

## Article

# **Investigating the Effects of Supervisor Feedback on International Masters Students' Dissertation Writing Outcomes in the UK**

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### ABSTRACT

At Anglophone universities, international students find the Masters dissertation challenging, perhaps because they cannot utilize the full potential of the supervisor's feedback (East, et al. 2012). Employing qualitative data, this study discovers that the supervisor's feedback can have psycho-affective, interpersonal and developmental effects on international students' Masters Dissertation Writing (MDW). It suggests that to obtain a fine-grained picture of these effects, supervisors should consider such important variables such as the student's personal needs, the developmental phase of the dissertation and feedback expectations, with a view to promoting students' motivation and encouraging them to develop their MDW.

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In the UK, doing a Masters dissertation poses challenges for both international students and supervisors (see Idris 2016). The supervisor's feedback aims to help international students deal with the complex and unstable feature of writing the Masters dissertation more effectively, how effectively it does this is contested (Woolhouse 2002, Grant 2003, Paltridge and Startfield 2007, Anderson et al. 2008, Bitchener, et al. 2010, East, et al. 2012). However, until recently, surprisingly little research has been carried out on feedback as a process in Masters dissertation writing (MDW). This article makes a genuine contribution to the sparse research on Masters students' and supervisors' views of the effects of the supervisor's feedback on international students' MDW.

Woolhouse (2002) provides some useful insights into how the feedback process is a researchable concept in MDW. Woolhouse (2002) compared the findings gained from her study of a Masters student's and a supervisor's early expectations of the dissertation tutorial with findings of other research studies (Phillips and Pugh 2000). Both sets of students and supervisors appear to share similar expectations concerning written work in the tutorial. Similar to Phillips and Pugh's study (2000, pp. 102,167), Woolhouse found that supervisors expect to 'see some written work early on in the process', and students expect their supervisors to offer 'constructive criticism'(2002, p. 142). To make tutorials more efficient, Woolhouse suggested that they should be 'more structured' by considering 'the needs of the students by asking them, prior to each tutorial, to identify aspects they wish to include' (2002, p.143). Woolhouse's study is of particular interest because it describes a method of conducting face to face tutorials in which both students and supervisors negotiate and discuss their supervision expectations. Although this study concentrates on the early stage of the Masters dissertation, it paves the way for exploring the potential effects of the supervisor's 'constructive' feedback, given during tutorials, on students' MDW.

In a more recent study in New Zealand East, Basturkmen and Bitchener (2012) used questionnaires and interviews to explore how 'effective' written feedback is from the perspective of postgraduate students (both home and international). Their study revealed that a key feature of effective feedback is that it helps foster student 'autonomy' and improve

'intellectual capability', although they may be 'more apprehensive about interpreting' the supervisor's feedback than home students probably because English is not their first language (2012, p. 10). It has also found that in spite of 'language and cultural background', international and home students benefit from 'both direct and indirect' types of written feedback (2012, p.10). Such findings reveal how written feedback influences both international students' and supervisors' views throughout the MDW process. Such effects are the focus of investigation in this study.

The present study was carried out at a UK university, including the following three distinct departments: Manufacturing Group (WMG), Law School (LS) and Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies (CTCCS). It aimed to answer the following overarching research question:

What are the potential effects of the supervisor's feedback on international students' Masters dissertation writing practices at WMG, LS and CTCCS?

## **Literature Review**

In broad terms, Laurillard (1993, p. 61) contended that any kind of learning entails feedback to the extent that 'action without feedback is completely unproductive for a learner.' It is clear that feedback seeks to foster learning because it is information offered to students about the extent their learning performance has improved. This information can be provided by teacher, peer or self. The challenge, however, is that it may be difficult to identify the actual effects of feedback on improving the learning process. Although research on the feedback process and its effects on MDW is sparse and inadequately theorized, it may be backed up by the extensive research on feedback in L1 and L2 writing. For example, Wiltse (2001) used questionnaires to explore the psycho-affective influence of teacher written feedback on increasing mass communication students' self-efficacy, i.e. students' trust in their capacity to improve their journalistic writing in a US context. Students were asked to rate their preferences for teacher written feedback on a journalistic essay with five comments related to 'local' (surface) issues and another five comments concerned with 'global' (meaning) issues. To help students rate their preferences for teacher written commentary effectively, the following four options were used: 1- definitely will use, 2- might use, 3- probably won't use, and 4-definitely won't use. Analysing the data statistically, it was discovered that teacher feedback had an impact on students' self-efficacy. However, Wiltse (2001) maintained that the 'Effects sizes were found to be small' (2001, p.17). Nevertheless, he suggested that such unexpected results may invite writing teachers to 'seek a balance between comments that facilitate learning and those that cause damaging affective reactions in students' (2001, p. 20). One advantage of Wiltse's study is that it shows how teacher feedback may have a motivational impact on inspiring students to work harder to improve their writing.

