**Transcript of Interview**

[Interviewer] I’m here with Rose and she is going to talk about technologies that she uses to support teaching and learning.

[Rose] I’m going to talk a bit about my use of audio feedback on a range of courses in Criminal Justice. I’ve ben using audio feedback for two academic years, with some success. There have also been a number of trails that I’ve worked through in terms of my use of the technology concerning things that I didn’t realise at the start f the process that might prove problematic, and time consuming.

I thought it might be useful to share my experience with other people so that if they wanted to use audio feedback they would be aware of some of the issues involved.

I started two years ago using audio feedback because I was concerned about the way in which we often provide a lot of detailed feedback to students but for whatever reason they don’t always seem to fully take it on board, and make effective use of the feedback. I’d come across some other information about the use of audio feedback at Leeds University.

What I’ve done is taken on board other peoples experiences of it and decided that I would give it a try.

In my use of it I was thinking about how to help students make more effective use of feedback but also in terms of accessibility. I’m conscious that a number of our learners have things like Dyslexia, and for them the written word might be more difficult to take on board whereas an audio file might be more effective that just reading feedback.

The other thing that I thought would be useful was listening to the audio recording with the written work in front of them, to hear the feedback in the same way as I created it. With written feedback the tone may not be correctly interpreted by the student, it could be read as having a negative critical tone, whereas with audio feedback the intonation of the voice may well be more effective in presenting it as a more supportive positive critique.

So for me audio feedback had a number of potential benefits. But I hadn’t perhaps considered all of the potential responses and I’ll talk a little about some of these that came from the students themselves, in a moment.

In terms of using audio feedback, I used it in the first instance on a module for second year undergraduate students. As a general rule our marking approach on this module was to provide a detailed feedback sheet, which incorporated a series of check boxes with space for additional free text. I generally tend to be quite verbose with my feedback, and include specific references to their work, to clearly illustrate my thinking and why I have given the mark that I have. So my approach is reasonably detailed. But what I didn’t appreciate when starting audio feedback was the length of the recordings and the size of file that these recordings resulted in. The first few that I did for that module were about 13 minutes in length. The students appreciated this approach and were generally complementary about the detailed feedback and they found it very useful. But I hadn’t envisaged the problems with sending the files to the students, or making them available. This is something that I’ll come on to in a moment.

When I looked at other people’s experiences of using audio feedback they spoke about making the file perhaps about 5 minutes in length and I really couldn’t understand when I started to do these recordings why my files were so lengthy. But what became apparent to me half way through the process was the reason why they were so long is that I was trying to incorporate everything that had previously been used on our written feedback form, in addition to the general comments that I would make.

So the second time I provided feedback to students using audio files I thought that what would be more helpful is to give students a typed copy of the feedback sheet with all the checkboxes marked, but to give them my free comments in the form of audio recording and that would effectively reduce the length of the recording. I trialed this approach with another group of students.

[Question from interviewer: How can you ensure that students actually listen t your feedback?]

That’s a good point. I’m aware that some people feel that students only look at the mark (grade) that they get, rather than reading the comments – certainly I’ve had people say that to me. So what I thought about when I recorded the audio feedback was not to give the mark (grade) on the typed feedback sheet, and not to give it to them at the start or end of the audio feedback recording, but I planted it somewhere in the middle. Some people might say that’s it’s up to the students whether they listen to it or not, but some teachers do put a lot of time and effort into trying to provide very supportive and developmental feedback, and it would be very disheartening and de-motivating to believe that no student ever took that on board. I just felt that putting the grade in the middle of the recording might discourage the desire to just try and retrieve the grade. So that was something that I made a conscious decision to do.

This academic year, what I’ve also done is moved it even further by giving students the choice as to whether they want written or audio feedback; because in terms of the trials I did last year some students said that they found it very helpful having written feedback because they could easily refer to it and go back to it and look through it when they were working on their next assignment. This was something that I hadn’t really anticipated at the time of doing the audio feedback. So for some individuals whilst they knew that they could listen to the audio again, some said that they liked having a physical tangible object, that you could easily visibly jump between paragraphs and sentences, which is not as easy to do with an audio recording. So whilst I had really positive comments, and for some students with learning differences they were very complimentary and said it really suited their learning style to be able to listen to the feedback, others were less complementary and indicated a preference for written feedback.

What I decided to do was to give students the choice of feedback. This certainly involved a lot more extra effort and time for me, but I was very much trying to be student centered and responsive to their needs. From a group of about 120 students, I only had about 20 students ask for audio feedback. I’m not sure whether that’s because people wanted to know their mark straight away and objected to it being ‘hidden’ in the audio recording. So in terms of equity I was then conscious that those who chose written feedback were getting their mark straight away. Again this was something that I hadn’t fully appreciated at the time. So when I repeated the process, for those who had chosen the audio feedback option I added their grade to the typed feedback sheet that accompanied the audio file.

I have to say that because I type quite quickly, and as I have used Dragon software to convert spoken work to text, producing typed feedback is much quicker for me that recording audio feedback. In order to make things a bit quicker and easier I recorded the audio feedback together in one or two sessions, and then did all of the written feedback together at the same time.

So that’s a bit about my experience, what I haven’t talked about are my issues in relation to technology. There are a couple of things that I learnt through the process that I would encourage others to think about when using audio feedback for the first time.

The first thing to think about is the size of file that you might have and how you are going to enable the student to access the file, Naively I had thought that I could just email the file to the students, but didn’t realise that there were limits on the size of file that could be sent through he institutional email system. So I remember rushing back in with my completed audio feedback, feeling very pleased with myself, only to discover that I couldn’t send the files to the students.

Through various conversations with a number of colleagues I found that the only way I could give students access to the audio files was to use Drop Box. I uploaded the audio files into Drop Box and gave each one a unique ID, Copy the ID link into the typed feedback sheet for the student. The student could then access their audio file in Drop Box via the ID link. Obviously if the student shared their ID with anyone else that was their choice.

My other point of advice is to make sure that when you are recording your feedback that you do so with a digital recorder, and save in an mp3 format.

I first started recording using Dragon software, which recorded in a file type that had to be converted to an mp3 format, which took a huge amount of time. Whereas if I had been able to record straight into mp3 it would have been a much easier process. This academic year I’ve been able to use a recorder where I’ve recorded straight into mp3 and that has saved me an enormous amount of time.

So make sure that you record in a format that makes it easy for you to manage the files but that students will also be able to easily access – mp3 format will play on many things. So you need to think abut the students being able to access the information as well as you being able to work with it.