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But I'm a distinction student!

The debates in recent literature, as summarized in McInnis & Krause (2002), expose the complexity of the issues surrounding transition into university. In particular, the literature acknowledges the dramatic pace of change in the higher education landscape which impacts on the first year experience. Lawrence (2002 p.9) makes the point however, that greater diversity of student background has to be accepted as the norm and not as a justification for unsuccessful institutional teaching and learning practices. When commencing students struggle to understand expectations as reflected in Australian studies (Cameron 1999 pp.16-17, Dobson et al 1996 p.23), lower understanding of grade standards and higher risks of failing or withdrawing prematurely exist. Consequently, the effectiveness of traditional tasks supporting these assessment and feedback processes within universities are rendered obsolete and ineffective.

Nonetheless, assessment and feedback practices remain a central part of a network of processes focused on the learning and teaching of students in higher education and to their engagement in the process. Feedback and marking standards are poorly understood by many students beginning university, and many students are disappointed in the results of their early assignment results and need to be assisted in understanding the nature of grades in reference to their submitted work. This paper reports on a study in 2007 focused on assessing first year students' perceptions about grades and sources of feedback around these and then educating them about these issues. First year students in a core course were surveyed during the first few weeks via a 'Tell-us' questionnaire to ascertain base-line knowledge of grading and feedback issues and then again towards the end of the study period to assess developed levels of understanding, following an online educational process developed as part of the project. Outcomes focused on students' increased understanding of grading standards and how to use and gain better feedback in improving results in submitted work.