Hyland and Hyland (2001, p. 208) analyzed the written feedback given by two teachers on six ESL students' assignments in a full-time proficiency program. They found that feedback is often seen as a key composing process that seeks to 'transform students' attitudes to writing and lead them to improvements' (2001, p. 208). However, they offered a caveat that the 'words' used by teachers when commenting on students' assignments 'can also confuse and dishearten them' (2001, p. 208). Undoubtedly, ESL writing contexts differ from Masters supervision ones. Nevertheless, to support the assumption that the supervisor's

written commentary has an affective impact on international students' MDW motivation with empirical evidence, some genuine exploration is needed at Masters level.

Specifically, what are the key aspects that the supervisor's feedback may focus on in MDW? Although little research has addressed this question, Hyatt's study (2005) may offer some insights into clarifying the feedback focus in a Masters context. Hyatt used a critical analysis of a corpus of written feedback commentaries on Master of Education assignments. He discovered seven categories of written comments: phatic, developmental, structural, stylistic, content-related, methodological and administrative. When supervisors and students discuss what feedback should focus on, the comments are viewed as 'the catalyst for a dialogue on how these comment types can construct a hierarchical relationship...' (2005, p. 350). However, Hyatt warns that providing 'comprehensive assessment criteria' is not sufficient to overcome problems arising from this asymmetrical relationship because these criteria may result in misunderstanding. Instead, feedback should provide students with an opportunity to interact within a dynamic community, and 'they are not simply disempowered apprentices whose role is to follow and reproduce' (2005, p. 351). Hence, there is a strong need to explore the interactional effects of the supervisor's feedback focus on international students' MDW outcomes.

### **Data Collection**

This study involved a qualitative small-scale exploration employing two data gathering instruments: semi-structured interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. The names of both students and supervisors used here are imaginary. Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate views of a small number of international Masters international students', specifically their perceptions of how the feedback process influenced MDW in WMG, LS and CTCCS. Three rounds of student interviews were conducted. The first round, which took place before students actually started the dissertation writing, included 12 international students from WMG, LS and CTCCS (four from each department). The second round took place while students were writing their dissertations and includes interviews with three international students (one from each department: Suha (LS), Martin (WMG) and Shihab (CTCCS)). The final round took place while the students were working on the final draft or submission of their dissertation with the interviews being conducted with the same international students interviewed in the second round. Semi-structured questionnaires included open-ended questions that aimed to explore a small number of supervisors' views of the feedback process on MDW. The questionnaire data consists of fourteen completed questionnaires from WMG, six from LS, and six from CTCCS.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data includes interview transcripts and written answers to the open-ended questions in the questionnaires. This body of textual data was subjected to analysis using a qualitative content analysis technique. A main merit of this technique is that it begins with the interpretive essence of textual materials (Silverman, 2001). In the following section, the findings will be reported and discussed by developing an 'unfolding' story from the database, allowing the students' and supervisors' voices to emerge. Data was collected from three complementary groups of participants: twelve student interviewees, three longitudinal cases (Suha's, Shihab's and Martin's) and 26 supervisors. To ensure transparency, I decided to develop a system of referencing the data extracts. This system shows how all quotations can

in principle be traced back to a specific data source. It includes some information about the respondent, department and data event, for example Martin, WMG, first interview.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The key question raised in this study is: What are the potential effects of the supervisor's feedback on international students' Masters dissertation writing in a UK university? Inbuilt in this question is the assumption that feedback is integral in the process of supervising international students' MDW. It was discovered that the effects of the supervisor's feedback may be either positive or negative in shaping international students' learning, and supporting (motivating) them to improve their MDW outcomes. The contrast between positive and negative feedback effects may look simple on the surface, however they reflect the complexities of the feedback process. There's a wide degree of variation in how international students perceive feedback, what it means to them, what methods the supervisor uses to deliver the feedback, what aspects the supervisor may focus on at different developmental stages and whether students understand the feedback given. This is a major contribution in the present study. A more comprehensive understanding of the effects of supervisor's feedback is reached by discussing the following three aspects of feedback: psychological/motivational, interpersonal and developmental.

