A low cost/open source system for delivering feedback in OSCEs and clinical attachments

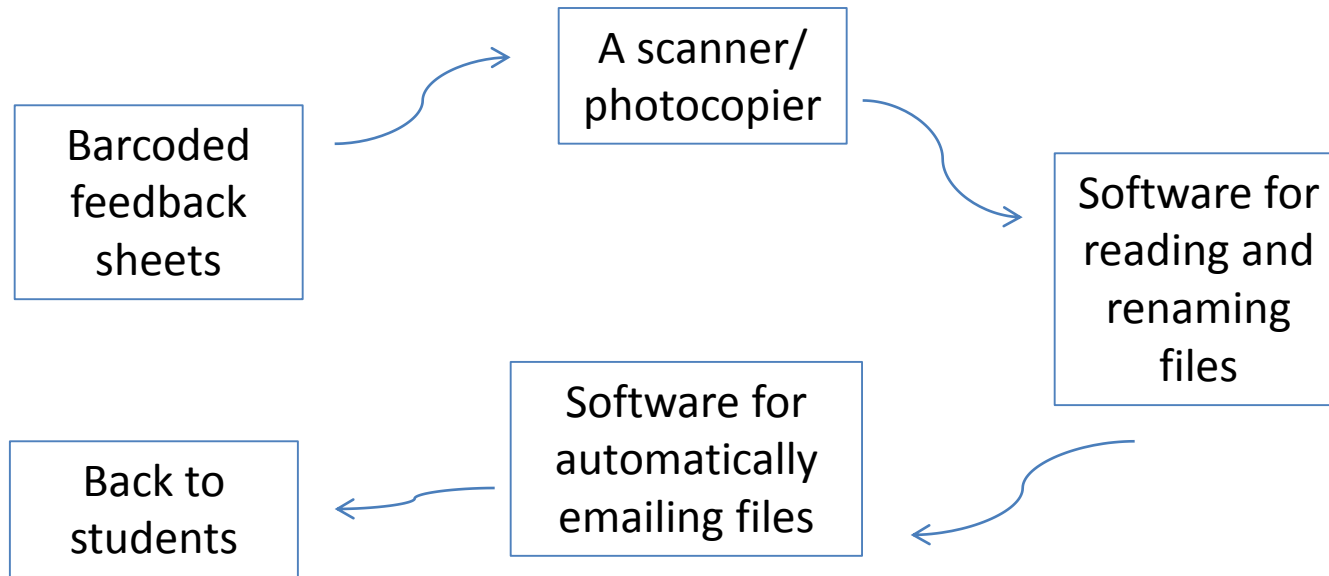David Hope
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Background and Purpose

- OSCE-type assessment is widely used to determine progression

- Virtually no feedback is offered in the UK on performance in this reliable and valid assessment despite a strong desire for it

- Given the enormous (potentially >5000 sheets) amount of paperwork manual feedback is extremely difficult, but in-person feedback makes the assessment unacceptably long

Technology!

- Ipads, laptops, recorders
- Very expensive
- Range £10,000 - £100,000, most of it recurring
- Significant practical barriers

  – Untested – is it worth doing at all?
  – How can we find out?
  – If it all goes wrong are we stuck with it?

A low cost solution

Barcoded feedback sheets → A scanner/photocopier → Software for reading and renaming files → Software for automatically emailing files → Back to students

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Delivery

- Delivered in the 2012-13 and 2013-14 year 3 OSCEs (first clinical year)

- Approximate sample size of 500 students each with eight stations

- One-off software costs of ~£200

- Recurring costs of around ~£150

- Free or open-source versions of each software subsequently identified

Feedback sheets

- Identifying details
- What went well/didn't go well
- Free text comments
- In this example, the student has been given ~250 words of constructive feedback

Did students like it?

- Overwhelmingly positive response
- Very commonly stated it was the most useful feedback they had received at medical school
- Strongly recommended continuing project
- Single most popular response for what could be done to improve the project: "Nothing."

Feedback for learning

- Research evidence suggests feedback is most useful when it focuses on meta-cognitive skills (e.g. Hattie, 1996)

- We wanted to ensure the feedback was used and helped developed independent learning

- A very small minority of students had difficulty accepting feedback – we must help these students

Feedback for learning

- In a class-wide session students discussed, listed, and returned
  - A strength they have identified from their feedback
  - Two points for learning based on feedback
- How they went about engaging in feedback with their peers – and how they would follow this up in future

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Conclusions

- This was only doable because of the low cost
- BUT the enthusiastic response demonstrates low-cost solutions or 'gold-plated' solutions are viable – neither is a waste of time
- The time and resources spent on fine-tuning the project were well spent
- Students were extremely happy with the results and staff engaged well

Future directions

- Testing performance improvements in subsequent years

- Identifying sub-groups who are resistant to feedback to determine why

- Improving delivery and expanding feedback until it becomes the norm

- Providing training materials so anyone replicate this