

Transnational Teaching

Quick Guide

Assessment and Feedback - Providing student feedback

“Feedback is the most powerful single influence that makes a difference to student achievement.”

Hattie, 1987

Feed up, feed back & feed forward

Student feedback is the advice teachers provide to students about their assessable work. It is an important part of the learning process because it provides students with:

- A sense of their progress against course objectives, learning outcomes and standards of assessment.
- The means to identify gaps in their knowledge or skills that require improvement.
- The motivation to continue to learn by recognising their achievements.
- Information that can support student's future, ongoing learning.

Hattie & Timperley (2007: 86) identified three important questions that provide the basis of good feedback, which they labelled in turn – Feed Up, Feed Back and Feed Forward:

- Feed Up - What are the learning objectives and outcomes articulated in the Course Guide?
- Feed Back - What progress have I made towards the goal?
- Feed Forward - What further improvements need to be made to advance my progress?

Some students may appear to be most interested in what they need to do to pass a course and indeed the feedback you give students should assist them to perform well in assessment tasks. At RMIT we encourage teachers to include “Feedback” and “Feed Forward” comments when assessing students' work. This involves providing feedback that indicates how the student can improve in their performance in subsequent tasks. These subsequent tasks might be future assessment tasks undertaken during the course or the program or in the way the student might approach tasks in future professional roles.

Psychological safety & assessment

RMIT aims to “create an environment where students feel comfortable enough to practice, make honest mistakes, and learn from them” i.e. to create a psychologically safe learning environment. This has implications for the ways academic and teaching staff provide feedback. Feedback should be provided with sensitivity and in a manner that does not cause embarrassment. Some cultures are particularly sensitive to receiving feedback that highlights flaws and errors in their work. A strengths-based approach to providing feedback can be helpful. In essence, a strength-based approach emphasises recommendations for improvement e.g. “aspects of this are good, it could be even better if....”

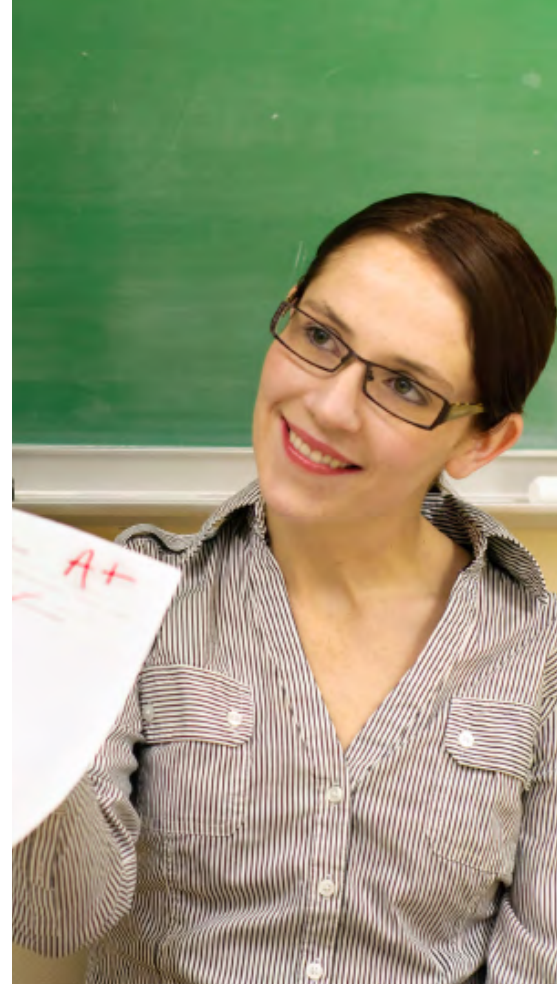
Getting started

Providing effective feedback to students requires you to:

- Design and develop assessment and feedback mechanisms that align appropriately with course objectives and learning outcomes. If you have not collaborated on assessment design it is important to know what the Course Co-ordinator has planned for the course and are able to explain how the assessment tasks align to the course objectives and learning outcomes.
- Ensure students understand the assessment requirements.
- Examine assessable work against the established assessment criteria.
- Promptly return assignments to students.
- Provide comments which are clear, succinct and focussed.
- Provide feedback about aspects of the task that were handled well. The assessment moderation process will allow you to develop and understanding of common themes.
- Provide meaningful comments to students indicating how they could improve their work.
- Offer students information about where they may obtain additional resources and assistance.
- Conduct group feedback by commenting on areas of the assessable work that students commonly handled well and where students typically failed to meet the expected standards. Peer-review discussions may also be helpful. Posting these comments on the course blackboard site will ensure that all students have access to your feedback.

Enhancing the quality of student feedback

- Establish or join a community of practice in your school where feedback strategies are discussed.
- Have students self-assess their work. This can be done by asking students to:
 - Submit a self-evaluation sheet with their assignment.
 - Demonstrate how they have incorporated your feedback from their last assignment into the current one.
- Provide students with a list of comments given to a similar assignment or essay. This could form a tutorial activity in which a discussion takes place that will better prepare students.
- Using Blackboard, provide students with the generic feedback comments prior to them receiving the actual mark.
- Keep a database of comments about your students' performance as a ready reference when making comments on each assessment.
- Ask students to write and submit a short action plan based on your feedback comments. This provides confirmation that they have read your comments, and will indicate how they are planning to use your advice in relation to their next assignment.
- Ask students to reflect on the feedback you have provided and to tell you what they think they could “stop doing, start doing and continue doing” to enhance the quality of their work.



- Reduce over-emphasis on written feedback and provide feedback orally, either in person or in digital audio format as an attached file.
- Offer students the opportunity to submit drafts, in order to obtain formative feedback.

Summary

Learning is enhanced when students engage with and apply feedback. Your feedback should encourage students to reflect on feedback comments, and then consider ways to apply the feedback in future assessment or workplace tasks.

Useful resources

Support is available from your Deputy Head of School (Learning & Teaching) or equivalent. Your College Academic Development Group or learning & teaching specialist can also provide advice, support and professional development.

Student feedback policy <http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=9pp3ic9obks7>

Coffee and Cookies: Conversations on Good Teaching - Providing feedback to students <http://mams.rmit.edu.au/adxtwpihsimkz.pdf>

Providing Feedback to Students - a Good Teaching Tip-sheet
<http://mams.rmit.edu.au/7dtrw9780vqxz.pdf>

References

Angelo, TA 2007, 'Feedback for learning: research-based guidelines for effective, efficient practice', *Presentation at Assessment Standards Colloquium, ASKe Centre of Excellence*, November 13-15, Weston Manor, Oxfordshire,

Hattie, J & Timperley, H 2007, 'The power of feedback', *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), pp.81-112.

McCallum, N, Bondy, J & Jollands, M 2008, 'Hearing Each Other - How Can We Give Feedback that Students Really Value', in Mann, L, Thompson, A, Howard, P (eds), *Proceedings of the 19th Annual Conference of the Australasian Association for Engineering Education: To Industry and Beyond*, Barton, A.C.T.: Institution of Engineers, Australia, 2008: [562]-[567]. Available online: <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=316891923802228;res=IELENG>

King, D 2007, 'Does it make a difference? Replacing text with audio feedback'. *Practice and evidence of the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education*, 3(2), pp. 145-163.

Providing informative feedback for students by using the grade centre within Blackboard VLE, Professor Helen Higson, Pro Vice Chancellor External Relations of Aston University in the UK, shares one of her best practice in learning and teaching in a short video CLIPP: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8XHmN43Kng>

