A range of people from different universities and colleges have told us how they are achieving benefits through the electronic management of assessment.

University of Southampton

I’m Adam Warren. I’m a Learning Designer in the Institute for Learning Innovation and Development at the University of Southampton.

I think EMA is really important because assessment and feedback are at the heart of what a university does these days. So they act as drivers for developing students’ research, analytical and presentation skills as well as their critical thinking and reflective practice. So I think it’s really important that getting this process right is a key institutional objective. Institutions worry a good deal about their NSS scores on assessment, for example, and there’s a huge demand from students to submit electronically. They really want to do this and therefore it makes sense to try and complete that process and to mark electronically and to provide the feedback electronically well. So it seems like an inevitable move.
Birmingham City University

My name is Nicola Bartholomew. I work at Birmingham City University and I am an academic lead for learning and teaching in the faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences.

For me EMA can be a fundamental way to enhance the student learning experience in terms of efficiency gains and e-submission, in terms of the nature of assessed work and feedback and encouraging more innovative ways of engaging students in their learning, and in terms of formative learning opportunities. EMA can also be extremely beneficial for staff to help them streamline the whole assessment and feedback lifecycle whilst potentially alleviating their workload. So for me it seems like a win-win scenario.

We have moved to e-submission of assessment over the last couple of years and the transition has encouraged us to not only discuss the logistical management of e-submissions and marking but also to discuss quality enhancement of assessment and feedback overall and this has informed subsequent policies and practice. Electronic systems can also support dialogue between staff and students. So, for example, reciprocal feedback around a submitted assessment task helps to inform our practice and helps to build assessment literacy in our students and enhances their experience overall.

It’s obviously beneficial for us to be thinking about the use of EMA in terms of enhancing our practice from a pedagogic point of view, but there’s obviously clearly efficiency gains with EMA too and one of the biggest wins for students is they don’t have to travel in to university to submit their work.

Our staff are also considering the nature of the feedback shared with students in terms of the quality of feedback and feedforward and they’re considering different modes of giving feedback too now. This is helping them to personalise their feedback for students and make it more accessible to them as well. So again it’s having a knock-on effect, a positive effect on our practice on giving feedback.

In terms of EMA it’s really good to have that constant archive of student work online that can be easily accessed by the marking teams and our external examiners as well. Teams have found it particularly useful to share their assessment documentation online with their external examiner on the VLE so that’s been another win from our perspective.

University of Hull

I’m Chris Turnock. I am the Head of Technology Enhanced Learning at the University of Hull.

Electronic management of assessment is important to us at the University of Hull primarily because it has the potential to enhance student learning, particularly as we embark on the strategy of promoting the use of digital marking and digital feedback, and part of that whole strategy is that we can enhance student engagement with their assessment feedback and therefore improve student learning and hopefully as well that student satisfaction increases and that also we bring greater efficiency into our processes and that it enables us to move towards a situation where assessment is primarily - but not completely because sometimes it’s not relevant - but primarily would be a paperless process and that therefore brings cost savings and also the environmental impact is reduced.
University of Sheffield

My name’s Bryony Olney. I work for the University of Sheffield and I’m the learning technologist for the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

As a department we’ve been looking at EMA in seriousness probably for about a year. We had a great deal of support from the leadership team who recognised the benefits, particularly in turning round time management for academics, buying them a little bit of extra time to do their marking.

It also brings massive benefits to students. Students don’t have to come in to see us to drop their assignments in. They have a bit more time to do their assignments which they’re really grateful for, and also the use of e-marking that we’ve started using means that they can receive their feedback in electronic format in the same way. The beauty of the electronic format of assessments is that it’s easy for them to download and retain, and also consolidate their feedback from multiple assignments rather than having lots of bits of paper hanging around their office. Certainly one student said to me they much prefer having it in electronic format so it doesn’t get dog-eaten or in a waste paper basket somewhere. So there’s loads of benefits particularly that the students have shared with us in terms of EMA.

Sheffield Hallam University

My name’s Brian Irwin. I’m the Head of Digital Capability at Sheffield Hallam University.

One of the reasons we’re interested in electronic management of assessment is really the student expectations. The students are starting to expect this sort of thing and we don’t want to be left behind. We equally would ideally like to be moving at the front of waves like this so that we’re providing the most modern digital experience for our students as we can.

As an overall benefit we hope that we might become a more digital institution and people’s practice would be moved forward across the whole institution in terms of staff and students in other areas too.

I think there’s a wider benefit which is around just improving their own digital capabilities and confidence using technology too. It’s a really good opportunity for staff to build up their digital capabilities and to improve their confidence with using some of these technologies.
Manchester Metropolitan University

My name’s Rod Cullen. I’m a senior lecturer in learning and teaching technologies at Manchester Metropolitan University.

I think experience of assessment is so integral to the learning and teaching experience as to make them almost impossible to disentangle. So I think that by developing and improving the hygiene factors around assessment we can sort of separate out the functional management bits from the learning and teaching that should be wrapped around assessment practice.

We’re getting to the stage at MMU where we’re making the basic good practice around assessment so visible, so that’s things like publication of clear, consistent, reliable submission dates, clear submission reliable return dates for feedback, that marks are made available transparently and quickly and are very easy for students to find. We’re taking care of those basic hygiene factors so we’re making it much easier to manage that process which then frees up time for students to have more dialogic engagement with the students about actually competing the assignment in the first place, and I think that overall will enhance the students’ experience of assessment.

Since 2008 we’ve seen year on year improvement in our NSS results around assessment and feedback to the point where we’re ahead of the sector now. But that’s really been about a concerted and focused effort on improving these hygiene factors around electronic management of assessment.