hill et al 2021). Whereas Begley and White (2003) identified that third year students' report fear of negative evaluation to be at its lowest and self-esteem to be at its highest by the end of year three. This pattern was also noted in Hill et al (2021a) research that found third year students demonstrated greater resilience and confidence in the face of feedback comments on their work. With this in mind, I decided that students from year two or beginning of year three (semester one) would be the best sample frame for the research. There were additional pragmatic and ethical reasons for the decision in that I did not teach students in year one or two. This meant I had minimal contact with them, moreover, I had not been involved in the assessment or marking of their work. I considered that this increased the likelihood that they

were meeting me primarily in my capacity as a researcher. That said, my role as an academic in the mental health team had the potential to influence the student's engagement with the research and what they discussed with me. This necessitated careful consideration of these aspects in the information provided to potential participants.

The use of purposive sampling was helpful in ensuring I explored the experience of students with different grade profiles. Having reviewed literature on attainment and feedback I considered there may be some difference in students interpretation based on the grades they attained. This phenomenon has been noted by Pitt and Norton (2017) and Kahu et al (2015). Hence, participants average grades were documented, and I aimed to interview participants across a range of grade bandings. Given the potential influence of the student's educational history in influencing engagement and expectations of feedback I also decided to note the academic qualification the participants had achieved prior to commencing the programme. These were the qualifications that enabled access to their undergraduate programme, or a previous graduate or post graduate qualification. I also gathered data on age and gender identification, as these may have been significant for the participant and the worlds they inhabit, which could influence the data derived from the interview and help with the analysis (Webster et al 2014).

4.2.4 Recruitment

The first stage of the recruitment process aimed to raise awareness of the research project amongst the population of interest. I attended the first few minutes of a lecture delivered to second year mental health students to present the proposed research. I spoke to two separate student cohorts with the aim of gaining sufficient participants for the study. Following the presentation, I sent an email to all second-year students in the two cohorts. The email introduced the research via a flyer and included an invitation to respond to me via email if they were interested in participating. Once a student responded expressing an

interest, I sent further information, which included the ethically approved participant information sheet (see **appendix F**) and consent form (see **appendix G**). The email and associated participant information sheet provided information on the aims and purpose of the research and information about myself as the researcher. The information stipulated that participation in the research was voluntary, and that participation would involve an individual interview which would take approximately one hour; that the interview would be audio recorded and stored confidentially; and that the audio recording would be transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Potential participants were informed that both the audio recording of the interview and subsequent transcription would be anonymised. I concluded the email and participant information document by requesting that student review the information and contact me by email if they were still interested in participating. The potential participants were also offered an opportunity to ask further questions before deciding whether to participate.

Within the process of recruitment, it is important to consider that participants may have their own goals for participating in the research. This is referred to as “Transaction” by Bourne-Day and Lee-Treweeks (2008). Given my position within the mental health team it was important that I provided reassurance to any potential participants that I would be interviewing solely in my capacity as a research student. Specifically, that all information would be anonymised, kept confidential and would have no influence on their assessment grades. Moreover, that the interviews for the research would not be a vehicle for passing on praise, constructive feedback or criticism to the specific academics who have provided them with their written feedback.

When a participants responded to say they agree to be interviewed, a further email was sent thanking them for their involvement, and a convenient date, time and location for the interview was negotiated by email and or telephone. Once a date and time had been established a confirmatory email was sent which included all relevant scheduling details, and I encouraged them to contact me with any queries and reinforced that they could opt out if

they no longer wanted to participate, and at any point prior to the analysis of the interview data.

4.2.5 Data collection preparation

The data collection was via a retrospective, in-depth semi-structured interview about the experience of receiving written feedback on their written academic work. The interviews took place between March and May in 2018. Whilst there are significant benefits to its use in gathering in-depth first-person experiential accounts (Smith et al 2022), there are some limitations to the approach, which include difficulty with recall, distortion, and post event rationalisation (Yeo et al 2015).

The interview's purpose was to elicit sufficient information to answer the research question during the analytical treatment of the interview data (Smith et al 2009, 2022). Consequently, the questioning style and type of questions were designed to facilitate the students' access to the experience of receiving feedback and associated events eliciting experiential accounts and interpretative accounts. This was achieved by planning interview questions in advance, preparing combinations of information gathering questions and further probes and prompts to elicit experiential information. Smith et al (2009, 2022) advise starting with open questions to prompt the participant to provide a descriptive account and facilitate rapport building, and then follow with questions that invite a more analytical response. See **appendix H** for proposed questions.

Whilst the questions and probes were planned, these were a guide rather than a script, and did not preclude the use of additional contextual questions that stemmed from a participant's response. The aim being to have a “conversation with purpose” (Smith et al 2022 p 54), so the questions serve as a loose agenda to ensure the right topics are discussed. However, the aim was for the discussion to be participant led, so the participant is free to convey their lifeworld. In addition, during the process of each interview I paid careful attention to the

interviewee to notice mood shifts or non-verbal communication that may indicate they had an internal response to the question. When this occurred, I shared my observation with the participant and gently encouraged the student to disclose what was on their mind in the hope that it would reveal important insights.

I decided to undertake the interviews on the basis that as an academic educator, mental health nurse and cognitive therapist I was experienced in the use of clinical, educational, and employment interviews. Whilst they differ from research interviews, there are similarities such as rapport building, the use of open, prompting, and probing questions in order to elicit information (Brinkman & Kvale 2015). The interviews took place in a room in the university that accommodates confidential discussion. Students were offered an option to be interviewed away from the school of nursing. However, all participants opted to be I interviewed in an office in the school of nursing. I dressed informally and prior to the start of the interview proper, I reassured the student that I was interviewing in my capacity as a research student.

At the commencement of the interview meeting, I reiterated the purpose, process, storage and analysis of the interview material (as was described in the participant information sheet). I also reiterated that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point up until the point where their transcribed interview entered the analysis phase of the research. In advance of the interview questions, I also reassured the participants that should I ask a question that they did not want to answer, then they could say "I don't want to answer the question" and I would move on to the next question without querying them as to why. This follows Lewis and Graham (2007) guidance of giving participants examples of the wording to use if they don't want to answer a question. The purpose being to put the student at ease and facilitate honest disclosure. Once I had provided this information, I asked whether the student was happy to proceed, and they signed the consent form (see **appendix G**).

With regard to stages of the interview and what should take place at each stage, I followed guidance from Yeo et al (2014) who recommend six broad stages of the interview process.

Details of the content at each stage are contained in **appendix I**. Broadly speaking, stage one, included arrival and introductions, stage two provided an introduction to the research, consent and the interview process; stage three commences with an open question to get a sense of how they are likely to respond to being interviewed and to adapt the interview approach so as to generate a good rapport; stage four is a dynamic process of asking open and probing questions, attentive listening and encouraging the participant to lead the conversation; stage five provides some advance notice that the interview is nearly over; step six takes place at the end of the interview, whereby the participant is thanked and the next steps are outlined, along with any recommendations or signposting to university resources and support that may be of use.

Seven students agreed to participate in the research, were invited and consented to be included in the study. Seven participants fell within recommended sample sizes of between three and twelve participants (Smith et al 2009, 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022). Smaller sample sizes reflect the commitment to ideography in IPA research. They create the capacity for in-depth analysis of each case and a manageable interview data set for cross comparison analysis (Smith et al 2009, 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022) Each participant was interviewed, and the interviews were transcribed in preparation for analysis.

4.3 Introduction to the participants

All seven participants provided information on the previous highest-level course completed and or the course that provided the entry requirements for the BSc Nursing (Mental Health). In accordance with agreed ethics, participants endorsed their identified gender, having been given the option to state whether they were female, male, other or prefer not to say. The age of each participant was recorded, and all participants were over 21 years old, this fulfils the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) category of mature student (HESA 2022). The information on grade average range were collected from the university records. Each

participant was given a pseudonym to maintain anonymity. The collated participant details are summarised in table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Introduction to participants

Pseudonym	Age	Grade range	Gender - Male/ female/ other/ prefer not to say	Previous qualification
Lisa	32	70+	Female	Access to Higher Education
Jim	39	70+	Male	BSc
Jo	33	50-60	Female	BSc
Amy	31	30-40	Female	A Levels
Helen	56	40-50	Female	Open University level 3 modules
Adele	41	50-60	Female	Foundation Degree
Jan	49	60+	Female	Access to Higher Education

4.4 Transcription and preparation for analysis

The interviews were all in person, one to one and were recorded on a portable digital device. The interviews were transcribed using transcription software, the transcription was then checked against the audio recording. This ensured the accuracy of the verbatim transcription, which was essential given that analysis in IPA largely focusses on what is said by the interviewee and interviewer. The transcript included all semantic information, relevant prosodic elements of the interview, such as long pauses were also included. Whilst not evident in the initial transcript, during the process of initial noting, I listened to the recording and added comments where there were obvious changes in the pace, laughter, or tone of speech. These notes were helpful in interpreting the surrounding text. Moreover, listening to the interview whilst reading the transcript thoroughly is considered good practice for IPA research (Smith & Nizza 2022). This process of cross checking and noting prosodic features facilitated a deep familiarity with the interview data. It was during this stage that the transcription was anonymised. This included anonymising participants names and any names mentioned by the participants.

Each interview was amended in turn and then once I was assured of the accuracy, a copy was included in the central column of an IPA table in preparation for the initial noting phase of the analytical process. The format of the table followed updated guidance from Smith et al (2022) and Smith and Nizza (2022). The IPA table included a central column for the original interview transcript with margins to the right for exploratory notes and margins to the left detailing the line of the text and the experiential statements emerging from the analytical work.

During the process of analysis, I aimed to stay as close to the data as possible, whilst also providing reflexive commentary and foregrounding any conceptual, theoretical, or experiential notes that came to mind that could influence the reading and interpretation of the data. This aligns with both critical realist and hermeneutic phenomenological ontological

foundations of the research, in that whilst I aimed to be ontologically close to the idiographic data, I acknowledged the fallible nature of enquiry and recognise knowledge and interpretation as culturally, historically, and socially situated (Baskhar 1979, Heidegger 1927/1962, Gadamer 1989).

The process of examining one's own beliefs and judgements, is an important part of the research process (Smith et al 2009, 2022) and is significant when considering the rigor and trustworthiness of findings. To facilitate transparency and rigour, I added an additional column to the IPA table to record reflexive notes and kept a reflective journal throughout the process. I kept a reflexive journal with me at all times, so as to record any insights and thoughts that came to mind from my readings, listening to pod casts and lectures, or following contemplation, or conversation. The diary formed an important part of the PhD journey, framing the development of ideas informing the analysis, and discussion phase of the research. An example of the IPA table is provided in Appendix J. Photographs of excerpts from the reflexive journal are included as **appendix K**

4.5 Stages of IPA analysis

There is no single correct method for undertaking analysis in IPA research (Smith et al 2009, 2022). Analysis tends to be guided by a commitment to ideography, along with underpinning phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophical principles, set within a subject relevant, theoretical and research context. IPA researchers can work flexibly in how they apply these principles and practices whilst analysing transcribed interview data (Reid et al 2005). However, for researchers such as myself who are engaging in IPA research for the first time, Smith et al (2009, 2022) advise following a coherent guide as opposed to following a set of principles. Considering the recommendation, I followed the method outlined in Smith et al (2009, 2022) and Smith and Nizza (2022) which sets out seven steps in undertaking analysis in IPA research, these are outlined below to provide a procedural context to the stages of analysis described later in the chapter:

Step 1 Listening reading and re-reading: Starting with the first case, the researcher listens to the interview, reads the interview whilst reading the transcript and re-reads the transcript.

Step 2 Exploratory noting: This involves noting descriptive comments, such as key words, phrases and explanations by the side of the transcript. This stage also includes initial notes on any linguistic features in the interview data such as the use of metaphors, pacing and pauses. Initial conceptual comments may be included at this stage but are provisional, and likely change or adapt as the analysis progresses.

Step 3 Constructing experiential statements: The result of the initial comments lead to a growth of data. Smith et al (2022) advise that it is this larger data set that becomes the focus of this next stage of analysis, which is the construction of experiential statements. The identification of experiential statements aims to reduce the overall volume of data whilst maintaining complexity of the material. This is done by reviewing the notes and transcript and capturing the experience that is conveyed in that section of the text.

Step 4 Searching for connections across experiential statements: The next step in the analytical process involves mapping out thoughts on how the experiential statements fit together to identify the most important and interesting themes within the participant's accounts. Smith et al (2009, 2022) and Smith and Nizza (2022) point to a number of criteria that can be employed at this stage. The first being abstraction, whereby experiential statements are considered by putting like with like to develop to clusters which illustrate the participants personal experiential themes. This is coupled with the analytic process of subsumption where the experiential statement in itself acquires personal experiential theme status. Smith et al (2009, 2022) advise on exploring the transcript for oppositional relationships between experiential statements which could indicate polarisation. Additionally, Smith et al (2009, 2022) advise examining the data with regard to any temporal, cultural and narrative themes relating to the experience can provide contextual analytical codes for

grouping. Codes may also be identified by the frequency the theme is reported or the function of language used in the transcript (Smith et al 2009, 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022).

Smith and Nizza (2022) note that when clustering experiential statements, a researcher can be working with a large volume of statements. Thus, there are some pragmatic decisions to make so that all statements can be viewed together, enabling points of connection and divergence to be visible. Smith and Nizza (2022) advise printing off the experiential statements and cutting the printed paper into each separate statement. The statements can then be placed on a large flat area, so the researcher is able to take a bird's eye view of them all. Repetitive statements are stacked on top of each other and whole set of different statements are visible. This enables the researcher to get an initial sense of emerging clusters.

Step 5 Naming personal experiential themes (PETs) and consolidating and organising into a table: once the clustering process has resulted in groupings that are meaningful and capture the experiential themes, these are given a label that clearly articulates the theme. This stage concludes by writing up the themes, so they are represented in table form, referred to as the table of Personal Experiential Themes (PETs). Where required, a PET may incorporate sub themes to better illustrate higher and lower order conceptual groupings within the same theme. Smith et al (2022) state the themes should be typed in bold upper case and sub themes in bold lower case, so as to represent the higher and lower levels of conceptual organisation. Each theme and sub theme should be recorded along with the page and line number corresponding with the location in the transcript. This provides an evidence trail of analysis that can be shared and scrutinised. The aim of this being to promote the rigour and validity of the analysis.

Step 6 Continue case analysis of each individual case: Once the first case is analysed, and a table of personal experiential themes developed, the researcher moves to the next case, repeating each of the stages outlined above. In keeping with the idiographic approach,

each case is analysed on its own terms, and at the point where the analysis of each case is complete there are potentially several very different PETs to consider in the next stage.

Step 7 Work with personal experiential themes to develop group experiential themes (GETs) across cases: This stage of the analysis reflects IPA's commitment to identifying the shared and unique features of experience, rather than identifying a group norm (Smith et al 2022). Guidance within Smith et al (2022) and Smith and Nizza (2022) advise that the researcher look through the PET tables from each of the cases to identify whether there are personal experiential themes that are shared and could be higher order concepts. Additionally, they advise researchers consider the differences between the themes. Practically, this can be done by placing out all the PET tables on a surface or screen, to have sight of the PET tables collectively. The process involves moving between tables, experiential themes, and quotes, seeking points of convergence and divergence. At this stage in the process the labelling of page and text line within the PET tables is helpful, as it ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the interview data. Smith et al (2022) advise physically moving the material around to explore potential groupings. This requires clear labelling to keep track of each case. Each coded PET is then separated into themes and subthemes so they can be moved round on a large flat space, clustering to form conceptual groupings of group experiential themes. This follows the same process as the clustering process used for individual case analysis, but on a larger scale. The group experiential themes are labelled and written up in a table of group experiential themes.

Smith et al (2022) argue that a mark of good quality IPA is a table of group experiential themes that can demonstrate the group theme as well as the unique way each participant reflects that theme. As with the PETs table, themes may be broken into sub themes, with themes documented in bold upper case and subthemes in bold lowercase. This stage of the analytical process represents an interpretative synthesis of the interpretative analysis of each case (Smith et al 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022).

Whist the seven steps provide a useful guide to the analytical process, it is worth noting the iterative nature of the process, and that this facilitates deeper levels of interpretation (Smith et al 2022; Smith & Nzza 2022). As the analysis proceeds, insights develop that may warrant revisiting earlier stages and refining the group themes. Thus, the researcher moves back and forth between the part and whole to achieve deeper levels of interpretation (Smith et al 2022). Once complete, the results of analysis are then written up in narrative form to illustrate how the unique participant experiences inform the group experiential themes. This is presented in **chapter 5**.

4.6 Idiographic case analysis

Each individual case was analysed in detail, reflecting the orientation towards ideography and exploration of each participant's experience of the phenomena, which in this case was the sense they made of the feedback experience.

4.6.1 Reading and exploratory note taking

Initial analysis was done by working through the transcript line by line and writing notes on a printed copy of the IPA table. I found the physical process of writing, facilitated a close connection with the data, and writing on a hard copy is advised in some IPA guidance (Smith and Nizza 2022). The first phase involved reading and documenting initial exploratory notes in the margin right of the transcript. In keeping with IPA guidance (Smith et al 2009), the process was slow, purposeful and in-depth noting reactions to the text, detailing descriptive, linguistic and conceptual observations. Descriptive notes summarised what the participant said, including where meaning was explicit. Key words and phrases were underlined. Linguistic notes included interesting linguistic aspects such as false starts, hesitation, laughter, tone of voice and use of pronouns, tense, and metaphor. All of which helped provide clues as to the participants sense making. The conceptual notes included questions

and conceptual comments for example "*is there something about feeling powerless and unable to affect change?"* My conceptual notes at this stage in the analysis were provisional but provided a hypothesised potential meaning that would be subject to further consideration.

As I worked through the text, my own emotions, predictions, theoretical and conceptual ideas occurred, and these were written in the reflexive notes column. In some cases, this took the form of commentary on interview technique and process for example "*this question is too leading, should have kept it more open".* In others, I noted previous knowledge or experience that influenced interpretation, for example "*Aware my therapeutic knowledge is influencing this interpretation".*

4.6.2 Constructing experiential statements

Once the exploratory noting phase was completed, I reviewed the exploratory and reflexive notes and proceeded to the next phase of constructing experiential statements. Experiential statements relate to "the participant's experiences or to the experience of sense making of the things that happen to them" (Smith et al 2022 p 86). This stage involved reviewing the information and creating an experiential statement that captured the meaning of the experience for the participant in that portion of the text. The process required analytical effort and interpretation. The experiential statement should provide a concise summary reflecting the important psychological processes and relevant context or content that provoke the participants response (Smith et al 2022). Thus, a series of analytical questions were developed via consultation with research supervisors and with reference to guidance developed by expert proponents of IPA (Larkin et al 2006; Smith et al 2009, 2022; Smith and Nizza 2022) the questions were used as an aide memoir to reveal the participants sense making:

- *What have I learned about the meaning of the experience to the participant in this portion of the text?*
- *What does this mean to them?*
- *What is this experience like?*
- *Why might they think this? (reflect on the whole/ context)?*
- *What are the things that matter to the participant?*
- *What are the meanings of those things?*
- *How is the persons stance in relation to those things characterised?*

The aim was to get as close as possible to the meaning of the experience for the participant, whilst acknowledging that my involvement in the process meant I could not access *pure experience*. In essence there is an additional filter in the double hermeneutic, as I am making sense of the participants sense making, which inevitably introduced further subjective interpretation. Experiential statements should be both grounded in the data and demonstrate conceptual thought. The practise of pursuing closeness to the participants account of experience carries the risk of being descriptive and omitting the essential interpretive component of IPA (Smith et al 2022). To mitigate the risk, I reviewed the experiential statements using a reflective question:

- Is the statement reflecting my analytic work or is it a reconfiguration of the original data?

This helped refine and amend statements to reflect my interpretative work, which equally carried a risk of moving away from the data. However, there was some reassurance in that the process is iterative and it is acknowledged that experiential statements and other findings throughout the IPA process can change because of later findings, peer review and research supervision (Smith et al 2022).

4.6.3 Finding connections and clustering the experiential statements

Once the whole interview had been analysed and the experiential statements identified, they were typed out on a separate document along with a record of the line number and page location in the IPA table. The document was then printed and cut so the experiential statements were separate. The statements were then moved to a space where they could be spread out and viewed from above.

The statements were examined, analysed, interpreted, and moved to conceptual clusters by noting points of divergence and convergence of meaning. Each cluster was then given a label. The process of clustering included the identification of repeated experiential statements, these were stacked and the statement that best captured the meaning chosen as representative. Smith and Nizza (2022) advise that a cluster should contain between three and five personal experiential themes. Initial clustering yielded a higher number of themes, further revisions resulted in the removal of some clusters which were less significant or similar to other clusters. Some clusters remained but became a sub theme within a theme. There were several revisions during the clustering process and at each point a photograph was taken as a record of the version and included as raw data to illustrate the iterative analytical process (see **appendix L**). Once I was satisfied with the clusters they were given a title which reflected the characteristics of the grouping.

4.6.4 Developing a table of Personal Experiential Themes

Following guidance (Smith et al 2022 and Smith and Nizza 2022) and using photographs as a reference, the clusters were typed up to form a table of personal experiential themes (PETs). The themes represented the highest level of organisation in the clustering process. Some personal experiential themes contain sub themes, to illustrate further conceptual organisation at a lower subset level. The constructed tables illustrated the personal experimental theme and associated sub themes, along with the experiential statements that

were grouped together under each. The corresponding passages of the interview that prompted the experiential statement detailing page and line number of the interview transcript was also recorded. This provided an audit trail, representing the analytic effort and facilitated ease of access to relevant sections of the data for further analysis and write up. Example tables of personal experiential themes are included in **appendix M**. Below is an excerpt from Adele's PET by way of illustrative example.

Table 4.2

Excerpt from PET table

Theme 5 RELATIONAL DYNAMICS			
Sub theme 1 Empathy with the marker	Page	Line	
Empathising with the marker	20	10	*I can understand it can be hard. I do understand that.*
Not wanting to add to the markers burden	31	6-12	*There are time constraints…they've got other jobs, I fully get that. It's part of the reason why I won't be knocking on someone's door saying can you just talk me through this.*
Sub theme 2 infantilisation			
Feeling patronised by feedback	14	6	*Erm… patronising*
Felt like they were of being told off like a child	32	15-16	*I'm a 40 year old woman I don't expect to be spoken to like a child!*

Note: PET table excerpt is from Adele's PET table

The process of developing the PET table was an iterative process, a first draft was developed reviewed and changes were made to the theme and sub theme headings to better reflect meaning. Additionally, the process led to some amendments to the experiential statements. Each of the amendments were colour coded to illustrate the iterated version history and all iterations, along with questions and reflections on the process were shared with my supervisors for discussion and feedback. This in turn resulted in further amendments to the PET until a final version was established.

4.7 Cross case analysis

This process explored the PET tables together to identify the shared and unique features of the experience of receiving written feedback on written academic work.

4.7.1 Developing group experiential themes (GET) across cases

Once each case had been analysed, my thoughts on the themes were noted and my provisional thoughts on the themes emerging across the groups were recorded (see appendix N). This yielded a substantial number of themes which were too numerous to reflect group experiential themes and did not reflect a detailed analytic synthesis, but they served as a starting point for consideration. I then considered the PET tables for each case, asking myself a series of questions derived from IPA guidance (Smith et al 2022):

- What lies at the heart of this experience?
- How did each participant live through the experience?
- How did each participant make sense of the experience?

This resulted in a distilled summary for each case which I documented in table 3. This process enabled the gestalt of each case to be present in my thoughts whilst analysing cross case themes, honouring the lived experience of each participant.

Table 4.3

Interpretative summary of each case

Participant	What lies at the heart of this experience?	How did the participants live through it?	How did each make sense of it?
Lisa	Feedback is how they are validated for their efforts, measure their performance, and develop further. Their goal is to excel, fulfil their academic potential and overcome self-doubt. This is the first time they have been committed to a goal. They (mostly) believe that previous failings have been because of lack of commitment or interest; but there is some self-doubt that they may not succeed, which they manage by investing considerable time an effort preparing and refining their assessments.	Hard work, perfectionism, reassurance seeking and anxiety.	Feedback is a valuable tool that can be used to develop and boost confidence. That goals are achievable. The process enhances academic self-esteem (ego).
Jim	Their self-identity is that of a high achiever and are determined to (and confident they can) achieve a first. They have experienced humiliation when they were publicly chastised for not checking their work and disappointed a respected teacher by not meeting their expectations of perfection. The experience is something they carry with them. They prevent further humiliation and disappointment by being well informed, striving for perfection and aiming to be the best, whilst also helping others and protecting young people from similar humiliation. They know about feedback practices and the potential to improve outcomes for students. They don't believe the feedback they receive gives them the developmental material they need, but they blame the system rather than the marker.	Confidence, ambition, perfectionism, competitiveness, having a clear grasp of regulations and standards. Being a curriculum governor for school education (protector / champion).	Feedback is valuable, but not used to its potential because of a flawed system.
Jo	They experience feedback as a measure of what has been done, and as a confidence booster to spur them on. They have limited time and competing demands - which limit their engagement with feedback. They want to do well and will follow the rules and commitments to others.	Work hard, focus on the grade rather than the feedback, fulfil commitments to others.	The mark is most important. Feedback is an additional benefit to engage with if they have time, but is most valuable when they have not done well.
Amy	They are lost and don't understand what is required. They consider themselves "not clever" and different (slower to grasp things) than their peers. A recent diagnosis of dyslexia has provided hope that they can achieve with the right support. They seek feedback approaches that are personal to their needs (individual, clear and conversation based) and worry that the system does not account for their individual needs.	With anxiety, self-criticism, procrastination and avoids speaking in groups. Engages with specialist support.	Feedback is essential but it doesn't meet their needs and they don't understand it.

Helen	They are unsure of what they need to do and are dependent on and expect the marker to provide specific feedforward guidance. They believe feedback should be developmental and indicate progression from one assessment to the next. They don't believe the system of anonymous marking can provide this.	Pragmatically, dispassionately, and passively - they are a recipient.	Essential for development - but not providing sufficient detailed information for their needs.
Adele	Seeking validation through high marks, wanting to be seen as someone who does well- coupled with some insecurity about being able to do so. Have ambitions to achieve a first and replicate the high marks in foundation year which since then they have fallen short of and don't understand why. They are unsure of what is required and have had mixed messages which has led to frustration and mistrust of the system. They feel powerless to change the outcome and feel disrespected and angry.	They are orientated towards the grade. They experience anxiety, procrastination, and anger, they want concrete answers and respect and find it difficult to move on from perceived unfair treatment.	The system is unfair and there is nothing they can do about it.
Jan	They experienced discrimination for dyslexia in school which has marred all previous attempts at education until this course. Their experience of an acknowledgement, technological advancement and reasonable adjustments for dyslexia have helped them communicate their message and be understood and accepted as someone with commitment and intelligence. They find feedback helpful and trustworthy (on this course). They have accepted themself and their dyslexia which has helped them build resilience to manage feedback on their work. They value positive recognition, and this helps them engage with developmental criticism of their work.	They are very anxious about the grade, but accepting of themselves.	As a helpful, motivating and validating process that heals old wounds.

Each case was colour coded (as in the table above) and a copy of the PET table was printed on coloured paper corresponding with the participants colour code, so as not to lose track of the individual participants in the group clustering process. In accordance with guidance, the cross-case analysis considered points of divergence and convergence and commenced at the highest organisational theme level in the first instance (Smith et al 2022, Smith & Nizza 2022). In practice this process involved cutting each PET into the separate theme sections and placing them on a large area (floor) so as to take a bird’s eye view of all cases.

As with the previous stage a series of questions taken from IPA guidance (Smith et al 2022 p100) were used to aid the synthesis of group experiential themes. Observations and notes were recorded in a reflexive journal which was kept close to hand throughout the process:

- What connections are there across the contributing cases? (Starting at the highest level of organisation on the PET table i.e. the themes)
- Which PETs are most prominent across the whole data set?
- How does a sub theme in one case echo or relate across another?
- Are there any experiential features that are obviously universal?
- At what level is the commonality shared?
- Are my analytic entities reflecting the participants experience?
- Are the analytic entities doing justice to my analytic work?

(Smith et al 2022 p100)

Some themes were immediately apparent and grouped together, some took longer to emerge and in some cases the themes were separated into the sub theme. As with the previous clustering activity, the process required several iterations, and photographs were taken of each iteration to provide an audit trail of the decision making process (see appendix O).

4.7.2 Table of group experiential themes GET

Once the physical process of clustering was complete, a first drafted table of group experiential themes was written. The table detailed the group themes and sub themes and included reference to the PET theme and sub theme, the associated words or phrase from the interview data, and the page and line location within transcript were also included (see **appendix P**). The GET table was reviewed via reflection, sharing with research supervisors, and discussed with accountability writing group. The data was considered through the lens

of Heideggerian (Heidegger 1927/1962), and critical realist (Baskhar 1979) ontology and several revisions and refinements were made so as to better represent the meaning of the participants experience of receiving feedback. Each iteration was recorded with a version and date stamp, along with introductory notes commenting on the rational for changes. In practice the process reduced the number of themes from seven to two experiential themes. The initial seven themes were identified via cross analysis and synthesis. Once the GET was developed, I was drawn to a deeper level of interpretation noticing the temporal and cultural aspects participants were bringing to the experience and the relational aspects that were shared between cases. Consequently, two overarching group experiential themes were illuminated and labelled ***educational baggage*** and ***mediating influence of relationships***. The original seven themes became subthemes. Table 5. provides a summary of the group experiential themes, sub themes and illustrative examples from the interview transcripts. The analysis and synthesis of data, and resulting themes are the focus of chapter 5.

4.8 Trustworthiness and rigour of the analytic process

Smith et al (2009 and 2022) emphasise the importance of assessing quality in qualitative research whilst acknowledging the difficulty in applying a set-criteria that accommodates such a diverse research field. Yardley (2000) highlighted four broad principles for assessing quality, these being sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. These principles provided a framework to plan and assess the quality of the analysis. Additional contributions from Levitt et al (2018), Nizza et al (2021) and Smith et al (2022) informed the quality assurance process, the practice resulting from these recommendations have been incorporated within Yardley's four broad principles below:

4.8.1 Sensitivity to context

The participant information sheet (see **appendix F**) stated whilst I was undertaking research as part of an MPhil/ PhD, I also had a role as an academic aligned with the course alongside other professional roles as a nurse and cognitive behavioural therapist. This information was circulated to everyone included in the sample frame, namely second year students on a BSc pre-registration mental health nursing programme. Potential participants could then make an informed decision about whether to engage in the study. This may have resulted in some students with significant experiences being reluctant to participate. A purposive sample of second year students were chosen because my marking and teaching responsibilities commenced in year three. This meant I would not have taught or assessed any participants. However, the fact that I worked as an academic aligned with the department and the course was an important consideration, and throughout the interviews I made a note in the reflective notes section of occasions where I thought the relationship may have influenced the interview. One such example occurred in an interview with Adele, who was clearly unhappy about the assessment feedback and grade they had received, and conveyed chagrin at the nature of their interactions with the academic concerned. The experience felt like that of hearing a student complaint. Having previously had responsibility for student complaints, I noticed the urge to resolve the issue. I made a note of the internal experience and focused on listening and facilitating an exploration of the meaning. This was then noted in the reflexive notes section of the IPA table to foreground potential influences on interpretation. This aligns with a quality indicator posited by Nizza et al (2021) namely that an IPA study should develop a vigorous experiential and or existential account that is clearly focused on the participants meaning.

Whilst acknowledging the potential transference in the interviews, I endeavoured to create an environment that was comfortable and informal to put the interviewee at ease. I offered all participants the option of being interviewed in the department building or at the library. During the interview I employed numerous listening and facilitation skills I've developed over

years of practice in mental health nursing, education, and therapy. All were used with the aim of building rapport, so students felt safe to provide an honest account of experience. In advance of the interview, I provided exit options for participants. This is part of ethical research practice, but also conveyed sensitivity to context and provided an option for students to withdraw should they decide they no longer felt comfortable disclosing information (Graham et al 2007). The final area for consideration was the situation of the research within relevant literature, and throughout the process of analysis I recorded where theoretical concepts from phenomenology, hermeneutics, pedagogy, and cognitive behavioural therapy informed my thinking. Typically, these were noted in the reflexive section of the IPA table and a reflexive journal, which was maintained throughout the research.

4.8.2 Commitment and rigour

This aspect included selecting appropriate participants for the research, and the approach to eliciting information. In this study the sample frame included those who had shared experience of assessment feedback, and during the interview I utilised open questions and probing questions to draw out both the participants experience and their sense of the experience. This included active listening and tuning into both the words and noticing any affect shifts that could indicate the presence of potentially significant thoughts. All of which are aspects shared between therapeutic interviewing and research interviewing (Brinkman and Kvale 2015).

The research process followed guidance set out by Smith et al (2009, 2022) and Smith and Nizza (2022). By following each stage of IPA set out in the guidance, and applying strategies to ground the interpretation in the data, and honouring both the idiographic and shared meanings of experience I endeavoured to adhere to established good practice in IPA. Additionally, I read IPA research papers, and viewed blogs and webinars led by experienced

IPA researchers. I consulted with my research supervisors at every stage of the process and shared information with peers in a writing group, academics in the school of nursing, and presented initial thematic concepts at a national education conference. The feedback from these events informed further analysis and discussion. This helped me to address two further quality indicators of IPA, namely the analytic reading of participants words and attending to convergence and divergence in the participants accounts (Nizza et al 2021).

4.8.3 Transparency and coherence

The collation and evidence trail of data collection and analysis took place via a process of version and date stamped IPA tables, PET and GET documents, along with photographs of the clustering stage, and typed summaries from the reflexive diary, reflections, and research supervision questions. All documents were shared and discussed with research supervisors. Each theme was supported by quotes from the interviews and the themes aimed to align with phenomenological (lived experience) and hermeneutic (interpretative) principles. Nizza at al (2021) posit that the analysis should provide a persuasive and coherent story that is built gradually via the analytic dialogue between selected and interpreted extracts from the participants. In following guidance and documenting each stage, action, discussion, and decision during the IPA, I aimed to increase the probability of attaining this quality marker.

4.8.4 Impact and importance

The aim of this research was to provide an original contribution to knowledge in the field of feedback research. Whilst the growth in research into feedback effectiveness and feedback literacy has been exponential in the last five years (Pitt & Quinlan 2022), IPA research exploring the meaning of the feedback experience is markedly absent. Feedback research has pressed ahead developing strategies for engagement (Winston & Nash 2016), models of

feedback literacy (Carless & Boud 2018) and approaches to feedback (Cavaleri et al 2019) with limited attention paid to lived experience and meaning of assessment feedback for students. As such there is a risk that the ontological considerations have not been addressed sufficiently, and approaches that take a standardised approach to what is essentially a personal and contextual issue could limit the effectiveness of well-intentioned interventions. This research aimed to generate new knowledge via a process of intellectual construction (Cary & Smith 1993) involving engagement with the findings from this research along with existing research and theoretical constructs.

4.9 Researcher reflexivity on the process of IPA analysis

Smith et al (2022) cite reflexivity as a strategy for exploring the relationship between the researcher's perceptions and experiences and the process of understanding the participants accounts of experience. As an academic and cognitive behaviour therapist I entered the research with a set of knowledge and pre-conceptions that inevitably influenced both my reasons for undertaking the research, and my journey through the research process. My initial motivation for the study connected to my work at the university, and my observations that students reacted differently to similar feedback, and they had differing preferences for feedback style. When I'd given formative verbal feedback directly to students, I often asked "how do you like your feedback? do you prefer the sugar coated or the *give it to me straight* approach". Invariably students would express a preference for a style that worked best for them, and students expressed different preferences. This experience furthered my curiosity into how students make sense of their feedback, and whether these phenomena could be understood better.

Additionally, in the process of dealing with student complaints about feedback I'd observed numerous occasions where students had strong negative reactions to what was ostensibly fair, well written and balanced feedback. This reminded me of clinical encounters in CBT

where emotional reactions were largely influenced by the view of an event rather than the event itself. Which resulted in my pondering whether it may not be the *actual* feedback but the *view* of feedback that was important. At this point I was drawn to the idea that self-esteem may have a part to play in the observed phenomena. Early discussions in research supervision, included the importance of foregrounding this knowledge, but I was rightly advised to keep an open mind. To that end I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research endeavour and during the analysis phase noted where knowledge from my therapeutic orientation and practice may be influencing interpretation.

One such example occurred during the interview stage. I found interviews flowed reasonably well, and my therapeutic practice afforded me some confidence in using a questioning style that facilitated rich interview data. The interviews varied in length, with one being much shorter (Helen's). This interview was by far the most challenging, in that whilst they provided significant information, they did so dispassionately and succinctly, which was in marked contrast to the other participants. It was important to note my own countertransference reaction to this experience. In a clinical context this would indicate that key cognitions had not been identified. I questioned whether my interviewing style had not gleaned the important experiential information from Helen and thus and not accessed the emotional aspect of the experience. Helen's account focused on the experience of receiving written feedback in terms of an evaluation of quality and helpfulness, and in interviewing and analysing I kept seeking the hidden emotional expression I thought *should* be present.

Within the interviews I found the role of researcher challenging when students discussed an issue where in my usual role, I would a provide an explanation or solve a problem. I was keen not to obfuscate the research interview but acknowledged this internal pull towards using my professional expertise within my reflexive practice. Being helpful is an inherent principle in my nursing, therapeutic and education practice. Consequently, I reassured myself that eliciting honest participant accounts of experience, that were as free (as possible) from contamination from other university processes would be more helpful than

providing an explanation as to why an event could have occurred. However, I reassured myself that once the interview concluded I could signpost the student to the appropriate support or process that could be of help.

Some phases of the IPA process felt familiar, interviewing, and idiographic analysis shared some characteristics with the process of idiographic assessment in therapeutic practice. Cross case analysis felt like entirely new and at times uncomfortable territory. I was not confident I'd identified significant group experiential themes through the clustering process, and it took a long time and several iterations to reach a point where the themes accurately reflected the potency of participants' experience. I learned the value of sticking with the interpretive analytical process until the resulting themes resonated, *felt right* and seemed recognisable to my supervisory team and critical friends amongst academic peers. I found the notion of *phenomenological nod* helpful in this respect, whereby people reading or hearing about the phenomenological description nod in agreement (Munhall 1994; Van Manen 1990).

During the process of idiographic analysis, I experienced a deep sadness in response to some of the accounts of experience. This was especially so in cases where participants recounted instances of misunderstandings and unfair criticism or discrimination whist at school. Invariably, these instances were internalised and impacted on their perceived horizon of possibilities. One such example being Amy's account of going through school with undiagnosed dyslexia and believing herself to be "not clever".

The research process prompted consideration of educational practice, in particular the inherent power structures and the impact on developing authentic helping relationships that promote learner agency. I reflected on the synergy with inherent power structures in health care and a shift towards person centred care as a means of improving quality and effectiveness.