### **Psychological/Motivational Effects**

Some students think that their supervisor's feedback, especially if delivered in person, has a positive impact on fostering their motivation to work on their dissertation at the early stage. In the words of one of the student interviewees:

*If face to face, perhaps we can discuss and say a lot of things perhaps some problems at that time, we can't think about a lot but when face to face, we can discuss more. Supervisor can motivate me to speak a lot, and I can motivate my supervisor to speak a lot, focus on this dissertation. (Joyce, WMG, 1st interview)*

Joyce suggests that the motivation is mutual because both supervisor and student are motivated by the contributions of the other (see Woolhouse, 2002, p. 142). From the analysis of the longitudinal cases, Suha suggests that the supervisor's feedback has a profound influence on increasing her self-confidence in handling the challenges of the MDW process:

*So now I feel like I'm on the right track and I'm doing good. So it encourages me to work better... Otherwise, if it was if it was not good then I think I have to go back to stage one to start writing again and all that. (Suha, LS, 2nd interview)*

*Suha: I feel self-confidence (sic) now. I feel now like I can advise any other student who is going come here.*

*Ahmad: In what way?*

*Suha: In writing in what I have been going through yeah. (Suha, LS, questionnaire)*

Suha now even feels self-confident enough to advise others on how to write the Masters dissertation. Similarly one of Anderson et al.'s student participants also indicates that,

I feel confident now to say what I think about a study when people spout, you know, this study and that study and I can say: “Well, that was a good one, that was a bad one (2008, p. 46).

The following excerpt from Shihab’s second interview also shows how the supervisor’s feedback can foster self-confidence at Masters level:

*She was satisfied with everything I mean well when somebody just tells you ok you’re going fine. You’re doing good nothing about the language. Just keep connections between the ideas. She was clear... I would say she’s an expert. She would just immediately spot it out for anyone whoever supervised. (Shihab, CTCCS, 2nd interview)*

This finding provides support for Anderson et al.’s (2008, p. 43) point that the supervisor’s ‘genuine’ ‘praise’ can encourage students to believe in themselves. One of their participants mentioned after receiving the supervisor’s feedback: ‘I felt very positive and reinforced... if she gave you praise or said it was good, it was good. It was good.’ Students’ views in this respect are supported by those of supervisors. Nadeen (LS) argues that her feedback can have a motivating effect on improving international students’ individual and ‘intellectual’ abilities. In her words:

*To provide support both personal and intellectual by commenting on drafts so that the student feels motivated. (Nadeen, LS,)*

Similarly, Antony (WMG) argues that his feedback intends to ‘encourage them (international students) to strive for a good result’. This finding shows that the supervisor’s feedback can maintain students’ self-efficacy (see Wiltse 2001). East et al.’s (2012) study also supports this finding, especially when they claim that students expect the supervisor’s feedback to ‘use positive comments as well as ... things to change’ for ‘it’s motivating to receive positive feedback’ and ‘think about how to develop the writing’ (2012, p. 163).

On the other hand, the supervisor’s feedback may have a negative influence on students’ constructions of themselves as writers and their motivation to produce desired outcomes. A number of reasons are given. For example, Jane thinks that the supervisor’s too negative feedback may damage her motivation to improve the quality of her dissertation, as mentioned in the following passage:

*The way he criticises might point some negative critique, discourage or demotivate rather than motivate you to do. Those are certain problems that I foresee but I think have not to be very conservative. (Jane, LS, 1st interview)*

Some supervisors also acknowledge that international students may become depressed when receiving excessively negative criticism. For instance, Nadeen (LS) indicates:

*It is also (sic) the student understand that comments and feedback is not criticism or undermining of their work as in many cultures these things are taken very personally. (Nadeen, LS)*

One can infer that instead of criticizing their dissertation work, students may sometimes view negative feedback as a personal criticism (see Hyland and Hyland, 2001, p. 208). The following passage from Christine's (CTCCS) questionnaire also illustrates this:

*Instead of seeking direct advice, the student chooses to hide away, writes the dissertation in pain, and realises only too late s/he could have utilised the supervisor's time and feedback.*

A further reason is concerned with conflicting feedback expectations. For instance, Martin has high expectations at the beginning because he intends to produce something useful for those working in medical IT management. As he points out: 'I think it (the dissertation) helps. I want to write a dissertation that really can help people.' (Martin, WMG, 1st Interview). He relates his motivation to the actual contribution that the dissertation will make. On the other hand, his expectations diminish at later stages of doing the Masters dissertation:

