GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

A PARTnerships Collaborative Project

This resource has been designed to assist academics in addressing some of the common challenges they face in their teaching. It guides and supports collaborative evaluation of current practices by encouraging individual and peer reflection, with a view to action.

This resource is comprised of three parts.

1. Giving feedback to students: A brief guide
2. Giving feedback to students: Individual reflection
3. Giving feedback to students: Peer discussion

There are two levels of peer review for academics seeking to review student feedback:

Level 1: Review feedback practices and adopt/try out new strategies (1 – 1½ hours).

Level 2: Review current rubrics and (re-) write them as required (1 – 2½ hours).

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

For more information, contact the Centre for Teaching and Learning

Giving feedback to students: A brief guide

Biggs & Tang (2007) claim that feedback "tops the list of … factors leading to good learning" (p. 97). Students should receive individual feedback on their work addressing how the work is good, and how the work can be improved. Formative feedback (during the semester) is an essential part of the learning process.

Good feedback practice:

- facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
- encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
- helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
- provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
- delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
- encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem; and
- provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape their teaching (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

What does good quality feedback practice look like?

Good quality feedback is:

Frequent	Students are given the opportunity to receive feedback on their learning at multiple points through the teaching term.
Positive	Feedback reinforces and rewards good work by pointing out strengths as well as areas for improvement.
Intended to guide learning	Students receive guidance about *how* to improve their work in the future, not just *what* to improve. It motivates students.
Focused on the work	Careful phrasing ensures that judgements are not made about students' capabilities.
Timely	Students receive feedback soon after their task has been submitted, and well before their next task is due.
Relevant	Feedback is relevant to the task criteria, and to student learning in the course. It aligns with the course ad program learning outcomes.
Clear and focused	Students are able to understand the feedback and its application to their work. It is kept focused on a few, important aspects of the work.

Giving feedback to students: Individual reflection
Use this table to reflect on your current feedback practices (½ − 1hour).

Frequency How often do your students receive feedback on their graded (or ungraded) work?	
Positive As a rule, do you find something positive to say about your students' work?	
Guides learning Does your feedback both justify the grade given and guide students in how to improve their work?	
Work Focused Is the feedback given written in a way that judges students' work rather than their 'abilities'?	
Timeliness How long after the task is submitted, and before the next is due, do your students typically get their feedback?	
Relevance Is the feedback clearly related to the task and the learning outcomes?	
Clarity and focus Is the feedback clear and concise, with a focus on key points?	

Do you…

Provide both individual and general (class) feedback?	Y N	Comments:
Use marking guides (or rubrics), and de-construct these with students *before* the task is due?	Y N	Comments:
Discuss last year's general feedback with current students?	Y N	Comments:
Discuss general and individual feedback with students as a follow up?	Y N	Comments:
Ensure feedback is quickly and easily accessed?	Y N	Comments:
Help students to understand the purpose of feedback, and show them how to use it?	Y N	Comments:
Have students give themselves and their peers feedback?	Y N	Comments:
Allow students to submit a draft for initial feedback?	Y N	Comments:
Allow students to submit practice papers or quizzes?	Y N	Comments:
Require students to demonstrate that they have used feedback you have given them?	Y N	Comments:

Giving feedback to students: Peer discussion

Use these questions to guide the discussion with a colleague (½ hour).

1) What did you learn about your feedback strategies from your reflection?

2) How would you rate your feedback practices with regard to impact on student learning?

3) How would you rate your feedback practices with regard to workload efficiency?

4) What solutions can your pair identify to strengthen your feedback and address workload efficiencies?

5) Identify up to two strategies you would like to use to implement the changes you have identified.

Date for a follow-up meeting to discuss further: _____

References

Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2007). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does* (3rd ed.). Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press.
Nicol, D. & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). *Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice*. Studies in Higher Education, *31*(2), 199-218.