Much of the research was undertaken during the COVID19 lockdown period and the nature of my employment resulted in an increase in responsibility throughout. From a leadership perspective my work became uncharacteristically transactional so as to reassure students and colleagues and solve unpredicted practical issues at pace to maintain steadiness. I experienced the importance of changing the nature of relationships and the degree of consultation depending on circumstance. This experience reinforced the importance of relationships and psychological safety and whilst not directly related to this research, is likely to have influenced my interpretation of the participants experience.

4.10 Conclusion

Having presented a justification for the IPA I provided an outline of the recommendations for good practice advised by Smith et al (2022) and Smith and Nizza (2022) and explained how these principles and procedures were applied. This included a description and justification for the information provided for participants, participant recruitment strategy, the preparation of interview questions and approach taken along with the approach to interview, and analysis.

The research participants were introduced, and I presented the approach taken in preparing the interview data, and provided a detailed account of each stage of the process of analysis leading to personal experiential themes and group experiential themes. I concluded with an account of the strategies used to promote trustworthiness and rigour of the analytic process, along with reflexive commentary on the process of undertaking IPA.

In **chapter 5** the findings from analysis will be presented via a narrative, to illustrate how the experience of each participant contributed to the group experiential themes.

Chapter 5 Analysis and findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the analysis of **chapter 4** in presenting the group experiential themes in a narrative format. In doing so I aim to present a coherent story that illustrates the unfolding dialogue between sections of interpreted extracts from the participants showing the unique contribution each participant gave to the group experiential themes. I aim to show points of convergence and divergence in the experiential accounts that led to the resulting themes, along with consideration of the contextual and temporal features that contributed to the analysis. A table of group experiential themes is presented, which includes the title for each theme and sub them. The full detailed group experiential theme table is too large to demonstrate a coherent narrative but is included as **appendix O** for reference. Each group experiential theme is presented along with a description This is then followed by associated sub themes and the associated excerpt from participants transcripts, along with a narrative that gives meaning to the selected data.

5.2 Group experiential themes

Through the process of idiographic and subsequent cross case analysis of the group I identified two main group experiential themes (GET) and eight sub themes which are summarised in the table 5.1 below. A full table of group experiential themes is illustrated in **appendix P**. This full GET table illustrates the group experiential theme and associated sub themes along with extracts from the interview data to illustrate how each participant contributed to the group experiential theme. This illustrates the uniqueness of each participants experience in their contribution to the group theme. Overall, the two group experiential themes of **educational baggage** and the **mediating influence of relationships** were shared across all participants, the sub themes illustrate the ways in which participants

experienced aspects within those themes, and these were not shared by all. In some cases, the sub themes illustrate points of divergence between participants. For example, there was variance between participants regarding their expectations on the purposes of feedback, which connected to the group sub theme of feedback being **an unfamiliar tool.**

5.2.1 Group Experiential Theme (GET) summary

Table 5.1

Summary of Group Experiential Themes (GET)

GET Theme	GET Sub theme
1 EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE	**1.1 An unfamiliar tool**
	1.2 Academic confidence influencing anticipation
	1.3 Seeking external recognition and status
	1.4 The legacy of negative school experience
	1.5 Feedback triggering self-regulatory strategies
2 MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS	**2.1 Empathy for the marker**
	2.2 Respectful communication
	2.3 Person centredness of feedback and feedback systems

5.3 Narrative description and analysis of group experiential themes (GET) with illustrative quotes and comments

Nizza et al (2021) advise that a quality indicator for IPA research is the construction of a compelling and unfolding narrative. This should include a narrative description of findings "which should be built cumulatively, through an unfolding dialogue between selected and interpreted excerpts from participants" (Nizza et al 2021 p371). Thus, to communicate the participants' experience of feedback, and how they made sense of it, each group experiential theme is presented along with a discussion of my analysis of each participant excerpt that resulted in the interpretation and resulting themes. The themes are presented in an order that facilitates the unfolding narrative, with consideration of the temporal nature of the participants' experience.

5.3.1 GET Theme 1 EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE

As I explored the collective cases, and my reflexive notes, I considered the points of connection and divergence across participants to identify group experiential themes. I developed the analytic entity of **EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE** which captured my interpretation of what was influencing the students interpretation of their feedback experience. As I reviewed the cases, I was struck by how each student's interpretative account incorporated memories of prior educational experiences, often going back to early years education. Moreover, they also carried their confidence, emotions and their expectations and hopes for the future into each feedback episode. All these elements were interconnected and inextricably linked to the students lived experience of feedback.

Consequently, the title of this theme aims to capture how in making sense of a feedback experience, participants brought their metaphorical *educational baggage* with them. Memories of school, their sense of themselves in an education context, their expectations, hopes and coping skills all played a role in their interpretation of the feedback experience.

This phenomena was present in all the participants accounts of their feedback experience and the sense they made of their experiences. Hence, **EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE** was identified as the first main Group Experiential Theme (GET), the constituent parts of which are detailed in the five sub themes presented below.

5.3.1.i GET Sub theme 1 – An unfamiliar tool

This sub theme represented a collective theme connected to the participants awareness of the full range of ways in which feedback could be used as a tool for their education. An obviously universal aspect of all the participants accounts was the limited use of feedback prior to university education. This is articulated by Adele:

> *"I can't honestly remember ever having feedback from school other than the annual school report." (p24)*
>
> *"I've done quite a few courses.. but you never really get feedback on that because there was very little writing. I've done a team leader management course, but I can't remember getting feedback on that either." (p26)*

Lack of experience in receiving or using feedback was echoed by other participants:

> *"In school we were just given our grade and that was pretty much it. (Jo p11)*
>
> *I don't think we did (get feedback), just the mark." (Amy p 19)*
>
> *"In the past I've had a mark given to me that was sort of mid-range but then no notes on how to improve. I've not had that here; I've had that at college." (Lisa p12-13)*

The lack of experience is significant because students are working from a position of entering the feedback experience without having an informed reference point of what feedback should be. In essence they've had no recollected experience of using the feedback

as equipment for their development. Jim recalled receiving some feedback, but largely evaluated it as inadequate:

> *"Feedback from here is a lot better than feedback I've received in the past, particularly that primary school one, but even A level feedback wasn't particularly great. That was just rights, wrongs, and a circle round it at the bottom with no particular explanation." (p20)*

In reviewing participants accounts of the feedback experience, there was a variance in views as to the effective purpose of feedback. Amy recalled how she struggled to use the feedback on her assessed work, often finding the terminology difficult to understand.

> *"Sometimes I find it hard to understand, like some of the wording of it. I'm like what does that mean? and so I'm googling it!" (p3)*

This excerpt illustrates the technical wording was entirely unfamiliar to Amy, reminiscent of a different language for which she needs a translation guide. The theme of needing a guide is further conveyed in the following excerpt:

> *"I feel like it ought to go through each section… I felt like it was quite brief. It wasn't detailed enough, so I feel like more…detail… so then I knew… exactly… you know, which bit." (p15)*

The pauses in the excerpt above are indicative of hesitation and apprehension, which reflects the uncertainty about what was required for the assessment, the meaning of her assessment feedback, and her difficulty in asserting her learning support needs. Amy's experience is one of nervous uncertainty. Her unfamiliarity with the language and practice of feedback used in higher education or any potential adaptions indicate she felt unable to use the tool for its intended purpose.

Participants had different expectations on the purpose of feedback, for example Adele entered the course with expectations that feedback would indicate where marks had been removed:

> *"It's important to me to find out if I've been docked any marks for referencing." (p6)*

Within Adele's account is the idea that marks are subtracted from a total, rather than cumulatively awarded. There is a focus on a concrete concept of inaccurate referencing, rather than the more conceptual attributes of assessment such as analysis or evaluation. Perhaps indicating that the reference point for making sense of the experience is prior educational experience focused on errors, corrections, and marks. A further indication of expectation is illustrated when Adele recalls advice given to the cohort:

> *"Well, we had a lecture off ***** the other day and they were saying "to get 81 percent you've got to have a full and perfect essay" really… they said "I very rarely mark above and 81". Whereas I've come into uni … with my expectations. Not necessarily 100 but I want to reach distinctions." (p23)*

Within this excerpt Adele expresses her determination to attain a distinction grade, and there is concerned surprise when the lecturer attributes the full and perfect essay 81 percent. The lecturers marking approach makes Adele's goal more difficult to attain than she had anticipated. Inherent in this excerpt is Adele's sense of unfairness.

Helen's expectation differed in that she was keen for feedback to indicate where she had been successful. In the following excerpt Helen expresses frustration at the limited feedback on assessment where she'd achieved more favourable marks:

> *"Just that you've done well, but not explained how you've done it. When you actually do well you don't get a lot of information." (p7)*

> *"It was a bit disappointing because you're expecting more feedback to explain how you had achieved that." (p12)*

Within this excerpt there is a sense that Helen is not clear why she is succeeding and has not developed the self-evaluative skills that would provide the required reassurance. This shows some similarity to Amy's account of experience, where she expressed the need for a detailed guide to show the way. In the absence of the guide, both participants feel ill equipped with the tools to progress their learning.

Additional participants identified developmental guidance as an aspect they hoped they would receive in feedback. Jim conceptualised good assessment feedback detailed, accurate and developmental:

> *(Feedback should show) "Where it went right as well as where it went wrong. In an ideal situation it would give you something to carry forward into future work and… it should be as comprehensive as possible. So the feedback should indicate the person has marked your work thoroughly…and made sort of an effort to understand and interpret it." (p16)*

The phrase *something to carry forward* is a phrase that is repeated throughout Jim's interview conveying that Jim views and values the feedback experience as an opportunity for learning and development in preparation for the future work. This differs from Adele's view that feedback primarily concerns grade justification. The idea of feedback as a tool for improvement is something shared with Helen and Amy, and was a negatively evaluated aspect of the feedback they had received.

> *"It wasn't explained clearly enough where I needed to improve, because the first assignment I failed it and had to resubmit and I just feel like we don't get enough on the assignment, there just a little written bit and then that's it." (Amy p4)*

> *"There wasn't enough feedback on where I could improve, I was then worried in case I failed it again." (Amy p6)*

Amy expresses worry at not receiving sufficient feedback that would enable her to understand what she needs to do to succeed and there is a sense of feeling lost, with limited

direction, in considering the gestalt of Amy's accounts of feedback she's received her experience is reminiscent of being given a map which she hoped would show her the way to improve, but in actuality contained limited information that she could not interpret.

Helen also expressed an unfulfilled expectation that she would receive more developmental guidance.

> *"It was disappointing because you're expecting more information to explain how." (Helen p6)*
>
> *"I just feel I didn't get enough feedback to get any better." (Helen p12)*

For both Helen and Amy there is a sense that the marker is the owner of crucial knowledge and expertise, which they expected would be shared to indicate what they have done well, not well and what they need to do to improve. They experience themselves as passive recipients of academic instruction (which they don't receive in sufficient detail) and as yet, have not developed confidence with self-evaluative learner agency.

This is in contrast to some participants, who articulate an active and analytical engagement feedback. An example of this is seen in the following passage:

> *"I look at the language that's been used and see what I understand of the meaning of it and see if it's written in a positive way or if its matter of fact, or if it is almost like a conversation between myself and a lecturer rather than just a bit of academic writing. So I'd look at that.. I quite like it when… because it's happened on a two occasions now, where the marker has written "I really enjoyed reading this piece of work". So I quite like that I've been able to engage with the audience in a way that they've actually enjoyed it…That they've actually enjoyed looking through my process." (Lisa p 4-5)*

In this excerpt Lisa is exploring tone and meaning in the feedback, analysing the information to extract maximum benefit. The reference to "audience" and "my process" are indicative of

Lisa viewing her assignment as being the product of a creative process and are reminiscent of phrases used in performing arts. These terms indicate conceptual awareness of performance related feedback that has been transferred to the academic feedback experience. There is a sense of the assessment and feedback being a conversation between student and the academic marking the work. The process has a more equal power differential than the previous account from Helen and Amy. The passage indicates that Lisa is immersed in work that is of personal significance and seeks feedback to achieve her aims. However, not all feedback is considered useful and an evaluation of the quality of feedback is seen in the following:

> *"So, I want to know exactly what I've done well and how it…how…how it stands out as a good piece of work. But I also want to know what I could do to improve it, or if it's a high mark and there's nothing much I could really improve on, it's just not quite top marks then say that, just be honest about it. If you make a note in the text to say "use this word" or "you should have done this" then I want to know why? Like, your rationale for saying that." (Lisa p10)*

This passage illustrates Lisa's analytic and evaluative engagement with feedback, seeking precise information on the reason for the assessment of quality. The phrase "just be honest about it" is indicative of a preference for a direct approach and is suggestive of perceived personal resilience. Moreover, Lisa seeks information that helps her improve and the phrase "I want to know your rational for saying that" indicates she won't automatically accept feedback without the qualifying rationale. Overall, given that Lisa reported having no experience of having had feedback on her academic work prior to entering this course, the account indicates a conceptual awareness of feedback that has been carried into academic life from elsewhere.

Like Lisa, Jim showed a conceptual awareness and some familiarity with feedback as illustrated in the following passage:

"You get a very quick sort of overview of what you'd done. Things would be broken down with rubrics, so you'd know roughly where you'd scored in each area. And that was it really, it was really quite limited the first-year stuff. And this year we've not had anything back yet. We get the story board feedback on Tuesday coming. But I imagine that'd be similar. I think the University is committed to three comments per page now as feedback. So as a system that has increased." (Jim p2-3)

"A lot of the feedback we got in the first year, it was quite limited, and I don't think it really gave much emphasis on where we were supposed to improve, which I think would have been helpful." (Jim p3)

Within the above Jim refers to rubric areas, showing an awareness of the marking criteria. Jim also refers to the university being committed to three comments per page, and notes that this is an increase on the previous standard. This indicates an insight into university marking recommendations and standards which has continued from the first year. Jim conveys an interest in university academic processes associated with feedback. Indeed, he later describes insights into the practice and purpose of feedback in school education:

"I'm an English and Maths curriculum governor in at a primary school. So would go in and look at the books and they heavily emphasize three targets, three things to improve for next time. Which they do at half term, which would actually fit in with an assignment at university.

They get a tick and then they move on and set three more, and that's the idea… to continually bring people forward.

That could respond to academic work across any discipline, not just mental health nursing." (Jim p17-18)

Jim uses his awareness of feedback practice in the primary school setting to recommend improvements in feedback in the university setting, indicating he's thought about it and values feedback as important. He is familiar with feedback as a tool through the referential

points of professional and organisational standards, along with his experience in the first year. In short has purposely acquired knowledge on how the feedback tool could and should be used.

Overall, the participants had varying expectations of the purpose feedback, and for all participants their prior experience of feedback had been limited. The influence of prior experience of and expectations of feedback, along with the connection to their academic success was in the following sub theme.

5.3.1.ii GET 1 Sub theme 2 – Academic confidence influencing anticipation

This important feature of the participants descriptions of the feedback experience related to their varying degrees of confidence they had in their academic success which they brought to feedback experience. This influenced their emotions while they anticipated the resulting feedback and grade, which in turn influenced the way in which they engaged with feedback when it arrived. Five participants spoke specifically of their expectations in relation to their confidence, with two expressing a sense of confidence prior to receiving graded written feedback on assessed work. For example, Jim said:

> *"I've always been quite open to it. I know some students get very defensive, maybe because I'm a bit older…and as well I think because I've got relatively good marks in the cohort." (Jim p5)*

In this section Jim conveys a sense of being reasonably sure he will be successful, and he conveys a calm open demeaner. This is contrasted later, where he discusses a current assignment, he is waiting on results for. In this case, the type of assessment is unfamiliar, and Jim is much less confident as to whether he's understood what's required, which influences the mood of anticipation.

"For the story board particularly (I am) quite anxious. Because I put a lot of work in so there that trepidation… and because the story boards are different in terms of what's expected compared to a straightforward essay. There's an element of gamble on whether you've done things exactly as they're supposed to be.

The essay was relatively straight forward.. I mean… I'm quite lucky. I'm looking forward to getting the feedback on the story board but I'm also a little bit worried in case it's not good." (Jim p11)

In the above description Jim acknowledges that imparting substantial effort does not necessarily lead to success, citing the importance of knowing what's expected. The word *gamble* signifies a sense of risk at not doing well, whereas ordinarily he's much more confident of success. The phrase *I'm quite lucky* speaks to a sense of being in an advantageous position in comparison to peers, perhaps in terms of finding assessments straightforward and doing well, but the word *luck* indicates a something not of his making such as innate ability. In reading the passage, I'm reminded of a sense of nerves before a competitive event. To this end the worry relates to being less sure of doing well in comparison to peers because of the unfamiliarity of the task.

Adele described the disappointment she felt not doing as well as she'd anticipated:

"So there is, there is some good but not very good. And obviously I'm going to be biased because I thought it was a good piece of work. I hung on with this because there were I thought, "I'm not too sure if I should expand on that or not?" So, I did change it. I like to get an essay done as soon as I can and then I work with it (tweak it). So it was kind of handed in at the last minute, and I always get excited for my marks. Maybe that's why I was so disappointed when it came back, and it was only 58!" (Adele p13)

Within this section Adele conveys that she'd written the essay early and then worked on it until the last minute trying to erase doubts about whether she'd done a good job. The word

excitement conveys that she confidently anticipated a positive result and was looking forward to it, only to be disappointed and surprised at the resulting grade and feedback.

Conversely, Amy conveyed a lack of confidence in her academic ability and was pessimistic about the outcome of assessments:

> *"I was feeling anxious, like the first time in particular, I kind of had it in my head that I'd failed it. But I was trying to be more positive and think no no you haven't stop being negative. But then as time went on and you hear people saying oh no I've failed it. You know before you might say oh it was hard , I failed it …and then when I found out I did fail I was kind of like – oh I was right." (Amy p7)*

> *"I just always thought I wasn't clever." (Amy p19)*

Amy's sense of herself as "not clever" and prediction of failure brings with it some anxiety during the anticipatory phase, and she tries to reassure herself. Within the passage is reference to others failing, and a sense of inevitability that if others have failed, then it is likely that she will too. Amy's comparison with others is in marked contrast to Jim's competitiveness who seeks to be the best, or Adele's anticipated success and subsequent disappointment. Amy views herself as being less able than her peers and on hearing that others had failed, she had a sense of inevitability that she would too. This failing was no longer a threat, but an inevitable outcome. There is a conciliatory tone to the "I was right", which may have a self-soothing quality.

Interestingly, two other participants described some pessimism and associated anxiety while waiting for results, which was in contrast to the eventual outcome. The interesting aspect of their accounts are much the same as Amy's in that, the pessimism linked with a long-standing view of their academic selves. In Jo's case there were mixed feelings:

> *"I know three weeks isn't a long time, but I still don't like waiting for it and I sort of feel, I suppose I would say anxious, but a bit excited looking forward to getting it back and knowing if I've passed." (Jo p5)*

The mix of anxiety and excitement is interesting in the context of Jo's explanation of her sense of self in education in the school environment.

> *"Because I really didn't do great in school. I didn't enjoy it. I didn't enjoy learning or anything. Its more later that I have." (Jo p13)*

Here, Jo references the connection between not doing well in school to enjoying learning, bringing this to the present experience, Jo's nervousness is connected to a pattern of not doing well in school but there is also a helpful condition, in that the confidence may not be connected to ability but interest.

> *"I do find it hard… especially the writing. Like I know what I want to say, but I struggle to communicate it or maybe I think I do, because then I do my work and I never think it's good, but I've got very good grades." (Jo p13)*

In this passage Jo conveys herself as someone who finds written communication hard, but she also acknowledges an empirical contradiction, in that her expectations have not matched the outcome. Hence, the mix of anxiety and excitement is derived from Jo's negative self-evaluative baggage carried from previous negative assessment experiences, whereas the excitement is connected to more recent positive assessment experience.

Lisa expressed a similar pattern having entered the course with a history of poor performance in the school and further education system.

> *"Yeah, I didn't do so well in high school.. and I used to feel really disappointed with a lot of the feedback I got and dropped out of college a few times. When I did things there and didn't get such good grades, I thought Oh well I really can't do it. But now I've come here, my feedback does mean more, because it's telling me things I've never been told before." (Lisa p12-13)*

The experience of receiving positive feedback is encouraging and reassuring for Lisa and fuels forward momentum, but on each submission her anticipatory anxiety that she may not do well returns.

> *"On submitting an assignment, I always don't feel confident that it's gonna get a good grade, even though history would tell me that I do get good grades in university. I never feel confident. So then getting that feedback just lifts it up a bit and tells me, you can do it. But then every time I submit, I still get that pang of 'un-confidence' and that anxiety." (Lisa p15)*

It is interesting to note that Lisa recognises that her confidence is a connected to past experience (educational baggage) that is brought into the present, and uses her more recent feedback as a strategy for easing the anticipatory anxiety about not succeeding. In both Jo and Lisa's case the recent more positive assessment feedback experiences are used to cultivate confidence during the process of preparing an assessment and waiting for the result. However, the intensity of the anxiety on the release date is such that Lisa is almost too scared to look at the result.

> *"I was just about to get the feedback… I think at four o clock, and I didn't want to look at the mark…because even then, I thought I'd not done as well as I had. And I looked and I'd done a lot better than I'd (expected). But I actually put my hand over the laptop and think no! no! I don't want to see it!" (Lisa p20)*

Within this account is a sense of not only expecting a low mark, but also that such an event would be injurious. The way in which Lisa covers the grade and slowly moved the hand away is an attempt to mitigate shock and protect herself from disappointment. This is despite the acknowledgement that they have received good marks on the current course. The strength of the negative beliefs connected to the earlier experience is shown in this instance where they physically protect themselves from the risk of seeing information that could be hurtful.

Similar to other participant's, Jan experiences anticipatory anxiety once an assignment has been submitted, but in her case the anxiety is connected to a specific grade goal.

> *"I was scared opening it up…I …the actual process of thinking about it was…was scary, but once I actually got into it and read it, it… it…it wasn't as bad.*
>
> *So yeah, the actual… waiting for the mark, and then being given it, it is hard. But once you've actually the mark and you over that 'oh I've done really well, or I've done badly! The feedback itself is alright, but it's the actual mark that's the killer.*
>
> *It's scary. Because I've placed quite high expectations on myself. So, if I don't get above 60 I get really pissed off." (Jan p5)*

Note the word *scary* and *killer* which indicate significant threat of emotional injury. The phrase "high expectations", this conveys a sense of reaching up for the goal perhaps a goal that is perceived as difficult to attain. The anticipation of the result is identified as the most difficult aspect and is associated to the potential threat of receiving a grade under 60. The anxiety is indicative of a lack of confidence in the outcome, the potency of words such as *killer* and *scary* indicate this is an emotional issue of high stakes, perhaps because of the educational baggage Jan brings to the experience. This threat remains present until the grade provides some reassurance or (in the case of low grade) some relief from fear. The fear is so significant for Jan that it interferes with her ability to focus on other work:

> *"It's the hardest…yeah its difficult. And then when you've got work to do in that time it slows you down because you're waiting and anticipating what your mark will be." (Jan p6)*

Here Jan illudes to a perseverative process of worry, that maintains her focus until the result is released and she can be relieved of the preoccupation.

Overall, levels of confidence influenced the mood of anticipation while students waited for their result. This seemed to be connected to personal identity derived from past events. Thus

is some connection with the next sub theme, whereby students hope to boost their confidence by seeking external recognition and status.

5.3.1.iii GET 1 Sub Theme 3 Seeking external recognition and status

An important feature in the participants interpretation of their feedback experience was the significance they placed on external recognition and the status that doing well afforded them. They brought the goals of recognition and status into their assessment endeavours, which in turn influenced the reading of assessment feedback. In Lisa's case, this is an interpersonal process where the marker provides her with the recognition as seen in the passage below.

> *"Because I like rewards, so I really really work hard at university, I work hard. And then when I get the feedback and it's positive, it makes me feel like… like rewarded for the hard work." (Lisa p11)*

The repetition of really and emphasis on "work hard" indicates Lisa's invests substantial effort to attain the reward she seeks from the academic marking her assessment, namely, feedback that includes the recognition of her dedication, and high-quality work.

> *"It was 50 questions, so the fact that I got 98 percent meant I only got one wrong… no feedback was given for that…when you do a multiple choice, you don't get feedback I think that's just because its measurable as it is. But maybe I don't know ...a little pat on the back would be nice. Some acknowledgements… so I like to be acknowledged." (Lisa p17)*

In the above excerpt Lisa describes some disappointment and not getting any written feedback on a multiple-choice exam where she'd achieved a near perfect score. This reinforces that for Lisa, whilst the grade is important, it's the communicated recognition from the academic marking her work that is the reward of significance. The recognition of hard

work is internalised to give herself a self-esteem boost, by feeding her ego. This is illustrated in the excerpt below:

> *"Acknowledgement for the hard work I'm putting in… that's what it's all about, I just feed my ego." (Lisa p18)*

For Adele, the recognition and status are primarily focused on grade attainment as is typified in the excerpt below:

> *"Because I want that first- I do! I know it's not the be all and end all – but it's important to me." (Adele p23)*

The tone of this statement shows determination and sense of *need* to achieve a first-class honours degree classification. The expression "not the be all and end all" expressed in this in this way could reflect that on an emotional level, attaining a first *is* in fact the be all and end all for this course.

> *"I want those good marks. I want to be recognised for my good marks." (Adele p25)*

In this excerpt the link with status and external recognition is explicit. Adele enters the assessment feedback experience with the pressure of attaining consistently high scores, and a clear orientation towards grade attainment as a means of attaining the desired status of a high achiever.

Jim described validation via assessment marks from a personal pride and competitive standpoint:

> *"But …yeah, it's quite important isn't it. Because it…it reflects yourself, it reflects the effort you've put in and the attention you've paid to lectures and your participation and understanding of, it's… just it is all summarised in that one piece of work. And sometimes you get those ideas that are in your head that just don't quite make it onto the page, but it's just that you are judged on that aren't you really." (Jim p12-13)*

In this passage Jim conveys a sense of the mark (and feedback) being representative of an accumulation of their efforts which reflect not only their understanding, but their character. This interweaving of self and assessment indicates that for Jim he is being marked on who he is as well as what he has produced. The concern about some ideas not quite making it onto the page indicates some concern that their insights and abilities may not come across to the marker, and then a final judgement will be made which does not reflect his ability. The passage is illustrative of assessment being a high stakes endeavour that he takes very seriously.

In addition to being measure of oneself, the outcome of assessment is also a means by which Jim measurers himself against himself against his peers:

> *"I imagine your sense of self and personal pride plays a big part as well in what you get, and competitiveness. There's a lad in my cohort called ****** and I sit next to him most lectures. I have a friendly rivalry with him when it comes to scores. So it can become a matter of pride and wanting to do well and wanting to get a good score, but it can get a bit competitive as well." (Jim p24-25)*

> *"But that's (the mark) really measurable isn't it. It's your barometer compared to everyone else, then when you look around you and everyone says what did you get? Because there's also masses of interest in what everyone got." (Jim p25)*

In these excerpts, Jim tunes into the measurable component, which facilitates comparison to others and refers to a competitive environment where there is a hierarchy and presumably people who come out on top. The description indicates Jim views this as a good-natured competition and people share their scores to ascertain their position in the hierarchy of attainment, which is expressed in the excerpt below.

> *"Tuesday when the storyboard (results) come in – three minutes past the 12 there will be someone on the Facebook group saying what did you get saying, what did everyone get? Or I'll get four or five messages saying what did you get? People are*

interested in what other people get… it gives like a yard stick to measure yourself against people in your class." (Jim p25)

The competitive element is facilitated by social media, where marks can be shared and made public. The tone and nature of this excerpt from the interview shows how Jim relishes the competition and the description indicates a competitive culture for at least some of the wider student cohort. The positivity conveyed may be in part because Jim has achieved comparatively high grades in his cohort and enjoys the status of being a high achiever. Furthermore, Jim does what he can to avoid disappointment and the emotional consequence of not meeting his own and others' expectations. This issue is connected to previous school experience and captured with the group next sub theme.

5.3.1.iv GET 1 Sub theme 4: The legacy of negative school experience.

An important group sub theme within the broader theme of educational baggage, was that of negative experiences during school education, which some participants carried into present day education. Some of this can be seen in the sub theme of confidence influencing anticipation of assessment results. Especially in Jo and Lisa's accounts where they referred to their expectations being linked to not doing well at school. There were two participants who provided accounts of events which had a profound impact on the sense they made of feedback experience Furthermore they believed these negative experiences resulted in a long-standing pervasive influence on all future encounters in education.

"I am 50, but I do remember school because it scarred me for life. They didn't believe in dyslexia. That's why it's taken me so long to admit it…I was always seen as lazy or as a cheat.

In third year when we were streamed and they (the teacher) where we were, who'd done well and who hadn't done well. My actual English teacher actually questioned

the person next to me about whether I was lying about how well I'd done in all other subjects, because I was so poor at English!" (Jan p10-11)

In the passage above Jan recounts memories which are distant but vivid. The phrase "scarred for life" indicates a belief that the experience caused her lasting irreparable damage. In some ways there are similarities with the previous two sub themes in that there is a sense of feedback having injurious (anxiety inducing) or restorative capacities (validating recognition). The recollection of teachers not believing in dyslexia infers they attributed difficulties to academic ability and character and made no adjustments. The quick succession of the words "actual" and "actually" conveys Jan's incredulity and outrage at the incident. Jan's reluctance to disclose her dyslexia until recently is perhaps indicative of a feeling of shame and the terms "lazy" and "cheat" are emotive pejorative labels she believes were attributed to her. The experience is one of misunderstanding and harsh treatment because of something Jan had no influence over, it is in essence an account of discrimination. In later sections of the interview Jan described the experience influenced her ability to cope with assessments on subsequent courses.

"Anything negative about my English hurts a lot…It annoys me to the point where I've thrown in course because of how negative it has been." (Jan p12)

The use of the word "hurt" communicates that the nature of the criticism as painful and there is an embodied sense of opening up old wounds.

"I was doing womens studies in 1999 and I got slated for a piece of work I'd handed in…absolutely slated for the level of English it was. So I …I just dropped the course because I couldn't cope with it." (Jan p13)

The use and repetition of the word "slated" indicates the Jan felt the criticism was severe. Furthermore, she felt unable to cope so left, which has been a repeated pattern until the current course. This is shown in the excerpt below.

"It has tarred all my academic life…and all my attempts at University… I failed them all because I couldn't cope with the essays…"(Jan p15)

However, on her current course, Jan overcame her fear of prejudice by disclosing that she had dyslexia and had been successful in her assessments thus far. Her success was attributed in part to the application of reasonable adjustments, which will be discussed later. In addition, technological advances in computer software mean spelling and grammatical checking were routine. This made a tremendous difference to Jan, who felt more able to communicate her intentions effectively and achieve good marks.

"It's an area I know I'm weak at. And the only way, the only reason I've improved and get good marks now is because of the computer." (Jan p13)

"I can acknowledge where my weaknesses are, and I can improve in terms of how I see myself. But in terms of actually improving my ability to change things now- I'm too old. I can change in other aspects of my life, but I wouldn't, I wouldn't go out of my way because the computer does it all.

So, if computers were got rid of instantly, it would be like someone getting rid of a calculator!" (Jan p14)

Within this excerpt Jan conveys self-acceptance and effective coping. She is aware of her difficulty with written communication and the need for reasonable adjustments. Finding the right method (or tool) has helped with written assessments and she's achieved good marks. There is a sense that this has been an exonerating and validating experience given the previous labels of "cheat" and "lazy". The phrase *I can improve how I see myself*, indicates Jan has changed her perspective on herself, and has a sense of where her efforts are best placed. The analogy with calculator use is interesting, the example may have been used because needing a calculator is routinely acceptable and understandable. In this way Jan encouraged me to view it from her perspective, by normalising and promoting acceptance.

Jan also conveyed a sense that self-acceptance and that technology has helped her heal the wounds that were inflicted at school.

The lasting impact of a negative school experience was also a significant in Jim's interview:

> *"I can remember being pulled out in class in primary school for getting …what I thought was going to be a really poor mark, that actually turned out to be a really good one- but I got told off! I got 92 percent in a maths assessment in primary school and told off because there eight questions I got wrong were really easy, had I gone back and checked them. So I got dragged up in front of the entire school… Humiliated!" (Jim p19)*

The use of phrases such as "pulled out", "dragged up in front entire school" convey a sense of forced public humiliation. His recollections show that the atmosphere in that moment had indicated he was in trouble. There is a sense of incredulity in recalling the incident which suggests he views the criticism as unfair. This is further explored in the excerpt below:

> *"Looking back now as an adult, they didn't look back at the 92 I got right…They just looked at the eight I got wrong. That's probably where I get my constant…its where it probably where it stems back to." (Jim p20)*

This passage indicates that Jim believed he would not have understood the unfairness of the criticism or style of criticism whilst a child. There is perhaps some empathy for their child self and negative judgment of the teachers abuse of power. This is interesting in light of his role as a primary school governor for English and maths, perhaps there is an element of Jim being motivated to protect other children from similar experience. The realisation in the last two sentences relates to Jim's propensity for feedback that provides information on how to improve and chase the marks he didn't get (discussed earlier) and his worry about the marks he missed. This is apparent in the excerpt below:

> *"I got mid 70's for my first-year assignments, I felt quite good, but I was concerned about the 26 percent." (Jim p21)*

“Two hours on a chaise long would probably cure it! (laughs)

And that was primary school, and that was…that would have been nearly 30 years ago. But I still think about it, I still think about the eight I got wrong, probably not always consciously…..You just missed eight marks by not checking!” (Jim p22)

The experience being humiliated has stayed with him. The joke about needing a chaise long is a reference to the event being one of psychological trauma requiring psychoanalysis. The laughing at this point could be a defensive reaction to anxiety and or shame, distancing himself from the seriousness of the incident. However, rather than the trauma being repressed, he conveys awareness that his experience in school has impacted on his current emotional and behavioural approach to assessment preparation, grades and feedback. The phrase “I got wrong” emphasises his role in the process and the potential to avoid further humiliation by checking. The phrase “not always consciously” captures how habitual and instinctive his approach has become.

In both Jan and Jim’s case their school experience has been carried into the education system presenting them with challenges and perhaps some advantages. Non the less the historical psychological *baggage* is present in all their contemporary assessment feedback experiences serving as a guide and an interpretive lens. Furthermore, the events of the past link with the approach taken to manage their emotions about assessment feedback, which is discussed in the next group sub theme.

5.3.1.v GET 1 Sub-theme 5: Feedback triggering self-regulatory strategies.

This sub theme captures the strategies participants engaged in when feedback was associated with negative emotions. Whilst the strategies varied, the apparent purpose was to alleviate emotions that had some connection to assessment feedback. They include procrastination, perfectionism, and reassurance strategies.

For Adele the experience of receiving a grade that was lower than she thought she would achieve resulted in some difficulties when writing a subsequent assessment:

> *"This is the first time I've had like a bit of writer's block. For this assignment we've got and I just can't put pen to paper and I've got all my research for my law assessment. Six different law bits and I can't physically write it. So I'm going around the outskirts and leaving that bit. I'm… I will be worried about that (previous grade). I think…because I'm struggling to write it, and I'm leaving it and leaving it." (Adele p29-30)*

In this account Adele describes her experience of writer's block, the reference to this being *the "*first time*"* and the puzzlement conveyed in her tone indicate this is an unusual experience she's not prepared for. "I can't physically write it*"* conveys an embodied physical block to her writing. Her articulation of feeling stuck reflects the diminished confidence and self-doubt she feels having received a lower than anticipated grade on the previous assignment. This passage captures how the more recent experience has had an impact on her sense of agency as she encounters something she finds difficult. The struggle and procrastination serve as a means of avoiding the uncomfortable worry that this assessment may result in further disappointment.

Amy describes similar difficulties with procrastination when she finds the work difficult.

> *"It's worrying, you know, because it takes me a lot of time to think… like to take in what I'm reading and then write it in my own words…yeah, I really struggle with that bit. So it takes me a lot longer, and so I'm going over it and going over it. So I'd spent a lot of time on it and then also … because I worry about it, so I put it off until the last minute. Then I'm rushing it and then I'm getting anxious. (Amy p8)*

Within this section of the interview, the pace of Amy's speech slowed where she emphasised that reading, and processing took her a long time, as if to mirror her internal experience. In the phrase "it takes me longer" Amy conveys that she finds it difficult in comparison to

others, which may reflect the pattern of her dyslexia. Moreover, she showed insight in that worry makes essay writing more difficult and stressful. Her response was to put off the task and avoid the immediate stress until such point that the stress of not writing outweighs the stress of writing, which then serves to motivate her into action. Amy captures a sense of being her own enemy in this scenario, she is aware it takes her longer, and is aware that she finds it harder to work when anxious and procrastinates to avoid short term discomfort at the expense of giving herself the best chance to succeed. She is also aware that this can be a self-defeating habit, with negative consequences, as she gets more anxious, avoids the work and then rushes.

In both the excerpts above Adele and Amy describe the process of self-regulating their anxious emotions via procrastination. Thus, they avoid the uncomfortable feeling of anxiety or avoid the trigger for the uncomfortable feeling by procrastinating over work that they find stressful or difficult. For other participants their approach to emotional self-regulation was to use perfectionism. This is exemplified in Lisa's account below:

> *"I'd assume that most people do feel anxious when they submit an assignment. I think that's fairly normal. But yeah… I just feel anxious about it and (think) could I have done more? Quite often I will go and look at what I've submitted and see if there is anything I can change whilst its still in the interim period before its final submission. So I will tweak my work if I feel I need to, I try not to…I try not to look at it…but I always do." (Lisa p7)*

To provide some context, Lisa is referring to a period of time when she has completed and submitted an assessment to an online portal in readiness for marking, which she routinely does in advance of the formal deadline. During this period, it is possible to access the document and make changes. Lisa acknowledges her anxiety after submission and normalises the anxiety she feels. Within this passage is a sense that her anxiousness is connected to whether she believes her efforts were sufficient, and whether she could have done more to influence a positive outcome. This then results in accessing the portal to

evaluate their submitted work and refine it. The phrase “I try not to do it.. but always do” indicates insight that the repeated checking may not be helpful, so Lisa tries to resist checking but never manages to resist the urge. This pattern is reminiscent of compulsive checking that may be used to alleviate anxiety triggered by uncertainty. The passage indicates that for Lisa, doing her best is of great importance, and while there is still the possibility to better, she feels nervous, which is alleviated by checking and amending her work. Once there is no option to check Lisa becomes more philosophical, and the anxiety dissipates, as illustrated in the excerpt below.