*Actually, my dissertation is a bit useless, to be honest, because... I say short of company. Not totally useless but a bit useless. It is under my consideration, expectation. I think the outcome should be more.* (Martin, WMG)

One main reason is that the 'outcome' doesn't meet his expectations. He aspires to develop something but he cannot do it because of insufficient research resources. So it can be intricate for supervisors to offer feedback that will meet all students' expectations. This mismatch between students' expectations and feedback is enlightening because it shows how students need to make sure that their expectations are reasonable by negotiating them with those of the supervisor. This finding confirms Woolhouse's (2002, p. 143) view that stresses the importance of negotiating the expectations with the Masters student at early stages of doing the dissertation.

### **Interpersonal Effects**

Findings from student interviews reveal that students value face to face tutorials more than supervisor written commentary and email. A number of advantages of face to face tutorials have been recognized, Laura mentions that face to face tutorials are advantageous because they enhance the dialogic interaction between the supervisee and the supervisor:

*I always prefer one to one talk... My expectation to be in the meeting room and discuss it because um I think that's the way I can say synergy. When you're discussing you produce a lot more than you produce individually. Email is more individual than coming together... that feedback will be I mean especially in guidance. I really need meetings.* (Laura, WMG)

She regards tutorials as a vibrant 'synergy' where both the student and the supervisor communicate their views and discuss particular comments more closely. At later stages of the dissertation, Shihab acknowledges the communicative value of face to face tutorials. He stresses the importance of 'body language' in making tutorials more interactive than email. In his words:

*I would actually agree that it is something cultural. Yes. Maybe for us yeah for my culture...really convey the body language element... But for other people from other cultures, text would do, but for me they at least not always they don't suffice. (Shihab, CTCCS, 3rd Interview)*

So the interpersonal feature of face to face tutorials may be influenced by cultural differences (see Grant 2003). The supervisor questionnaires also mention the interpersonal value of face to face tutorials. For instance, Christine (CTCCS) points out:

*Sometimes I speak to the student face to face to make sure she/he understands my feedback. It facilitates direct dialogue between the student and myself. (Christine CTCCS)*

Such findings support East's et al. (2012) students who argue:

*It's not just written feedback ... we talk about our draft over coffee, which is more relaxing ... Being friendly and [having] communication is very important between supervisors and student, that you keep talking about the work, and other things like life...(2012, p. 11)*

Another advantage of face to face tutorials is that they require more active negotiation between the student and supervisor concerning the precise meaning of feedback comments.. This kind of negotiation enables the student to ask for immediate explanation of those comments that are not clear, as mentioned by Musharaf:

*I think in terms of feedback I mean I'm more comfortable if I talk face to face because yeah because I mean you know sometimes on Internet on even talking on MSN you cannot put through your message very clearly if you're talking face to face. I prefer face to face. (Musharaf, WMG, 1st Interview)*

This benefit is also mentioned by the supervisors. For instance, Douglas indicates that face to face tutorials are useful because they provide a good opportunity to give students more clarification. In his words:

*[I] Prefer face to face –... you can get an indication if they understand what you are saying, and if they don't then you can try to explain it again a different way. (Douglas, WMG)*

Nadeen (LS) adds:

*Feedback that is not accompanied by face to face meetings can be problematic for the overseas student who may not understand the comments, or who may have questions but unable to articulate these. It is also important to make the student articulate these. (Nadeen, LS)*

Moreover, this negotiation shows how supervisors themselves use this opportunity to check to what extent their students have understood their comments:

*Conversations help the supervisor to know if the student has understood and if they are worried about anything. (Colin, WMG)*

It is noteworthy that this negotiation presents the supervisor as a facilitator and not simply an assessor. However, some students and supervisors in the present study argue that face to face tutorials may have a negative impact on international students' interaction with the supervisor. One reason is associated with lack of sufficient time to meet the supervisor on a regular basis. Shihab puts it in this way:

*Now it's the way I'm gonna be frank about this. The way I see, it depends (sic) how busy the supervisor is. The way some students have supervisors which are not really busy so what they do is to meet them in person. Whereas my supervisor the way I see it she is quite busy. Her feedback will take the form of written comments. (Shihab, CTCCS, 1st interview)*

