

CRADLE suggests...

Feedback and GenAI



FEEDBACK AND GENAI

Feedback is one of the most powerful tools for student learning. But it's also one of the most complex. The arrival of generative AI (GenAI) tools like ChatGPT offers increasingly easy access to tailored information, outside of formal teaching processes. This raises important but challenging questions: Why and how do students turn to GenAI for feedback? How do they use this information? What role does teacher feedback now play? What does this mean for the way we teach and offer feedback to our students?

This brief guide offers practical, research-informed suggestions to help educators think about GenAI in the context of their feedback design and delivery.



Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning

CRADLE suggests is a series of briefings from the [Centre for Research and Assessment in Digital Learning \(CRADLE\)](#), which translates our own research into practice-based possibilities.

THE RESEARCH

Students report using GenAI tools to get feedback on their work.

They are often doing so early in their studies, typically independently, and frequently without telling anyone. They use it for a variety of purposes, including to clarify questions, improve structure of texts, revise drafts, or boost confidence. Students in the same unit will use GenAI quite differently from each other. Left to their own devices, different students will use it in ways that are both positive and negative for their own learning.

This adds a significant new dimension to the feedback landscape. GenAI tools now provide students with another source of feedback outside formal teaching processes, one that is available on-demand and on their own terms.

While GenAI is fast and available on demand, it doesn't always provide accurate or meaningful advice. More importantly, it lacks the human capacity to offer recognition, or the sense of being understood, challenged, and guided by someone who knows you and your work. This is a key component of learning and it's something that AI simply cannot do.

Recent work involving CRADLE members offers three key insights to guide teaching and feedback practice:

Students use and see GenAI and teacher feedback differently

Survey responses show that students often don't see GenAI as a replacement for teacher feedback. They value GenAI for its speed and clarity, but still turn to teachers for trustworthy, unit-specific, and personalised advice.

Feedback is more than information, it's a form of recognition

Not all feedback is the same. Feedback can invite students into dialogue, challenge their assumptions, help them feel intellectually 'seen', and introduce them into a learning community. Recognition from human teachers offers this kind of feedback in a way that AI can't replicate.

GenAI feedback is limited

While GenAI can simulate dialogue, it does not replicate the developmental, context-rich guidance that teachers and supervisors offer over time. Human feedback builds trust, reflects care, provides meaningful challenge at key points and helps students grow, not just improve.

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ADAPTING CURRENT FEEDBACK PRACTICES FOR GENAI

Assume students will use GenAI for feedback

Design learning environments and feedback processes that acknowledge this reality but be mindful that not all students will choose to use it.

Support students to include, interpret, and evaluate GenAI feedback

Students may use GenAI for reassurance or direction, but they need help judging its limits and value and how to use it well.

Consider GenAI as extending, not replacing, feedback conversations

GenAI can help students articulate questions or prepare drafts, but it lacks important qualities that support and shape learning.

See feedback as an opportunity for recognition

Feedback does more than transmit information. GenAI can offer useful suggestions, but only human feedback can create the mutual recognition that supports deep learning and academic growth.

Design feedback opportunities with humans across a module, course or unit

GenAI feedback is commonly not sufficient on its own. Tailor your feedback comments to enable students to take the next step. Use what they have done to point to what they need to do.



FIND MORE

1. Corbin, T., Tai, J., & Flenady, G. (2025). [Understanding the place and value of GenAI feedback: a recognition-based framework](#). *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 1–14.
Explores why some types of feedback matter more than others, and how GenAI fits into feedback that supports learning and identity.
2. Henderson, M., Bearman, M., Chung, J., Fawns, T., Buckingham Shum, S., Matthews, K. E., & de Mello Heredia, J. (2025). [Comparing Generative AI and teacher feedback: student perceptions of usefulness and trustworthiness](#). *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 1–16.
A cross-institutional survey exploring how students use and value feedback from GenAI and teachers.
3. Jensen, L. X., Bearman, M., Boud, D., & Konradson, F. (2025). [Feedback encounters in doctoral supervision: the role of generative AI chatbots](#). *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 1–14.
A reflective self-study showing how GenAI compares with supervisor feedback, and what each offers.

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