> *“And then once it’s gone, it’s gone and I just think “oh well what will be will be” and I just await the feedback.” (Lisa p7)*

Perfectionist tendencies are also present in this excerpt from Jim’s interview:

> *“One of my lecturers was saying its small gains at the top… and you have to put a lot of extra effort in to get that…to close… those tiny couple of marks within the gap. ***** said “you know you’re getting good scores” but I’ve always been concerned about that bit that I’m not getting and how to squeeze it up.” (Jim p23)*

Jim describes his strive to bridge the gap between his result and the perfect mark. Given the account Jim gave of experiencing humiliation in school for missing eight marks, this striving for perfection could be conceptualised as a defensive strategy to reduce the risk of negative evaluation and further humiliation.

Self-regulating mood via the use of reassurance was a strategy used by Lisa to cope with upcoming assignments:

> *“I do read all my feedback and it does boost my confidence a bit. So, if I’m feeling bad about it, say I’ve got an upcoming assignment, (and I’m) feeling bad, I’ll look over my feedback and think, well, I’ve done it before, and I did that and I did this. I look at how I’ve written things and what’s been written about me… I just use it and think right well, if I had ….” (Lisa p19)*

This passage captures how Lisa uses her previous writing and feedback reassure herself that she can succeed in the next assessment. The tone and phrasing in this portray a sense that Lisa is functioning as her own performance coach, or cheerleader, encouraging herself that she is capable of succeeding, by reminding her of previous evidence of success. This practice helps spur Lisa on to continue with her work, perhaps shifting her mindset and boosting her confidence.

Reassurance was also a feature in helping Jim deal moments of disappointment:

> *"For a prior course I had a practice project to do, and at the time I was being made redundant. So, the project didn't really hit it off. So, the feedback for that was quite harsh and I didn't get a great mark for that, due to mitigating circumstances elsewhere." (Jim p17)*

Within this excerpt Jim presents mitigating circumstances as the reason for not doing well in assessment in a previous degree. The use of the passive voice in the phrase "so the project didn't really hit it off" is interesting as it was his own project. This perhaps is indicative of Jim's reluctance to attribute the outcome to himself, thus the mitigating circumstances become reassuring protection against the injured pride of a lower than usual mark and critical feedback.

Reassurance also featured as Adele talked though her use of feedback:

> *"Interviewer – It sounds as though you really use the feedback, you…*
>
> *Adele- I think sometimes too much… I really should read it and come away from it really but…And I think really, in my view it comes down to the individual marker… I don't think they realistically have a set of rules that they've got to follow." (Adele p19-20)*

The phrase "too much sometimes" was expressed with a thoughtful concerned tone, as though Adele believed the degree to which she thought about the feedback was unhelpful.

The subsequent statement “I should read it and come away from it” indicates that she dwells on the feedback, suggesting there is some perseverative rumination. There is a sense of feeling hurt within the first part of this statement. The final part of the passage conveys Adele’s attempt to reassure herself by diminishing the reliability of the feedback she has received. Thus, providing some protection against the feedback injuring her self-esteem.

The self-regulatory responses outlined in this sub theme can be conceptualised as responses to the stress have been carried into the assessment experience. Whilst they all appear to be helpful in alleviating the associated negative emotion, they vary in the degree to which they help students adapt to challenging assessment and feedback situations and fulfil their potential.

The GET of educational baggage and the associated sub themes all capture this sense of the students bring something with them into the assessment and feedback experience that influence the sense they make of the experience and the various impact this has on their use and expectations of feedback, the influence it has on them and the strategies they use to cope, move on from, or their aspirations in light of their baggage. This was a personal experience of each of the participants, the next group theme related more to the interpersonal experience of feedback.

5.3.2 GET Theme 2 MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

In analysing the students interpretative accounts of their feedback experiences, all students referred to their connection to other actors in the feedback space, and how this influenced them. For some students, this was within the education system, and for some, it was their lives outside the education system. There was a sense within the accounts, that relationships with others had a mediating influence on their interpretation of their experience of feedback. Whilst there was nuance between participants, the commonality across all was the presence or a relational influence. Hence, the **MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF**

RELATIONSHIPS was revealed as an analytic entity and became the second group experiential theme.

This theme reflects how the use of, engagement with, and experience of feedback was mediated by the perceived nature of the relationship with the marker, and the perceived ability of the university systems, the marking, and the marker to connect with them and meet their individual needs. Within the overarching GET, a further three sub themes were identified via the interpretative process, each of which are presented in detail below.

5.3.2.i GET 2 Sub theme 1 Empathy for the marker.

This sub theme captures the participants' consideration of markers' experience of marking, this was expressed by Jim and Adele where they had not received the quality, or type of feedback they hoped for. There is within this a sense that Jim and Adele considered workload pressures as a possible reason why the feedback they were was presented with did not match their hopes and expectations, and influenced their decisions on what to do about it.

> *"it looked to me like it was someone who had obviously had quite a big batch of papers to go through and was just splitting it across the four characters of the rubric and going "that looks about, there it looks about that, and that looks about that". And that's…I'm not going to say skim read, because I don't think that would be fair, but it looks like they just perhaps just read it. "Yeah. That's that, that's that and that" assign the score and put a couple of marks on and then onto the next one. But I think that's to do with the volume as well, to be fair. Because I'd imagine they'd have to knock out in the first year – what 500 students? They'd probably get a big batch each. And you've got 15 days to mark it, haven't you." (Jim p7)*

By using the phrase "big batch of papers", Jim is trying to envisage the markers experience of the marking process. The pace and phrasing (big batch, knock out, that's that and that) of

the conjectured marking activity conveys that he believes the marking has been swift and perfunctory. Within the passage he indicates that the marking lacks sufficient depth, but the term “unfair” suggests he views the process as pragmatic given the volume of marking. There is a reluctance to blame the marker for the outcome, instead Jim reflects on organisational reasons why marking is not as comprehensive as he’d hoped. There is an attempt to view this from the perspective of the marker, which he does via a mental calculation of marker workload based on his knowledge of the number of students. In this sense he is considering the work and time pressures and empathises with the marker.

This is exemplified in the following passage:

> *“I suppose the flip side of that is if you look at it from their point of view, they might have seen that the learning outcomes had been met to a certain level and thought that, "yeah, that was that". and then moved on looking perhaps for the next learning outcome. Definition and clarification were sort of highlighted in that one, particularly as it would have been a level four assessment. So I think it was just quite descriptive…So its like yes you have defined that! Yes you have defined that! Yes you have defined that! And you’ve probably met that! And because they are looking for four learning outcomes.” (Jim p9)*

In this description Jim refers to a threshold approach to marking, in that the marker sees the threshold has been met and moves on to the next. His reference to the descriptive and clarification components as part of level four assessments illustrates his awareness of academic levels, taxonomies, and processes. Jim’s empathy with the marker is demonstrated through his visualisation of the process from the markers perspective and he is disappointed, but accepts the outcome with a sense of inevitability.

Adele showed similar consideration of the markers experience in the process, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

> *“And I can understand it can be hard. I do understand that” (Adele p20)*

Within this statement Adele conveys empathy in terms of her perception of how difficult marking is. In a later passage Adele returns to the issue of markers experience, but with a focus on workload:

> *"Still, there's time constraints isn't there, with people who are marking, they've got other jobs and I understand that. I fully get that, and I think that's part and parcel of the reason why I won't be knocking on someone's door saying, "can you just talk me through this?" Because I'd be feeling like they would be thinking "Oh for God's sake!.. Yes! come in! … And I don't really want to mither" (Adele p31)*

Adele's reference to time constraints and workload conveys her empathy for the marker's experience and she portrays the marker as someone overworked and short on time. What is interesting in this passage is how her empathy serves as the mediator in her decision not to ask for help. The use of the colloquialism "mither" indicates she sees her potential request for clarification as burdensome and irritating. Adele's visualisation of knocking on the door and asking for help only to be met with an exasperated response is an image which conveys anticipation that her request will be deemed unreasonable. This interpersonal aspect is further typified by the next group sub theme which concerned the degree to which feedback represented respectful communication.

5.3.2.ii GET 2 Sub theme 2 – Respectful communication.

This group sub theme relates to Jan, Jim and Adele's reference to incidences and approaches to written feedback which they believe did not convey respectful treatment of their assessment, their efforts or themselves.

> *"I think if people dissed your work completely (it would be unhelpful). Because even if it's poor…you've still put the time and effort in, or most people have, some people might not. But you have put some time and effort into it and that should be recognised." (Jan p 9).*

Within this passage Jan uses the phrase “dissed your work completely” which is a colloquialism meaning the marking would be entirely negative. In that sense Jan expresses that this would be unhelpful. She emphasises the importance of respecting the effort put into the work regardless of the quality, and that this should be reflected in the feedback by way of recognition.

> *“So one comment I had, I’d used the term “to wit”, then moved on to expand on a point previously made. And that had been highlighted and someone, whoever marked it had put “I don’t know what that means”. I thought, well that’s 20 seconds on Google just to check. It’s not…maybe it’s a little legal, but it’s a relatively common term. So I didn’t understand what they didn’t understand about that…” (Jim p 6)*

In this passage Jim conveys bewilderment at the marker’s comment they didn’t understand the term he’d used. The phrase “that’s 20 seconds on google” shows his incredulity and irritation that the marker didn’t take the time to check the term before commenting.

> *“I suppose there were moments where I felt, a bit undervalued. I’ve put loads of effort into that, and just for an extra two minutes of marking, and you might be able to go- actually, that reads fine.” (Jim p8)*

The phrase “I’ve put loads into that” indicates Jim’s sense that his efforts have not been appreciated by the marker and reciprocated by respectful treatment of his work. The perceived lack of recognition and superficiality in the written feedback is thus deemed at odds with the care and attention he feels he put into the work which essentially undermines his confidence in the feedback.

Adele expresses similar sentiments at the perceived lack of respect afforded to her efforts:

> *“(Comments about) The things that you’ve done wrong or “you’ve discussed this”. No, I haven’t! I’ve taken a long time to do this! At least have the decency to mark it properly, to read it properly! Or write the right comment on the right paper. They*

could have been referencing someone else's paper and done it by mistake." (Adele p14)

The tone, pace, and volume of speech all convey a sense of anger at the marker's comments, which from her perspective are grossly inaccurate. The phrase "at least have the decency" conveys disapproval for the mistakes, which she attributes to a lack of care and respect for her work. The issue of conveying respect within written feedback is further complicated by the lack of emotional tone and pacing in the written feedback, as it relies on the recipient to interpret the intended tone. Which could be influenced by the student's personality characteristics, personal circumstances, and experiences. In Adele's case, there were occasions where written feedback was perceived as patronising and condescending:

"I think it's a little bit patronising when they're trying to tell you "You have attempted to do this" and "you've not done this". (Adele p3)

The tone and style Adele recounted this comment, introduced a patronising quality to what appear to be somewhat innocuous language. This is reflective of how the sentence was interpreted by Adele. During the interview Adele conveyed a similar sense of feeling infantilised by the communication from academics, as can be seen below:

"Quite seriously, I'm a 40-year-old woman! I don't expect to be spoken to like a child!" (p 32)

Here Adele infers a perceived lack of recognition for age and history which is deemed disrespectful. The interpersonal element of feedback is apparent in this statement, and lack of recognition for age and stage of life becomes a potential obstacle to Adele engaging positively with the content of the feedback or the academic providing it. This aspect of not seeing the individual within the feedback is a key feature of the final group sub theme presented below.

5.3.2.iii GET 2 Sub theme 3: Person centredness of feedback and feedback systems.

This group sub theme aims to capture the participants reported experience of the synergy between assessment feedback and the system of feedback with their individual needs, circumstances, and preferences. This was deemed an important issue by all participants and a critical part of whether they were able to access and engage with the feedback material.

The relative ease of accessing feedback was an issue raised by Jo:

> *"Normally we submit an assignment and when the grade comes out, you sort of get a grade on Blackboard and then you have to sort of go further into your assignment to have a look at the feedback…If you open up the assignment it's …it comes up on the right-hand side, you get some written feedback comments within the document which is good." (Jo p1-2)*

Within this excerpt Jo expresses an appreciation of the feedback summary and annotated feedback. The account indicates a staged process whereby the grade is visible and available first, then the experience is one of purposeful searching for the feedback, which is not immediately available in the same way the grade is. Jo's use of the second person pronoun "you" in "you'd have to sort of go further in", creates a distance between herself and the process, which suggests accessing feedback is not something Jo does routinely.

> *"The only thing I would say…I haven't liked about it is that sometimes when you're out an about and getting the grade through your mobile, you can't always access your feedback…because at home I could just open it up on a tablet or a laptop and see everything. But on my phone, it's…it's more difficult to actually see the feedback. You can see the grade normally, but it's hard to get into the document to see the feedback on your phone." (Jo p2)*

The above passage and the term "out and about" create a sense that notification of the grade as an unwanted intrusion into daily life. The mark is visible wherever you are,

providing the phone is close to hand, but the associated helpful context and explanation for the grade is not.

Accessibility of feedback within the context of other responsibilities was an area Jo discussed later in the interview:

> *".. the group supervision I really like, because I wouldn't have access to supervision prior. So I think its been very beneficial." (Jo p12)*
>
> *"I'm busy with sort of going to uni and with my kids and, you know, child care. So I'm normally sort of juggling where I'm going to be or what I'm doing, and I would either forget or maybe leave it a bit late to book… It was difficult to get it structured in. But with it being in the timetable…I have felt the benefit from it….when I've been working on… in certain ways you do the group supervision (and) you get sort of feedback on how you are doing, how you are getting on, or if you're maybe steering in the wrong direction." (Jo p12)*

In this passage Jo refers to the practice of group supervision sessions, whereby students participate in a timetabled module assessment group supervision session (MAGS) facilitated by one of the academics on the module. Within this they have the opportunity to consider the requirements of the assessment, discuss their plans and share short draft excerpts of the assessment. The process includes the opportunity to ask questions, hear how other students are addressing the assessment, and receive formative assessment feedback from academics and peers. Jo refers to the previous strategy of booking an appointment with the academic to discuss the assessment, which is in addition to the timetabled sessions. In this passage Jo describes the importance of the sessions being timetabled in that when it was an additional time commitment, she didn't access the support. What is captured in this passage is a sense of the competing time commitments of family life, which for Jo takes priority. The excerpt conveys the value Jo places on feedback, but equally that she wouldn't have prioritised this for herself over other commitments such as childcare and fulfilling

commitments to her children's schedule. Jo's interview conveyed that she believed in meeting her commitments to others, even when this was at the expense of her potential academic development. Consequently, timetabled assignment guidance sessions became something she was required to attend, rather than something she chose to do for her own benefit, that ate into the time she had available to meet other commitments. The engagement with feedback was something that needed to fit with Jo's time-poor lifestyle if it is to be utilised, and so the person centredness of feedback needed to factor in the family commitments of a parent, as well as Jo's development as an individual student.

For Amy the main challenge to engaging with feedback was comprehension and accessibility:

> *"I remember last year, everyone who failed the first one… we did have like a big group where we all go in and discuss it. But it's just …yeah, I don't know. I just felt like it wasn't… you know… tailored for each individual. It was just everyone together… I prefer the more sit down, like one to one and go through it." (Amy p5)*

In the above passage, the repeated reference to size is interesting, in that phrases such as "big group" and "all together" are expressed in the negative. Amy's preference for an individualised conversation approach is articulated. The passage is peppered with hesitation and false starts which convey that Amy felt intimidated and nervous. Amy's sense of the mismatch between the feedback approach and her individual needs and preferences are further illustrated in the excerpt below:

> *"Because some of the times as well… its like… obviously, if you don't know who's work is being marked. Its kind of like.. its kind of like you give them your feedback, but your not giving it to.. like… I … I can't even explain, it's like if I were sat there having a conversation, it would be more beneficial, but in writing, it is also hard to interpret what is meant by that. (Amy p6)*

This passage contains hesitation and false starts which portray the nervousness Amy feels and her difficulty in articulating the approach she feels she needs. The passage is dense with concerns. Firstly, she is anxious that the anonymity within the marking process means the feedback isn't personalised. Secondly, that she struggles to code the meaning of the written feedback. Thirdly, that she needs a more relational conversational approach to help her. There is a sense of feeling lost, misunderstood and alone within this passage.

Helen also conveyed some concerns about how anonymous marking impacted on the provision of ongoing developmental feedback:

> *"Interviewer- So, have you had that experience where someone's given you feedback and they've noted improvements on a previous assessment?*
>
> *Helen- Before I did, but I've not had that here.*
>
> *Interviewer – Did you find it helpful?*
>
> *Helen- yes, because you can see where you've improved… but here it's different tutors isn't it." (Helen p13)*

The practice of anonymous marking means that the possibility of noting improvements on previous assessments is removed within the summative feedback write up. The disappointment expressed conveys that this was something she previously found beneficial and is lacking in the current system. There is an emphasis the importance of knowing the individual students work in order to provide continuity and ongoing commentary she believes is required for her development.

In contrast to Helen and Amy, Jan found the marking system matched her individual needs:

> *"Just as a dyslexic… just how the system works now… and having the disclosure form at the beginning so people don't criticise your English. It makes a huge difference to me." (p18)*

Jan valued the development of inclusive marking guidance for students with dyslexia. The use of the phrase “huge difference to me” captures Jan’s sense that the difference she feels goes beyond the marking, and that the change has led to a profound positive change for her. Given Jan’s earlier school experience and the impact on subsequent attempts at university, Jan’s experience of reasonable adjustments also carries with it a validating and exonerating quality, where the change in system has enabled her to show her capabilities. Thus, the experience of a system that can accommodate Jan’s individual needs has allowed Jan to heal old wounds and project a positive future for herself.

The above illustrations capture the importance of relational component of the feedback experience. Which in turn serve as a facilitator or obstacle for engagement and fulfilling potential. Within each sub theme there is a sense of seeing and respecting the person within the feedback and adapting to their need.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided an illustration of the group experiential themes of **Educational Baggage** and the **Mediating influence of relationships** by providing a table summary and then a detailed narrative account. Excerpts from participants’ interviews were provided to illustrate my focus on parts of the data that demonstrated experiential and / or existential importance. A narrative illustrating the interpretative analysis that led to the identified group experiential themes and sub themes was included. This practice followed guidance from Smith et al (2022), Smith and Nizza (2022) and IPA quality indicators advised by Nizza et al (2021). The purpose of the research was to generate new knowledge, and thus in **chapter 6** findings from this analysis will be considered in the context of existing research and theory to explore what is new, and how existing theories and research could shed light on these findings.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the research findings in context, by engaging in dialogue with existing conceptual frameworks and research. The first part outlines the ontological, epistemological, and methodological position of the discussion. The subsequent section presents each theme with the Heideggerian construct that revealed the group experiential theme. Group experiential sub themes are conceptually framed in the context of relevant philosophical, psychological, and educational research. The addition of theoretically oriented sub-headings within the group sub-themes provides further clarity as to the relevant areas of research pertaining to the findings. The discussion will conclude with a reflexive account which positions myself within the discussion and the research.

6.2 Methodological considerations

Returning to the research question, I set out to explore:

How do students who have received written feedback on their written work make sense of their experience of receiving feedback?

As discussed in **chapter 3**, following an investigation of appropriate methods to explore the research question, I settled on interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Consistent with the epistemological underpinning of IPA, I aimed to understand the lived experience of the participants, and to make sense of their experience in light of relevant theory (Smith et al 2009; 2022). I also acknowledged my own role in the interpretative process, and the influence this may have had on the meanings that emerged through the analysis and discussion. Thus, the findings and knowledge claims from this research are the result of a threefold process of 1) focusing on and interpreting the students lived experience;

2) reflexivity and foregrounding my existing knowledge and influence; 3) engaging with existing associated theoretical concepts and research.

One of the purposes of the research is the generation of new knowledge. The generation of new knowledge is dependent on a process of intellectual construction (Carey & Smith 1993). In this thesis, I do so via the engagement with the research findings of this study, theoretical constructs, and existing research. All of which is underpinned by critical realist and hermeneutic phenomenological ontology.

In alignment with critical realist ontology, I set out to explore students' interpretation of their experience of receiving feedback, seeking to draw out what lay beneath the empirical observable reality of the students receiving feedback and reacting to it. Consistent with CR, I considered feedback as an empirical reality in a university education system that exists regardless of the student's engagement with it. I also considered that once received, the empirical reality of assessment feedback is viewed through the subjective lens of the participant.

This is consistent with the Heideggerian position where reality is viewed as something that exists outside human perception, but that things themselves are not revealed until they are encountered, and meaning is applied (Polt 1999). Thus, feedback exists, but it is not revealed until it is encountered and made sense of. Heideggerian concepts of *being* provided a helpful framework for illuminating the individual and shared experiential themes that emerged from participants during the analysis of interviews. As such, each theme is discussed with the corresponding Heideggerian construct that helped to bring forth meaning.

As a methodology, IPA has the capacity for dialogue with other theoretical concepts and explanations (Smith et al 2009; 2022). In this study numerous fields of research provided important contextual information that helped make sense of findings. These included educational psychology, pedagogy and relational pedagogy, cognitive behavioural theories, education policy, and socio-material practice. Therefore, each theme and sub theme are

discussed in relation to the relevant contextual theories and research that support or challenge the claims made in this thesis.

In considering the findings and associated discussion, I acknowledge that this study focused on a small number of participants (n=7). All of whom were mature mental health nursing students in their second year of study in a post 1992 University in the north of England. They were also one of the last cohorts of students to have their tuition fees funded by HEE. Importantly, they all volunteered to be interviewed, and so may have had motives for participation that could have influenced the findings. Consequently, I considered the themes and discussion in light of the participant characteristics, and how this research connects with wider research on assessment feedback and associated phenomena.

6.3 Discussion of Themes and Sub Themes

6.3.1 Theme 1 EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE

Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenological concepts from Being and Time (Heidegger 1927/1962) were helpful in illuminating the theme of educational baggage. To summarise, students are conceptualised as Dasein, in that they are beings who consider their own existence. They exist in a world and relate to things such as ready-to-hand equipment and present-to-hand entities, and they relate to other Dasein in the world via **care** and **concern**.

Dasein project future possibilities for themselves, and they may choose to pursue goals that reflect their full potential for *being* (**authentic existentiality**). They would do so by pushing themselves to the limits of their capability and fulfilling their absolute potential. However, it is more likely that they will choose actions which fall away from their potential for *being,* by conforming to the choices made by others and/or following a less anxiety provoking path (**inauthentic fallenness**). These projected possibilities are influenced by Dasein's

thrownness and **facticity** (the limits and givens of what is possible for them), which in turn influence their current thoughts and action.

Heidegger's conceptual term *thrownness* refers to Dasein being thrown into the world not of their making. Moreover, the world they are thrown into provides the reference points for understanding and *being* in that world. This includes the accepted norms and practices of others in that world, the ready-to-hand equipment they are aware of and use, and the possible future they can envisage for themselves in light of all these aspects. Hence the past, present and future are entwined in the moment of experience.

With reference to participants in this study, each of them was thrown into the social and cultural world they were born into. Importantly, they attended school at a particular time and place, each involved with approaches to pedagogy that were practiced at the time. They were part of a school community and interacted with other students and teachers, each with their own ways of approaching education and each other.   As mature students they are also part of numerous worlds connected to their employment, social and family positions in life. Each aspect providing context and influence over their *being-in* that world and *the* world.

As students on an undergraduate mental health nursing course, they will likely have a sense of what they understand of themselves as participants in the world of mental health nursing undergraduate education, and of *being* a mental health nurse in the world of mental health care. In essence they entered the world of higher education with reference points for understanding, which influence their projected possibilities for themselves and the expectations they have of the world of education and nursing.

I use the term **Educational Baggage** to represent the carrying of these inextricable aspects of the student's *being* into the world of higher education, and the influence this has over the feedback experience. This was explicit in the interview data, and without exception the participants in this study made sense of their experience of feedback with reference to memories of school, their sense of themselves within the context of education, their

expectations, hopes and coping skills. The ontic experience of receiving feedback was imbued with ontological significance, where past, future and present exist in that moment and students made sense of their feedback via their own referential totality.

As discussed in the literature review section, research exploring the referential and contextual considerations of feedback are limited. There is recognition within feedback models and research that individual characteristics (Ajjawi et al 2022; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Carless & Boud 2018; Evans 2013; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Henderson et al 2020; Lipnevich et al 2016; Mackintosh-Franklin 2021; Orsmond & Merry 2013; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Sheild 2015; Winstone et al 2017) and relational components (Evans 2013; Hill et al 2021) are brought into the feedback experience. There is an acknowledgement that these vary between students and influence outcomes. However, these tend to be ontic descriptions such as ability, emotion, and meta-cognitive ability. This has resulted in the development of models and strategies aimed at proactive and positive support for students in developing feedback literacy (Carless & Boud 2018; Winstone & Nash 2016).

The contextualised meaning and significance of the feedback has been noted in research using exploratory methods (Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Siemenski et al 2016), realist review (Ajjawi et al 2022) and systematic review (Winstone et al 2017). Furthermore, Evans' feedback landscape (Evans 2013) presents a conceptual framework that incorporates relational, contextual, and mediating aspects of feedback experience which are intertwined.

The term educational baggage provides an accessible label for the referential totality of the sense making phenomena. Metaphors can be a helpful tool for communicating complex concepts, providing a bridge between current and new understanding (Stott et al 2010). This has the potential to be employed proactively by students and academics as they assess learning needs and plan for learning, assessment, and feedback practice in higher education. Education requires a commitment to what one is not "yet" (Heidegger 1927/ 1962) and a commitment to something which is not fully understood (Barnacle & Dall' Alba 2019).

Pitt et al (2020) have argued that for feedback to be effective students need to invest in their academic self-identity, and Barnacle and Dall' Alba (2019) argue that this helps students to commit to actions which steer them towards the academic self they have not yet become. Trubody (2015) argues that authentic education requires students to transform their traditions into heritage, and choose possibilities for themselves (within the limits of facticity). The tendency is for feedback research to treat students as though they are the same (Gravette 2021; 2022; Pitt et al 2020). However, given the variant forms of educational baggage, the conditions and context that support or constrain the students use of feedback are likely to be different for each individual student.

The notion of educational baggage could be helpful in exploring a student-centred approach to feedback use. Though further research would be required to explore whether students understanding of their own educational baggage serves as a useful strategy facilitating helpful engagement with feedback, and the wider learning and assessment experience.

6.3.2 Sub theme 1 An unfamiliar tool

Within the literature there is a recognition that if feedback is to have any effect, learners need to use it as a tool for learning, and furthermore to apply the learning from feedback in their future work (Joughin et al 2021). All participants in this study had limited experience of feedback on their assessed work prior to entering higher education. Those that recalled feedback, tended to describe the feedback as brief, inadequate and focused on the grade they achieved. The use of feedback as a tool for learning was an unexplored strategy for many. To complicate matters further, they had different expectations of purpose and preferred format. Students had been encultured into a way of using feedback that was different to the HE experience. In short, most students made sense of the feedback experience through a lens of unfamiliarity as to its forms and function.

The Heideggerian concepts of *ready-to-hand equipment* and *understanding* were helpful in revealing the theme of feedback as an unfamiliar tool. According to Heidegger (1927/1962) the mode of *understanding* discloses the significance of something and its purpose, so it can become *ready-to-hand* equipment which is used for the sake of achieving an aim. Furthermore, understanding the purpose of equipment can disclose further projected possibilities for Dasein. The possibilities of equipment and the vocabulary to describe them and their use are made available to us via our culture (Polt 1999). Consequently, the understanding and use of feedback equipment is connected to the students' experiences with others in the world of education. Applying this concept to the issue of feedback, for the most part, the students (and the marker's) limited familiarity and use of feedback meant the full purpose and use of feedback was not disclosed (or was insufficiently disclosed). This in turn limited the perceived future learning possibilities for the student.

The interview data indicated that most participants had a preliminary understanding of feedback (*a fore-structure of understanding*) which influenced their interpretation of the feedback experience in a particular way. Adele wanted grade justification, Jim and Helen wanted developmental guidance. All three were disappointed that the feedback did not meet their expectations. This mirrors research citing a mismatch of feedback expectation and outcome as an influence on student satisfaction with feedback (Carey et al 2017; Patterson et al 2020). Jim's understanding of the tool of feedback was the most comprehensive, having familiarised himself with university policy and contemporary feedback practice in the school system. Consequently, there was a degree of frustration that feedback had not been provided in a format that maximised its potential for learning. Thus, there was some indication that the marker, and perhaps the systemic approach to marking, limited the potential for using feedback. Interestingly, this aligns with the argument that teacher feedback literacy is required for effective feedback practise (Boud & Dawson 2023; Winstone & Carless 2020).

6.3.2.i Choosing the right tool for the job

One participant in the study (Amy) described significant difficulty in understanding the language used in feedback, rendering it both ineffective and a source of additional stress. As a fundamental principal, feedback needs to be understood for it to be of any use to the student (Winstone et al 2017a). Moreover, Amy described not understanding the requirements of the assessment and what she needed to address. Consequently, Amy had no clear starting point. Hattie and Timperley (2007) stated that when knowledge of what an assessment requires is absent, then feedback is an ineffective strategy and should be replaced with instruction. Moreover, in researching the process of meaning making and feedback in assessment, Esterhazy and Damsa (2019) identified that declarative knowledge of the task was required prior to engaging with the domain and procedural knowledge used to perform the task. It was only when these were in place that feedback serves its useful purpose. For Amy, the feedback she received when she failed her first attempt was not the correct equipment. She needed clear instructions, and the declarative knowledge of what the assessment was before she could engage with feedback information on how well she was doing.

6.3.2. ii Using feedback tools

Winstone, Hepper and Nash (2021) identified self-efficacy as a main mediating factor in students making use of feedback. Where students viewed feedback as a tool they could use to improve their work, they were more likely to engage with it. Some participants indicated they viewed feedback as something they actively used as a tool for development. Lisa's interview showed that she used and internalised feedback to develop self-evaluative judgement of her work. Lisa thought about her feedback when engaging in new work in order to evaluate her work and how she was progressing. Self-evaluative beliefs are an important meta-cognitive process, which are increasingly being highlighted in feedback research

(Ajjawi et al 2022). They are also a key feature in self-regulated learning models, and interactional feedback models (Lipnevich et al 2016; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006).

Lisa, Jim, and Jan all demonstrate feedback recipience characteristics that are likely to be beneficial to learning (Winstone et al 2017). Though in Jim's case, his awareness of the untapped potential use of feedback was a source of frustration. By contrast, Helen, Amy, Adele, and Jo all viewed feedback from a transmission perspective where feedback is something provided by the academic and received by the student. Contemporary conceptions of feedback principles, as a multi-source dynamic process requiring active engagement and application was not something most participants were cognisant of. Furthermore, participants who developed insights into aspects of effective feedback practice had done so independently and during post compulsory education.

All participants in the study were mature students, who attended school during a time where conceptions of feedback followed transmission models. These models had teacher as expert passing information to student, with limited student involvement in the process. Recent changes in educational practice include school-based innovations for engaging with and enhancing the students use of feedback. By way of example, one such practice is Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time (DIRT) (Winstone & Winstone 2021). This involves school pupils reviewing their work (using a different coloured pen to make notes in their workbooks), reflecting on the quality of the work and identifying improvements. The activity is done in class or as a set homework, with the aim of supporting pupils to develop evaluative judgement and learning through engagement with feedback. The impact of this (and similar) strategy has not been fully explored (Winstone & Winstone 2021) and the influence on university education is yet to be realised.

According to Heidegger, the experience of understanding reveals the "for the sake of which" of ready-to-hand equipment which opens up possibilities for its use and outcomes. Thus, if a student understands and interprets feedback as equipment used to enhance learning and academic performance, they can project the possibility of improved academic performance.

Given the significance of feedback as a tool for learning, it makes sense to support students to learn how to use it to its full potential. Thus, this research supports the body of research recommending HEI's implement programmes aimed at developing feedback literacy during the early transitional phase of graduate education (Ajjawi et al 2022; Molloy et al 2020; Patterson et al 2020; Pitt et al 2020; Pitt & Quinlan 2022; Winstone et al 2017; Winstone et al 2021).

6.3.3 Sub theme 2 Academic confidence influencing anticipation.

6.3.3.i Attunement

In this study the student's level of confidence was influential during the anticipatory phase awaiting the release of their assessment results. The associated moods gave indications as to their predictions of success and moreover, how they engaged with the feedback material associated with their grade. The Heideggerian concept of **attunement** was helpful in illuminating this theme (Heidegger 1927/ 1962). According to Heidegger, we are already attuned to our overall situation, and the mood of attunement discloses our thrownness into our situatedness (Polt 1999). The facticity of their past and present, and the situation they have been thrown into influences their current sense of it. As such this is a temporal experience for students, which is illustrated in the student accounts of waiting for an assessment result.

For example, Jim described a sense of confidence and openness in anticipation which he attributed to being older and wiser, but also to having been successful in the past. Jan described anticipatory anxiety while waiting for the result. The degree of anxiety is debilitating in that she found it difficult to concentrate on anything else until she received the grade for her work. Jan's history is different to Jim's in that she has been unsuccessful on previous courses, and importantly in her view that the lack of success was in part to do with

power and discrimination. Jan's attunement exposes her thrownness into a situation where there is a power differential, potential discrimination, and dyslexia.

Jo and Lisa both described anxiety during the period of anticipation, in both cases they predicted they wouldn't do as well as they hope. They attributed this to their previous experiences in education and a perception of themselves as "not academic". On their current course, both students had achieved good grades that they were happy with, but acknowledged they repeated the same anxious cycle each time a new assessment was submitted. Thus, their past remained ahead of them.

6.3.3.ii Learning experience and associated schema

Several theoretical concepts and empirical findings from educational literature are helpful in unpacking these phenomena. Evans (2013) feedback landscape model includes several proposed mediating factors for students and academics. These include the role of previous experiences of learning and associated schema. The assessment feedback and grade are thus anticipated in light of previous educational experience and the associated meaning (schema) attached to those experiences. Within Poorman and Mastorovich's (2019) exploration of student experience of grading, they highlighted the significance of previous experience on the students' perception of assessment feedback and their need for an A grade. Moreover, Ajjawi et al (2022) identified previous achievement as a mediating factor in the processing of feedback, whereby higher achieving students were mobilised by the sort of critical feedback that would have been detrimental to lower achieving students. The confidence associated with previous success serving as trigger for the self-belief required to take on the challenge. Thus, previous experiences and associated schema influence the anticipation of, and engagement with feedback.

6.3.3 iii Self-esteem

The phenomena can also be considered in light of psychosocial concepts and theories. For example, the cognitive behavioural model of self-esteem proposed by Fennell (1997) conceptualises self-esteem as an estimation or attitude towards oneself which has its origins in early life experience. Life experience leads to the development of beliefs about oneself which lay dormant until they are activated by critical incidents. Once activated they are illustrated by the content of immediate thought (e.g. predictions and contextual self-evaluation), mood (e.g. anxiety, low mood) and actions (e.g. avoidance, perfectionism). In this context the assessment process could be viewed as the critical incident activating the underlying beliefs students have about themselves, which in turn influenced their prediction about the outcome of the assessment and their associated mood. For example, the belief "I'm not academic" (developed during school) led to the prediction of failure and associated anxiety. This was illustrated in Amy's case where her belief "I'm not clever" influenced her prediction that she would fail. Moreover, the prediction and associated anxiety meant that when she worked on an assessment, she felt anxious, which she subsequently alleviated by engaging in procrastination.

The influence of mature students' self-esteem on feedback reception and moods has been explored by Young (2000). In this study students with low self-esteem had difficulty processing feedback accurately, and there was a bias toward negative information that reinforced low self-esteem. Moreover, positive comments and high grades were discounted as they didn't align with their view of themselves. Students with low self-esteem beliefs had difficulty separating work from self, thus criticism of work became criticism of self. In a later study, Shields (2015) found the same pattern, whereby academic low self-esteem was identified as a factor in the accurate processing, usefulness and emotions associated with grading and feedback. In both studies the findings were regardless of actual outcome, so students with high self-esteem, low marks and critical feedback were less likely to personalise the feedback and coped better. Shields concluded that for those with low

academic self-esteem, the process of assessment threatens to expose perceived inadequacy, so they remain anxious even in the face of recent success.

The concept of self-esteem applied to this research provides a framework for understanding why in the face of success some students continue to anticipate failure. Importantly, the school experience is likely to be the point at which core beliefs were established. This could be a possible explanation as to why Jim (who had been successful in school), did not experience anticipatory anxiety whereas Lisa (who was not successful in school) did. Even though they were equally successful on the current course.

6.3.3.iv Fixed vs malleable intelligence beliefs.

Further explanatory psychological frameworks are posited by Dweck (2000). Most notably Dweck's articulation of the importance of whether students believe intelligence is fixed (entity theory) or malleable (incremental theory). Where student's believe intelligence is something that is fixed, they believe that they have a certain amount of intelligence that will not change. Consequently, assessment situations present the risk of exposure, and a student with a fixed view of intelligence is likely to choose options that are less likely to expose any perceived deficit. This is often at the expense of learning, as when presented with a challenging activity that is beyond current knowledge and ability, they will avoid, believing themselves unable to develop beyond current ability. In contrast students who believe their intelligence can be developed incrementally through learning, embrace academic challenge, viewing the difficulty as an opportunity for growth. Dweck (2000) identified this growth mindset as critical to lifelong learning and development.

Applying these principles to this research, the anticipation and reception to feedback could be understood in terms of whether the students had a growth mindset or not. For example, whilst Lisa is more anxious than Jim (perhaps because of her belief about not being academic which was established during school), she also has some facilitative growth

mindset beliefs where she valued feedback and the role of feedback in helping her develop. Importantly, Lisa had noticed that she has been able to improve her work through a process of external feedback and self-evaluation. So, despite early experience, Lisa had a degree of academic self-efficacy which enabled her to utilise feedback, even critical feedback. Thus, she experienced anxious anticipation, but also excited expectation.

Adams et al (2020) identified academic self-efficacy as the important mediator in students' perception of grade outcome and feedback, and argued that feedback should be framed in terms of promoting the student's sense of self-efficacy. Equally, Ajjawi et al (2021) identified the perception of mastery and autonomy as a mediating mechanism in learning from feedback. Furthermore, characteristics such as self-efficacy and receptiveness feature in several evidence-based feedback models (Butler & Winnie 1994; Evans 2013, Lipnevich et al 2016; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006).

Interestingly, in a review of contextual factors influencing feedback recipience, Winstone et al (2017a; 2017b) identified agency and volition as two of four essential criteria for agentic engagement with feedback (see **chapter 2** literature review). As an example of volition, Winstone et al (2017a) identified defensive barriers to feedback recipience where students had a fixed idea about the grade they wanted and subsequently fell short. This account resonated with Adele's interview where she recounted the impact and perception of feedback after receiving a disappointing grade. Adele was upset by the grade and was angry in response to her view it had not been marked with sufficient care. She was also anxious about the threat of getting a low grade in future which negatively influenced her essay preparation. Furthermore, she became self-critical and noticed a bias towards negative comments about her work which she felt unable to move on from. In that sense Adele's experience of feedback was shown via the mood of attunement towards her next assessment.