Lisa, a student, highlights the Japanese linguistic insufficiency of the staff member giving feedback as another negative aspect of supervisor's feedback:

*He is not Japanese of course, but I'm studying translation studies. I have to compare English and Japanese. In that case, he has some knowledge about Japanese, but he doesn't know Japanese well. Can also I rely on him totally or not? Because in my department, the teacher said the supervisor is just supervisor and the study is your own study. So you cannot rely on them totally. (Lisa, CTCCS, 1st interview)*

Written commentary and email are seen by some students as more convenient because of the option of printing an attached text. Martin explains this in the following quotation:

*We email a lot... I send the file to my supervisor before I go to meet him. And he revised my work with a pen and on paper. He will print it out for me and give me the copy. (Martin, WMG, 1st interview)*

Likewise, Sonia points out:

*And also because like email is very convenient and also just mentioning the written comments because just like last time I sent her the topic to propose ideas and she has... kind of written comments as well. So I can read her comments at the same time on my own ideas. And I could have the print out as well. (Sonia, CTCCS, 1st interview)*

One can infer that Sonia prefers the email because the supervisor's written comments can be saved in a concrete record.

### **Developmental Effects**

Some findings show that the supervisor's feedback focus can have a positive effect, improving international students' MDW outcomes. Many student participants believe that although the supervisor's feedback may cover a variety of aspects (content, ideas, grammar, layout, spelling, presentation), the focus should be on meaning-level issues (e.g. arguments, counterarguments, theory, ideas, topic, opinion) at the early stages of doing the dissertation.

The following extract from the interview with Suha shows how meaning-level feedback is expected to focus on 'content':

*The content of my dissertation, what is actually my arguments. Whatever I've been you know the content basically does not mean that structure of it but what it's being containing my dissertation, the topic which is mostly concerned my opinion which is the gist of the whole work of it. I think that's crucially very important. (Suha, LS, 1st interview)*

According to Helen, meaning-level feedback can also have a direct impact on improving the quality of her MDW:

*I think first is about content. I mean the main content you're writing about in your essay that should be the most important thing um because um whether your essay is worth writing or is a good essay, it depends on the content: the ideas, the arguments, the comments the idea about the legal topic and writing in my dissertation. (Helen, LS)*

Helen argues that content-related issues should be prioritized because they help her develop the quality of her writing. The developmental impact of the supervisor's feedback is also identified in Martin's longitudinal cases. The following extracts from Martin's second interview illustrate how the supervisor's feedback seems to have had a direct influence on Martin's writing development:

*I'm working harder enough. Of course, he said to me the work is nice, but there is still room to improve... Probably that's the message (Martin, WMG, 2nd interview)*

*Each time I met him. I've got something to submit. So probably I met him 6 times and I submit 6 drafts. He used some email to correct me (sic) thoughts because sometimes I will have some thinking when I want to discuss with him. And he give (sic) me feedback basically those are the directions, questions. Is that a good way to write like that? Or is that a good direction...? (Martin, WMG, 2nd interview)*

This finding resonates with Paltridge and Startfield's (2007, p. 44) point that the supervisor's feedback can be seen as 'a significant resource for improving not only the content and ideas but also language use and the rhetorical organization of their writing.' In a similar vein, some supervisors agree that the supervisor's meaning-level feedback has a key influence on improving students' writing at early stages of doing the dissertation. The following excerpt offers a good illustration of this finding:

*[The purpose of the feedback is] to ensure that the student has the opportunity to develop the content to the standard of a pass and subsequently to a level consistent with their ability. (Philip, WMG)*

A few students think that the supervisor's feedback may have a positive linguistic effect on their writing, improving the quality and accuracy, especially when it focuses on surface-level issues such as grammar because English is not their first language. For instance, Musharaf anticipates that the supervisor will offer feedback on grammar because English is a foreign language for international students:

*A lot of people have come from different backgrounds and international students. So their first language is not English. So they (supervisors) should give feedback on, I think, not spelling but grammar. (Musharaf, WMG, 1st interview)*

This finding is also backed up by the findings gained from the supervisor questionnaires. A useful example is Nancy (LS):

*At the proposal stage, choosing to make sure the topic is properly defined (not too wide or ... too narrow), realistic but sufficiently challenging intellectually. During the writing of the dissertation picking up from reading draft problems with structure, style or analysis and advising on improvement. (Nancy, Staff, LS)*

