ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

The enduring value of teachers in feedback processes: Evidence from student perceptions of genAI versus human feedback

Jimena de Mello Heredia, Michael Henderson
Monash University

Margaret Bearman, Jennifer Chung
Deakin University

Tim Fawns
Monash University

Simon Buckingham Shum
University of Technology Sydney

Kelly E. Matthews
The University of Queensland

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into higher education has sparked debates about the future role of teachers (Chan & Tsi, 2024), including in providing feedback information to students. While GenAI offers unprecedented accessibility and immediacy, this presentation argues that teachers' expertise remains irreplaceable in productive feedback – i.e., processes in which students make sense of information about their performance and use it to improve the quality of their work or learning strategies (Henderson et al., 2019, p. 1402).

Drawing on a large-scale, cross-institutional survey involving 6,960 Australian university students (Henderson et al., 2025), this Pecha Kucha highlights students' perceptions of GenAI versus teacher feedback. The quantitative analysis revealed that nearly half of them (49.7%) reported using GenAI for feedback. However, they rated teacher feedback as more helpful and significantly more trustworthy. While 83.9% found GenAI feedback helpful, only 60.1% considered it trustworthy, compared to 90.5% who trusted teacher feedback. This trust gap may reflect the inconsistent quality identified in GenAI's feedback comments (Venter et al., 2024).

The thematic analysis of 5,736 open-ended responses from students who used GenAI for feedback yielded 8,498 coded instances, revealing four interrelated characteristics in which teacher feedback was perceived as outperforming GenAI.

Contextualisation and Relevance: Teacher feedback was perceived as more sensitive to specific assignment contexts (95.2% of 669 instances rated GenAI as less contextualised than teacher feedback) and more relevant to learning objectives (84.6% of 123 instances rated GenAI as less relevant). This contextual awareness enables teachers to identify what matters within disciplinary and course-specific frameworks.

Reliability and Accuracy: Students perceived teacher feedback as significantly more reliable and trustworthy (95.4% of 1143 instances), reflecting teachers' ability to provide more trustworthy and accurate guidance without the hallucinations and factual inaccuracies that can appear on GenAI outputs.

Relational Significance: Teachers offered more personal, connected feedback experiences (93.8% of 471 instances), providing the interpersonal recognition essential for productive learning relationships. This relational dimension cannot be replicated by GenAI’s algorithmic responses.

Expertise: Students recognised teachers as more authoritative sources (88.2% of 119 instances), valuing their disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical understanding of student development trajectories.

Students' evaluation of feedback is fundamentally shaped by perceptions of source credibility (Bearman et al., 2024), which may explain why students perceive teacher feedback as more trustworthy than GenAI's. Research demonstrates this selective engagement: uptake of content-focused GenAI feedback was considerably lower than form-focused feedback(Ziqi et al., 2024), suggesting students recognise GenAI's limitations for substantive guidance requiring disciplinary expertise. This translates into learning outcomes, with students not only perceiving instructor feedback as more useful but also demonstrating significantly greater lab score improvements than those receiving GenAI feedback (Er et al., 2025).

GenAI may create opportunities for educators to focus on what they do best: providing expert, contextualised, and relationally-grounded feedback within authentic learning relationships. This potentially positions teacher expertise as increasingly valuable, with educators prioritising higher-level pedagogical responsibilities, such as developmental guidance, facilitating critical thinking, and disciplinary enculturation, while GenAI supports lower-level feedback processes, like grammar correction and initial draft review. Students appear to already recognise this distinction, trusting teachers for more substantive, transformative feedback while appreciating GenAI's supplementary role for immediate, accessible guidance.

Keywords: feedback, generative AI, higher education.

References

Bearman, M., Tai, J., Dawson, P., Boud, D., & Ajjawi, R. (2024). Developing evaluative judgement for a time of generative artificial intelligence. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *49*(6), 893–905. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2024.2335321

Chan, C. K. Y., & Tsi, L. H. Y. (2024). Will generative AI replace teachers in higher education? A study of teacher and student perceptions. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *83*, 101395. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2024.101395

Er, E., Akçapınar, G., Bayazıt, A., Noroozi, O., & Banihashem, S. K. (2025). Assessing student perceptions and use of instructor versus <scp>AI</scp>-generated feedback. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *56*(3), 1074-1091. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13558

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. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2025.2502582

Henderson, M., Phillips, M., Ryan, T., Boud, D., Dawson, P., Molloy, E., & Mahoney, P. (2019). Conditions that enable effective feedback. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *38*(7), 1401-1416. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1657807

Venter, J., Coetzee, S. A., & Schmulian, A. (2024). Exploring the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the delivery of effective feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2024.2415649

Ziqi, C., Xinhua, Z., Qi, L., & Wei, W. (2024). L2 students' barriers in engaging with form and content-focused AI-generated feedback in revising their compositions. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2024.2422478

de Mello Heredia, J., Henderson, M., Bearman, M., Chung, J., Fawns, T., Buckingham Shum, S., & Matthews, K. E. (2025, Nov 30 – Dec 3). The enduring value of teachers in feedback processes: evidence from student perceptions of genAI versus human feedback. Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education Conference, Adelaide, Australia. DOI: https://doi.org/10.65106/apubs.2025.2763.