This account mirrors research finding from Hill et al (2021a) who identified that for the majority of students, feedback had an emotional impact which was far reaching and long

lasting. The emotions associated with negative comments became more intense when engaging with the next assessment. Furthermore, the dissipation of negative emotion was dependent on the next assessment being successful and comments favourable. The detrimental impact of negative feedback and disappointing grades is cited in numerous studies. Sieminski et al (2016) identified emotional vulnerability to feedback in all their case study participants, and Poorman and Mastorovich (2019) noted that the grading process was emotionally laden for students. Several researchers urged academics to consider the emotional impact of their feedback and to be careful when phrasing negative comments (Hill et al 2021; Patterson et al 2020; Poorman & Mastorovich 2019), especially with students in the first year of study (Hill et al 2021).

One cannot assume a student's reaction to negative comments will have a detrimental impact, especially as some students find negative comments motivating (Pitt & Norton 2017) and those with a growth mindset may use negative feedback as a springboard for improvement. The dominant current practice of anonymous feedback prohibits knowledge of individual student characteristics, thus, how best to phrase feedback to maximise student gains, is a challenge. Moreover, one cannot assume that negative emotions are in themselves prohibitive for development. Thus, the presence of growth mindset, rather than the valence of feedback comments or grade, appear to be influential in determining the anticipation of and engagement with feedback.

6.3.3.v Anxiety and shame

Different moods may indicate different modes of being. Heidegger (1927/ 1962) argues that the mood of anxiety discloses the possibility of authentic living. In this sense, the anxiety felt by the student could reveal their projected possibility of learning and achievement. This can be seen in Lisa's anxiety about her assessment submission. The path of dedication she chose to help fulfil her academic potential was reflective of Lisa pursuing an authentic mode

of existence. In contrast, Storolow (2011) argues that the mood of shame discloses an inauthentic mode of existence where the mood connects to what we believe others will judge us for, and we feel exposed and deficient in the eyes of others. Shame is the emotion that most closely resembles Adele's description of her experience when she didn't achieve the grade she hoped for.

Bynum et al (2019) explored the emotion of shame amongst medical residents in the USA. They found that shame triggers included failure to reach personal goals, fear of judgement, and comparison with others. All of which are inherent in learning processes in higher education. Shame experiencing medical residents labelled themselves as deficient, inadequate, and flawed. The consequences of shame included anxiety, distress and depression, along with associated physical symptoms, difficulty concentrating, slowed thinking and racing thoughts. Moreover, students withdrew from support and disengaged from learning. The detrimental influence of shame on learning and performance across different disciplines has been further documented by Tangney and Dearing (2002). Shame is an important emotion to consider in the context of feedback. The findings from Bynum (2019) and Tagneny and Dearing (2002) are important, as the higher education nursing experience is littered with potentially exposing events, where students are given feedback in the presence of others, and if shame is activated, students may find it harder to engage in the activities that could be of benefit.

Carless and Boud (2018) and Molloy et al (2020) identify emotions as being a critical aspect of student feedback literacy. The mood of attunement in the assessment situation reveals the students thrownness and facticity. Thus, emotional attunement appears to be an indicator of beliefs and characteristics which may serve as an educational risk assessment for student vulnerability. This could provide a guide as to how best to maximise students learning. Where students have had a negative assessment experience, there is some scope for exploring how best to support the students to positively engage with the feedback and maximise their learning potential. To that end, Bynum et al's (2019) recommendation that

academics normalise shame in the context of learning and offer meaningful strategies for coping and self-assessment may be worthy of study in the nursing education context.

6.3.4 Sub theme 3 Seeking external recognition and status

This theme captured how the external recognition of their achievement, and the associated status this afforded them, influenced participants interpretation of the feedback experience. Viewing this through a Heideggerian lens, students enter the world of higher education which is guided by standards that are established by distant authority figures within university, national, and international quality assurance structures (Das-man). Students enrol on programmes of study and produce assessments to demonstrate their learning. The quality of work is *rewarded* with a commensurate assessment grade and qualification. Thus, there is an inevitable degree of inauthenticity, as attaining status and recognition in undergraduate education requires that students conform to, and be measured against, pre-determined standards.

Trubody (2015) argued that Heidegger's conception of authenticity and inauthenticity represented the relationship that we have with our own being. How we are, is either chosen (authentic) or not chosen, and we are doing what everyone else does (inauthentic). Moreover, inauthenticity is a necessary structure of existence in that, as self-interpreting beings, we interpret ourselves in terms of those around us (Trubody 2015). Seeking external recognition may be representative of an inauthentic mode, but there is no value judgement attached to the mode of inauthenticity. Authentic and inauthentic are not equivalent with modern use of the terms which tend to be more value laden and synonymous with real and fake (Trubody 2015). Raaper (2020) describes grading of assessment as a form of individual and institutional currency, where grades are accepted as a measure of worth to oneself and others. This acceptance of the status quo and striving for measurement are not without

consequence, and can have a detrimental or positive impact on student learning and wellbeing.

Within this study, the participants described different motives for seeking external recognition. For example, Lisa searched her feedback for evidence that the marker had noticed the effort she'd invested in her work.

> *"I work really hard at university… and when I get the feedback and its positive, it makes me feel like…like rewarded for the hard work." (Lisa p 11)*

Lisa was keen on narrative feedback whereby the influence of her work on the assessor could be seen. To further illustrate this motive, Lisa was less satisfied with exam results that gave a grade and no narrative feedback, even though that grade was 98 percent. Jim was keen to be awarded a high mark as he took pride in his work. He viewed the grade as recognition of character and the respectful significance he afforded the work and his lecturers. The assessment result also provided Jim with a means of measuring his status in the peer group. Having high academic status amongst his peers was a goal, and Jim enjoyed the competition and friendly rivalry with other high achieving peers. Adele sought the status and reputation she believed a first-class honours degree afforded her, and she struggled that her efforts had not yielded the results she hoped for. The effect of focusing on the external status moved Adele and Jim towards an inauthentic mode, where they measure themselves in comparison to others as opposed to what they are personally capable of.

6.3.4.i Learning goals vs performance goals

Dweck (2000) argued that a student's goals for assessment are an important factor in determining the impact for learning. Learning goals are aligned with incremental beliefs about intelligence, and are deemed helpful in that students are more likely to take on difficult challenges and persevere. Students with learning goals value learning over the appearance of intelligence. Performance goals are aligned with fixed beliefs about intelligence, where

students are more likely to find difficult challenges anxiety provoking and avoid challenges if they risk exposing perceived deficiency (Dweck 2000). Students with performance goals place greater value on the appearance of intelligence and success to others. Thus, the motive for seeking external recognition may provide insights into a student's goals and the potential impact on the learning journey.

Lisa's description appeared more indicative of learning goals, Adele's were more aligned with performance goals and Jim's account conveyed a hybrid of learning and performance goals. The issue of performance goals was observed by Poorman and Mastorovich (2019). They found that students conveyed the need for an A grade on their assessments and were much less concerned with their learning. The result being that students were anxious in assessment situations, they worried about falling short of their standards and letting people down. Additionally, they had a sense that their identity (and worth) was connected to being an A grade student. Similarly, this need for high a grade was conveyed in Adele's interview where she stated:

> "*I want those good marks. I want to be recognised for my good marks*"
>
> (Adele p25)

The need for an A was considered counterproductive to learning in Poorman and Mastorovich's research, and the need for a high grade clearly contributed to Adele's difficulty engaging with her assessment and assessment feedback.

As discussed, falling short of a goal and comparison with others can be a source of shame for some students (Bynum 2019) which in turn can reduce engagement with learning (Brynum 2019; Winstone et al 2017). Ryan and Henderson (2018) also found that when students achieved a lower-than-expected grade they were more likely to respond to feedback with emotions of shame, anger and upset that interfered with their learning. In this study Lisa and Jim had both achieved the goals they had set for themselves and received the associated external recognition, whereas Adele had not.

Research exploring the influence of self-esteem on assessment outcomes highlights inherent emotional vulnerability when students are unable to separate the grading of assessment from a measure of themselves (Poorman & Mastorovich 2019; Shields 2015; Sieminski et al 2016; Young 2000). The recommendations from these studies and those of Dweck (2000) include academics promoting a holistic view of education and encouraging learning goals as part of programmes to develop a growth mindset. Future research could explore the influence of pedagogical practice that helps students recognise their own reasons for seeking external recognition and status. Such practices could help students explore the associated risks and benefits of seeking external recognition, normalising failure as part of learning, and advise students on potential coping strategies.

6.3.5 Sub theme 4 The legacy of negative school experience

This theme described how students' past negative experiences in school were present within their current interpretation of the feedback experience. The school experience is in part representative of the student's thrownness (Heidegger 1927/ 1962), and these provide reference points for the current interpretation of experience. Each student was influenced by their school community, and of the educational policy and pedagogy that was practiced at the time. Some students referred to the influence of key individuals from their schooling, whose influence was internalised and sustained through future educational endeavours.

In Jim's case he recalled the enduring influence of a teacher who had publicly chastised him for not checking his work. In recounting the event, he described how in current assessment activity, he feels the presence of his teacher's words saying, "you missed eight marks by not checking". This fuelled his diligence, but also led to his worry about missing something, letting people down, and that his work would negatively reflect his character. His joke "two years on a chaise long should do it!" reveals he found the experience psychologically impactful, and perhaps injurious. The choice to become a primary school curriculum

governor is suggestive of him wanting to protect children from the same fate, and his interest in university assessment policy could equally be viewed as a protective strategy.

6.3.5.i Cognitive behavioural theory

In hearing Jim's (and other participant) accounts of their experience, my understanding was influenced by my clinical knowledge of cognitive behaviour therapy formulations. Whilst working through the interpretation I made reflexive notes foregrounding this influence, whilst purposefully staying close to the data. Thus, I acknowledge that I entered the research with knowledge that I could not remove, but remained open to new knowledge. In this instance the cognitive behavioural formulation was a helpful framework that aligned with the ontological position of critical realism and hermeneutic phenomenology, by revealing hidden structures and temporal ontological significance.

The cognitive theory posited by Beck (1976) and Ellis (1962) argues that it is the meaning of events, rather than the events themselves, that are largely responsible for peoples emotional, behavioural, and cognitive reactions to them. These meanings are developed as a result of early life experiences and are carried through life, lying dormant until they are activated by a triggering event. Once activated, the meaning is shown via the content of thought (words, images, memories), the emotional response and the associated behaviours, and physical sensations. In applying this framework to Jim, I hypothesise that the early experience of being a bright student who was expected to do well, coupled with the humiliating experience of public chastisement, led to the development of schemas he carried through life. These schemas were a set of core beliefs about himself and others. Along with these beliefs were a set of protective rules (e.g. checking your work will protect you, make sure you know what you should do, strive to show your best academic self) and associated behaviours (e.g. checking the rules, seeking feedback). Assessment situations served as a critical incident, and these triggered thoughts (e.g. what am I missing? If I miss something I'll

let myself and others down; “you missed eight marks by not checking”) and cognitive processing biases (focussing on the marks he didn’t get), along with associated behaviours (checking academic policy, feedback seeking). In the main, Jim’s thoughts and behaviours facilitated his academic advancement, but they had their routes in an adverse early experience, which added some emotional vulnerability and discomfort to the process of assessment in the context of education. The assessment process thus became a potential trigger for further humiliation and shame.

In Jan’s case she clearly articulates how going to a school where they “didn’t believe in dyslexia” meant she was subject to discrimination. The influence of the English teacher who believed her difficulties with English reflected low intelligence and poor character had been significant in her future education endeavours. The emotive language she used was evocative of injury and trauma, such as “it scarred me for life”. In Jan’s case her experience influenced her beliefs about people involved in education. Academics became potential perpetrators of further discrimination, so she kept her dyslexia diagnosis secret. Whilst she knew she was capable, the dyslexia meant she found it difficult to communicate her intentions in the written word. Assessment experiences were critical incidents, and when she received criticism on spelling or grammar on previous degree courses, she’d felt overwhelming negative emotions, and left the course. The facticity of prior and present-day equipment and pedagogy has been a significant factor for Jan, as computer software and inclusive education policy provided Jan with the equipment she needed to reduce the risk of further personal criticism and discrimination. Her recent experience served to provide evidence which validated her beliefs about herself as having academic potential, and helped form new beliefs that academics can be safe, helpful, and facilitative.

6.3.5.ii Trauma informed education

Whilst they would not meet a clinical diagnostic threshold, Jan’s account, and to a lesser extent Jim’s account was reminiscent of trauma. They both experienced events which were

harmful, which had a lasting impact on their mental, emotional, and social wellbeing (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2014). In making sense of the traumatic aspects of student's accounts, and considering the connection with feedback, I was drawn to recent developments of trauma informed care and trauma informed education.

In recent years health services in the UK and United States of America (USA) have moved towards a model of trauma informed care which was originally proposed by Harris and Fallot (2001). The SAMHSA trauma informed approach to care provision rests on four assumptions: 1) **Realise** that trauma can affect individuals, groups and communities, 2) **Recognise** the signs symptoms and widespread impact of trauma 3) **Respond** by integrating knowledge of trauma into system wide practices, policies and procedures 4) **Prevent re-traumatisation** (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID) 2022).

Trauma informed care approaches incorporate the promotion of physical and psychological safety, and promote trust via the use of transparent policies and procedures guiding treatment. Service user choice, empowerment and collaboration are key features of trauma informed service provision, along with individualised approaches that include cultural considerations (OHID 2022).

There has been growing interest in trauma informed approaches to education which follow principles set out in trauma informed care (Goddard et al 2019). The benefits of using trauma informed education in the school system include, improved self-regulation, self-efficacy, enhanced interpersonal and communications skills, along with improved attainment and reduced attrition (Dugan et al 2020; Thomas et al 2019). Goddard et al (2019) argue the case for using trauma informed education principles in nursing education, in recognition that some students have experienced historical trauma. They also argue for the approach as a means of learning how to cope with the ongoing exposure to trauma that student nurses and nurses experience.

Implementing trauma informed education rests on the relationship between student and academic, whereby a supportive relationship forms the safe base for academic development. Thus, there is some synergy with relational pedagogy. In a nursing education context, Goddard et al (2022) advise that academics use caring strategies in their dealings with students. This could be for example, demonstrating flexibility by recognising student avoidance can be a trauma response (and take the appropriate next step); or emphasising acceptance of imperfection as a means of self-compassion that could facilitate persistence with complex new learning. Goddard et al (2019) present examples of a trauma informed nursing education which includes frequent feedback, clear detailed instructions and feedback, multiple contact opportunities and referral for academic support. Furthermore, more abstract strategies such as personal connection, enthusiasm for teaching, and empathic perspectives are advocated.

The principles and practice of trauma informed education have some synergy with the aspirations of student and teacher feedback literacy (Boud & Dawson 2023; Carless & Boud 2018, Molloy et al 2020; Winstone & Carless 2020), the mediating factors for learning posited by Evans (2013) and identified by Ajjawi et al (2022) and Dweck (2000). Academics use of caring strategies also provide students with useful reference points for becoming a nurse. Barnacle and Dall Alba (2019) advocate that education should encourage students to take a stand on what they are learning and who they are becoming. Thus, they advise education should explore the ways of *being* which help reveal their projected possibility for being the best student and nurse they can be. By demonstrating careful concern for students', academics model practice that can build resilience and promote care for self and colleagues. These characteristics can be helpful in dealing with an inevitably stressful profession (Goddard et al 2021).

For those students carrying the baggage of a negative school experience into higher education, the process is likely to be challenging, as it brings an additional obstacle to overcome on the learning journey. The practice of trauma informed education doesn't

assume all students are traumatised, nor does it require academics to be therapeutically trained. However, it may provide a safe space for learning, where students are not re-traumatised and are provided with examples of good interpersonal practice. Whilst the trauma informed approach presents potential, the outcomes within nursing education are not established. Thus, further research is needed to explore the impact in nursing education. One interesting aspect is that the approach requires an interpersonal dimension that aims to facilitate students reaching their potential. The influence of relationship dynamics on the interpretation of feedback was a core theme revealed in my research, and this aspect will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.6 Sub theme 5 Feedback triggering self-regulatory strategies

Several participants discussed actions they engaged in that alleviated anxious emotions. The main strategies were perfectionism, procrastination, and self-reassurance. Some of these strategies reflected the experience of anxiety associated with students realising their potential and making the choice to pursue it. Thus, reflecting an authentic mode of being in this context. An example of this was seen in Lisa's use of self-encouraging reassurance when she felt fearful at the start of preparations for the next assessment. Procrastination and some forms of perfectionism are more aligned with the inauthentic mode of being described as fallenness (Heidegger 1927/1962). In such instances students fell away from their authentic potentiality for *being* by engaging in procrastination, or by being primarily concerned about their performance, grade, and status rather than learning and reaching their full potential.

6.3.6.i Emotion regulation and feedback models

In an educational context, the antecedents and responses to emotions associated with learning are an important aspect of feedback effectiveness. They feature in self-regulatory models of feedback (Butler & Winnie 1995; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006) and the student feedback interaction model (Lipnevich et al 2016). They also form mediators of feedback success in the feedback landscape model (Evans 2013). Managing emotions associated with feedback and taking action, also feature heavily in models of feedback literacy (Carless & Boud 2018; Molloy et al 2020).

The term *self-regulation* used in these feedback models refers to the meta-cognitive and affective aspects of feedback processing in connection to their role in learning. Whereas the emotional self-regulation strategies theme elicited from the students experiences, have a specific focus on *emotional self-regulation*. These were strategies employed by students to alleviate uncomfortable negative emotions (typically anxiety and shame) and so are qualitatively different to self-regulation as it is used in feedback models. There is some overlap in that they incorporate meta-cognitive processes, and affective processing, but emotional self-regulation strategies are focused entirely on managing emotion.

Emotional self-regulation was apparent in all but one (Helen) of the participants interviews and was a feature in their sense making and in their learning. In returning to feedback models, it was difficult to see how this emotion regulation process was explicitly reflected within established models of feedback. For example, Butler and Winnie's (1995) self-regulated learning model (figure 2.1) has a strong cognitive focus, whereby the students' cognitive systems in undertaking actions and evaluating feedback and performance are highlighted. The updated version (figure 2.2) includes student disposition as an aspect of feedback processing. By way of illustration, if the product of monitoring their performance is that they are unsuccessful or they are disappointed; the likelihood of continuing or not is related to the student's motivational beliefs and their hopefulness in reaching the goal.

External feedback is an additional source of information that is integrated into the cognitive system, which feeds into the student's assessment of progress and performance.

There isn't an explicit description of the student's ability to regulate their emotions in this process. The model tends to focus more on the link with the student's motivation to reach the goal, and their sense of hope in being able to reach it. Applying this to emotion regulation strategies, when a student is anxious about an assessment, or disappointed by feedback, the strategy they engage in (e.g. avoidance / persistence) will most likely be connected to the importance of the goal and their perceived likelihood of reaching it. Thus, Butler and Winnie (1995) place perceived self-efficacy as a central feature in learning from feedback.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) self-regulated learning model (figure 2.3) and the associated publication, discuss how feedback influences student's feelings about themselves, and the impact on future learning. They refer to Dweck's (2000) research on the role of fixed and malleable intelligence beliefs, and their influence on the setting of performance or learning goals. Specifically, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick identify the importance of students understanding feedback as an evaluation of performance in context, rather than of themselves as a person. They argue that research exploring motivation and self-esteem provide helpful insights into why students fail to self-regulate their learning. Moreover, one of their principles of good feedback is that it should encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. To facilitate the development of helpful learning beliefs, they advise a strategy of multiple low stakes assessment tasks with an emphasis on progress and achievement. This is considered preferable to high stakes summative assessments where feedback information is solely about success or failure. Hattie and Timperley's model (2007) conveys a similar perspective in their feedback for learning model (figure 2.4) in which they advise feedback should focus on task and performance, not on the student.

Whilst it is undoubtedly helpful to provide feedback that is developmental, motivational, and focused on the task, this does not guarantee that it will be interpreted by the student as intended. As previously discussed, students with low self-esteem have greater difficulty in separating their assessment products from themselves, tend to personalise feedback comments and experience negative emotional reactions (Shield 2015; York 2000). The risk of negative emotions as a result of feedback cannot be entirely removed, no matter how balanced and considered the feedback is. Thus, student emotional regulation skills which help them cope and persevere with learning are important.

In presenting the feedback landscape model, Evans (2013) (figure 2.4) refers to twelve mediators that influence the sense students make of their feedback. Personality is stated as one mediator, with another including attributions, motivation, self-efficacy and resilience (i.e. the ability to adapt to stressful situations). These mediators could be influential in the emotion regulation process, but the model itself doesn't identify emotion regulation as a mediator for feedback use. Interestingly, Evans states that feedback should be presented in a way that doesn't threaten the student's ego. Arguing that this could be done by providing feedback on how to improve work, and minimising information that concerns performance relative to others. This suggestion falls foul of the same interpretive challenge, in that however well written and well intentioned, students bring their educational baggage to the experience which influences the interpretation and response. Evans (2013) argues that student's emotional resilience as a dimension of self-regulation is an important area for future feedback efficacy research. Furthermore, they state that research into the facilitators and barriers to student self-management of emotions is required. As such Evans acknowledges the importance of emotion regulation, but equally acknowledges its role in feedback is not fully understood.

Within the Lipnevich et al (2016) student feedback interaction model (figure 2.5) there is reference to emotional processing within the feedback experience. In that the students cognitive and affective responses to feedback are the result of their appraisal of feedback.

These appraisals are influenced by learner characteristics, and affective and cognitive processing generate actions which may be adaptive or maladaptive. Personality, receptivity, and self-efficacy are all identified as learner characteristics. Though as with the other models, there is no explicit inclusion of the student's ability to regulate their emotions as having an influence on the process.

In considering emotion regulation, Nieman et al (2014) posited emotional instability as a moderating variable for emotional response to negative feedback. Where students scoring higher on measures of emotional instability tended to react with more anger in response to negative feedback than those with lower emotional instability scores. Furthermore, Perkrun (2006) argue that emotions have an impact on performance via the activation of cognitive resources, learning motivation, learning strategies and self-regulated learning processes.

Whilst not directly referring to emotion regulation strategies, student feedback literacy models refer to managing affect (Carless & Boud 2018) and acknowledging and working with emotion (Molloy et al 2020). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that emotion regulation could form part of the feedback literacy skill development. Proposals on how to go about this are not included in the conceptual papers, but are proposed as important areas for future research.

Within this study, the student's approach to regulating their emotions was influential in how they made sense of the feedback they received, and how it influenced their engagement with, and preparation for further assessments. I was left with questions as to whether skills in emotional regulation had a relationship with self-regulated learning? Furthermore, could strategies aimed at improving emotion regulation be helpful in improving self-regulated learning skills and academic performance?

6.3.6.ii Perfectionism, procrastination, and rumination

The main emotion self-regulation strategies students employed were perfectionism, procrastination, and self-reassurance. Perfectionism was noticeable in three of the participants, (Lisa, Jim and Adele). Though each had different aetiology. Frost et al (1990 p 450) define the characteristics of perfectionism as "setting excessively high personal standards of performance… which are accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluations of one's own behaviour". It was later conceptualised as a multidimensional trait with two dimensions: **perfectionistic striving**, and **perfectionistic concerns**.

Perfectionist striving refers to "the setting of personal standards and a self-oriented striving for perfection" (Madigan 2019 p969). This dimension of perfectionism is associated with a moderate positive relationship with academic achievement (Madigan 2019). Perfectionistic concerns are the "concern over making mistakes, feelings of discrepancy between one's expectation and performance, and negative reactions to imperfection" (Madigan 2019 p969). Interestingly, this description has some synergy with triggers for shame that were identified by Bynum et al (2019) discussed in an earlier part of this chapter. Perfectionistic concerns have been associated with a small negative relationship with academic achievement (Madigan 2019).

Within Lisa's account of her approach to assessments there is a clear indication of perfectionism. Lisa starts early and works on an assessment, tweaking and refining up to the last possible moment so it can be as good as possible. This account aligns with Madigan's perfectionistic striving description. Interestingly, perfectionistic striving could be considered consistent with Heidegger's notion of being in an authentic mode of existence, in that Lisa was pushing herself to be the best that she could be in this assessment context.

By comparison, Jim, and Adele both demonstrate perfectionistic concern. Jim's reference to "*always being worried about that bit I haven't got*", and the reference to letting people down, is indicative that there was some concern about not showing his potential, and the risk of

negative reactions. Having previously been disappointed with a result, Adele was fearful that she would fall short again. There is a clear illustration of perfectionistic concern in her account, which resulted in anxiety fuelled procrastination:

> "*This is the first time I've had like a writer's block and I just can't put pen to paper...I will be worried about that previous grade…I'm struggling to write, and I'm leaving it and leaving it." (Adele p 29-30)*

Interestingly, Madigan (2019) identified procrastination as being one of the consequences of perfectionistic concern. This also illustrates fallenness (Heidegger 1927/1962) in that Adele's anxiety that she may not do well, leads to falling away from her potential- by not doing the work.

Academic procrastination is defined by Steel and Klingsieck (2016 p 37) as "to voluntarily delay an intended course of study-related action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay". The reasons for procrastination can be varied, some of which do not align with the accounts provided by participants, for instance low levels of conscientiousness and low interest (Steel & Klingseik 2016). However, procrastination is also associated with low levels of self-efficacy (Lee et al 2014, Steel & Klingseik 2019) and self-regulated learning, which may have been part of the reason for some participants in this study. Schraw et al (2007) argue that antecedents of procrastination fall within three categories: **Self**, which includes interest and organisational skills; **Teacher**, which includes clear expectations and well organised course materials; **Task**, which relates to background knowledge and perceived difficulty of the task.

In Amy's case, she had only recently been diagnosed with dyslexia, having gone through education believing herself as "not clever". She described finding assessments harder than her peers and feeling anxious in class when others appeared to understand things she didn't. Moreover, she found the task difficult, was not clear on the expectations of the assessment and required individual, verbal guidance to meet her learning needs. As such,

Amy described low self-efficacy and difficulties with the self, teacher, and task antecedents of procrastination.

Adele's experience of receiving an unexpected disappointing result had led to anxiety and reduced self-efficacy. Moreover, Adele's description of dwelling on the previous result is indicative of rumination. Rumination is defined as repetitive, prolonged, and recurrent negative thoughts about oneself, feelings, personal concerns and upsetting experiences (Watkins 2008). Rumination has been identified as a maladaptive coping response that is detrimental to understanding and problem solving (Donaldson & Lam 2004; Watkins and Moulds 2005; Zeidner 1995). Furthermore, it tends to maintain, and sometimes magnify negative emotions (Nolen-Hoeksema et al 2008; Watkins & Roberts 2020). Consequently, Adele's rumination was likely to have an influence on her procrastination.

6.3.6.iii Self-reassurance and self-compassion

By contrast some student accounts demonstrated helpful emotion self-regulation when they were disappointed or anxious. Jim engaged in reassuring self-talk when he didn't do as well as usual on a previous assessment. The overall consequence of which was a higher second-class honours degree rather than the first he hoped for. He reassured himself that the assessment was a work-based project, which he'd needed to complete whilst simultaneously being made redundant. He reassured himself that the limited success was connected to circumstances outside his control as opposed to his ability. This is reminiscent of Hattie and Timperley (2007) description of feedback, whereby one of the means of reducing the gap between current performance and performance goal, is to reduce the goal. Jim used the experience as a motivator, fuelling his determination to achieve a first class honours this time round.

Self-reassurance is defined as the ability to be soothing, encouraging, and supportive to oneself in the face of setbacks (Gilbert et al 2004). Self-reassurance is reflective of an

affiliative relationship with the self which can serve as a buffer between self-criticism and negative emotional states (Petrocci et al 2018). A clear example of this is evident in Lisa's description of how she uses previous feedback to sooth anxious feelings and provide encouragement when she starts the next assessment:

> "*If I've got an upcoming assignment and I'm feeling bad, I'll look over my feedback and think, well, I've done it before, and I did this and I did that. I look at how I've written things and what's been written about me and I think, right well…" (Lisa p 19)*

Self-reassurance is highly correlated with self-compassion (Hermanto & Zuroff 2016). The construct (and measurement) of self-compassion is characterised by three components: being kind to oneself, seeing one's troubles as part of common humanity, and being mindful of one's distress (Neff 2003). Both self-reassurance and self-compassion involve relating to oneself with kindness in the context of personal shortcomings and adversity. Thus, research using self-compassion is worth considering in a discussion of self-reassurance as an adaptive emotion regulation strategy in the context of feedback.

Interestingly, self-compassion is associated with learning rather than performance goals (Dweck 2000; Neff 2003). In that individuals are motivated to achieve by the desire to maximise potential and wellbeing rather than a desire for enhanced self-image. Although not indicative of causal links, Neff et al (2003) found self-compassion to be negatively correlated with fear of failure and anxiety, positively correlated with motivation, but not correlated with academic performance. Moreover, self-compassion is linked to adaptive coping in the face of academic failure and disappointment.

Self-compassion training shows potential for developing helpful emotion regulation and self-efficacy skills. Smeets et al (2014) completed a trial where female college students were randomly assigned to a three-week self-compassion group (n=27) alongside an active control group (n=25) that were taught time management skills. The self-compassion group showed significantly greater increase in self-compassion, mindfulness, optimism, and self-

efficacy, along with a significant reduction in rumination. Both groups showed improvements in life satisfaction and connectedness. Though no differences were found between the groups in their mood or their degree of worry. Whilst it's not surprising that a self-compassion focused group increased self-compassion, it is interesting to note the change in self-efficacy and rumination. Furthermore, the satisfaction and improvements that both groups had in connectedness is suggestive that early self-management/ regulation interventions with students may help them feel more connected to academics and peers. Though this could have been the result of the interpersonal skills and rapport building expertise of those involved in the groups.

In a more recent longitudinal study, Egan et al (2022) found associations between better academic performance and higher emotional resilience, mindfulness, self-compassion, and consideration of future consequence. Negative associations between academic achievement and procrastination were observed. They argue that interventions aimed at supporting students to develop resilience, mindfulness and self-compassion skills ought to be incorporated into the curriculum as a means of supporting academic development.

Self-compassion and compassion focused approaches show some potential as a helpful strategy for dealing with unhelpful emotion regulation strategies that students may bring with them into university education (perfectionistic concern, procrastination, self-criticism, and rumination) (Egan et al 2022; Gilbert 2017; Neff 2003; Smeets et la 2014). However, further research is required to explore the application and efficacy of such approaches.

6.4 Theme 2 MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

This theme concerns the influence of student's relationships with academics, and in some cases, other people and systems that exert their influence in higher education. These relationships were key in the students understanding, use of, and experience of the feedback process. The world of higher education has its own cultures and practices that the

students were becoming oriented to (at least in part). The influence of other people (or Dasein) in a world is captured in the following quote: “We always inhabit a shared world and the way we exist in a world is always essentially structured by others” (Dreyfus and Wrathall 2007 p7). Heidegger (1927/1962) asserts that being-with-others is the transcendental condition that makes it possible to discover equipment, which we use for the sake of getting things done which are important to us. In this case being-with-others involved in education is the condition required to discover how feedback can be used, *in-order-to* develop academic skills and practices, for *the-sake-of* becoming a graduate, and in this case a nurse. Though each student will vary in terms of their potential possibilities as a graduate and as a nurse.

The positive act of being-with and **concern** for others (*besorgen*) is described by Heidegger (1927/1962) as having two forms. The first form is termed **Leaping-in.** This is concern for others whereby one takes over another’s *care* of things. There is an assumption that the provider of concern knows what is best. They take responsibility for another’s care, they do for the other, they advise and instruct. This way of showing concern for another is not described in any kind of pejorative sense; there are times when taking over the care for another is required and helpful. However, the process involves an unequal power differential, with the person showing concern having more power than the person in receipt of the actions of concern. Leaping-in also creates a dependency on the person showing concern. Heidegger considered this to be an often necessary, but inauthentic mode of concern for others.

By contrast **Leaping-ahead** is the mode of concern that involves directing concern towards others by helping them to fulfil their own possibilities more fully. This requires an understanding of the other and their needs, and the promotion of agency in the other. In authentic concern, one leaps ahead as though to pass the power back to the other.

In an educational context, the academic could show concern for the student by providing feedback that reflects a leaping-in relationship. This would be the case with transmission models of feedback that involve one directional advice for the student on what they should

be doing, and what they have done wrong. This process does not require the academic to know the student, but rather to know about the subject, to provide corrective information and information about what should be included and what is required. The practice of providing written feedback on an anonymous assessment paper falls in the leaping-in category of relating to the student with concern.

In contrast, leaping-ahead feedback would require the academic to know the student, and to find out from the student the kind of feedback that is likely to be of benefit. Moreover, the purpose of the feedback should be to pass the power back to the student so they can become more expert in their learning, eventually providing their own feedback. This could be via the practice of dialogic feedback which is personalised to the individual needs and preferences of the student. Educational practices promoting student self-regulated learning and self-evaluative feedback are examples of this. As are feedback practices that incorporate the student voice via dialogic feedback and involvement in feedback design.

6.4.1 Sub theme 1 Empathy for the marker

This sub theme described the student's interpretation of the feedback experience when they received feedback that they were unhappy with. There was a difference between the level of detail in feedback provided by the marker and the students hopes for more detailed explanatory feedback. For Jim, this was connected to a sense that the marking was rushed, perfunctory and lacking in detail. In Adele's case she didn't understand how the feedback she received had related to her work and was also suspicious that the marking was inaccurate.

What was interesting was that neither Adele or Jim complained to the marker or sought to gain further information or explanation. This is at odds with much of the literature referring to students as demanding consumers in a neo-liberal education context (Bunce et al 2017; Tomlinson 2017). Though it may have reflected a power differential (Matthews et al 2021). In

considering this I was drawn to Heideggerian concepts concerning how we live in the world with others, especially in terms of conforming to the norms set by others (Das-man). In this instance both Adele and Jim were unhappy, but chose to follow a more subservient position even though this had the effect of limiting their potential (fallenness) within this assessment outcome. It could be that they felt pressure to conform to the levelled down standard of feedback for fear of standing out from the crowd, being labelled as difficult. In Adele's case this may have been part of her interpretation, as she had queried information in a prior course and had a negative experience where she was chastised for approaching her personal tutor and questioning the marker's feedback. In Jim's case, he saw limited value in pursuing this course of action, conveying a sense of inevitability and pragmatism that it didn't seem worth the potential upset and difficulty this may cause.

Within both Adele and Jim's account was consideration of the marker, their workload, and the pressure they were under. Their decision as to the next course of action was in part influenced by their purposeful consideration of how the marker experienced the process of marking in the context of large numbers of students and lots of papers to mark. As a result, they viewed the result as inevitable and their query about the marking as an unwelcome addition to the markers workload.

Their perceived insights into the world of the lecturer, resulted in them choosing the least disruptive path for the marker, and acquiescing to the levelled down approach to feedback on their summative assessment. They conformed to the threshold standards set by *the other* (Das-man) but in part this was driven by concern for the academic.

6.4.2 Sub theme 2 Respectful communication

This theme emerged from the description of feedback experiences which students interpreted as being disrespectful of their efforts, or themselves. Jan expressed a clear expectation that the marker should include an acknowledgement of the effort students had

put into the assessment. This was deemed important regardless of the grade and viewed as showing respect for the students' efforts. The importance of acknowledging students' efforts in feedback was also noted by Hill et al (2021a) in their research exploring student's emotional reactions to feedback and the consequences for learning. They advised providers of feedback include comment on effort, in addition to comment on outcome. This approach aligns with feedback learning models that aim to promote self-regulated learning (Butler & Winnie 1995; Nicol& Macfarlane Dick 2006; Lipnevich et al 2016), and provide feedback at the self-regulatory level (Hattie & Timperley 2007). These models promote the use of external feedback as something that can be internalised by the student to generate helpful beliefs about the role of effort and persistence in their success. Moreover, commenting on effort is deemed helpful for reinforcing the importance of learning goals and promoting more helpful malleable intelligence beliefs (Dweck 2000) and self-efficacy (Adams et al 2020).

Two of the participants conveyed a sense of feeling undervalued and disrespected by the feedback they received. In Jim's interview, he described being criticised for using "et al" in a manner which was entirely consistent with the university referencing guidance. On another occasion he had used the term "*to wit*" and the lecturer had commented "*I don't know what this means*". He thought the marker should have checked and he described feeling undervalued when his efforts were not reciprocated by careful marking that would have involved checking unfamiliar terms.

Adele expressed anger when her feedback included grammatical errors or spelling mistakes. She found this especially vexing when these errors were part of critical feedback on her own spelling and grammar. She also recounted her suspicion that the feedback comments she'd received were intended for a different student, indicating her distrust of the marking. The lack of acknowledgement of age and stage in life was a source of annoyance for Adele, who conveyed her chagrin that some of the communication she'd received had been patronising and not sufficiently respectful:

"*I'm a 40-year-old woman, I don't expect to be spoken to like a child*!"

(Adele p 32)

For Jim and Adele, their experience reduced their confidence and trust in the marker, and the diminished the credibility of the feedback. Consequently, their appreciation of their feedback as a tool for improvement reduced.

Students' perceptions of the care academics take with feedback are significant for feedback utilisation. Feedback is a demonstration of care for the students learning and care for the students as individuals. Ajjawi et al (2022) identified relatedness as a mechanism that can enhance or reduce engagement with feedback. Relatedness concerned the student's perception of care, positive regard, and trust in the academic and the feedback they receive (Ajjawi et al 2022). Furthermore, Gravette and Winstone (2019; 2021; 2022) explored the importance of relational pedagogies in higher education. They argued that when assessment feedback interactions are not genuine and meaningful, students can feel a sense of alienation and that they don't matter. This can have a detrimental impact on the student's future engagement with learning and support. Consequently, Gravette and Winstone argue that curriculum designs and assessment strategies should include practices that convey to the students that each one of them matters, and their learning and wellbeing is important.

Barnacle and Dall 'Alba (2019) argue that from a Heideggerian ontological perspective, educators are called on to show how to *care*, in order to encourage students to take a stand on (care about) what they are learning, and who they are becoming (students, nurses, academics). They encourage educators to consider the extent to which their feedback (and educational) practices demonstrate *care,* as these become the reference points for students, influencing their perceived possibilities for *being*. This influence can extend beyond the bounds of the assessment or course, in that the norms and practices of study and relating to one another are continued into working life.

6.4.2.i Relational feed-forward

As a means of improving relationships, communication, and effective feedback for learning, Hill et al (2021b) proposed a relational feed-forward approach to assessment feedback. Relational feed-forward is described as a dialogue form of assessment communication between student and instructor, through which interpretations are shared, confusions and expectations are clarified. Hill et al (2021b) argues that the process requires the educator to have an awareness of the socio-affective context of feedback. The educator should think about the impact of this on the learner, which requires educators to consider their power, position, and experience.