Lucy (WMG) also mentions that her feedback usually tries to identify ‘bad elements of the work (be they linguistic... related)’. Furthermore, in providing feedback on language, some supervisors see their role as partly that of proof-reader. A good example is Antony (WMG):

*We often have to edit the dissertations ourselves as they progress in order to get the relevant message clear. (Lucy, Staff, WMG)*

This finding suggests that international students should be offered more assistance with such surface aspects as spelling, grammar and layout to make the text more meaningful. Bitchener et al.'s (2010, pp. 92-93) study offers some support for this finding. As one of their supervisor participants puts it: ‘I give feedback on accuracy on early drafts because I want to set the standard and I do the same again at the end when I am helping my students polish up the writing...’ However, some students such as Suha, address this issue by seeking outside support. It seems that this outside help is useful because it may not over-privilege the supervisor’s role as the sole feedback provider. In her words:

*I made sure before sending my complete draft to my supervisor that I did give other people in other faculties especially those who are specializing language to proofread that work. So that my aim was that if I give it to my supervisor there should not be much comments from him. I think it worked. (Suha, LS, 3rd interview)*

Providing detailed correction of written English may have some negative effects on the dissertation process. One problem is that it can consume the supervisor’s valuable time. For example, Lucy (WMG) points out that when it comes to international students ‘more time is spent correcting the English...’ Time spent correcting may also have a negative impact on the quality of the content of the dissertation. To allow more time for the supervisor to concentrate on content related issues, international students are asked by their supervisors ‘to get a native English proof-reader but often they do this far too late in the project cycle, so they lose marks for layout, spelling grammar etc.’ (Antony, WMG). Bitchener's et al. (2010, p. 92) study claims that supervisors ‘expect their students to sort out their own accuracy issues...’ because they ‘are not editors’.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the supervisor’s feedback focus can enhance particular interpersonal effects because the supervisor is not only viewed as an evaluator but also as a facilitator. The following extracts from Suha’s third interview offer some explanation of how her supervisor’s role has become a facilitator:

*Of course, he has requested me that if I need any other problem, I'm always invited and I should always email him in case of anything. That in itself shows that he has been interested, committed. He replied instantly you know. (Suha, LS, 3rd interview)*

*Ahmad: Now, how you respond to your supervisor's feedback when you receive the comments on that draft?*

*Suha: Oh. I become delighted. I just feel like ok at least... he is considerate with me and with my work. Of course, it makes me I become motivated because the time whenever I sent the email I'm always anxious to see his comments and if it happens like if he delays, but he has not done that I become like that I'm worried. (Suha, LS, 3rd interview)*

Three reasons are associated with Suah's view: a) offering invitations to Suah to ask questions that need further clarification, b) showing more 'commitment' and 'interest' in the student's work, and c) sending timely feedback. In this way the supervisor creates a positive and encouraging atmosphere conducive to interacting more dynamically. Hyatt's (2005) study offers some support for such findings. He claims that 'if writing is truly to be understood as a developmental process, and for writing pedagogies to reflect this, then the role and function of tutor feedback needs to be engaged with more critically' (p. 352).

## **Conclusion**

The importance of the present study is that it could make a contribution to the sparse research on the potential effect of the supervisor feedback on international students' MDW. The effects of supervisor feedback can be grouped into psycho-affective/motivational, interpersonal and developmental effects. To understand these effects more thoroughly, it is important to take into account of such issues as the student's personal needs, the developmental phase of the dissertation and feedback expectations. One value of these issues is that they can establish an interesting context or framework within which the effects of the supervisor's feedback can be more effectively interpreted.

International students seem to have a variety of conflicting feedback expectations at different stages of the Masters dissertation process. The interpersonal influence of the supervisor's feedback may help both supervisors and Masters students communicate their expectations and achieve some clarity about when written work is expected to be submitted by students, when they will get it back, and the kinds of comments supervisors will give on this written work. Supervisory meetings can be a useful means to stimulate both international students and supervisors to negotiate responsibilities, share views, and learn from each other. Because conflicting feedback expectations may occur at a variety of phases of the Masters dissertation process, more research needs to be conducted on how other departments across UK University address the issue

In conclusion, some international students may not be motivated to process supervisor feedback effectively at different stages of the writing process. They may be confused and even disheartened by excessively negative feedback. Therefore, it is advisable and consequently it is necessary to raise awareness of the affective influence of supervisor feedback on international students' motivation. In contrast when supervisors provide effective feedback to international students, their motivation increases and their attitudes to writing become more positive.

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