

How do I give feedback when marking?

Topic focus

- purpose of feedback
- types of feedback
- giving feedback for learning

Topic outcomes

- you will be able to identify characteristics of good feedback
- you will be able to perceive what students expect from feedback

'University policy requires academics to provide good feedback to students on their learning. But what specific types of feedback will assist with student learning? I have to mark 50 assignments. Am I supposed to spend hours writing comments on them? If the assignment is really good, do I need to write anything? Should I just tick everything? Or should I use a matrix sheet with standardised comments to tick?'

Take a moment to reflect on this issue.

What challenges does this pose for *your* teaching?

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Possible solutions

1. Try the 'sandwich' approach when next marking assignments – when writing your overview comments about the assignment in general, begin with a positive comment, followed by constructive criticisms, finishing with a positive reinforcer.
2. Try writing at least one comment on every page of a student assignment – a. praise, b. suggestions for what could have been included to improve the assignment, c. suggested source for further reading, d. URL of advice on proper referencing, e. a request for a clearer explanation.
3. Try having a 'conversation' with the student via your written comments - e.g. 'Yes, I agree' or 'Do you think that this point is adequately explained?' or 'Yes!' or 'Whilst you make a fair point here, have you considered ...' or 'This is a perceptive analysis of the issue' or 'I feel that you could have extended this discussion here to include...'.

Example:

When assessing social problems, [Hulley and Clarke \(1994\)](#) identify two fundamental explanations used to define the cause of the problem. First there is the 'blaming the victim' perspective; this approach attributes problems that arise to deficiencies of particular individuals. When considering the above statements made by the Australian Immigration minister and the term 'queue jumpers', it is apparent that these phrases underpin the [blaming the victim pathology](#). The second approach, [social construction theory](#), rationalises that social problems occur as the result of flaws in social organisation and structure. Unlike the 'blaming the victim' approach, this viewpoint moves away from working with individuals and seeks to remedy social problems on a larger scale by reassessing and addressing inadequacies within social structures. These two approaches [differ significantly](#) and the actions pursued by those working within a social welfare setting will depend on the theoretical model the professional has adopted.

Sensible source to use - also consider Green and Thorogood 2004

'in'?

Unclear here

You could expand on this claim

Why do you think the Minister made these statements?

Good contrasting of approaches here

* source: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ssas/pdfdocs/chapter7.pdf> (accessed 8 May 2007).

4. Ask students after Assignment 1 if your feedback was helpful.
5. Survey your students and ask them the types of feedback they find helpful.
6. Watch out for evidence that your advice was heeded when you mark the second assignment or the final exam.
7. Ask individual students for their opinions of your feedback.
8. Ask a colleague for their opinion about the quality of your feedback.

More help

Here are some resources from which you may seek some advice. They are all annotated so as to assist you in making judgements about what might be useful advice for your particular teaching context. By exploring some or all of these resources, you may well be able to generate strategies to suit your particular circumstances.

1. Deakin University, Faculty of Arts, Strategies for Teaching and Learning CD (2005) - section on the Basic Principles of Marking. Two students talk about the feedback they have received for an assignment and discuss what is useful.
2. http://ilp.anu.edu.au/Tutors/Assessment_Feedback.pdf - this site from the Australian National University encourages you to reflect on your marking from the perspective of a student receiving an assignment back.
3. <http://www.polyu.edu.hk/assessment/arc/action/feedback.htm> - offers some guidelines for giving constructive feedback to students.
4. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/id432_using_feedback - a thoughtful discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of feedback
5. <http://www.scu.edu.au/services/tl/pathways/assessing/assessing5.html> - from Southern Cross University, this site contains many useful strategies for giving feedback to students.
6. <http://www.iml.uts.edu.au/assessment/feedback/index.html> - a brief discussion of how students regard the level of feedback they receive as evidence of good teaching.
7. http://itdl.org/Journal/Jun_04/article06.htm - a journal article by Jason Huett, University of North Texas, which discusses the use of email as a tool for giving feedback to students.

8. <http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/teaching/assessment/grades.html> - a substantial (23 pages) discussion of awarding grades and giving feedback, from the University of Queensland.
9. http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/tutortraining/pdf/feedback/Characteristics_of_Good_Feedback_to_students.pdf - the characteristics of good feedback, from the University of Melbourne.
10. <http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/LearningConnection/staff/assessment/feedback.asp> - a brief discussion of the conditions which make feedback effective.
11. http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/pd/gw/page_30.htm - David Jaques offers some advice on different types of feedback and giving feedback.

Alert !

Students expect feedback which informs them of what they did well and what needs to be improved. Assessment offers an excellent opportunity to promote learning.