In a study using relational feed-forward, Hill et al (2021b) found the approach helpful for clarifying the tone of feedback, and the students reported feeling closer to the lecturer. The approach helped with self-regulated learning and preparation for future assessments. Relational feedforward helped students manage their emotions about the feedback, thus reducing the impact of the “emotional backwash” which can interfere with feedback processing (Pitt & Norton 2017). Hill et al (2021b) acknowledge the resource intensiveness of the intervention, suggesting dialogic feedforward be used in the initial part of a course so as to set up effective use of other methods of feedback thereafter. Walker-Gleaves (2019) describe the importance of relational pedagogy, whereby relationships between academics and students form the basis of learning, and effective learning is promoted where there are respectful and trusting relationships. This approach mirrors similar recommendations by Evans (2013) who advised feedback should be viewed as an interpersonal process where students are provided with an early induction to their role within the feedback activity. This in turn reflects initial scene setting to promote student feedback literacy (Carless & Boud 2018) and the facilitative mechanism of relatedness (Ajjawi et al 2022).

6.4.2.ii Intellectual candour

As part of the induction process, some argue that lecturers should share their experiences of feedback, so as to normalise some of the emotional and cognitive challenges of feedback, a practice referred to as intellectual streaking or intellectual candour (Bearman & Molloy 2017; Gravette et al 2020; Molloy & Bearman 2019). The practice of intellectual streaking (Bearman & Molloy 2017 p1284) is “the nimble exposure of a teacher’s thought processes, dilemmas or failures as a way of modelling both reflection-in action and resilience”. The practice aims to show that working with constraints and uncertainties are a normal part of expert academic practice. Hopefully this has a reassuring influence for students who imagine that difficulties are an indication that they are not capable or able, and thus reduces the likelihood of shame reactions.

Whilst these strategies are not directly focused on respectful communication, the approaches show some potential as a means of developing student academic relationships that are based on care, trust, transparency, and awareness of the student. In doing so they provide power sharing conditions that are more likely to lead to helping relationships in the authentic mode of leaping-ahead, and support students to fulfil their potential.

6.4.3 Sub theme 3 Person centredness of feedback and feedback systems

This theme concerns the student’s perception of feedback as being person-centred. It relates to the synergy between assessment feedback and the student’s individual needs and preferences which went beyond being a student. The individual needs were diverse in terms of their scope, with some focused on the preference for individualised verbal feedback (Amy), some being focused on their visibility in the feedback process (Amy, Helen) and some on their visibility and support across the learning journey in the programme (Helen). Interestingly, Jo discussed aspects of the feedback process in terms of how they aligned with being a mature student who had competing identities and demands on her time.

6.4.3.i Multiple identities

For Jo, the ease at which assessment feedback processes fitted into her life was an important issue. Jo described having multiple identities. In addition to being a student she was a parent and had obligations to fulfil that meant she found herself juggling university, university work, childcare, and arranging childcare. This meant when formative assessment guidance sessions were offered that required additional time (e.g. submission of drafts, one to one appointments on top of scheduled time) she didn't avail herself of the opportunities. For Jo, the integration of formative assessment feedback into the class schedule meant she accessed the support in that the attendance requirements of the course meant she attended the sessions, and it did not feel like she was prioritising herself over her family.

Jo's experience mirrors the findings of Shanahan (2000) who argued that the multiple identities occupied by mature students mean they make compromises with their education and home life. In this study, students acknowledged that there wasn't enough time to accomplish everything to a high standard, so they made choices about where to focus their efforts and recalibrated their goals and expectations of themselves accordingly. Moreover, Gregsen and Nielson (2023) found in their study of mature students, that student parents described being limited in how they could navigate their time and prioritise what they engage with on the HE journey. Caring responsibilities and associated obligations were the main influence on how students allocated time. Thus, for feedback practices to be inclusive for students who have outside responsibilities, they should be incorporated within scheduled teaching time, at least in part.

6.4.3. ii Obstacles and access to electronic feedback

The influence of time and access was also relevant for Jo's experience of summative feedback. The electronic system used by the university meant that the grade was accessible on a smart phone, and she could see this wherever she was, providing she had a phone with

her. This at times represented an intrusion, especially if out, in company, and the grade was not what she'd hoped for. In contrast, the narrative feedback was only accessible when she logged on to the electronic learning platform and purposefully opened her marked assessment. Feedback summary comments were then available, but annotated feedback was only available by clicking on the section of the essay where an icon indicated the marker had included annotations. These extra stages reduced the likelihood of engaging with the feedback, with Jo tending to engage with written feedback where she felt she needed to, such as where the grade was poor.

The additional barrier to get through is less than ideal, given the documented poor uptake of feedback when it is associated with a grade (Winstone & Boud 2022). Mensink and King (2020) analysed the extent to which students accessed their feedback. Where the grade was accessible without the feedback comments, 42 percent of students did not open the feedback section. When the grade was included within the feedback information, 17 percent of students did not open the folder. Though even in this case, it's not clear that the students read the feedback, let alone engaged with it to inform their development. Most students in this study, read and valued their feedback, though it could be argued these students are motivated to engage with feedback by virtue of them volunteering to take part in a study on feedback. Other feedback studies indicate Jo's behaviour is more representative (Winstone and Boud 2022; Mensink & King 2020) and the additional obstacles may further reduce the likelihood of engagement.

6.4.3.iii Standardisation and personalisation

For Amy, she very much wanted to engage with her feedback, but the style and language of feedback she received was inaccessible, and the feedback and assessment process was a source of anxiety. Amy described her experience of assessment feedback as one where she felt lost, and needed a guide to orientate her to the territory. Specifically, she expressed a

preference for individual dialogic feedback, whereby the marker could sit with her and go through the feedback with her. Amy's reference to having to go through the assignment in a "big group" and "all together", conveyed her sense that everyone was treated the same way, with insufficient consideration of individual needs. As discussed, Cravette and Winstone (2022) argue that students can feel a sense of alienation when they are treated as a homogenous group, which can have detrimental consequences for learning. This is especially important for students who tend to achieve lower grades on their assessments. Pitt et al (2020) found the introduction of standardised good feedback practice tended to benefit higher achievers most, but had the opposite effect for lower graded students who were already feeling lost. The change only served to further their bewilderment. The Mathew effect of introducing initiatives that help the already capable become even more capable, is a phenomenon discussed in school education (Winstone 2019) and perhaps requires further consideration in the HE sector. Pitt et al (2020) advised that students with lower grades tended to prefer verbal feedback. They benefitted from strong relationships with educators and their peer group. Furthermore, they required support to develop a growth mindset and feedback literacy. Interestingly, audio and video feedback methods were deemed most successful for students in the lower grading brackets (Cavaleri et al 2019).

Personalised, individual feedback is deemed a key feature of effective feedback, and was a recommendation made in many feedback studies (e.g. Carey et al 2017, Douglas et al 2016; Hill et al 2021; Patterson et al 2020; Pitt & Quinlan 2022; Sieminski et al 2016). Patterson et al (2020) advocated the use of multiple multi-modal feedback opportunities that should include some face to face, and audio/ video recorded feedback. Evans (2013) emphasised the importance of lecturers knowing the students, so feedback can be provided in a way that is appropriate for their learning needs. Additionally, Evans argued that students need to know their lecturers, where both parties work together and have a clear idea of their shared responsibilities within the feedback process. Barnacle and Dall'Alba (2019) agree, stating

that academic staff and students need to know each other, otherwise educational feedback is in a deficient mode of leaping-in, doing for and creating dependence.

6.4.3.iv Anonymous feedback

Whilst the case for individualised personal feedback is robust, there are numerous logistical and policy constraints that need to be considered. Assessment feedback practice most commonly follows summative assessment submission (Pitt & Quinlan 2022) and summative assessments tend to be marked anonymously. Anonymous marking has been commonplace since 2008 when the National Union of Students (NUS) ran a successful campaign lobbying for its introduction. The campaign entitled “Mark my work not my name” (NUS 2008) rested on concerns regarding potential gender and ethnicity bias in marking (Bradley 1993). The NUS argued that the introduction of anonymous marking would reduce the fear and likelihood of discriminatory marking practices, and would protect academics from accusations of prejudice.

Two participants in this study highlighted anonymous marking as an obstacle to their learning from feedback (Amy and Helen) in that the feedback wasn’t sufficiently personalised and limited the opportunity to comment on progress since the previous assessment. By contrast, Lisa preferred anonymous feedback in that she knew the result was entirely based on the work, and thus it felt more validating.

The practice of anonymous marking has been criticised on the basis that it promotes one way transmission approaches to feedback, limiting the potential engagement and recognition of progress that non-anonymised personalised feedback affords (Carless 2013; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Pitt & Winstone 2018; Winstone & Boud 2022). Moreover, the attainment gap has endured since the introduction of anonymous marking, with some longitudinal research highlighting anonymous marking has made minimal difference (Hinton & Higinson 2017). Further research by Pitt and Winston (2018) explored the performance

differences and perception of marking fairness, and helpfulness. In a student sample comprising of men (n=98) and women (n=97), Black (n=62) Asian (n=31) and White (n=102), they found no differences in performance data when comparing the students who had anonymously and non-anonymously marked assessments. They found a grade gap reflective of the concerning national picture whereby white students are awarded higher grades. Additionally, they found female students perceived anonymous marking as fairer than non-anonymised. However, all students viewed non-anonymised marking as having greater potential for learning, and reported stronger relationships with lecturers where marking was not anonymous. Pitt and Norton argue that the awarding gap appears to be a complex systemic issue that requires more than the removal of names. Furthermore, in deciding whether to anonymise marking, academics should consider the potential advantage of bias removal alongside the potential disadvantage of less personalised feedback.

6.3.4.v Conflation of grade and feedback

One potential way forward could be the separation of assessment grading and feedback, so grading can remain anonymous, but then un-anonymise the work so as to provide personalised feedback. Winstone and Boud (2020) argue that whilst assessment grading and feedback coexist, their purposes are quite different. Assessment grading is the evaluation of performance and certification against standards and criteria, whereas the aim of feedback is to influence future work (Winstone & Boud 2020). Furthermore, the conflation of the two has resulted in feedback being secondary to the grade. Jonsson (2013) argues that feedback delivered along with assessment grading means it comes too late to be of use to the student. The attachment to assessment means that it often follows assessment templates and thus includes assessment jargon more aligned with a defensible position than something of use for student learning (Gravette et al 2020b; Jonsson 2013; Winstone & Boud 2020).

Winstone and Boud (2020) argue that assessment tends to take priority in curriculum design, whereby the learning outcomes and assessment methods are submitted well in advance of course commencement. Esterhazey and Damsa (2019) have argued for curriculum design to include clear feedback opportunities throughout a course, recommending multiple low stakes feedback opportunities, especially at the beginning of a course. Multiple opportunities for feedback with repeated interactions of different types were also recommended in research into feedback efficacy (Hill et al 2021; McKay 2019; Milne et al 2020; O'Malley et al 2021; Uribe & Vaughn 2017). Furthermore, numerous researchers cite the importance of a clear induction on the purpose and practice of feedback (Boud & Dawson 2023; Carey et al 2017; Douglas et al 2016; Evans 2013; Henderson et al 2019; Patterson et al 2020; Molloy et al 2020; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006).

Engagement with feedback is reduced when it is provided in conjunction with an assessment grade (Mensink & King 2020; Winstone et al 2021), especially when the grade is lower than hoped (Rand 2017). As such, even well written helpful feedback may not be accessed when it is delivered in conjunction with a summative assessment grade. In answer to the problems associated with the conflation of assessment and feedback, Winstone and Boud (2020) present some alternate strategies. Firstly, the use of adaptive release, where the comments are delivered prior to the receipt of a grade. Secondly, the use of interactive cover sheets whereby the student makes specific requests for feedback on areas they want to improve or are unsure of. Orientation to the use of interactive feedback requests is advised, this guards against students requesting feedback on "everything" and enabling best use of the request for feedback. Thirdly, they suggest designing programmes that include assessed activity where students demonstrate how they have incorporated previous feedback into their work.

Winstone and Boud (2020) advise that staffing resource be reallocated to provide feedback earlier in the academic year. They argue that whilst it is appropriate for grading to be at the end of the module or academic year, feedback should be earlier in the cycle and feed into the final task. Finally, they recommend separating grading from feedback, whereby grading

is anonymous, but feedback is personalised. The practicalities of this need to be considered, and courses such as nursing with large numbers of students require a strategic approach to resource allocation to facilitate this practice. One such approach could be to separate large cohorts of students into smaller groups, each with a team of academics assigned to them. The aim being that the size of groups facilitates students and staff knowing each other and feel a sense of belonging to the group. In such a system, person-centred approaches to feedback (and education) are more achievable.

6.4.3.vi Accountability and quality assurance

Feedback provides students with information that hopefully is of value to them in their development, but feedback is also used for quality assurance processes, such as moderation and external examining. Furthermore, it is used as part of a universities internal institutional auditing, and contributes to external ratings which inform league table position. The multiple functions of feedback have presented some unintended consequences that impact on the provision of feedback. Winstone and Carless (2021) explored academics views about the feedback they provide and found many experienced professional dissonances. Academics reported they were aware of the feedback they wanted to provide for student learning, but felt compelled to provide feedback that supported student satisfaction ratings and quality assurance requirements. Furthermore, academics described defensive practices in the provision of feedback that protected them against potential complaints. Some of the consequences of this included monologic feedback that included technical assessment language, writing a large amount of feedback so as to demonstrate value for money, and the reluctance to engage in more relational approaches to feedback.

Increasing academic discourse refers to a marketized, neoliberal education sector putting institutions and academics under increasing pressure to improve feedback practice (Gravette 2020; Raaper 2016). Though, Winstone and Boud's (2021) findings suggest it is

questionable as to whether this results in improved feedback practice or improving the measurement on external metrics, which may in fact be detrimental for student learning. Brady and Bates (2016) refer to the standards paradox, whereby the hopes for practices to be enhanced are limited by an over emphasis on accountability. They discussed the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) priorities of enhancement and accountability, and argue that an over emphasis on accountability has been at the expense of educational innovation and enhancement. This situation may be exacerbated by QAA relinquishing their role in April 2023 and handing to the government's Office for Students (OFS).

The OFS conditions for registration (OFS section B4) emphasise that universities are accountable and responsible for providing a high-quality learning experience that protects the interests of students. It states that students are to be assessed effectively and supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education. There is a strong emphasis on accountability, consumer rights and value for money. Whilst accountability and high standards are laudable, it could influence practice towards standardisation which may not be conducive to relational person-centred educational practice (Gravette & Winstone 2022).

An additional challenge to enhancing feedback practice is the measurement of feedback as it stands in the NSS. Within the survey, questions on assessment and feedback are grouped together. The feedback questions on the 2023 iteration of the NSS ask:

How often have you received assessment feedback on time?

How often does your feedback help you improve your work?

These questions align with transmission models of feedback which do not reflect contemporary relational conceptions of feedback (Winstone et al 2021c). Moreover, the emphasis on student satisfaction, the alignment with university league tables, and commercial consequences, has resulted in feedback practices that aim to "game the metrics and increase scores" (Winstone & Carless 2021 p268). Clearly there are a wide number of actors involved in the provision of feedback. Many will never be known to the academic or

the student, but all have an influence on design, culture, and practice. This presents a challenge for feedback practice that should be based on enhancing student learning.

Quality assurance, league tables and legislation all have an influence on the relationships between educators and students. The external policy and legislative environment designed and enforced by distant, often unknown authority figures are representative of the Heideggerian concept of Das-man (Heidegger 1927/1962). The description of providing feedback solely to fulfil quality assurance requirements and accountability reflects the conformity to Das-man and the fallenness of the academic. Whilst Heidegger acknowledges conformity and fallenness as the usual state of Dasein, in this case there is a potential ripple effect whereby the feedback provided for students falls short of what they need to fulfil their potential. This positions the student lecturer relationship in a deficient mode, which reduces the likelihood of leaping-ahead relationships and person-centred feedback practice. Barnacle and Dall'Alba (2019) invite academics to question the extent to which their educational endeavours are helping students develop their capacity for care and fulfil their potential for being? Or whether they encourage falling into line according to the expectations of *the they* (Das-man) and play the game. The influence of government policy and market forces was not something I'd anticipated when first embarking on an exploration of students experience of feedback. The design and data captured in this study did not facilitate an exploration of the influence of quality assurance and accountability on the enactment of feedback practice. Though this appears to be an important area for future research.

6.5. Reflexivity – my place in the discussion

Once the themes and subthemes had emerged, I considered the findings in context and engaged in a dialogue with the related existing research (Smith & Nizza 2022). This practice was helpful in eliciting the research that shed light on findings and helped clarify new and illuminating findings from this study. Research relevant to the themes that emerged from

this study covered a broad range of disciplines including educational psychology, clinical psychology, pedagogy, educational policy and philosophy. What at first sight had appeared to be a close focus on experience and relationship, branched out significantly. Thus, it was important to maintain some conceptual and relational clarity between the themes and associated theory and research. To that end, I developed a summary table which included the themes, sub themes, associated concepts, recommendations, and related literature. This served as a helpful reference point, summarising the literature and connection to the themes and sub themes. The table is included as **appendix P**.

6.5.1 Self as educator and clinician

As an educator and clinician, I'm aware of the synergy between the two aspects of my professional life. Within this research, the overlapping principles of professional practice have come to the fore. Initially as part of my reasons for undertaking the research, then, as part of the process of interviewing and analysis, and during this phase of contextualising the research findings within existing research. The literature presented in this discussion highlights the importance of the partnership between academics and students, of students feeling as though they are known, and that their feedback is personalised. Students do not arrive on a course as a tabula rasa. They bring their experiences, personality capabilities and hopes with them.

In my clinical role, these aspects are very much the basis from which one would assess, engage, formulate, establish goals, and plan therapeutic activity. Whereas there are clear evidence-based interventions and strategies, therapeutic practice is based on an idiosyncratic formulation which incorporates a strong sense of the individual. By way of example, there are clear protocols for the assessment and treatment of panic disorder, however an individual's presentation of panic, the nature of physical symptoms and the cognitive and behavioural patterns that maintain the problem can vary enormously.

Moreover, the preferred approach and style of therapeutic interaction can vary enormously from person to person.

Effective practice occurs when the evidence, the individual, and the relationship are all part of the therapeutic work. Moreover, a principal goal is for the person seeking cognitive behavioural therapy to reach the point where they develop the insights, abilities, and confidence to become their own therapist. The vehicle through which change takes place is the relationship. A sense of feeling understood and having confidence in the therapist are important aspects that can help people take on challenges and bring about change. Especially during times where levels of hope and confidence are low.

In reviewing the contextual research, I was struck by how the above elements translate to findings in feedback research. The importance of understanding a student's learning in relation to models of learning and feedback, the impact of prior experience, the importance of relational aspects, and the significance of students feeling as though the feedback is personalised and that they matter. All with the aim of supporting students to fulfil their aspirations and potential.

Technical therapeutic knowledge and practice are not required for education, however there are some shared principles and practices that could positively influence feedback practice. Firstly, caring about the subject and caring about students' education appear to be a fundamental principle (Barnacle & Dall'Alba 2019). Secondly, having a good sense of the student's educational needs, and helping students to develop insights into their patterns of study, learning about new strategies and what works best for them (Carless & Boud 2018; Molloy et al 2020; Hill et al 2021b; Pitt et al 2020). Thirdly, helping students to identify clear goals and instilling confidence that they will have instruction, guidance, and an opportunity to develop their skills (Boud & Dawson 2023; Esterhazy & Damsa 2019; Winstone & Carless 2020). And finally, creating the environment where students have faith that they can become what they are not yet (Barnacle & Dall'Alba 2019; Goddard et al 2019).

6.5.2 Self as a manager and leader

The results of this research and the wider literature all speak to a practice which requires knowledge of the student and strong relationships between academics and students. As a manager of education provision and a leader of academic teams, I am mindful of the resourcing and efficiencies that are essential for the sustainable delivery of educational programmes. Strategic planning that is underpinned by the principles of enhancing academic student relationships and knowledge of student needs is likely to be a worthwhile endeavour. The development of relationships and knowledge of students requires effective electronic communication and administrative systems where students don't get lost in the crowd. This research has furthered my conviction that all programmes should include an initial period of study geared towards transition to higher education learning, along with the provision of associated resources. To maintain a sense of connection and ongoing development students should have a personal tutor throughout their programme who has oversight of their learning and development. Where the size of a course is prohibitive to students and academics knowing each other, a cohort could be divided with corresponding teams of academics so relationships can form, and the range of expertise maintained. Scaffolded learning should incorporate scaffolded study skills development. This should be supportive of the student's development of feedback literacy, and should be during class time, at least initially. Interestingly, some of these principles are absolute requirements for apprenticeship programmes, where self-assessment, individual learning plans and regular reviews are a condition of apprenticeship provision.

This research and the associated literature have led me to question the value of the large resource allocated to summative feedback. Whilst the written feedback may include feedforward information, the current practice does not reflect an effective helping relationship. The practice of feedback may be better placed earlier in the programme providing formative feedback towards eventual summative pieces of work. However, the research has reinforced my belief in the value of developmental feedback, and this is difficult

to do where marking is anonymous. In a sense, the use of developmental feedback at the point of summative assessment is the wrong tool for the job. The feedback should be part of the development of students work followed by a summative assessment of their application of the development activity. This is not to be confused with students submitting drafts for marking, which is a practice that does not promote the self-regulated learning and self-evaluative judgement aspects of feedback literacy (Carless & Boud 2018; Macintosh-Franklin 2021; Molloy et al 2020). Such practices in the absence of criteria based self-assessment, are more likely to promote leaping-in helping relationships, where students are told what to do, and match their assessment to what they think is wanted, rather than develop self-evaluative judgements and fulfil their potential.

The problem with leaping-in is that it is a relationship of dominance that fosters dependency. In considering this I've thought more about power structures in education and how students and academics can not only scaffold learning but scaffold relationships, so students become increasingly independent by the end of the course.

The shift away from leaping-in relationships to one of learner centred practice would most likely require a cultural shift in education practices. As such a clear rationale, a practice development strategy, and evaluation would be required (Hodges 2016). A sense of trust and the marrying of student and staff satisfaction are likely to be the key to any successful endeavour. Therefore, both the academic and student voice would need to be strong features in design and implementation. I was interested to see the work of researchers who have been exploring feedback as socio-material practice (Gravette 2019) and the significance of students' sense of belonging and mattering (Blake et al 2022; Gravette & Winstone 2019). Individual, relational, systemic, and resourcing considerations are all critical to ensuring students and academics know each other, and that students are supported to achieve their goals and fulfil their potential.

6.5.3 Self as a student

The process of researching the experience of feedback whilst also being a student seeking feedback has been an interesting meta-process. As a student, I am nervous each time I sit to write, and I feel a sense of nervousness each time I submit work for review. My most common doubt has been “am I writing at level eight?” As my supervisors will attest, the earlier supervision session following the submission of a draft often involved reassurance seeking, checking whether I was working with the material at the right level. I have also availed myself of opportunities to attend development sessions on writing for research, and have engaged with a plethora of associated written and course material (Silvia 2018; Sword 2012). Essentially, I learnt the valuable lesson that writing is rewriting, to feel the fear and write anyway (Jeffers 2007), and to develop a strategy for sustained writing during busy periods of work. The process has made me consider parallels with students in this study and beyond.

Just like the students in this study, my anxious mood of attunement reveals my thrownness into my situatedness, and as such I’ve reflected on the aspects of my existence that contribute to the sense of nervousness I’ve felt. In considering my own educational baggage, there are a number of key aspects. Like some of the students in this study, I’ve carried the legacy of school experience. Of particular interest to me was the emergence of memories from primary school that came to the fore whilst undertaking this research. I recall getting spellings wrong in a test and being asked to stand on my chair for the remainder of the lesson as punishment. I recall the feeling of embarrassment at the time, it was like having to wear the proverbial “dunce cap”. From that point on, I certainly developed a sense of myself as someone who wasn’t good at spelling and writing. There is also some reality to this, in that it’s not merely a sense that I wasn’t good, I struggled with it. During my school years, I often had to check and re check work, and would be nervous about sharing my writing for fear of judgment.

During my high school education, I remember making a conscious decision that I wanted to do well, and decided that the best way to do that would be to apply myself to my studies and revise. I wrote plans for revision and put stickers on potential distractions in my room, reminding myself I was not to partake until I'd done the required studying for that day. The practice of studying worked. I understood my subjects better and I left compulsory education with examination results that exceeded what I (and others) would have anticipated for me in the preceding years. Importantly I learnt two valuable rules. Firstly, I learnt that I could succeed if I applied myself, and secondly, that I had the self-discipline to do so. The consequence being, that when I found something tricky, I could sit with it and work until I understood it.

Going through the research process I've connected the dots between my fear of negative evaluation every time I submit a piece of work to the early experience of embarrassment. In addition, I've realised that my perseverance is reflective of a growth mindset (Dweck 2000) and self-regulated learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006). Whilst there may be some elements of maladaptive self-protection, it is also likely to be an adaptive rule that helps me learn, helps me help others learn, and have the confidence that they can. Learning how I learn has been one of the most important things I've done, and I am sure it is pivotal in my drive towards a career in education.

Hence my educational baggage is one influenced by early negative educational experience, coupled with an ability to self-regulate, belief in the possibility of development, and clear goals. An understanding of these elements has been helpful in navigating my learning journey, along with a supervisory relationship that reflects a leaping ahead student-centred style that encourages me to reach beyond where I am.

6.6 Conclusion

This discussion presented the findings of the research within the knowledge context. Following a summary of the methodological, epistemological, and ontological position, each of the themes and sub themes were presented and considered in relation to philosophical constructs, psychological and educational theory, and contemporary research. This resulted in the intellectual construction of concepts and explanations that underpin the claims of the thesis. The discussion incorporated a reflexive component, discussing my professional, managerial and student roles, so as to position myself within the work, and foreground interpretive influence. The next chapter presents the conclusion to the thesis along with recommendations for practice and a consideration of the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present a summary of the research process, the main findings and consider the potential implications for feedback practice. I proposed two principles of feedback practice and outline 10 recommendations. I will set out the original contribution to knowledge made in this thesis. Finally, I will present the limitations of the research and my recommendations for further research.

7.2 Knowledge gap

The initial rationale for this research was to explore my observation that student's response to feedback did not appear to correspond with the quality or intentions of feedback. A review of the literature in **chapter 2** revealed that students had different conceptions of feedback, use and recognition of feedback varied, as did students' satisfaction with the feedback they received. Existing research highlighted that feedback had an emotional impact, and students expressed a preference for personalised feedback. Research exploring the influence of context on students' experience of feedback was limited, as was the influence of the individual on the sense they made of the feedback experience. Hence the identified gap in the literature concerned *how* student nurses make sense of the feedback experience.

7.3 Research question and methodology

The research question was identified as "How do student nurses who have received written feedback on their written work, make sense of their experience of receiving feedback?" As discussed in **chapter 4,** interpretative phenomenological analysis was chosen as the research method because it facilitated an exploration of each participants interpretation of

experience, and an exploration of cross cutting themes between the participants. The research is both constructivist and critical realist, underpinned by hermeneutic phenomenological and critical realist ontology. Thus, this research considered the synergy of ontological assumptions of HP and CR. These being that that there is a *world*; that *being* is influenced by culture and history, and that the influence on *being* may be hidden but can be disclosed. Furthermore, that knowledge is both dependent on building models of understanding that account for the phenomena, and through personal experience and perceptions. As discussed in **chapters 4 and 5,** each participant interview was analysed in turn to identify personal experiential themes, and once complete, cross case analysis identified group experiential themes. This process included reflexive practice to foreground and make transparent any potential influence on interpretation. The Heideggerian concepts of Dasein being in-the-world, being-with others, and ready-to-hand equipment served to illuminate participant themes, and provide a framework for understanding students experiences of feedback.

7.4 Summary of findings

In interpreting their accounts, we flowed through a double hermeneutic whereby participants made sense of the experience of receiving feedback, and I made sense of their sense making. Their accounts revealed the ontological significance of feedback whereby their sense of being (ontology) a student on an undergraduate mental health nursing course, preceded their knowing (epistemology) of the purpose and potential of feedback, and how it could help them fulfil their potential. Through the process of analysis two themes were revealed **EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE** and the **MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS.** Five sub themes emerged from the overarching theme of educational baggage, these were: **An unfamiliar tool; Academic confidence influencing the mood of anticipation; Seeking external recognition; The legacy of negative school experience;**

Feedback triggering emotional regulation strategies. Three sub themes emerged from the mediating influence of relationships. These were: **Empathy for the marker; Respectful communication; Person centredness of feedback and feedback systems.**

Each student entered the course with their own **educational baggage**, which represented the referential totality of their existence in relation to education. Their experience of feedback, their conception of its purpose and familiarity with its use revealed that feedback was **an unfamiliar tool**. Within these seven students, they were all interested in their feedback, but had different conceptions of what feedback should include and how they could use it. This influenced their interpretation of what they received.

The student's **confidence influenced the mood of anticipation** (attunement) when waiting for feedback on their summative assessments. This was temporal, in that the past present and future were entangled in the experience of feedback. Their anxiety tended to be connected to a desire to do well, with some insecurity as to whether they would achieve their goal. This was often attributed to beliefs about themselves based on previous academic performance in the school system, even in the face of recent success. In some cases, the anxiety was carried through from a recent disappointing result which they feared would be repeated. The beliefs about whether feedback would help them develop or expose weaknesses influenced the anticipatory period and the mood of anticipation.

Most students were **seeking external recognition and status** via the feedback process. In some cases, this was focused on a grade, and the perceived associated status this afforded them. In some cases, it was recognition of effort, character, or progress. There were variations in the degree to which students' ambitions concerned their learning and development, or whether it was about achieving a high grade. This was influential in one student's interpretation of their feedback, whereby falling short of a performance goal was associated with shame. Some student's accounts revealed the **legacy of a negative school experience** which had been internalised and carried with them into their course. The past was experienced as the present, and influenced preparation for assessments and

interpretation of feedback. The students described the powerful and long-lasting impact of these experiences, which were internalised and surfaced during assessment and feedback episodes.

The students described that assessment **feedback triggered emotional self-regulation strategies**, that helped them cope with anxiety. Some students adopted a strategy of perfectionism as a means of managing their anxiety. Where this was fuelled by a desire to do their best and fulfil potential, perfectionism was beneficial. By contrast, where perfectionism was driven by a concern that they would be unsuccessful, this tended to result in procrastination. One student articulated that they procrastinated because they found the assessment difficult and didn't understand the requirements. This resulted in feeling anxious and overwhelmed by what lay ahead. Where students recognised they procrastinated, they were aware it was unhelpful, but the drive to avoid uncomfortable feelings at times was too strong for them to engage with the work. By contrast, one student who felt anxious and insecure about their ability to succeed, reassured and encouraged themselves, using previous feedback as a motivator. Self-reassurance was helpful to one student in providing a buffer for a disappointing result. Whereas for another student, ruminating over a disappointing result interfered with their ability to fully engage with the next assessment. These students discussed the influence of their emotion regulation strategies in managing the emotional aspects of being assessed, all of which had an impact on the sense they made of feedback experiences.

The feedback experience was subject to the **mediating influence of relationships** with academics and other people and systems that exerted an influence on the process. With regard to the feedback provided, where feedback reflected monologic communication without consideration of the students' needs, these reflected a largely deficient mode of helping (leaping in). Whereas, when students felt seen and engaged with, their experience and use of feedback was much improved, and they were able to internalise the information and apply to future work (leaping-ahead). Though not a sub theme of its own, a power

differential was conveyed in all three sub themes within this theme. Some students expressed dissatisfaction with their marking, and in considering their feedback they showed **empathy for the marker** and the large volume of work they imagined they would be working through. This, along with a sense of pragmatism meant they acquiesced and continued without complaint. Some students highlighted the importance of feedback demonstrating **respectful communication**. For some students this meant the effort and care they had put into their written work should be acknowledged in the feedback commentary, and by the care and attention that went into the marking of their work. For some participants, written feedback was the medium for the demonstration of respectful care and concern for them as a student.

Students referred to the **person centredness of feedback and feedback systems**. For some this concerned the ability of feedback to fit into their lives where they had multiple identities and competing demands on their time. In some cases, students spoke of their need to have their preferences and learning needs taken into account. The standardisation and anonymity of feedback practice meant some felt their needs were not addressed. Furthermore, the lack of personal connection with the person providing feedback prohibited using feedback or using it to its full potential. Two students described a synergy between the type of feedback they received and their preferences for feedback. For both students, there was a sense of trust in the process where they engaged with their feedback and it fuelled their agency.

In considering the students accounts of feedback and what the experience meant to them, it is apparent that they did not simply receive and use feedback. The sense they made of the feedback process was filtered through the prism of their existence, and its use was helped or hindered by the nature of the relationship they had with the feedback provider. **Chapter 6** presented research literature to contextualise findings. This provided useful insights into the potential strategies for helping students understand and manage their educational baggage. Furthermore, the literature provided insights into numerous strategies that could facilitate

helpful leaping-ahead type relationships, that maximise the chances of students fulfilling their potential.

7.5 Original contribution to knowledge

The answer to the research question identified through this study, was that students sense making was influenced by their educational baggage and subject to the mediating influence of relationships.

7.5.1 Ontological significance of feedback

In this thesis I claim that the participants made sense of their feedback through the lens of its ontological significance. This significance was different from student to student, but the principle of ontological significance was shared by all. The mood of attunement illuminates the ontological significance, bringing forth the student's history, confidence and facticity into the assessment situation, which influence their expectations and goals. Thus, the student's interpretation of feedback was influenced by these temporal aspects which occur in the moment students consider their feedback. The identification of personal ontological significance as a feature of feedback engagement adds to existing literature on the feedback landscape (Evans 2013); Feedback literacy (Carless & Boud 2018; Molloy et al 2020) and views the issues influencing the interpretation of feedback from the student's perspective. This provides a basis for further research.

7.5.2 Conceptual clarity

Two experiential themes were identified in this research, the first theme of **educational baggage** provides an accessible conceptual label capturing the ontological significance of feedback for the student and the subsequent impact for their learning. This concept may

serve as a useful reference point for further research exploring the utility of knowing one's educational baggage as a means of enhancing feedback literacy. The second theme, the **mediating influence of relationships** aligns with other research highlighting the role of relationships in the feedback process. This thesis extends knowledge by proposing that relational leaping-ahead student-centred feedback could be a means of supporting students to fulfil their potential. These two principles of understanding one's educational baggage, and deploying relational student-centred feedback, may be helpful in promoting feedback literacy.

7.5.3 Methodological approach

The use of IPA to explore and analyse the sense students make of the feedback experience represents an original contribution to the field. Moreover, the methodological approach to IPA which synthesised critical realist and hermeneutic phenomenological ontological perspectives within IPA research methods is a further original contribution to knowledge. The approach taken to methodology and ontology provided a deeper understanding of the variables that that influence feedback engagement, adding a student voice to address the knowledge gap of insufficient consideration of the impacts on a student's sense making in the context of feedback in the world of pre-registration mental health nursing education.

7.6 Implications for feedback practice

As a result of the findings of this research and the associated literature, two principles of feedback practice are proposed, along with 10 practice recommendations. These principles and recommendations may be helpful to consider as part of an education strategy aimed at enhancing learner agency, partnership, and effective feedback practice. I present them as potential approaches to address the themes that emerged from students in this research. A

summary table which includes the themes, sub themes, practice recommendations and associated research can be found in **appendix Q**

Principle 1: The early phase of a course should incorporate practices that facilitate student awareness of their educational baggage, and the intersection with assessment feedback and engagement with learning.

Principle 2: Feedback practices should incorporate relational considerations that adapt to students needs and promote learner agency.

Recommendation 1: Student self-assessment of their educational baggage, and the creation of a personal development action plan

During the initial part of a course, students could be supported to explore a timeline of assessment feedback experience as a means of identifying their educational baggage (e.g. previous experience, expectations, helpful strategies). Students subsequently develop associated action plans to address vulnerable areas and build on strengths. These could be aligned with feedback literacy models (appreciating feedback, making judgements, managing affect, taking action) (Carless & Boud 2018). Exemplars of educational baggage and action plans could facilitate this process, perhaps using intellectual candour (Bearman & Molloy 2017; Gravette et al 2020; Molloy & Bearman 2018) to normalise the experience and promote a growth mindset. This activity could be run in conjunction with sessions outlined in recommendations 3 and 4. In principle, these plans and timelines are kept by the student, and may serve as a helpful focus of discussion in personal tutor conversations. Subsequent personal tutor-student sessions could revisit the student's action plans and progress with feedback literacy. Ideally this approach is scaffolded with an aim of self-regulated learning

and self-evaluative judgement by the end of the course (Ajjawi et al 2022; Boud et al 2018; Esterhazy & Damsa 2019).

Recommendation 2: The course induction period should include an orientation to the purpose and function of feedback as an important tool for student learning and development.

Findings from this research highlighted that students were not familiar with the ways in which feedback could be used as a tool for their learning and development. Moreover, there were different expectations and interpretations of the purpose and practice of feedback between the participants. Multiple studies referred to course induction as being the best part of the course as being the best place to set the tone for students' feedback expectations (Molloy et al 2020; Patterson et al 2020; Pitt and Quinlan 2022). Orientation to the purpose and practice of feedback as part of a transition to higher education programme was noted and recommended in multiple studies (Ajjawi et al 2022; Molloy et al 2020; Patterson et al 2020; Pitt et al 2020; Pitt & Quinlan 2022; Winstone et al 2017; Winstone et al 2022). This practice helps expose and orientate students to the tool of feedback, and consider how they can best use it for academic development. Resources such as the Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT) (Winstone & Nash 2016), provide clear exposition on the varying aspects of feedback. The DEFT provides students with information on feedback purpose, along with tips and strategies for decoding technical language, managing the emotional components of feedback, and using feedback to improve future work.

Recommendation 3: Introduce the concept of growth mindset at the start of a course.

Within this study, students who demonstrated a growth mindset were better able to engage with, and utilise feedback for their development. As part of the orientation to education in HE, courses could incorporate learning activities that introduce the concept of growth mindset,

along with its value in academic development, employability, and leadership (Dweck 2000). Following on from this, students could be encouraged to set personal learning goals and evaluate progress at regular intervals throughout the academic year.

Recommendation 4: Practical sessions on self-regulation, including advice for dealing with academic procrastination, perfectionism and using self-reassurance/ self-compassion techniques

Within this study, most students experienced anxiety about their assessments, and some experienced shame and embarrassment. The student's emotion self-regulation strategies were influential in learning from feedback. Those with more adaptive self-reassurance/ self-compassion and self-coaching approaches fared much better than those that engaged in self-criticism, procrastination and rumination. Introductory sessions aimed at raising awareness of the triggers and impact of academic procrastination and perfectionism, along with guidance on strategies for managing and coping, may be beneficial during the early phase of a course (Lee et al 2014; Lipnevich et al 2016; Madigan 2019; Molloy et al 2020; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Nolen-Hoeksema et al 2008; Perkrun 2006; Schraw et al 2007; Steel & Klingseik 2019; Watkins & Roberts 2020). An introduction to self-reassurance, self-compassion or other similar approaches may promote helpful study practices, and develop students' emotional self-regulation skills (Egan et al 2022; Gilbert 2017 Neff 2003; Neff et al 2005; Smeets et al 2014). Students sharing the strategies they find helpful, could serve as a means of developing insights, promoting peer relationships and belonging (Blake et al 2022). Furthermore, academics use of intellectual candour could normalise the challenges that trigger procrastination and perfectionism, along with providing insights into how they manage them. Practical sessions aimed at awareness and skill development would ideally be supplemented with online resources to support students to apply the skills independently. This should include signposting to further support where required.

Recommendation 5: Frequent low-stakes feedback opportunities with an emphasis on relational feedforward in the first year of study

Low risk practice with feedback would have been helpful for the students in this study, it would have benefitted those that were unfamiliar with feedback practice or were less confident with their ability. Moreover, it would have provided development opportunities for the more able students. In-class participation in feedback practice (e.g. exemplars, self-assessment against criteria, verbal feedback practice) as an assessment for learning strategy are likely to be beneficial. These, coupled with a curriculum design that provides opportunities to enact feedback so it influences the final summative grade, are likely to enhance engagement and productive use of feedback (Boud & Winstone 2022; Hill et al 2021a; McKay 2019; Milne et al 2020; O'Malley et al 2021; Patterson et al 2020; Pitt & Winstone 2019; Uribe & Vaughn 2017). Dialogic relational feedforward practice (Hill et al 2021b) may be helpful in clarifying the tone and intent of feedback. Moreover, it could be helpful in working through misconceptions, supporting students in future learning, and facilitating leaping-ahead type relationships with students. Thus, it aligns with learning how to use feedback tools, working through emotions and building confidence, the approach is likely to help with the relational aspects that were identified by students in this study.

Recommendation 6: Incorporate interactive feedback cover sheets for written summative assessments, explore student views on anonymised marking and un-anonymised feedback.

The students had varying preferences for feedback, and their needs were different, but they all received feedback that followed standardised templates and formats. The use of interactive feedback sheets (Bloxham and Campbell 2010) that are submitted along with assessments and include requests for feedback on specific aspects of the assessment, may have benefited participants in this study. These would have provided students with an

opportunity for some bespoke feedback that matched the aspects they were keen to develop. The approach also has some scope to accommodate the student's educational baggage. Interactive feedback sheets can maintain the personalised approach after year one, when the relational feedforward practice ends. Furthermore, interactive dialogic feedback provides space, whereby students can explore their development over the course of the programme. In this study, some students viewed anonymous marking as an obstacle to developmental feedback, though one participant viewed anonymity as more validating. With these students, the option of requesting un-anonymised marking and feedback was something students would likely have taken up. There may be logistical challenges of providing an option to have anonymised feedback where marking takes place on an electronic platform. However, a second option may be to follow suggestions made by Boud & Winstone (2022) to mark anonymously, but un-anonymise to provide the written feedback. Consulting with students on the potential options with a candid discussion of the risks, benefits and evidence would be helpful to gain insights as to the student voice on the issue (see recommendation 10).

Recommendation 7: Multimodal feedback to include some video/ audio recorded feedback

Students in this study had preferences for different types of feedback, with some preferring verbal feedback on a one to one, and some valuing audio feedback. The dominant mode of assessment feedback was digital written. The inclusion of a variety of feedback modes, increases the chance that students have their preferred form of feedback for part of the course. Additionally multi-modal approaches provide opportunities for modelling how to provide different forms of feedback. The practice of multi-modal feedback, and preferences for feedback, have been recommended in systematic reviews of student views on feedback (Douglas et al 2016; Patterson et al 2020). Feedback using video/ audio methods is most

beneficial for students in the lower grade bandings (Cavaleri et al 2019; Pitt et al 2020) so should be considered as part of the feedback practice on a course.

Recommendation 8: Programme of staff development

Feedback research has proliferated in recent years, and new evidence, along with empirically derived teacher literacy frameworks (Boud & Dawson 2023) and recent Advance HE recommendations (Pitt & Quinlan 2022) provides some scope for development programmes for educators. Students in this study highlighted the variability of feedback practice. With some practices having both a detrimental impact on the perceived value and use of feedback, and the relationship between students and academics. Moreover, educators unknowingly provided feedback that surfaced student's previous negative experiences. Continuing professional development supporting academics to become more feedback literate, and raise awareness of trauma informed educational practice, may enhance quality of feedback. Furthermore, these approaches show potential in facilitating staff student relationships that promote psychological safety and learning (Goddard 2019). As part of this, an exploration of staff feedback culture along with consideration of the facilitators and barriers to providing effective feedback (Mathews et al 2021; Raaper 2018; Winstone & Carless 2021) may help effective implementation of feedback practice, especially where this requires a change from current practice.

Recommendation 9: Implement systemic organisational strategies that help academics know each individual student and the approaches that help them succeed.

The importance of relationships where students and academics know each other, and the potential impact this has on their development, came through strongly in this study. Most participants described how not being known, and their individual needs not being addressed, had a detrimental impact on their development. Several studies highlight the significance of

students and educating academics knowing each other for students learning and development (Barnacle & Dall'Alba 2019; Evans 2013; Gravette & Winstone 2019; Hill et al 2021b). Consequently, on courses that have large cohorts of students (such as nursing) there needs to be a strategy for supporting the development of these relationships. One possible option is the separation of large cohorts into subsets, each of which are attached to teams of appropriately qualified academics. This approach to resourcing is more likely to facilitate relationship forming and familiarity that can support students' sense of connection, support, and social belonging (Blake et al 2022).

Recommendation 10: Include feedback opportunities within curriculum design and include the student voice in planning feedback strategies.

Educational research cites feedback as being essential for learning (Ajjawi et al 2022; Ajjawi & Boud 2017; Butler & Winnie 1994; Esterhazy & Damsa 2019; Evans 2013; Hattie & Timperley 2007, Lipnevich et al 2016; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Winstone et al 2017). In this study, students expressed views about feedback practice and preferences for approach. However, feedback practices are often not considered, or are secondary to assessment within the quality assurance process in curriculum design and development (Boud & Winstone 2022). The student voice is established as an integral part of university review of pedagogy and curriculum considerations, but is less prominent in assessment and feedback design and evaluation (Matthews et al 2021). The inclusion of the student voice in the planning of assessment and feedback strategy offers an opportunity for students to have a say in the decisions and practices that affect them. Additionally, it provides opportunities for students to become more aware of the evidence base behind assessment and feedback strategies.

7.7 Limitations of the study and future research recommendations

This study is contextual and interpretative, and thus the findings are not intended to be generalised. As an IPA study, this research focused on the idiographic and group themes of a small group of mental health nursing students as they made sense of their experience of receiving written feedback on their written work. The research took place in one university in the north of England, the students were all in the second year of the study at a similar stage on the course (second year). The number of students who participated (n=7) is appropriate for IPA research where the emphasis is on gathering rich data from participants who have experienced the phenomena of interest (Smith, et al 2022; Smith & Nizza 2022). Whilst the guidance on the required number of participants is not prescriptive, IPA guidance indicates somewhere between three and twelve participants to be appropriate (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009; 2022). The findings of this study need to be considered in light of the small number of students, and that they came from the same course of study. Thus, they may not reflect a broader population of mental health nursing students. Furthermore, given these students started their programmes pre 2017, their perspectives may differ from post September 2017 cohort students who fund their programme via a student loan system. That said, the research has important implications for practice because it highlights the importance of individual context as an important feature influencing how students make sense of the feedback experience. Furthermore, it provides conceptual clarity in identifying contextual themes that had not previously been identified as influencing the feedback experience. Themes which are broad and flexible in scope, and could be trialled as part of an approach to improving student outcomes via student self-assessment, student centred curriculum design, and resource planning.

It is important to note that the participants were all mature and domestic students. In the UK, school feedback practice has changed in the last decade (Winstone & Winstone 2021), and a such the findings from this study may not translate to domestic students from younger age groups, whose education was influenced by different educational policy and practice. Whilst

the notion of educational baggage may be an interesting idea to consider in light of the international student experience, it is important to note there were no international students in this study and so findings are not directly transferable. Further research is required to explore the lived experience of students under 21 years of age and the international student experience in relation to feedback.

Two of the participants disclosed they had a learning difficulty. In both cases their experience of dyslexia was critical to their experience with feedback. For one participant, this was because they were diagnosed at a time and place where reasonable adjustments were not considered or applied, and this had an influence on all future educational interactions. For another participant they had recently been diagnosed, and were commencing their journey to find out what adjustments they needed and why. They present some interesting and very different perspectives on their experience of feedback in light of their dyslexia. The idea of educational baggage and relational dynamics is interesting to consider in connection to learning difficulties, but again the findings are not generalisable, and further research is needed to explore applications for neurodiverse students.

All students volunteered to participate in the research, hence they were motivated to participate. This may be because they had a particular perspective they wanted to share, or perhaps because they were interested in assessment feedback, or participating in research. There are a multitude of reasons why students may have chosen to participate, all of which can influence the interview and the findings. As such the findings should be considered in light of the potential bias this could introduce. The findings are not intended to be generalisable to the broader student population, but rather as a starting point to consider possible influences on feedback experience.

As the researcher, I interviewed all students and interpreted the interview data. I chose to interview second year students as I'd not been involved in their teaching or assessment work by that point. However, my role as a mental health nursing academic, and the leadership responsibilities I had at the time (Principal lecturer leading the mental health team) could

have influenced the accounts students gave of their experience. Having a leadership role with some responsibility for quality also presented challenges, especially as some accounts included incidents where I would ordinarily take action to resolve. Whilst I took care to foreground this in my analysis and discussed in research supervision, this may have influenced interpretation. Furthermore, my clinical roles in nursing and cognitive behaviour therapy are likely to have had an influence on interpretation. I took some comfort in that the methodology and theoretical positioning of the research was one where I acknowledge experience and incorporate this into the reflexive discussion. However, it is important to be transparent and explicit about my position in the research, so these factors can be considered.

In summary, the research findings should be considered in terms of the small number of participants from a specific course at a specific university. Each participant had their own experiences and circumstances which I aimed to honour in the analysis. Whilst I took care to foreground my influences, I cannot undo my knowledge and experience hence the findings need to be considered in light of the experiential lens I bring to the interpretation. As such the results are a starting point for consideration and further research, and are not intended as a generalisable evidence base for practice.

Further research could explore the experience and impact of applying concepts of educational baggage and relational dynamics as part of a programme of orientation to HE. This could be considered at a cohort level, but the experience of international students and neurodiverse students are important areas for future research.

This research explored the sense making from a student perspective, and there is some suggestion in the literature that drivers for the style and content of feedback are influenced by accountability and quality assurance agendas. As such an exploration of the marker's perspective on feedback, and the influence this has on the feedback experience overall is an important area for further research.

7.8 Next steps

As discussed in **chapter 5** and **6** the findings from this research influenced my practice as a student, as a lecturer, and as a manager and developer of educational provision. Shifting practice to become more learner centred and relational, which considers the ontological significance of feedback for students and how to shape systems and practice to better incorporate these insights. Consequently, I've developed resources to support effective engagement with feedback that emphasise awareness of the purpose, function, and use of feedback for learning along with an assessment of feedback literacy. Developmental sessions incorporate students' consideration of the influence of their educational baggage on learning and engagement, which are accompanied with guidance on potential strategies for coping and enhancing engagement. The sessions have been developed for classroom and online delivery along with an accompanying staff development sessions which has been delivered within the school and the wider university.

The recommendations have been incorporated into plans for the redesign of pre-registration nursing curriculum which incorporates an initial focus on bridging from further education to higher education, the assessment of feedback literacy, strategies for identifying educational baggage and the development of action plans to promote learning which are reviewed with personal tutors. A shift in resource to incorporate relational feedforward in the first year, and student support in tutorial sessions to enhance meta cognitive strategies and emotion regulation as a means of enhancing learning.

Dissemination plans include an accepted abstract at a national health education conference, and presentation at local and regional mental health nursing academic forums, along with a continued programme of staff development at school and university level. The impact of strategies informed by these findings will be evaluated in future research.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the conclusion to the thesis outlining a summary of the main findings and stating the original contribution of this research. Namely, the ontological significance of feedback for students and the conceptual clarity of educational baggage and the mediating influence of relationships. The chapter outlines the potential implications for practice and presents two principles and ten recommendations for practice. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the limitations of the research and recommendations for further study.

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Appendices

Appendix A 12 Pragmatic actions (Evans 2013)

Evans (2013 p79) 12 pragmatic actions

1. Ensuring an appropriate range and choice of assessment opportunities throughout a programme of study.
2. Ensuring guidance about assessment is integrated into all teaching sessions.
3. Ensuring all resources are available to students via virtual learning environments and other sources from the start of the programme to enable students to take responsibility for organising their own learning.
4. Clarifying with students how all elements of assessment fit together and why they are relevant and valuable.
5. Providing explicit guidance to students on the requirements of assessment.
6. Clarifying with students the difference forms and sources of feedback available including e-learning opportunities.
7. Ensuring early opportunities for students to undertake assessment and obtain feedback.
8. Clarifying the role of the student in the feedback process as an active participant and not as purely received of feedback and with sufficient knowledge to engage in feedback.
9. Providing opportunities for students to work with assessment criteria and to work with examples of good work.
10. Giving clear and focused feedback on how students can improve their work including signposting the most important areas to address.
11. Ensuring support is in place to help students develop self-assessment skills including training in peer feedback possibilities including peer support groups.
12. Ensuring training opportunities for staff to enhance shared understanding of assessment requirements.

Appendix B Teacher feedback literacy competency framework (Boud & Dawson 2023)

Level	No	Category	Examples
Macro	1	Plans feedback strategically	• Identifies feedback as a strategic intervention • Minimizes negative effects of simultaneous tasks in different subjects • Develops strategies which involve students • Uses inclusive feedback practices for all students
	2	Uses available resources well	• Apportions feedback resources to most effect • Ensures students can readily access feedback data • Mobilises students for multiple feedback roles
	3	Creates authentic feedback-rich environments	• Models feedback processes on authentic disciplinary processes • Makes feedback processes familiar and commonplace • Assists students to utilize information from the environment in which they operate
	4	Develops student feedback literacy	• Explains feedback to students and their role in it • Promotes feedback as something useful in the world • Sets expectations around the nature of feedback
	5	Develops/ coordinates colleagues	• Briefs colleagues to focus on priorities in feedback processes • Trains tutors/sessional staff to undertake high quality feedback activities • Mutually shares successful feedback practices with colleagues
	6	Manages feedback pressures (for self and others)	• Manages workload to ensure that greatest feedback priorities are met • Organises feedback information generating sessions to mimimise teachers repetitive work • Designs for student self-correction, leaving teacher time for other feedback
	7	Improves feedback processes	• Collects evidence about the effectiveness of feedback on learning • Establishes processes that reveal if students have utilized feedback information • Utilises information from students to improve their own practices

Meso	8	Maximises effects of limited opportunities for feedback	• Uses feedback selectively where it can have most impact • Allocates time to feedback events commensurate with their importance • Coordinates feedback with other pedagogical practices
	9	Organises timing, location, sequencing of feedback events	• Sequences feedback events to maximise their influence on student learning • Ensures that feedback information is available in time for subsequent tasks • Times feedback activities early in the semester
	10	Designs for feedback dialogues and cycles	• Stages tasks to maximise effects of feedback information • Prompts students to identify particular kinds of feedback information they need • Uses nested assessments in which input is given in stages in building a more substantial outcome
	11	Constructs and implements tasks and accompanying feedback processes	• Designs feedback activities to enable students to self-assess before input from teachers • Sources and deploys a wide range of exemplars to demonstrate features of good work • Undertakes in-class discussions about feedback
	12	Frames feedback information in relation to standards and criteria	• Explicitly connects feedback information to standards to be achieved • Has students judge their own work against explicit criteria • Reviews rubrics from the point of view of their value for feedback purposes
	13	Manages tensions between feedback and grading	• Distinguishes between feedback information and grade justification and deploys each appropriately • Designs feedback processes to enable students not to be distracted by marks or grades • Avoids discourse of grades in discussing quality work
	14	Utilises technological aids to feedback as appropriate	• Deploys audio/video/screencast feedback as needed • Uses Learning Management Systems (LMS) for recording and accessing feedback information • Uses technology to enable more efficient/scalable feedback processes
	15	Designs to intentionally prompt student action	• Provides persuasive rationales for the importance of student actions in feedback processes • Designs activities so students can incorporate feedback responses into subsequent assignments • Invites students to show how they have utilized feedback information in their work
	16	Designs feedback processes that involve peers and others	• Designs exemplar exercises that involve students providing feedback • Facilitates and equips students to engage in peer feedback processes

Micro	17	Identifies and responds to student needs	• Fine tunes their comments to individual student needs • Ensures students receive usable information • Relates feedback inputs to students' self-assessments of their work
	18	Crafts appropriate inputs to students	• Provides comments that identify needed improvements • Poses questions that open students to new ways of thinking about their work and other ways of doing it • Strategically avoids wasting time on low-level corrections
	19	Differentiates between varying student needs	• Provides differentiated feedback support to different groups of students • Identifies students at risk of not being able to use feedback processes well • Seeks to engage difficult to involve/ marginal/ excluded students

Note: From Boud, D., & Dawson, P. (2023). What feedback literate teachers do: An empirically-derived competency framework. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 48*(2), p162- 163 . https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1910928 . Copyright (2021) from Boud & Dawson.

Appendix C Literature search protocol

Review protocol

Problem identification / searchable question

What are student nurses' experiences of receiving written feedback on academic assessments

Variable of interest – student experience

Search tool

PICO

Search tool	PICO
Population	Student nurses
Intervention	Written feedback
Comparison	-
Outcome	Experience

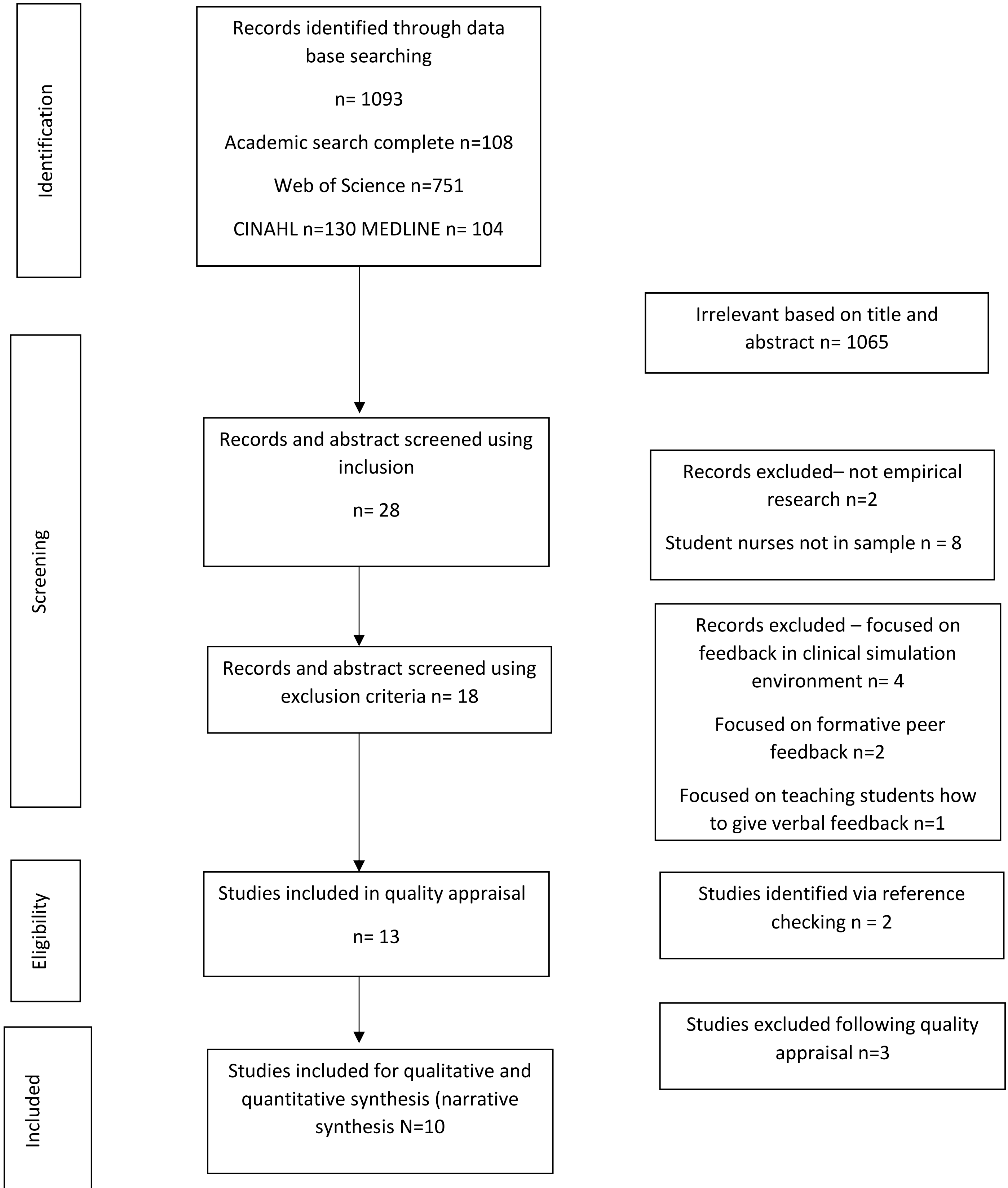
Literature search

Electronic data bases	CINAHL MEDLINE Academic search complete – EBSCO (Psyc Info, British Education Index, ERIC) Web of Science
Other search methods	Reference checking
Search terms	P - "student* nurs*" OR "nurs* student* I - "written feedback" OR feedback OR "assessment feedback" C O – experience* OR perc* OR view or interpret*
Limiters	Since 2016 English language Full text Peer review
Inclusion criteria	Participants in higher or further education Presence of key words

	Experience of student feedback is main or only focus Empirical research
Exclusion	Feedback focused on clinical skill Student experience is not the primary focus Peer feedback in the absence of academic feedback Student nurses not part of the sample

Appendix D PRISMA flow chart

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Moher et al 2009)



Appendix E Copy of data extraction table

	Type of research	Citation	Study	Sample	Method	Results	Conclusion	Limitation	Quality of evidence
1	Integrative review	Ilangakoon, C., Ajjawi, R., Endacott, R., & Rees, C. E. (2022) The relationship between feedback and evaluative judgement in undergraduate nursing and midwifery education: An integrative review. Elsevier Limited. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2021.103255	Integrative review. Q What is the relationship between feedback and evaluative judgements in nursing and midwifery education?	18 studies (12 Qual 2 MM and 2 Quant) All studies based on simulation/ reflection/ work based learning. International	Data base searches, search terms and eligibility criteria all included and appropriate. Search from 1989- 2020. Team review - ID problem, conduct search, evaluate data, analyse data, present review.. 1408 retrieved, 856 abstracts screened, 36 appraised for quality 18 met quality threshold and included in data analysis. PRISMA included, tables included. Team approach to coding- coded by lead author and checked by team for verification	**Conceptions of feedback varied** - 1 as transmission of info, 7 define as general info about performance, 7 as dialogic, 10 as both performance and dialogic. **Purpose of feedback** - 15 feedback as learning and improved performance. 10 as supporting integration of theory and practice for clinical settings. 8 feedback validates performance and justifies grades increasing motivation for learning. 1 study positive feedback as reassuring and confirming existing knowledge, boosting confidence. **Sources of feedback** 16 educators, 9 peers, 3 patients and families. Educators preferred, concern re peers providing assessed feedback, but valued formative. **Modes** - rubrics, marking criteria, frameworks, instruments, written. Written preferred, clinical verbal considered vague. **Concepts of evaluative judgements (EJ)**- ID as reflection, reflective and self assessment required, comparing with others. **Purpose of evaluative judgements** - personal growth, supporting prep for clinical practice, supporting independence, enabling integration and transferee of knowledge. **Relationship between feedback and EJ**, - if learning perceived as meaningful, when assessing against a standard, some unable to used educator feedback - didn't relate to it so didn't inform EJ.	1) Concepts of evaluative judgements exist as a process and outcome in nursing and midwifery education 2) Feedback processes need to position the student actively for evaluative judgement capabilities to be developed. +H2	Evaluative judgements not a term used in literature until recently and not in nursing and midwifery education- may have missed some papers through not identifying papers where conceptions of EJ are discussed. Very varied types of feedback limited in written assessments	good review of evidence. Clear on limitations of research. Helpful for future research - post matching content with concept of EJ and risk of missing research.
2	cross sectional study	Sultan, B., & Gideon, V. (2021) Bachelor of science in nursing students' perceptions regarding educator feedback. SLACK INCORPORATED. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20210729-07	Cross sectional study Q not clear. Evaluating the quality, quantity, timing and utilisation of feedback.	38 BSc Nursing students. 20-26 years Pakistan	Measured response of students to assessment using Assessment Experience Questionnaire (Gibbs and Simpson 2003). Modified the scale, Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.74-0.87. Data collected in 2017. Likert scale 1 (strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree (questionnaire included). Descriptive stats (mean and SD), SPSS. response rate to survey 94%.	General low scores on each area (all under halfway point of 2.5). **Quality and timing scored** 1.8 SD 0.49- (specific, plenty, lacked elaborated feedback, hindered improvement, too late, threatened self esteem). **Quality of feedback 2.09 SD 0.39** (not helpful in understanding how to improve, disagree with, didn't understand, objective and unbiased, focused on task, used sandwich method, polite/ rude) . **Type 2 SD 0.46** - mostly verbal **Utilisation 2.14 SD 0.51** (Didn't read carefully, didn't use to go over assignment, didn't prompt to go over other material, didn't use for future assignments, don't reflect on performance)	Advises on the provision of written feedback that uses sandwich method. Recommend educators are trained on how to provide feedback. Recommends further research, more robust design. Recommends research into effectiveness of feedback models, methods and styles.	Not clear the AEQ is a valid/ reliable. Small sample size. More of an evaluation of course assessment feedback than research on perceptions of feedback.	low, no research question and operationalisation of perception not clear.

6 mixed methods	Mackintosh-Franklin, C. (2021) An evaluation of formative feedback and its impact on undergraduate student nurse academic achievement. Elsevier Limited. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2020.102930	Mixed methods, Q not clear - but cites an evaluation of formative feedback on a module	1st and 2nd year BSc Nursing students (all fields). English university.	n=353 offered opportunity to submit draft. N=115 submitted 500 word draft to online portal. Data for quality review taken from portal immediately following completion of module. Data collected = number of formative assessments, amount and nature of formative feedback collected from feedback team. Academic achievement taken from exam board spreadsheet. Also looked at whether differing nature of feedback impacted on achievement. 12 academics. Monitored number of formative submissions and final submissions per academic. Number of words in formative feedback. Thematic analysis for qual data using Braun and Clark (2006) 6 stage thematic analysis. Initial familiarisation and coding. No mention of verification.	Variation in style - 1 didn't provide any individual feedback but sent an generic email to students, some copied and pasted generic statements, some sent lots of individualised detailed comments. Themes 1) **factual correctional feedback** most prolific, some supportive some blunt. 2) **Dialogue with individual students**- some students included Q in draft that were answered, some academics asked students questions. Some generic and one emailed group. 3) **Encouraging feedback** - nearly all provided, two academics provided no encouraging feedback and two used it inconsistently. Some included "less than encouraging" critical feedback. Quant results Students submitting formative - more likely to get an A (21% compared to 12%) non failed (compared to 6%). Achievement scores of formative grp tested against non formative = high significance p= 0.003. No significant diff in performance with formative group in relation to amount of feedback or marker (0.028) no sig diff across both groups connected to marker or total marking on assessment (0.562) nature of feedback or staff workload (total marking). **Only mediating factor was submission of formative draft.**	Value of formative feedback not as clear cut as previous literature suggests. Formative feedback not significant, but rather the students that submit a draft more likely to do well. Questions utility of formative draft submissions. Position the conclusion within Hattie and Timperley paper citing four levels of feedback (task, process, self regulatory, self), and that student specific feedback is less effective than process and self regulatory. Students who submit work for formative feedback may be more motivated, self efficacious and have a more positive disposition for learning which leads to higher attainment.	Not clear how many are international students, no demographic details available due to nature of data capture. Limited generalisability as one HEI and UG Nursing students. Factors affecting student achievement are varied and there may have been confounding variables. Findings should be seen as one element within overall context of this body of educational knowledge.	Moderate- limited info on verification in thematic analysis increase chance of bias. Acknowledged possibility of confounding variables.
7 mixed methods	Henderson, B., Chipchase, L., Aitken, R., & Lewis, L. K. (2022) Consensus marking as a grading method for the development of evaluative judgement: Comparing assessor and students. Elsevier Limited. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2022.103386	Convergent mixed methods parallel research design. Aim- to explore post graduate emergency nursing students perceptions of oral visas using consensus marking compared to assessor judgement. 1) perceptions of learning experience and relationship with the assessor. 2) Differences in student anxiety and satisfaction between grading methods.	n= 56 post grad students on emergency nursing module. Australia	Descriptive generic qualitative approach used, consolidation criteria for reporting qual research (COREQ) used to guide qual component. 2 conditions, 1st viva online-6 weeks into course. Judged and assessed by academic responsible for teaching. Grade guided by marking rubric (10 mins duration on average). 2nd (same group) 13 weeks into course. Consensus marking where assessor engaged student in reflection/ evaluation of performance against required standards and guided by rubric, before mark given feedback conversation with assessor and calibrate knowledge to expected standard. Consensus reached between assessor and students on grade achieved. (15 mis duration). After visas and grades received, all invited to on line interview re perceptions of viva and consensus marking. Interviews done by researchers not involved in assessment / teaching. Interviews transcribed and anonymised. Interviews coded by all researchers (including assessor who was primary researcher) using Braun and Clark (2006)six stage thematic analysis. Researchers engaged in iterative cyclical process to ID codes. Inductively conceptualised codes,. Dependability via 2 researchers reviewing transcribed data to validate codes. Anxiety measured by Exam Anxiety Scale (EAI) (Bowdey and Gabriel 2013) administered 3 days before each assessment. Satisfaction measured by Satisfaction in Oral Viva Assessment Scale (SOVA) (Salamonson et al 2016) immediately following both visas. Anxiety and satisfaction results tested for normal distribution using Shapiro-Wilk test. Shapiro-wilk test found familiar test anxiety endorsements was unlikely to be the result of normal distribution on the 1st viva. Negative self concept and autonomic response along with familiar test anxiety endorsements were unlikely to be the result of normal distribution in 2nd viva. Incomplete questionnaires were removed and 46/53 included in study (82%). 13 students agreed to be interviewed (23%).	6 themes identified. 1) **Accountability for learning** - 10/13 said viva compelled them to learn and made them feel accountable. 2) **Authentic assessment that translates to clinical practice** 8/13 expressed oral vasa with consensus reflected the realities of work life. 3) **Feedback dialogues and immediacy** 11/13 oral viva with consensus marking gave immediate and detailed feedback and facilitated understanding. 4) **Reflection and understanding** 8/13 appreciated the opportunity to reflect and elaborate their performance, that it assisted them in identifying future learning needs. 5) **Test Anxiety** 12/13 expressed viva caused anxiety (varied causes) one had increase in anxiety in consensus marking "I knew somewhere I'd be marking myself". Most it reduced in consensus marking. 6) **Voice shifting and power dynamics**. 9/13 used words indicating their involvement and influence in consensus marking (justify, explain, discuss, rationalise) Some report ability to have a voice reduced stress. **Anxiety tests significant reduction in consensus marking p=0.001. Satisfaction increased with consensus marking p= 0.01.**	Consensus marking facilitates student centred learning, similar to clinical environment debrief, promotes self evaluative judgements. Less anxiety provoking and more satisfactory.	Numerous limitations cited by author- the assessors involvement with the research could have influenced student disclosure at interview. The consensus marking at the second assessment - reduction of anxiety may be connected to familiarity rather than method. Student sample - small proportion of self selected students may have had something to say. Students not interviewed may have presented different picture.	Interesting and a good start - but further studies need that remove methodology issues such as assessor involvement, sequencing of viva. Students likely to have self evaluative capabilities given area of work and post grad. Not generalisable. Quant data no remarkable and not trustworthy. Further ideographic data besides English as 1st or second language and gender

8	Case study	Sieminski, S., Messenger, J., & Murphy, S. (2016). Case study: What supports students to improve their grades? Open Learning, 31(2), 141-151. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2016.1188691	Case study of open university students who were borderline pass (40-45) but went on to improve. Interviews focused on gaining insights into approaches that helped them succeed.	Borderline then successful students. 7 open university students 3 Nursing 4 social work. Age between 37 and 59 All women, all white. UK. All students sponsored by an employer. Widening participation students. Long periods away from education.	33 Students identified as having received a borderline pass grade and subsequently improved. 33 identified all contacted by letter and invited for interview. Amazon voucher payment of £25 offered. 3 nursing students were interviewed 4 social work students were interviewed. All cases summarised, thematic analysis of interviews (not generalisable). Study focused on identifying the approaches that helped the students to succeed.	Ideographic account of each student indicating outside responsibilities, home, work, confidence and motivation aspects. 4 Themes identified- 1) **Feedback** - students valued discussions with tutors, they internalised and operationalised feedback for use in subsequent assignments. The feedback needed to be accessible and understandable. 2) **Social learning**- they engaged with peers and colleagues and created communities of practice. Learning beyond what was formally provided. 3) **Sponsorship** - financial investment from employer and provision of study time was a facilitator and motivator. Two participants referred to support from partners and family to create space for study. 4) **Emotional** vulnerability - All were reluctant to talk to tutors before submitting the 1st assessment (authors link this to fear of exposing perceived deficiencies). Emotional vulnerability displayed by all participants, with feedback invoking strong emotions.	Whilst not generalisable to - The four themes contributed to the students success. Recommend 1 that **tutors proactively support engagement** rather than wait for students to approach. 2 Be **alert to anxiety and emotional vulnerability** and be sensitive to this in the style of feedback given. 3 Feedback should be **accessible and intelligible**. 4 **Social setting of learning** needs to be in place - create opportunities for social learning with peers and colleagues where they identify themselves as learners could strengthen learner support.	Not generalisable - case study (though acknowledged as such). Interviewer bias likely. All sponsored students - may influence disclosure.	low level of evidence, but interesting as there is a focus on the ideographic which is not present in others. Some similar finding to larger scale research such as Hill et al and Patterson et al studies. Interesting that this draws out some social contextual issues.
9	Thematic analysis	Hill, J., Berlin, K., Choate, J., Cravens-Brown, L., McKendrick-Calder, L., & Smith, S. (2021) *Exploring the emotional responses of undergraduate students to assessment feedback: Implications for instructors* . International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL).	Aim - Investigate emotions encountered by undergraduate students in relation to feedback. Objectives derived from broad principles of control-value theory. 1) Identify nature, strength and persistence of emotions after receiving instructor feedback. 2) Explore if emotional reactions informed their attitudes in relation to future assessments. 3) Examine whether emotions influenced their learning overall. Qualitative data collection 2019-20 in 3 universities of similar size. Data gathered by 1) small group semi-structured interview and 2nd collection of personal reflective diaries.	3 Universities Sample framework Indiana University Purdu University Indianapolis USA Y1 Health sciences students 19 out of a possible 39 (49%). University of the West of England UK, Y2 Geography, 6 out of a possible 32 (20%) MacEwan University, Canada, Y3 and 4 Nursing 5 from a possible 32 (16%). Total students n=30. Interviews n=24 Diaries n= 6	Data gathered by 1) small group semi-structured interview (3-4 students per group). Questions piloted in one of the groups. (questions included). 6 Group interviews n= 24 students in total. 3/4 were female, interviews took 40-60 minutes. Interviews conducted by research assistants to reduce chance of teacher familiarity influencing outcome. Transcribed and analysed using Braun and Clark (2013) thematic analysis process. But influenced by knowledge and concepts known to the researchers and the research objectives. All researchers undertook pre analysis coding to confirm inter-rater reliability. Which involved researchers reading one transcript and manually coding phrases as units of analysis. Then calibration phase where emergent themes and categories identified and agreed by whole team. Remaining scripts coded by a pair of researchers using constant comparative method (Straus and Corbin 1994). After additional cross reading themes identified and agreed. Analysis process supported by memoing and coding, researchers shared thoughts on codes and relationships as they emerged Codes and memos shared across research team to verify final themes. 2) Collection of personal reflective diaries, captured electronically in students own time. Students capture key reflections - 6 diaries across 3 modules, All female aged between 18 to late 20s. Identifying information removed. Coded following same process as interview data.	10 key themes identified and illustrated with themes and quotes. A diagram summarise the main themes which are : <u>Student emotions</u> 1) Negative feedback invokes largely negative emotions- overthinking and a sense of failure in early years of study. 2) Negative emotions hard impact, are burdensome and linger, especially in early years, can be processed more quickly in later years. 3) Positive feedback evokes largely positive emotions, feel cared about, can help re-centre emotions. positive tutor commentary can misalign with student emotion. 4). Positive feedback easily received, invoking intense but fleeting emotions. <u>Consequences of emotions</u> 5) Negative emotions can hinder improvement of work, demotivating and knocking self efficacy especially in early years, souring faculty-student relationships. 6) Some students show resilience seeking direction and dialogue with instructors, especially in later years. 7) Positive emotions enhance self-efficacy, self-esteem and ability to plan and organise work. 8) Positive emotions motivate some but not all students - feeling of relief and pride reduces desire to act on feedback. 9) Feedback is taken personally by students, linked to the individual rather than piece of work, impacting on learner identity and permeating wider learning experience, both positively and negatively. <u>Implications for instructors</u> 10) (see conclusion)	Feedback has an emotional impact that is lasting (in the case of negative) and can be detrimental for self efficacy motivation and extends beyond the assessment feedback episode to other learning -Authors detail recommendations for instructors as the 10th theme. Implications for instructors - Express feedback carefully and thoughtfully (especially negative feedback) to support emotional preparedness of student. Balance negative with positive comments, offer clear direction for improvement, acknowledge effort, offer dialogic feedforward. Give permission to fail - establish feedback rich low stakes assessment environments, Improve student feedback literacy via early stakes assessment environments. Improve student feedback literacy via early meta cognitive conversations. Improve staff feedback literacy via institutional training and policy.	Diaries - motivated students, small sample. Risk of retrospective bias, predisposition to answer in a particular way, possible lack of reflective capacity, additional subjective lens via researcher interpretation of students diary. Groups - may be influenced by other members of group. Some attempt to reduce bias by researchers reading all transcripts. Issues of familiarity with the course may be at play e.g. later years may be more resilient perhaps because of familiarity with feedback and culture and practice in HE. The 3rd and 4th year participants were all nursing students - perhaps the impact of practice feedback in the clinical environment influenced this? Varied education systems may be a problem- heterogeneity may not be helpful.	Moderate- good It's a qual study so lower level of evidence- however, the detail of the analysis and verification is clear. Picking up similar issues to other studies.

10	HP	Poorman, S., & Mastorovich, M. (2019). The meaning of grades: Stories of undergraduate, masters, and doctoral nursing students. Nurse Educator, 44(6), 321-325. https://doi.org/10.1097/NNE.0000000000000627	Hermeneutic interpretation - Hermeneutic phenomenology used to understand the meaning of grades to nursing students	n=46 nursing students from 20 programmes in 14 schools in US. 18 Baccalaureate, 15 Masters, 13 Doctoral)	Face to face interviews each student asked "Tell us about a time that stands out to you when you were graded?" "Now reflect on your story and describe what this meant to you". Each interview was taped and transcribed, anonymised and coded. Originals destroyed once accuracy confirmed and analysis completed. Researchers engaged in hermeneutic analysis - met on a regular basis to read , re read and write individual interpretations of each narrative. Rigorous interpretation "allowed meaning, experiences and judgements to be illuminated.	Main theme - **Needing and A.** This occurred at all levels, and once transcribed it was difficult to ascertain which students were at the different levels of study. Examples from stories provided. Needing an A stemmed from childhood and find memories of being rewarded for an A by family. Belief that not getting an A means letting everyone down, can't accept not being an A student. Not getting an A led to questioning whether they had made the right decision to study, identity as a perfectionist. Not getting an A resulted in emotional pain, holding self to a high standard. Student found they were good in clinical practice and decided tests were not the only way of testing knowledge and capabilities, as confidence grew, grades mattered less. Memories of disapproving teachers, letting grades define themselves,. Belief that amount of effort exerted should be considered when assigning grade. Experiencing anxiety and physical symptoms such as chest pain. Anything graded resulting in anxiety.	No generalisations or conclusions but points to consider - Participants needed an A in everything leading to stress and anxiety. The A was more important than the learning. Teachers should consider the power of words on students as many reported previous experiences that still haunt them. Consider how students can be helped who feel they need an A? Consider how to help students look at grades from different perspectives. Recommends conversations between faculty and students that are focused on hearing each other. Using narrative pedagogy, sharing stories, listen to the issue of grades from the other perspective, develop empathy for the student experience. Grades are emotionally laden.	No generalisable, no conclusions. Large study for phenomenology.	Clear on focus and limitations of the study. Not enough info on the HP element - looks like there was some care structure, authenticity and thrownness concepts in the accounts but not discussed. Also some discussion of what looks like authentic helping - but again not discussed. Would have liked to see more on the process of arriving at the stories.
11	Systematic review	Paterson, C., Paterson, N., Jackson, W., & Work, F. (2020). What are students' needs and preferences for academic feedback in higher education? A systematic review. Nurse Education Today, 85, 104236. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2019.104236	Systematic review of literature Research Q What are students needs and preferences for feedback in HE?	36 studies included in systematic review. sample size in studies range from 10 - 1409. International studies. Some didn't report sample sizes	Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta analysis -protocol PRISMA- P All papers meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria up to 2018. Independent screening of titles and abstracts Independent data extraction then compared. Quality appraisals shown - Evidence synthesis = narrative synthesis and tabulation of results. Narrative synthesis - 1 Data reduction - based on levels of evidence and review question. 2 Data comparison, iterative, making comparisons and ID relationships. 3 Conclusion verification. Used valid appraisal tools. Showed selection process, results and protocol.	Studies generally not methodologically robust. 3 Themes emerged **1) preferences for feedback** - timeliness, balance between positive and negative, direct feedback on content, linguistic clarity and legibility, grade justification feedforward. **2) Psychological impacts** - feedback has an emotional impact (affects confidence motivation, one study students felt unable to cope with feedback, six studies show value having their preferences embedded in feedback helped motivation). **3 Multimodal** including e.g. face to face, digital, audio recorded. Feedback as a two way process. (electronic - lack of personalisation, limited narrative feedback. Verbal viewed as more detailed able to clarify points, valued discussion. Research implies need for multimodal holistic approach to feedback.	Students value multimodal feedback including electronic and digital audio - irrespective of mode there is a need for feedback to be personalised and unique to the student. Future research should explore how specifically students use feedback. Little known about student- student and student- teacher relationships. Consider emotional impact and consequences of feedback. Implications - 1) Educators should include student preference - which should include a balance of positive and negative, direct feedback, linguistic and legible, helpful for progress and personalised. 2) Feedback can invoke powerful emotions impacting on confidence and motivation 3) Multimodal feedback which may include audio/ video/ written/ face to face.	identified most studies didn't report reliability or validity in of questionnaire instrument used. Those that did reported Cronbach's alpha between 0745-0.818. Most studies convenience sampling. Didn't disclose relationship with participants. Limited generalisability as reported from one HEI.3 studies had small sample size. 10 students limited demographic data. noted studies with no reported sample size. Cross sectional design of most studies limits understanding of how needs and preferences change over a programme. Different educational context and systems in different countries.	Good systematic review of evidence but evidence is poor. Clear on limitations of research. Helpful for future research.

12	mixed methods	Douglas, T., Salter, S., Iglesias, M., Dowlman, M., & Eri, R. (2016). The feedback process : Perspectives of first and second year undergraduate students in the disciplines of education, health science and nursing. Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 13(1), 25-44. https://doi.org/10.53761/1.13.1.3	Mixed methods study Questionnaire and short answer. Study aims - whether students actively seek feedback and their perception of its value to their education. Q-1 What do learners perceive as feedback 2) How do learners perceive the educational value of feedback? 3) How and why do learners actively seek feedback? 4) How do learners respond to feedback.	587 enrolled undergraduate students invited to participate from Y2 Health Sciences, Y1 Education, y2 Nursing. University of Tasmania, over three sites (Launceston (Tasmania) n=79 education, n=104 Health Sciences n= 222 nursing. Darlington (NSW) n=59 nursing & Rozelle (NSW) n=123 nursing. Cohorts include gender range, English and non English speaking backgrounds represented. diverse age groups Large number of nursing students enrolled at Darlington campus are of Nepalese origin. All students on blended learning courses with some classroom based study. **321 participated (55%) Higher return rate for 2nd year Nursing (68%)**	Paper based survey instrument with open ended questions students answer with simple or complex qualitative statements. One common questionnaire for all students to satisfy project aims. Questions developed by investigators then refined to develop instrument . Distributed in class room for completion by staff member independent of the study. Students advised completion was voluntary and responses would be de-identified and their grades would not be affected. Descriptive stats on quantitative information- converted student response numbers to percentages (Y axis) the attached percentages and question number (x axis) tabled on a graph. Qual - each investigator coded the data and notes exchanged and discussed themes agreed and validated by revisiting original statements.	Essays and assignments most identified form of feedback. Types of learning where feedback takes place 24% identified formative learning, 51% identified summative, 18% said both. Timeliness of feedback process - 50% said it had a negative impact. 40% said they actively seek out feedback in addition to that provided. Barriers to seeking feedback 2% said lack of staff time, 3% lack of student time. Other barriers include - negative experience,6-7%, not sure of value 12%, not specific / not helpful 19%. 4 Qual themes identified 1) **Forms of feedback** - tend to identify feedback as connected to summative assessment and don't recognise feedback in different context. Some naivety about feedback, purpose and potential. Nursing students showed link to practice. 2) **Student seeking** - 62% actively sought additional feedback from tutor via face to face or email, usually to clarify results or improve learning. Teachers in control of feedback - strong theme of staff contact. **3) Feedback perception and awareness**- not aware, not understanding - author highlights importance of how teacher constructs feedback. Students not showing the practice of making informed judgements on their work. **4) Educational value**. Generally helpful for understanding learning - some undecided, some said discouraging and unhelpful. Authors advise feedback that is clear aligned with learning outcomes and include suggestions for improvement.	Implications Students naïve to feedback - advise sessions for students on recognising and using feedback. Students seeking additional feedback could be connected to not understanding feedback or inconsistent feedback. Students value personalised feedback, difficulty using generic feedback. Staff should be supported to provide specific and advisory feedback.	no reference to reliability of instrument. Nursing and education have practice feedback. Survey in class pressures students to complete. Removal of identifying information indicates that students write identifying info on survey - may influence student responses. Stats very basic, but give a general view. Impact of language and location? Not generalisable. Range of demographics in introduction but not in breakdown of stats. May be helpful to know diff between international and domestic.	moderate - interesting info. Different educational contexts. Some similar themes to other research in this sample. Possibility of response bias, in class distribution with identification increases likelihood. Possible recall bias. No evidence of testing for reliability. No pilot of the measure.
13	Survey	Carey, P., Milsome, C., Brooman, S. & Jubb, E. (2017) student views of assessment feedback. Innovation in Practice 2 123-131.	Survey method - 5 point Likert scale survey distributed to students at Liverpool John Moores University.	Undergraduate students at LJMU n= 1409 questionnaires returned. Biological sciences n=546, Social sciences n=363, Law n=312, Nursing n=268. Full time - 95.7% 16.9% over 24 years old. Level of study 41% y1, 28.6% y2, 27% y3.	5 point Likert scale survey distributed to students at Liverpool John Moores University. n= 1409 questionnaires returned. Biological sciences n=546, Social sciences n=363, Law n=312, Nursing n=268. Full time - 95.7% 16.9% over 24 years old. Level of study 41% y1, 28.6% y2, 27% y3. Missing info accounts for difference in total numbers. Survey distributed in class by lecturers in semester 2. Data double entered onto a spreadsheet then imported to SPSS. Significant associations between variables established using chi-squared tests for nominal data and analysis of variance for original data	Nearly half **doubted whether feedback helped them improve** performance. 8 in 10 students claimed verbal feedback as important as written implying a **holistic view of feedback**. 2/3 final mark most important aspect of feedback. 70.1% receive feedback at the same time as grade. Views on feedback consistent regardless of subject except nursing where there were significant difference in views on assessment distribution- more likely to judge work as unevenly distributed. Analysis of variance **demonstrated relationship between course work collection and students understanding of and trust in the assessment process.** Student ranked useful ness of a range of feedback methods. Top five were- **1) one to one discussion with module staff 2) one to one discussion with personal tutor 3) written comments on feedback sheet 4) annotations on scripts 5) individual e mail with specific comments.** Agreement **lowest on feedforward** elements of feedback.	**Feedback should offer all students individualise commentary on their work to enable future improvements. Actions focused on how students engage in process of assessment and feedback that help student understand criteria**. Advise that relationship with engagement suggests it reinforces a sense of responsibility for their own work. One to one preferred , but logistical resource challenges, focussing on a greater awareness of marking process may be helpful.	Not clear that conclusions match the information - the study is a review of current practice in a university to inform recommendations, about feedback practices.	low/ moderate.

Appendix F Participant information sheet

The participant information sheet

Dear ………

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Study title

“An exploration of mental health nursing students’ perceptions of written feedback on academic work”

What is the purpose of the study?

I am a MPhil/ PhD student in the School of Nursing at UCLan. I am also an academic, nurse and cognitive behaviour therapist seeking to understand more about the perception of feedback

The aims of the research are:

- To explore mental health nursing students’ perceptions of written academic feedback.

The objectives are:

- To conduct interviews with mental health nursing students to explore their perception of the written academic feedback they have received.
- To undertake a thematic analysis of the interview data to identify themes in perception, which will inform the development of a questionnaire.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been chosen to participate because you are a student on the BSc (HONS) Pre-registration Nursing (Mental Health) in your second year. At this stage on the course, you will have submitted and received feedback on written work so may have some views that are relevant to this research. Additionally, I have not been involved in teaching you, or assessing your work. I will be assessing written work your third year, this assessment uses anonymous marking so I am unable to identify whether I am marking a piece of work that has been produced by one of the research participants.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw without giving a reason. This will be possible until one week after you have been given the completed transcript of the interview. At this point the final analysis of the interview data will take place.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will contact you to arrange an appointment that is convenient and advise you where the interview will take place. The interview will take approximately one hour (and no more than 2 hours) and will be held in an informal interview room at the university. At the beginning of the interview appointment I will provide you with a consent form for you to read through and check you are happy for the interview to be recorded and then used as data for the research. The interview and recording will start after you complete the consent form agreeing to participate.

The interview will involve being asked questions about your experience and views about the written feedback you have received. The information you provide during the interview is confidential and will not be passed on to academics who have provided you with written feedback.

You do not have to answer any questions, and can leave/end the interview at any point. For example, if you don't want to answer a question, you could say "I don't want to answer that question" and I will move on to the next relevant question. If you decide to withdraw during or after the interview, then the recording and transcript will be deleted/ shredded and not included in the analysis. Please note that this will not be possible once the final analysis takes place.

Once the interview has taken place the audio recording will be transcribed and you will be sent a copy of the transcript via encrypted e mail or by post so you can check that the information is accurate. I will contact you one week later to check whether you are happy that the transcript is a fair representation of our interview. If you do not believe the transcript is accurate, then the information will not be included and will be destroyed. If you agree that the transcript can be included, the information will then be analysed along with the data from other interviews. You can withdraw your data up to one week after seeing the transcript. After this point the data will be analysed and it will no longer be possible to withdraw your data from the research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no immediate direct benefits to you. The information you provide will contribute to a further understanding of the variables involved in the perception of written feedback. The data will also be used to develop a questionnaire that will be used in a future study.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

There are no anticipated risks involved in your participation, all information will be kept confidential and the information you provide will have no influence on your marks, assessment or future studies. It is unlikely, but possible that you could become upset when

discussing your perception of the feedback received. The interviewer is a mental health nurse and cognitive therapist and is experienced in supporting people to alleviate distress. However, if your distress is of concern, you will be supported to access the relevant student support service e.g. counselling. It is possible that you may raise academic issues that are of concern, if this occurs you will be advised on the appropriate person who could deal with this.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about you will be kept confidential (subject to legal limitations), electronic files will be labelled using a code and will be encrypted. Any information linking you to the coded files will be kept separately in a locked drawer in my office. The office is also locked and not shared with other members of staff. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on academic integrity. As a result, the data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for 5 years from the end of the project.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you wish to participate in the study then please contact me at sltraill@uclan.ac.uk or on 01772 895104 and I will arrange a convenient appointment for you. I will contact you one week after sending this invitation if I've not heard from you. This will be to check whether you have any questions or have made a decision about whether or not to participate. Please note that you are under no obligation to participate, and you do not have to provide a reason for not participating.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be used in the thesis for an MPhil/ PhD. It is also hoped that the research findings will be published in relevant academic journals and presented at conferences.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being conducted in the School of Nursing and is supervised by researchers from the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing. The Director of Studies for the research is Professor Joy Duxbury. The other members of the supervisory team are Dr Nigel Harrison and Dr Philippa Olive.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by the STEMH Research Ethics Committee, University of Central Lancashire.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions or require further information then please contact me at sltraill@uclan.ac.uk or on 01772 895104.

If they have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact University Officer for Ethics at OfficerforEthics@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Yours Sincerely

Sarah Traill

MPhil/ PhD Student

School of Nursing

Faculty of Health and Wellbeing.

Appendix G Consent form

CONSENT FORM V3

Full title of Project: An exploration of mental health nursing students' perceptions of written feedback on academic work.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Sarah Traill, MPhil research student, Brook Building 316, School of Nursing, College of Health and Wellbeing, University of Central Lancashire. Preston PR1 2HE. 01772 895104

Please read the following statements and initial the boxes to indicate your agreement

	Please initial box
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, dated ………………… for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time until one week after viewing the transcript of the interview. I understand that I do not need to give a reason for withdrawing my interview data.	☐
I agree to take part in the above study.	☐
I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored securely (after it has been anonymised) for up to five years from the end of the project.	☐
I understand that electronic data will be stored on an encrypted memory drive. Written data will be stored in the researcher's private locked office.	☐

I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data from the study up to one week after viewing the transcript of the interview. At which point the analysis of data will take place and it will no longer be possible to withdraw data. ☐

I agree to the interview being audio recorded and transcribed. ☐

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

I would like a copy of a summary of the results of the study.

Insert e-mail address [ ]

Appendix H Interview questions

Semi – structured interview question guide

Question to begin the interview	
Just to start, can you tell me about the stage that you are up to on the course?	
Open Questions	**Prompting/ probing questions**
It would be really helpful to find out about your experience of receiving written feedback on your written academic work. Can you tell me about it? **OR**	
Can you tell me about the written feedback you have received on your written work? **OR**	
Can you tell me about a time on this course when you have received written feedback from the person who marked the written work you submitted for a module?	
	Did you read the feedback?
	How did you interpret the feedback?
	What sense did it make to you?
	How did you feel when you read it?
	How did you feel during the time when you had submitted your work and were waiting for the feedback?
	Was the feedback helpful to you?
	Can you describe how was it helpful? *(ask if needed)*

	Was the feedback unhelpful to you?
	Can you describe how it was unhelpful? *(ask if needed)*
	What do you consider to be helpful feedback?
	Can you give examples? *(if needed)*
	What do you consider to be unhelpful feedback?
	Can you give examples? *(if needed)*
	Why do you think you reacted the way you did to the written feedback?
How does this compare with previous times when you received written feedback on other courses or at school?	
	Can you tell me more about this? *(if needed)*
	Do you think there is connection between your previous experience and more recent reaction to written feedback?
	Can you expand on this? *(if needed)*
Is there anything else that you want to say about your written academic feedback that you have not discussed?	

Appendix I Interview stages

Interview stages (Yeo et al 2014)

Stages of the interview
Stage 1: Arrival and introductions Rapport building by thanking the participant for coming and conveying a friendly, warm and relaxed demeanour. Guide the participant to their seat and provide water, coffee/ tea.
Stage 2: Introduce the research: Advise on the scope of the research, that the interviews with mental health nursing students to explore their perception of written academic feedback. That it will take roughly one hour (no more than two) and their participation is voluntary. That the interview will be recorded on a digital recorder. That the information will be stored in an encrypted file and that it will be filed under a code number. The details linking the name and code number will be kept in a different file that is locked and or encrypted. There is no right or wrong answer, that they don't have to answer all the questions and if they say "I don't want to answer that question" I will move on to the next appropriate question. When the interview is transcribed, they have an opportunity to check the accuracy. I will provide a consent form and ask them to sign this if they are willing to proceed with the interview.
Stage 3: beginning the interview At this stage the participant will be asked an opening question in order to get a sense of how they will respond to being interviewed, give a flavour of the interview dynamic and how the approach may need to be adapted in order to put the participant at ease and facilitate disclosure.
Stage 4: during the interview (see proposed interview questions below)
Stage 5: Ending the interview: Advanced notice that the interview is nearly over and end the interview positively.
Stage 6: after the interview

Thank the student for their contribution, remind them that a transcript of the interview will be provided so they can check that it is an accurate account of the interview. Advise on any resources they may find helpful – e.g. study support or other relevant university resources.

Appendix J Illustrative excerpts from IPA tables

Excerpt from IPA Table Jim

Jim IPA table

Experiential statements	#	Original transcript	Exploratory themes	Reflexive notes
	1–5	[00:00:00] Sarah: Right. We're we're we're recording. Yes, we're recording now. Okay. So I've just got the first question I just wanted to ask is can you tell me about the stage that you were up to on the course?		
	6–9	[00:00:14] Jim: I'm a second year mental health student and about halfway through the year. Just about to go on to placement four		
	10–13	[00:00:20] Sarah: right. ..Okay. Yeah. Right in the middle then., it would be really helpful to find out a little bit about your experiences of feedback on your written work.		
	14	[00:00:31] Jim: Okay.		
	15–16	[00:00:31] Sarah: So could you tell me a little bit about that?		
	17–18	[00:00:34] Jim: The feedback I'd say that we had in the first year, was limited really, and I think that was probably due to volume.	Limited – not enough.? Not comprehensive? (bound by time and volume)	

1

Experiential statements	#	Original transcript	Exploratory themes	Reflexive notes
Attributes limited feedback to the marker having a high workload- empathy for the marker.	1–2	And you have people in the marking masses of scripts.	Thinking about the marker and their experience of marking.	
	3–4	[00:00:44] Sarah: So was in that they limited in that they didn't write much?	Masses- conveying large number of scripts- empathy for the marker.	
	5–8	[00:00:46] Jim: No, you would be talking about, perhaps on a page, maybe one or two overall comments, which worked through to maybe a paragraph or two at the front end on the Turnitin submission.	No- they view the volume and detail as limited. One or two - conveys a view that this is insufficient, but the tone indicates a sense of resignation about it.	
	9–11	[00:00:59] Sarah: Right.		
A view that feedback is superficial and covers the basics.	12–15	[00:00:59] Jim: So you'd [00:01:00] get a very quick sort of overview of what you'd done. Things would be broken down with the rubrics, you'd know roughly where you'd scored in each area.	Quick sort of overview- indicates they think it is brief or rushed? They show awareness of the marking process. Roughly - are they saying it was superficial?	
	16–20	And that was it really, it was really quite limited, I think, first year stuff. And this year we've not, we've not anything back yet, so that's well...... I'll wait for that. We get, typically we get storyboard feedback on Tuesday coming.	The slow pace of speech and repetition of "it was really"- indicate some criticism of the marker but some hesitancy to criticise. Why? Is this because of the empathy for the marker?	
	21–23	[00:01:23] Sarah: Yeah.	"That's well..... I'll wait for that" - are they wanting to evaluate the quality of the feedback? Or is it anticipation about the result and associated feedback?	

2

Experiential statements	#	Original transcript	Exploratory themes	Reflexive notes
Cognisant of university standards and process is for marking.	1–4	[00:01:24] Jim: But imagine that'd be similar. I think the university is committed to three comments per page now, as a feedback, as a systems that has increased.	Showing insight into the university standards on marking, and how this has changed. Considering how this has influenced feedback practises.	
	5	[00:01:33] Sarah: Yeh, as a standard.		
	6–8	[00:01:34] Jim: So a lot of the things, a lot of the feedback that we got in the first year, it was limited, and I don't think it really gave much emphasis on where we were supposed to improve, which I think would've been	False start – "a lot of things, a lot of feedback" - All that being careful perhaps cause they're not happy but can empathise with the marker? They make reference to there being limited	

Experiential statements	#	Original transcript	Exploratory themes	Reflexive notes
Evaluates feedback as general and lacking targeted guidance for academic development.	1–7	page, you get things like, kind of "good overview" or "good explanation", or "this area could have been improved by using a reference". So it was, it was very general and I don't think.... I think perhaps like some targets for the next essay might have helped.	Provides a clear account of the feedback communication showing that they have read and remember their feedback. Conveying a preference for future focused feedback - wanting to improve? Targets for the next essay - indicates goal orientation.	Feedback literacy
	8–10	[00:02:29] Sarah: Might have helped a bit more.		
	11	[00:02:30] Jim: Yeah.		

Excerpt from IPA Table Adele

IPA Table Adele

Experiential statement	#	Transcript	Exploratory notes	Reflexive notes
	1–5	[00:00:00] Sarah: Right I'll just put the microphone down there. And so the first question, really just as an opener is, could you tell me about the stage that you are at on the course?		
	6	[00:00:12] Adele: Second year,		
	7	[00:00:13] Sarah: second year, so early middle?		
	8–9	[00:00:15] Adele: And just, just at the start really because I'm in the March intake.	Emphasising start of the 2nd year. Are they highlighting novice status?	
	10–16	[00:00:18] Sarah: Right..... So you just come into the second year. Okay. So it'd be really good to find out a little bit about the experience of written...... of receiving written feedback that you've had while you've been, while you've been on the course. So could you tell me a little bit about that and what it's been like?		I'm nervous this is feeling like a complaint at this stage.
Annoyed and frustrated- not had the chance to be heard.	17–20	[00:00:34] Adele: Well, I've got lots to say really if I go through these. Obviously the first assignment that I ever did, I've got ninety eight percent on.	The student shows annoyance, they are prepared for the interview and brought a file of their feedback. Lots to say – it's been stored up and this is an opportunity to get things off their chest. Starting from a high-grade foreshadowing a drop.	I'm interested to know whether this was on the BSc Nursing. Trying to steer the student to the topic but being gently so as not to

1

Experiential statement	#	Transcript	Exploratory notes	Reflexive notes
	1–2	[00:00:43] Sarah: Okay. Was that on the degree or on the foundation?		inflame. Also feeling a bit defensive but trying not to show it.
	3–4	[00:00:47] Adele: That was on the foundation.		
Hopes raised but not realised. Aware of dependence on the academic to realise the ambition but feel ignored	5–8	Yeah, the marker told me I was writing above level four, and it went to publishing stage but I don't know where (name) has gone to the university now to carry on with that. Yeah.	The marker told me emphasising that they've been advised the work is of a high standard and publishable. Conveying a mismatch between this and later feedback. Realisation of dependence on the marker. Hopes raised then nothing. Are they conveying abandonment? Being left / discarded / not considered?	
	9–11	[00:00:59] Sarah: Yeah. they're still around, they're in a slightly different role, but they're still around. They'll be on the email.	Role conflict	Irritated at self. This isn't the purpose of the interview. Role conflict – I'm giving advice rather than exploring experience. Empathy for the student, wanting to help/ de-escalate.
	12	[00:01:04] Adele: I heard they'd left.	I heard - third party information, not sure what's happening, in the dark, not thought of considered.	
	13	[00:01:05] Sarah: No they are still here.		
	14–15	[00:01:06] Adele: So nothing has really been done about that.	Hopes not fulfilled. The doing requires the person who has left. Is there something about feeling powerless unable to effect change and a realisation that they are dependent on the academic.	
	16–18	[00:01:08] Sarah: Yeah. He's in the research team now. So if you send him an email, you'd be able to get in touch.		Role conflict, giving advice.
Disappointment at going from a high to low mark, positive to negative feedback.	19	[00:01:13] Adele: So to go from that........	Tone indicates incredulity. Stuck by the difference between marks. The experience is worse for having a previous praise, recognition (potential) and high mark. Expressing disappointment at the mismatch between expectation and reality.	Thinking of Heideggerian notions of living in the world of HE and the familiarity with culture and practice in HE. They have received advice, but it is inauthentic being. Conforming to Das-man. Not authentic learning and development but conforming so as to achieve.
	20	[00:01:15] Sarah: right....?.		

2

Experiential statement	#	Transcript	Exploratory notes	Reflexive notes
	1–3	[00:01:15] Adele: to my very last assignment that I did, where I got, a lot of the feedback on that was very negative.	A lot and very negative emphasise the difference. Focused on the negative comments in feedback. Perhaps because of the previous positive?	Recall post grad course with high achieving students who were upset when previous high mark profiles were not achieved. ? Narcissistic breach/ injury.
	4	[00:01:21] Sarah: Right.		
A sense of being talked down to.	5–10	[00:01:22] Adele: Which I'll take on the chin. I mean, I have looked at it and yes there is some mistakes in it, but I think it's a little bit patronising and when they're trying to tell you, *you have attempted to do this. You've not done this.*	Mistakes in it – checking for fairness, noticing the negative comments in feedback. Is the negative acceptable if they can also see the mistake? There is a focus on mistakes. Patronising – marker comments convey superiority/ condescension / treated like a child. Told off / talked down to.	
	11	[00:01:33] Sarah: Yeah....?		
Frustration at inability to	12	[00:01:34] Adele: Or, *you've made this*	Checking for fairness...[illegible]	

Experiential statement	#	Transcript	Exploratory notes	Reflexive notes
	1–2	[00:02:05] Adele: The ones where I think they've unfairly marked do you mean...?	Thoughts drawn to the unfairly marked ones. Negative experience at the forefront.	
	3–7	[00:02:07] Sarah: Well, maybe......... if or, or any, you know, if, if you want to be specific about maybe sometimes when you've had some marks and tell me a little bit more about it.		Lots of false starts. Finding this difficult.
Focussing on the grade and justification for the grade.	8–12	[00:02:15] Adele: Well I've got a lot of good feedback, it is good feedback. This one was good feedback. (shows the essay and feedback) That was 98%. One. Yeah. There's some critical feedback in that as well.	Good feedback equated with good marks. Is the issue about the mark and justification for the mark rather than the quality or helpfulness of feedback? Some critical feedback in a 98%. Are they alluding to this being an explanation as to why the assessment was not 100%?	
	13	[00:02:26] Sarah: Yeah. So that was feedback from your previous course?		

Appendix K Reflexive journal notes

Photos of reflexive journal

ref works.
Marty 1972*.

Linguistic notes. - the actual words spoken or how they are spoken. eg pronouns, verbs e tenses, pauses laughter, hesitation, tone, false starts. - all convey meaning

Conceptual notes. - often takes the form of questions (esp at start) eg Why did she find it difficult to engage.

Descriptive notes - summarize the explicit meaning of what participant said

What have I learned about the meaning of the experience to the participant in that portion of the text?

Things that matter, The meaning of those things
Ways in which you characterise the person's stance in relation to those things

What does this mean to them?

What is this experience like?

Why might they think this?
(reflection a whole/context)

Experiential statement:
is the statement reflecting my analytic work or is it just a reconfiguration of the ~~experiential~~ original data?

ET - reflect the words thoughts & also the interpretation

Concise summary - reflecting important & process of the contextual content which provoke the response

Working through the exploratory statements & the theme of personal agency led me to revisit the section on school feed back

— I've added the experiential statement re the school report which said 'Must try harder', 'always 'head in the clouds'

21.3.2022 am

writing the experiential themes table & returning to quotes. I've moved personal cost of aiming high & falling short – not ever sure its correct theme as it is about personal expectations & push self to achieve but may not be being realistic

22.3.2022

Note Theme 2 – is this about changing the mark? feeling powerless to affect change really p8 concerns getting the mark changed

As I review the statements some don't feel right so I've coded these in blue I'll return to them rather than change now – need to consider as part of the ~~class~~ passage & the whole

– In Theme 2 is there something about morality in marking.

– or am I influenced by the student picking Deontology (ethical theory of rules that distinguish between right from wrong)

Not sure about the vulnerable aspect of 'feeling powerless & vulnerable.

Personal cost of aiming high & fall in short – is this more about pushing self but own expectations are unrealistic

Theme 3.

Trying hard to reduce the likelihood of -ve feedback – more accurate experiential statement if in past tense

Waiting for the right time writing this I'm not sure its reflective of the experience – this seems to be

[illegible] analysis.

- Look at the PET tables.
- What lies at the heart of this experience?
- How did each of your participants live through it?
- How did each one make sense of it?
- What connections are there across the contributing cases. –
- [Easiest to start at highest level of organisation in the PET table]

Which PET'S are the most potent across the whole data set?

How does a sub-theme in one case echo or reverberate across another?

Are there any experiential features that are obviously universal?

At which level is the commonality actually shared? (PET, sub theme, experiential statement) –

Throughout process ask.

- Are your analytic entities reflecting the participants ~~experience~~? experience?
- Are you doing justice to the data and your own analytic work?
- Think through & develop tables for the new analytic entities (should capture each GET & subtheme)

Interpretative synthesis of interpretative analysis of each case

20.8.2022.

Organising principles I've used for PETS

- similarity
- narrative organisation –
  - the importance of an unfolding sequence of events in the person's biography / life course. – the thematic structure affects this life course.
    - relevant in my analysis.
- experiences of feedback in school & connection to engagement with & feedback literacy in HE
  - development of identity / academic self-esteem
-
- links with – critical realism
- real domain – activating something that generates the realistic
  - activates core beliefs. – Feared.
- self esteem development / trauma –
- link with HR – Thrownness / being in the world.
  - expectations & competing expectations –

li

Example of reflective process notes while developing the table of personal experiential themes - Adele. Typed

19th March 2022

There are some themes about fairness and the inability to have unfairness remedied. There are themes of power.

There are statements that indicate they are seeking validation through the mark.

There is a theme about understanding the requirements required to get good marks, understanding what is required and the impact of not having this- which is uncertainty and seeking certainty. The student appears not to have learned how to use feedback, they are inexperienced with feedback and seeking certainty. This may explain the emphasis on specific corrections.

There is a theme about the relationship with markers. Themes of empathy, respect, trust and approachability emerge from the data.

There is a theme that looks like the presence of cognitive bias while reading feedback and a negative emotional consequence.

There is a theme creating personal agency to achieve ambitions.

Working through the exploratory statements and the theme of personal agency led me to revisit the section on feedback received in school. Consequently, I've added an experiential statement about the school report which said “must try harder” and “head in the clouds”. These seem important considering the students efforts and application to achieve their goal of gaining good marks and a first class honours.

21st March 2022

Writing the experiential themes table and returning to the quotes. I've moved the “personal cost of aiming high and falling short” to the *using personal agency to achieve ambitions theme*. But not sure it is correct there, as it's about personal expectations and pushing self to achieve but that the achievement may not be realistic.

22nd March 2022

Notes on theme 2 *feeling powerless to effect change*. Is this about changing the mark? Within the interview feeling powerless to effect change really concerns the experience of wanting to get a mark changed. As I review these statements- some don't feel right, so I've coded what I think they should be in blue. I'll get back to them rather than change permanently now- It will allow for some discussion in supervision. I need to consider the part of the passage and the interview as a whole.

In theme 2 is there something about moral marking? Or am I influenced by the student picking deontology? It’s interesting that they focus on an ethical theory of rules that distinguish between right and wrong actions. There is a parallel with their view of the

feedback experience. I'm not sure about the *vulnerable* aspects of feeling “powerless and vulnerable”.

The experiential statement “the personal cost of aiming high and falling short” is this more about pushing oneself but ones expectations are unrealistic? Perhaps hinting at self-doubt?

Theme 3 “using personal agency to achieve ambitions” –

The experiential statement -*trying hard to reduce the likelihood of negative feedback*- is this more accurate if the experiential statement is in the past tense?

Waiting for the right time - while writing this I'm not sure it's reflective of the experience. This seems to be an experience of having a long- held ambition and waiting for the right time, and how this heightens the importance of the achievement/ goal.

23rd March 2022

Change the experiential statement on page 45 from a ***sense that*** to ***acknowledge that*** *focusing on the negative as a strategy for improvement results in disappointment.*

25th March 2022

Is there a huge theme of validation and esteem which has sub themes of validation through the grade, bias towards the negative, self-agency behaviour to improve grades, and schema defence?

I'm very influenced by my therapeutic experience in CBT so need to be cautious with this interpretation.

There is an emerging theme where the process of reviewing feedback can be embarrassing- for example page 15 line 2.

24th of March 2022

Reflections following a conversation with a colleague. Thinking of the marking feedback our children receive on their work in high school. Pupils are asked to do the *dirt* on their own work by analysing their work in purple pen so they can see. Pupils are also asked to note three things that went well, three things where the work would be even better, and to consider what a good one would look like or WWOGOLL.

It seems that children and young people are being taught how to develop feedback literacy and academic awareness. The participants in this study are all mature students and will not have experienced this approach to developing feedback literacy. They haven't learned how to use the tool or even what it looks like. Consequently, they come into university life ill-equipped with the equipment they need to succeed. Do we do enough to support these students? A discussion on this maybe a good chapter in the thesis.

26th of March 2022

Change the experiential statement- “Aware they take criticism to heart”, to “aware they dwell on negative feedback” this feels more reflective of the experience.

I've added sub themes to theme 6- relationship with the marker.

Interesting conversation with a colleague- I should read literature on critical pedagogy. Clay Shirkey. Also read literature on learner agency self-determinism and look up micro generational learning. These may be particularly relevant for understanding mature student needs.

27th of March 2022

Changed subtheme 2 infantilisation - statement page 41 from “has previous experience of asking for clarification which resulted in hostility and being told off like a child" to “has had previous experience of asking for clarification which resulted in a hostile response and being told off like a child”.

28th of March 2022

I've changed the order of the experiential themes table, so it follows a process from self/ validation and information processing through to uncertainty about academic requirements and wanting concrete information, then using personal agency, relationships, and then feeling powerless in an unfair system. This seems to flow better.

Some items are in purple, I'm not sure these are needed.

Note to self- the table of experiential themes is feeling like a formulation.

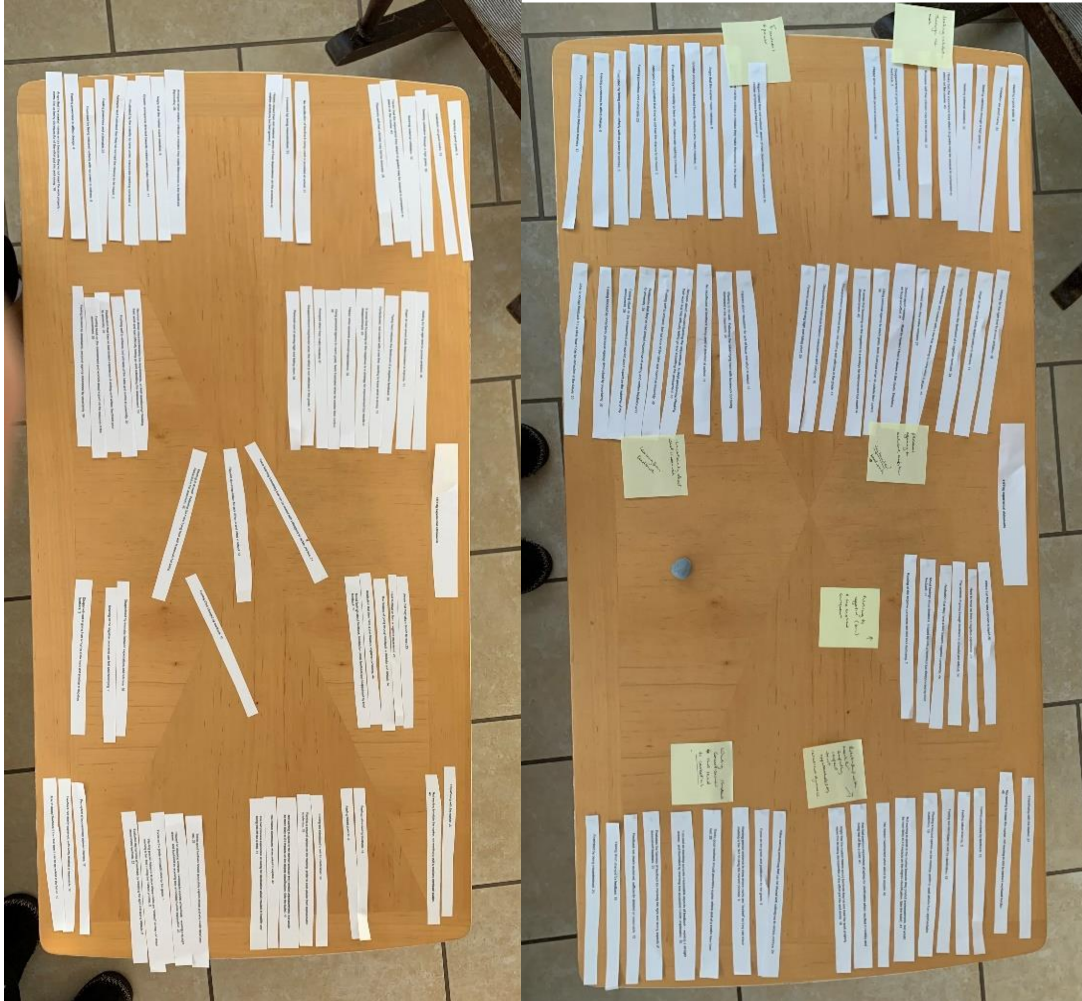
2nd of April 2022

Reviewing and correcting and typing up the themes and notes from my writings. I notice additional themes of pride and embarrassment. I've added these to the list of experiential statements and added them to the theme of seeking validation. I think theme one is better explained by self-esteem with a sub theme of validation.

I don't want to mess with this anymore, and could do with some supervision before progressing further. I’ve coded in colour so there is an audit trail.

Appendix L Illustration of experiential statement clustering process

Photo of clustering process for Adele



Appendix M excerpt from PET Table (Lisa)

Table of experiential themes F32AHA

The black text is the first iteration, the blue text is where I've amended in the second iteration. The red text is after a review of the theme groupings

Experiential statement	Page	line	Quotation
Theme 1 Feedback as a tool that can be used for development			
Sub theme 1 Trusting the process of assessment and feedback			
Engages with constructive feedback and has had positive experiences when applying insights in subsequent assessments	2	15-19	*..that was more about content that I could.. I could have developed more and that would have increased my mark.. So I found that quite useful and I've taken that and I've done really, really well in subsequent modules.*
Seeking feedback as a means of enhancing facilitating academic development	4	4-11	I don't really see much criticism in the feedback to say like, *well, you could've done this. You could've done that.* It's more *you've done this really, really well,* which makes me feel really good.... and I really like that, but sometimes I just want a little bit of *do this a bit better the next time, please.*
Seeks reassurance that they have met or exceeded expectations	5	22-25	*I'm looking to see if they think that I've met the outcome and I've done what was asked of me, or if I've gone above and beyond.*
Values and engages with feedback as a medium/ mechanism for improvement and reward.	6	19-25	*I definitely definitely do read my feedback is really important to me! I feel sad if I got a bad mark as well. But then I just use that to improve. Yeah, it does make me feel happy to get good feedback, and I think I respond well to, reward.*
Views critical feedback as having a central role in their development.	11	1-8	*if I got a low mark and all my feedback was positive and there was no criticism that would be really unhelpful for me because I'd be thinking... oh... you know, why haven't I got a better mark..*
Anonymous marking is less personalised but more validating as you can be sure it is the work that is being judged.	12	14-22	*The ****** it's not anonymous. ….. So, it's got that, that personal element to it. Erm... so that that one is different, where it doesn't matter that much to me, because I want to be given feedback on what I've done, not who I am, if you will.*
Trusts feedback to inform and help with the next assessment	19	19-24	*Particularly with reference lists as well, because all my feedback about that has been that I've done it well so every time I'm doing my reference list, I will go back to my previous piece of work and just check it against that to make sure it was okay.*
Trusts the system / process of assessment as a means of ~~facilitating~~ improving their learning / development.	21-22	22-2	*I'd look for where I can improve and improve. Yeah. So that's, that's what I do.*
Sub Theme 2 critical engagement with feedback information			
Analytical engagement with the language of feedback	4	19-26	*........ I look at the language that's been used really and see like what I understand of the meaning of it and see if it is sort of written in a positive way, or if it is written quite matter of fact, or if it is almost like a conversation between myself and a lecturer rather than just an academic bit of writing.*
Their experience of feedback has been that it is helpful and detailed.	6	10-15	*..all my feedback so far, has been quite thorough. I spoke to with the students where it's not, that's not been the case in first year, but for me, my feedback is always quite in-depth, you know, there's a good couple of paragraphs to read.*

Believes criticism and corrections should be supported with an explanation in order to be helpful.	9 13-17	*So I thought that was a bit of.... I didn't find that particularly helpful.* *Yeah. Because they didn't expand on why I should I should have used that rather than the term I'd used.*
Discerning of criticism, won't follow blindly.	9 21-27	*I want to know why… to simply say to me, don't use that phrase, use this phrase. Isn't enough for me, because I couldn't see the difference at the time.*
Analytical and evaluative engagement with feedback.	10 3-13	*I want to know exactly what, you know, what I have done well and how it.... how... you know, how it stands out was a good piece of work. But I also want to know what can.... what I could do to improve it. If there is any improvement, (to be made) or if it's a high mark, and there's nothing much I could really improve on, it's just not quite top marks and say that! Just be a bit honest about it!*
Seeking precise feedback that incorporates a rationale for the comment	10 15-17	*..if you make a note in text to say, "use this word", or "you should have done this". I want to know why? You like your rationale for saying that.*
Previous experience of superficial feedback when in college which was unhelpful.	11 7-13	*…you said I've got a good understanding, you know... no, nothing you said leads me to think I could have improved.* *So that would be unhelpful feedback for me. I've not experienced that since college. So it doesn't really relate to the university, but I have in the past and that.... That's not, it's not helpful.*
Believes the primary purpose of feedback for them is to facilitate improvement but has limited experience of this.	12-13 26-2	*like I said, in the past where I've had a mark given to me that was sort of mid-range, but then no notes on how to improve. I've not had that here..... I had that at college.*
Theme 2 ~~3~~ Personal locus of control		
Works for and appreciates being rewarded for hard work.	11 22-26	*Because I like rewards, so I really, really work hard at university, I work hard. And then when I get feedback and it's positive, it makes me feel like..... like rewarded for that hard work*
Self belief - being able to influence the assessment outcome (locus of control).	15 20-22	*(be)cause I didn't really have the same self-belief I have now. Right back then.*
History of being naughty in school. Believes there is a clear relationship between their recent effort and progress.	16 22-23	*I didn't use to do that when I was younger- I just used to mess around and be naughty at school.*
Substantial personal effort put into succeeding.	21 15-19	*.....the effort, the sheer effort that I put into every piece of work.* *So, the hours that I've spent looking for research and sitting in a library.*
Theme 3 4 Authenticity /fulfilling potential		
Views writing as a creative process and an opportunity to engage and entertain the marker/ reader.	4-5 28-5	*I quite like it when... because it's happened on two occasions now where the markers written, "I really enjoyed reading this piece of work". So I quite like that I've been able to engage with the audience in a way that they've actually enjoyed it. It's not just been a standard.... this is an assignment I'm reading and it's a bit dull.. That they've actually enjoyed looking through my process.*

Appendix N Descriptive notes from initial read through of drafted PET tables

Cross case themes (provisional, from first read through prior to colour coding and grouping- not analytical at this stage).

1. **Limited or no feedback literacy preparation prior to HE** All cases include experiential statements that indicate they have not had any preparation for using feedback whilst they were in compulsory school education system. No work aimed at developing feedback literacy. Compare this to the current systems in school where strategies for developing feedback literacy include –
    a. Classroom based Dedicated Improvement and Reflection time (DIRT) (notes in purple pen.
    b. Exemplars via - What Would a Good One Look Like WWAGOLL
    c. Teaching achievements / targets- usually 3 per term.

2. **Reading and engaging with feedback**: Most read feedback, the only exception being Jo who reads it if they receive a poor mark and otherwise is ambivalent. Amy reads, but finds the language inaccessible so is unable to use. Jan, Helen, Lisa, Jim, Adele all report reading the feedback thoroughly with the purpose of identifying where they gained and lost marks and to identify areas for development.

3. **Assessing accuracy and fairness of feedback** Adele, Lisa, Jim – report assessing the quality of feedback received in terms of the accuracy of comments and the fairness of comments. All three were students seeking high grades.

4. **Valuing feedback as a tool for improvement –** this was a strong theme for Lisa, Jim, Helen- with all viewing this as the primary aim of feedback, and some frustration when this was not present.

5. **Feedback as grade justification** – Adele and Jo viewed the feedback as a means of providing an explanation of where marks are lost and gained. Viewing feedback as more aligned with grade justification than improvement.

6. **Uncertain about the requirements in HE assessments** – Helen, Amy were both unsure about what is required in the HE assessment environment and dependant on guidance from a marker for future work. Jim was very well versed in the regulations and processes connected to assessment and feedback and was in marked contrast to the other interviewees.

7. **Personalised feedback and anonymous marking** – Helen and Amy would have liked personalised feedback that fits with their needs and commented on progression from one assessment to the next and viewed anonymous feedback as being an obstacle to this. Whereas Jan viewed anonymous feedback as more validating as it concerned the work and would not be influenced by relationships / unconscious bias.

8. **Reassurance seeking** – Helen, Jan, Jim, Jo, Amy All viewed feedback on the positive aspects of their work as important for letting them know when they were on the right track.

9. **Confidence boosting effect of positive feedback –** Jan, Helen, Lisa all report positive feedback information as helping boost their confidence and motivation and helping them deal with the aspects of their work that they needed to improve.

10. **Validation via the grade** – All experienced a sense of validation when they received a high grade. With the opposite occurring with a low or failed paper. The grade was personally validating. Seeking a high grade was associated with wanting validation and to be known for achievements.

11. **The impact of the grade on reading and engaging with feedback** – Some report the good grade helped them view the feedback in a positive light (Jim, Jan) and some report the grade negatively skews the reading of feedback information (Jo, Adele, Amy, Jan). Adele noticed a negative skew regardless of the grade.

12. **Anticipatory anxiety** – all report some anxiety when they are unsure of how well they have done and are waiting for the grade. Lisa and Jo reports anxious avoidance and one participant Jim is usually confident they have done well and only experiences this with unusual assessment methods that have not been previously attempted.

13. **Reassuring and Exonerating experience of having reasonable adjustments recognised and applied.** Jan and Amy both had negative experiences where reasonable adjustments were not applied and they were negatively labelled either by themselves or by others.

14. **Adverse experiences in school linked to current feedback response-** Jan, Amy, all experienced adverse events that resulted in humiliation and or discrimination. In all cases these events impacted on their future engagement with education, their compensatory or safety seeking behaviours to protect themselves from future damage.

15. **Perfectionism –** Adele, Lisa and Jim all show perfectionist tendencies and are concerned about the marks that were missed and why.

16. **Empathy for the marker-** Adele and Jim **–** both refer to marker workload as a reason why marking may not provide the level of detail they had hoped for.

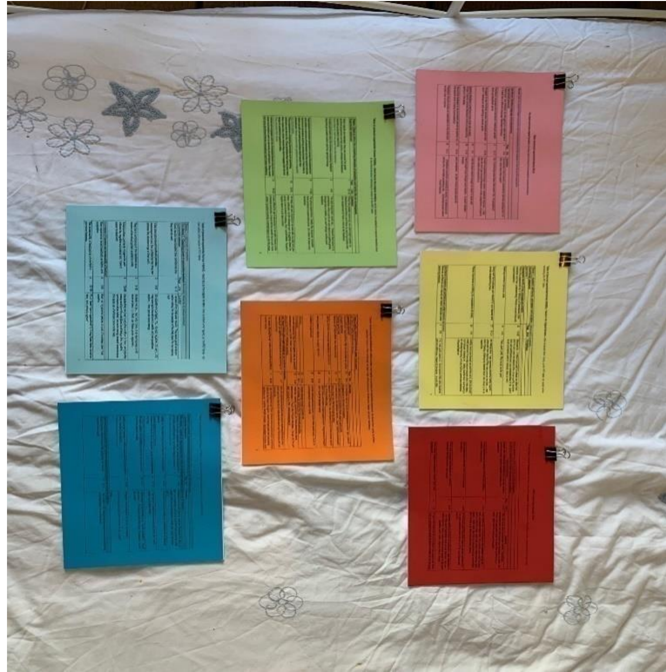
17. **Academic self-esteem – Core beliefs –** All participants report a sense of themselves as an academic which is connected to their experiences in school. Some reported a lack of confidence Amy/ Jan in themselves and an enduring negative belief about their capability. Some report they did not engage with school and their previous performance was connected to not taking school seriously Adele, Helen, Jo, Lisa – in these cases they had some functional assumptions that facilitated current engagement and achievement (I can succeed if I work hard). One participant reported high academic self-esteem and reported being a high achieving student in school. In all cases their sense of themselves as an academic influenced their approach to current studies. One participant was able to engage in the process of education and the inevitable critical feedback once they had been able to accept themselves.

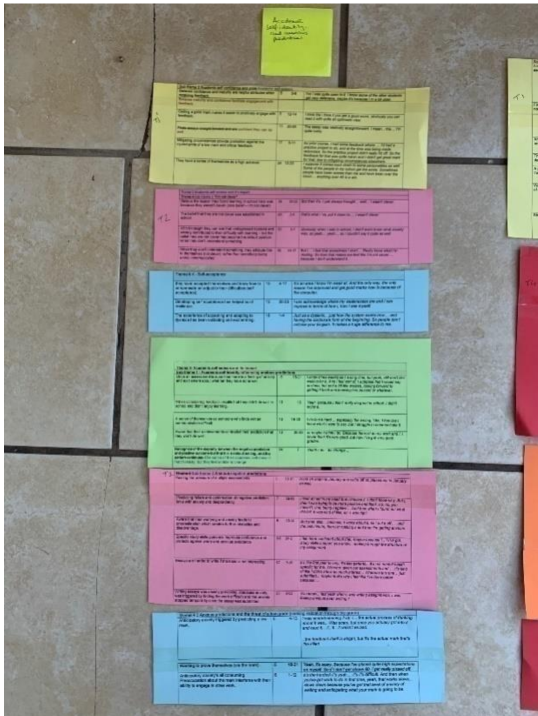
18. **Relationship dynamics** – Power and trust. Adele did not trust the system or fairness of the marking process and felt powerless to address perceived unfairness. Jim noted inaccuracies in process but saw limited value in correcting the marker.

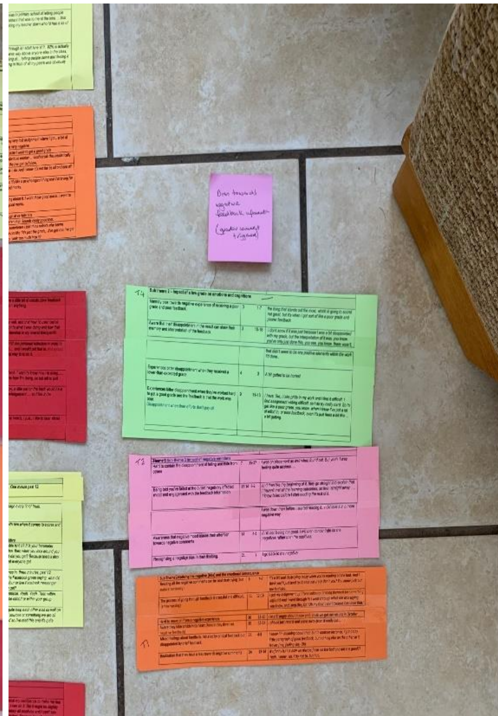
19. **Capacity for feedback to harm** - All but one participant (Helen) report feeling injured by negative feedback, for some (Jan and Jim) they report lifelong damage as a result.

20. **Capacity and time for study** – Jo was unusual in that they didn’t engage with as much support for assessment or developmental feedback because they had outside commitments which they prioritised.

Appendix O Photos illustrating cross case clustering process







Appendix P Table of Group experiential themes GET with illustrative quotes

Group experiential themes with reference to personal experiential theme PET (T) and PET subtheme (ST), page (P) and line number (#) on the IPA table.

GET THEME 1 EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE				
GET 1 Sub theme 2 – Academic confidence influencing anticipation	T	ST	P	#
Confidence				
JIM – "I've always been quite open to it. I know some other students get very defensive, maybe because I'm a bit older." *"The essay was relatively straightforward…"*	1 1	2 2	5 11	3-8 20-25
ADELE- *"I thought it was a good piece of work" (ID at ET level when writing up GET)* *"I always get excited for my marks… maybe that's why I was so disappointed when it came back and it was only 58%" (ID at ET level when writing up GET)*	4 4		12 13	4-6 5-7
Pessimism				
AMY – *"I just always thought…I wasn't clever. "* *"I kind of had it in my head that I'd failed it. I don't know why. But then I was trying to be more positive.. and then when I found out I did fail, it was like Oh I was right."*	2 2	1 2	19 7	19-22 16-25
JO – *"I know three weeks isn't a long time…but I still don't like waiting for it. And I sort of feel, I suppose I would say anxious, but a bit like excited looking forward to getting it back and knowing I've passed or whatever."* *"I didn't do great in school. I didn't enjoy it."* *"I do find it hard…especially writing, I know what I want to say but struggle to communicate it. Or maybe I think I do because I'd do my work and never think its any good but… I've got good grades."*	4 4 4	1 1 2	5 13 13	16-21 10 18-22
JAN– *"Yeah, it's scary. Because I've placed quite high expectations on myself. So if I don't get above 60, I get really pissed off."* *"It's the hardest… yeah its difficult. And then when you've got work to do in that time, yeah, that work slows down because you're waiting and anticipating what your mark is going to be."*	3 3	1 1	5 6	18-21 1-12
LISA– *"I don't always feel confident that I'm going to get a good grade, even though history would tell me I do get good grades at university. I'd never feel confident. So getting that feedback just lifts me up and tells me – you*	4	3	15	9-17

know… you can do it. But then every time I submit, I still get that pang of un-confidence and that anxiety." (ID at ET level) *"I was just about to get the feedback…I think I received at four o clock.. and I didn't want to look at the mark…because even then, I thought I'd not done as well as I had. And I looked and I'd done a lot better than I had (expected). But I actually put my hand over the lap top and think no! no! I don't want to see it!" (ID at ET level)* *"I was just feeling like… I'd be disappointed if I didn't get a good grade… but then I was expecting lower than I got." (ID at ET level when writing up the GET)*	 4 4	 3 3	 20-22 21-1 21 5-9
Tuning into the negative			
JO – "*The thing that stands out most, which is not going to sound great, is when I got a poor grade or poorer feedback."* *"I don't know if it was just because I was disappointed with my grade but my interpretation of it (feedback) was you've only just done this…there didn't seem to be any positive elements within the work I'd done."*	4 4	2 2	3 1-7 3 10-18
AMY- "*At the beginning they explain that I haven't met all the learning outcomes, so then straight away I know I've failed before I start reading the rest of it."* *"I was down before I started reading it….I did take it in a more negative way."* *"If I'm not feeling too good, I will then concentrate on the negatives rather than the positives.* *I go back to the negative."*	2 2 2	3 3 3	13-14 6-2 14 4-8 21 2
ADELE- "*It's a bit soul destroying really- when you're reading all the bad. I think you just tend to do that naturally don't you? You know- pick out the bad bits…"* *"It's funny isn't it how we always focus on the bad and not the good? Yeah, I know I do. I try not to- but I do."*	1 1	2 2	6 4-7 34 12-14
GET Theme 1 – Sub theme 3 Seeking external recognition and status			
LISA –"Acknowledgement for the hard work I'm putting in… that's what it's all about, I just feed my ego." *"..a little pat on the back would be nice. Some acknowledgements… so I like to be acknowledged."*	4 4	1 2	9 1-12 17 17-21

ADELE – *"I want those good marks. I want to be recognised for my good marks."* *"Because I want that first- I do. I know its not the be all and end all – but its important to me."*	1 1	1 1	25 13-15 25 13-15
JIM – *"It reflects yourself, it reflects the effort you've put in…the attention you've paid to lectures and your participation and understanding…"* *"But that's really measurable isn't it. It's your barometer compared to everyone else, then when you look around you and everyone says what did you get? Because there's also masses of interest in what everyone got."*	1 4	1	12 15-22 25 7-12
GET Theme 1 Sub theme 1 An unfamiliar tool			
Limited prior experience			
JIM – "*feedback here is a lot better than the feedback I've received in the past, particularly that primary school one, but even A level feedback wasn't particularly great. That was just rights wrongs and a circle around it at the bottom with no particular explanation."*	3	2	20 14-21
JAN "*In the past I've had a mark given to me that was sort of mid-range but then no notes on how to improve. I've not had that here… I had that at college."*	1	2	12-13 26-2
ADELE – "*I can't honestly remember ever having feedback from school other than the annual school report."* *"I've done quite a few courses.. but you never really get feedback on … because it was more … very little writing. I've done team leader management (course) I can't even remember getting feedback on that either."*	2 2		24 7-8 26 8-11
JO *(In school)* **"***We were given our grade and that was pretty much it."*	2	2	11 2-4
AMY – "*I don't think it did, no, just the mark"*	1	3	19 3-6
Needing a guide			
AMY – "*I feel it ought to go through each paragraph… so then I'd know exactly which bit."*	1 1		3 6-8 15 16-18
HELEN- "*Just that you've done well, but not explained how you've done it. When you actually do well, you don't get a lot of information."* *"It was disappointing because you're expecting more feedback to explain how you had achieved that."*	2 2		7 9-18 12 8-14
differing expectations of purpose			

JO *"On what you could change, what you've done to meet the learning outcomes."* *"Telling you how you could have expanded on things to increase your grades or telling how you could have explored something further in certain areas or telling if there are any parts that may be relevant"*	3 3		8 1-2 8 17-20
ADELE *"It's important to me to find out if I've been docked any marks."* *"We had a lecturer the other day and they were saying "to get an 81 you've got to have a full perfect essay" He said "I rarely mark above 81" whereas I've come to uni with my expectations... not to get 100 but I want to reach distinctions."*	3 2	2	6-7 21-2 23 8-13
JIM *"Where it went right as well as where it went wrong. In an ideal situation it would give you something to carry forward into future work and it should be as comprehensive as possible."* *"..an idea of continually bringing people forward"*	3 3	2 2	16 1-5 16 1-5
HELEN *"It was a bit disappointing because you're expecting more information to explain how..* *I just feel I didn't get enough feedback to get any better.* *I've got to see (the feedback) to see what I've got to pick up on* *It was a bit disappointing because you're expecting more feedback on to explain how… you had achieved that."*	1 1 3 3		6 17-19 12 8-14 3 8-9 12 8-14
marking the marker			
JIM –" *I think you just tend to sort of critique your feedback as well a little bit, don't you."* *"I would have to read it obviously…. and decide whether I thought it was fair or not."* *"A quick sort of overview of what you've done. Things would be broken down in the rubrics, you'd roughly know where you'd scored in each area. And that was it really- it was really quite limited."* *"It was very general… I think perhaps some targets for the next essay might have helped."* *"It left me in the position where I understood what I'd done, but not sure how to do the next one."*	3 3 3 3 3	1 1 2 2 2	6 6-8 12 5-17 2 13-19 4 1-10 10 15-26

LISA *"I look at the language that's been used and see what I understand of the meaning of it and see if it's written in a positive way or if its matter of fact, or if its like a conversation between myself and a lecturer."* *"All my feedback has been thorough… there's a good couple of paragraphs to read."* *"If you make a note to say "use this word" or "you shouldn't have done this" I want to know why? Like your rationale for saying that."*	1 1 1	2 2 2	4 19-26 6 10-15 10 15-17
JAN *"If I hadn't agreed with it, it may have been harder to take, but I actually agreed."* *"Even on my poorest pieces of work, I've always seen it as positive."*	1 4	2 2	4 12-19 4 1-6
ADELE *"There's a reason I only got 74%....there's reasons behind that that weren't properly explained."*	3	2	21 21-25
AMY *"It wasn't explained enough where I needed to improve"* *"I feel it ought to go into each section… it wasn't detailed enough."*	1 1	1 1	4 13-19 15 7-10
JO *"You get some written feedback but also some comments within the document- which is good."*	2	1	2 1-2
GET Theme 1 Sub theme 4 The legacy of negative school experience			
injury and vulnerability			
JIM "*I remember being pulled out in class in primary school for what I though was going to be a really poor mark but actually turned out to be a really good one."* *"I got dragged up in front of the entire school…. Humiliated!"* *"The feeling of being attacked in the marking sometimes, so the wording, people must have to think quite hard about the wording or perhaps* soften *things sometimes."* ***JAN*** *"I'm 50, but I do remember school because it scarred me for life. They didn't believe I dyslexia."*	2 2 2 2		15 17-26 19 17-23 15 17-26 10 24-27

"My actual English teacher actually questioned the person I was sat next to about whether I was lying about how well I'd dine in all other subjects because I was so poor at English."	2		11 5-14
JIM "*They just looked at the eight I got wrong… that's probably where my constant… its probably where it stems back to"*	2		20 1-8
"Two hours on a chaise long would probably cure it!.... you know … yeah… that massively influenced."	2		21 23-26
"I think about that That would have been 30 years ago- but I still think about the eight I got wrong, even not always consciously."	2		22 6-18
JAN *"That's why it's taken me so long to admit it.. I was always seen as lazy or a cheat."*	2		11 1-2
"It has tarred all my academic life and all my (previous) attempts at university."	2		14 16-21
Protection of self (and others)			
JIM *""You missed eight marks by not checking!" So now… when I get feedback…I do wonder. Which would then fit with me wanting things to carry forward and where to improve."*	2		22-23 22-5
"I got mid 70's for my first assignments I felt quite good- but was concerned about the 26%."	2		23-26
JAN *"I got slated for a piece of work I'd handed in… absolutely slated for my level of English, it was. So I… so I just dropped the course because I couldn't cope with it."*	2		12 13-20
JIM *"I'm a curriculum governor at a primary school, so would go in and look at the books… they heavily emphasis three things to improve next time…"*	3	1	17 23-27
"I know the university is committed to three comments per page now, as a system that has increased.."	3	1	3 2-5

GET Theme 1 Sub theme 5 feedback triggering self- regulatory strategies			
Procrastination			
ADELE – *"This is the first time I've had a bit of writer's block. For this new assignment we've got, and I just can't put pen to paper. I've got all my research and I can't physically write it. So I'm just going round the outskirts doing everything else." (ID at ET level when writing up GET)* *"I'll be worried about that (previous 58%) I think because I'm struggling to write it and I'm leaving it and leaving it." (ID at ET level when writing up GET).* **AMY – "***I worry about it, so I put it off… until the last minute, then I'm rushing and getting anxious."*	2 2 5	 2	29-30 20-3 30 7-12 8 10-14
Perfectionism			
LISA– "*Because I like rewards, so I really, really work hard at university, I work hard. And when I get feedback that's positive it makes me feel like… like rewarded for that hard work."* *"The effort, the sheer effort that I put into every piece of work."* *"I go and have a look at what I've submitted and see if there's anything I can change in that interim period before its final submission. So I will tweak my work if I feel I need to. I try not to look at it but I always do."* **JIM-"…***you have to put a lot of extra effort in to get that, to close the that tiny couple of marks with the gap. They (the marker) said "you know you're getting good scores" but I've always been concerned about that little bit that I'm not getting."*	2 2 4 1	 3 3	11 22-26 21 15-19 7 17-24 23 14-16
Reassurance			
ADELE ***"****It comes down to the individual marker….I don't think realistically they have a set of rules that they follow."* **LISA** *"If I've got an upcoming assignment (and I'm) feeling bad, I'll look over feedback and think, well, I've done it before, and I did that and I did this and look at how I've written things and what's been written about me."* **JIM**– *"for a prior course I had a practice project to do, and at the time I was being made redundant. So, the project didn't really hit it off. So, the feedback for that was quite harsh and I didn't get a great mark for that, due to mitigating circumstances elsewhere."*	1 4 1	1 1 2	20 1-3 19 1-2 17 5-11
GET Theme 2 – MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS			
GET Theme 2 Sub theme 1 Empathy for the marker			

JIM- *"it looked to me like it was someone who had obviously had quite a big batch of papers to go through and was just splitting it across the four characters of the rubric and going "that looks about, there it looks about that, and that looks about that...assign the score and put a couple of marks on and then onto the next one."* *"But I think that's to do with volume as well, to be fair…because I'd imagine the volume of papers that they'd have to knock in the first year 500 students. They'd probably get quite a big batch each."* *"I suppose the flip side of that is if you look at it from their point of view, they might have seen that the learning outcomes had been met to a certain level and thought that, "yeah, that was that". and then moved on looking perhaps for the next learning outcome."* **ADELE - "***And I can understand it can be hard. I do understand that"* *"Still, time constraints isn't there – with people who are marking, they've got other jobs. And I understand that. I fully get that, and I think that is part and parcel of the reason that I won't be knocking on someone's door saying can you just talk me through this."*	5 5 5 5 5	 1 1	7 13-26 8 1-6 9 4-6 20 10 31 6-12
GET Theme 2 Sub theme 2 – Respectful communication			
JIM- "*I thought people could, perhaps a have just looked a little bit deeper, I suppose there were moments, where I felt a bit undervalued, I've put loads of effort into that. And just for an extra sort of two minutes, of marking , and you might be able to go actually that reads fine."* *"I thought, well, that's 20 seconds on Google, just to check!"* *"I've got a bit defensive, and thought shall I email and tell her 'actually your school health referencing guide says to do that' but I didn't bother"* **ADELE – "***I've taken a long time to do this! At least have the decency to mark it properly to read it properly! Or write the right comment on the right paper."* *"I think it's because I try so hard. Like this comment "is there something missing from this sentence, what is it that goes without saying"….I haven't written it goes without saying!"* *"I think it's a little bit patronising when they're trying to tell you "you have attempted to do this. You've not done this""* *"I'm a 40-year-old woman I don't expect to be spoken to like a child!"*	6 6 6 5 4 5 5	 4 4 2 2	8 12-21 5-6 17-2 8 12-21 14 11-14 17 22-26 3 7-10 32 15-1

JAN – "*Because even if it's poor your work... if you've still put the time and effort in…So... if... so, then it would be nice to have that recognised."*	1	2	8 12-20
GET 2 Sub theme 3– Person centredness of feedback and feedback systems			
JO *"When the grade comes out, you sort of get a grade on blackboard and then you have to go further in your assignment to have a look at the feedback"*	1		1 13-15
"I'm busy with going to uni my kids and you know, childcare. So, I'm normally juggling where I'm going to be and what I'm doing. So, I'd either forget or leave it a bit late to book (assignment guidance)"	1		12 9-13
"It's difficult, but with it being structured into the timetable I've felt the benefit from it."	1		12 16-22
AMY- "*I just feel like it wasn't tailored for each individual"*	3		5 2-8
"I get quite anxious about submitting it again… I just feel I need more feedback, more support. Obviously if you don't know who's work is being marked….I can't explain … it's like if I was sat there having a conversation it would be more beneficial."	3		6 7-19
HELEN – "Anonymous marking and different tutors make it difficult to get feedback on progression in your work. *Because its different tutors isn't it. Yeah…."*	3		14 5-18
"It depends who marks it sometimes, because sometimes you don't get very much and sometimes you get quite a bit."	2		3-4 19-2
JAN – "*Just as a dyslexic… how the system works now… having the form at the beginning so people don't criticize your English – it makes a huge difference to me."*	4		18 1-4
"Because they've given a positive of how I've done…the negative comments about what I've done wrong don't seem to hurt as much as they have in the past."	1	1	8 14-25
"So, for the first time I've admitted I'm dyslexic this time. It's made a big difference."	5		15 4-8
"It's better this time because computers are completely different. I was using word processors and they didn't have the spell check and grammar checks that they do now."	5		15 11-21

"I can acknowledge where my weaknesses are, and I can improve in terms of how I see myself."	4		13	20-23

Note: ID = identified; ES= experiential statement

Appendix Q Experiential themes, concepts, recommendations, and evidence

Theme	Sub theme	Key concepts and recommendations	Evidence
EDUCATIONAL BAGGAGE Referential totality key interpretive concepts Thrownness – Heidegger Being thrown into the world not of your making which provides reference points for noticing equipment, primordial notions of past present and future influencing sensemaking of the feedback experience (care structures) and authentic and inauthentic modes of being leading to fulfilment of potential and fallenness. Implications Propose – Supporting students to develop feedback literacy and that this should include exploration of past educational experience and the link with the present awareness and future goals. Students are supported to “self-formulate” and action plan for their development.	**An unfamiliar tool** *(Modes of being – Thrownness – lack of use on the school system means feedback is a present to hand rather than ready to hand mode of being* • Choosing the right tool – instruction/ feedback • Using the tool – understanding of purpose transmission/ receptiveness/ different conceptions	• Orientation to feedback purpose and potential in HE, Part of transition to HE programme. Include resources e.g. DEFT (Winstone and Nash 2016) • Feedback literacy orientation and practice (frequent and low stakes)	• Butler & Winnie 1994; Evans 2013, Lipnevich et al 2016; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006). Teacher feedback literacy Winstone & Carless 2020; Boud & Dawson 2023. DEFT – Winstone and Nash 2016 • Ajjawi et al 2022; Molloy et al 2020; Patterson et al 2020; Pitt et al 2020; Pitt & Quinlan 2022; Winstone et al 2017; Winstone et al 2022
	Academic confidence influencing anticipation *(Temporality – primordial notion of past present and future existing in the feedback experience)* • Attunement-temporal • Learning experience and associated schema • Self esteem • Malleable and fixed intelligence • Anxiety and shame	• Attunement reveals thrownness into situatedness – risk assessment • Self-assessment on how previous feedback informs current approach • Promote malleable intelligence beliefs • Normalise failure • Frequent low stakes feedback practice • Scaffolded learning	• Evans (2013); Poorman and Mastorovich (2019); Young (2000); Shields (2015) • Ajjawi et (2021); Evans (2013); Hattie & Timperly (2007); Lipnevich et al (2016) • Dweck (2000); Nicol

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			& Macfarlane-Dick (2006) • Adams et al (2020); Bearman & Molloy (2017 Brynum (2019); Gravette et al (2020); Molloy & Bearman (2018). Winstone et al (2017a) • Hill et al (2021a); Sieminski et al (2016) Bynum et al (2019); Molloy et al (2020); Patterson et al (2020) • Vygotsky (1978)
	Seeking external recognition and status *(External recognition as part of a deficient mode of being recognition rather than learning)* • Authentic and inauthentic • Learning goals vs performance goals • Shame risk	• Goal setting • Value and effectiveness of learning goals/ risk of performance goals	• Dweck (2000) • Poorman and Masorovich (2019); Shields (2015); Sieminski et al (2016); Young (2000) • Brynum (2019); Winstone et al 2017). Ryan and Henderson (2018)
	The legacy of negative school experience *(Care structures – the experience of the past existing in the experience of receiving feedback and the perceived future potential)*	• Trauma informed education • Demonstration of care to facilitate learning, care and build resilience	• Dugan et al (2020) Goddard et al (2019); Goddard (2022); Thomas et al (2019) • Barnacle and Dall'Alba (2019);

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	• Cognitive behavioural models • Trauma informed education		Molloy et al (2020)
	Feedback triggering self-regulatory strategies (*Fallenness, coping with the anxiety involves behaviours that can result in falling away from fulfilling potential and authentic modes of being. Low cognitive load, and safety behaviours)* • Emotion in feedback models • Perfectionism (striving) • Perfectionism (concern), procrastination, rumination • Self-reassurance and self-compassion	• Psychoeducation on procrastination perfectionism and rumination and relationship with learning. • Self-reassurance & Self-compassion • Coping strategies	• Butler & Winnie (1995); Carless & Boud (2018); Hattie and Timperley (2007); Lee et al 2014; Lipnevish et al (2016); Madigan (2019) Molloy et al (2020); Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006); Nolen-Hoeksema et al (2008); Perkrun (2006); ; Schraw et al (2007); Steel & Klingseik (2019); Watkins & Roberts (2020) • Dweck (2000); Gilbert et al 2004; Gilbert (2017); Neff (2003a 2003b); Petrocci, Dentale & Gilbert (2018) • Smeets et al (2014); Egan et al (2022)
MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS Key interpretive concepts – being	**Empathy for the marker (Concernful, conforming)** • Conforming, levelling down	• Review marking practices see last section) – propose relational feedback practice	• Barnacle and Dall'Alba (2019); Hill et al (2021b); Kelly et al (2021)

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with (mit-sen and Das-man, solicitude/ concern) Being with is a transcendental condition that makes it possible for Da-sein to discover equipment (in this case feedback). Solicitude/ Concern – *leaping in* as deficient mode of being with. *Leaping ahead* – person centred, restoring care to Dasein. Power sharing Restrictions of the system and acceptance – Das-man, the rules of the other which align leaping ahead and fallenness. The use of and engagement with feedback is mediated by the perceived nature of the relationship with the marker and the perceived ability of the system, marking and marker to meet their individual needs. Implications Propose- that student feedback literacy can be influenced by the system and the quality of the relationship with the marker/s. Learner centred feedback. Social constructivist and relational	• Power/ concern for		
	Respectful communication *(Demonstration of care and concern)* • Relational feed-forward/ relational pedagogy • Intellectual candour	• Relational feedforward in first year • Relational and narrative pedagogy principles • Appropriate use intellectual candour	• Gravette & Winstone (2019); Hill et al (2021b) • Ajjawi et al (2022); Evans (2013); Gravette & Winstone (2019);Pitt & Norton (2017); Walker-Gleaves (2019). • Bearman & Molloy (2017); Gravette et al (2020); Molloy & Bearman (2018).
	Person centredness of feedback and feedback systems (*Facticity and synergy with the world of higher education and whether the world is perceived as Das man requiring a conformist response or a world where one can fulfil potential in light of one's facticity*) • Multiple identities, student parents • Obstacles and access to electronic feedback • Standardisation and personalisation of feedback • Anonymous marking • Conflation of grade and feedback	• Integrate feedback practice and some assessments in timetabled learning time • Electronic platforms that remove/ reduce obstacles to feedback info • Repeated frequent multimodal feedback practice • Consider lower performing students • Interactive feedback sheets • Video/ audio feedback • Personalised feedback • Relational feed-forward • Anonymised grading un-	• Shanahan (2000); Gregsen and Nielson (2023) • Mensink and King (2020) • Patterson et al (2020); Hill et al (2021a); McKay (2019); Milne et al (2020); O'Malley et al (2021); Uribe & Vaughn 2017). • Pitt et al (2020); Winstone (2019) • Bloxham & Campbell (2010) Winstone & Boud (2020)

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	• Accountability, QA and NSS- Das-man	anonymised feedback (optional) • Feedback included in curriculum design • Large cohorts separated into "houses" with allocated teaching teams. • Student involved as partners in developing feedback practice	• Cavaleri et al (2019) • Barnacle & Dall'Alba (2019) Carey et al (2017), Douglas et al (2016); Evans (2013); Hill et al (2021a); Patterson et al (2020); Pitt & Quinlan (2022); Sieminski et al (2016). • Hill et al (2021b) • Boud & Winstone (2022); Carless (2013); Hinton & Higgson (2017); Pitt & Winstone (2018) • Boud & Winstone (2022); Esterhazy & Damsa (2019) • Ajjawi et al (2022); Barnacle & Dall'Alba (2019); Evans (2013); Gravette & Winstone (2019) • Kelly et al (2021)