

Five unusual things to improve feedback: in your teaching

Steve Draper, Glasgow University
David Nicol, Strathclyde University

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/>

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1. A calendar of feedback

A course team could publish in advance a calendar of feedback: when, what type e.g. mark or comments; feedback or forward; peer or tutor.

Good for raising the profile of feedback on a course;
For boosting NSS scores

Conveys that feedback is not just a teacher action, not just about marks, not just written,

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Calendar of feedback for a course

Assignment	Handin	Feedback ready	Feedback Type
Essay	12 Jan	24 Jan	Written, personal
Essay 2	-	Weekly tutorial	Oral, feedforward advice
Essay 2	3 Mar	15 March	Written, mark, feedback

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Calendar of feedback for a course

Term essay	1 April	Mid-June examiners' meeting	Mark only: summative
Lab report	14 Feb	28 Feb	Pro-forma mark and feedback sheet

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Calendar of feedback for a course

Critical review	-	Weekly tutorial	Oral, feedforward advice
Critical review	1 March	3 March	Peer formative feedback
Critical review	7 March	15 March	Written and oral feedback, in group

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2. Comment bank

Basic idea is to have a comment bank, and feedback then consists of selecting these well written comments as appropriate (not re-writing them).

- This might be by cut and paste;
- Or by giving the students a list of ALL the comments, plus ticking the ones that apply
- OR by making the student select the ones that apply.

The cost is creating the bank.

If the course leader acts first on his group / sample, he might write the comments needed by all tutors.

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Advantages

- A. Better quality, and saves rewriting work: express the same point once, optimally expressed.
- B. If students see all comments, they pick up more of the issues that might apply even if they didn't do it badly enough to be pointed out to them.

We waste all the tutor effort of writing comments for only one student's benefit.

This is a variant on having students read each others' feedback from the same tutor.

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2b) Magic rubrics

Offers an opportunity for a "magic rubric". These have been shown to have a significant effect in many studies. Here's one for programming:

"Remember, learning to program can take a surprising amount of time & effort – students may get there at different rates, but almost all students who put in the time & effort get there eventually. Making good use of the feedback on this sheet is an essential part of this process."

See <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/loaled/dweck.html>

For accounts of and references to 4 studies.

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3. One minute papers

For feedback to the Teacher (from learners).

Announce question at start of class.

At the end of a class, get students to write an anonymous 60 second reply, and hand it in, to a question such as:

- "What question do you most wish to have answered at this moment?"
- "What was the main point of today's lecture?"
- "What are the most important questions remaining unanswered?"
- "What was the muddiest point?"
- "What's the connection between this lecture and previous one?"

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One minute papers (2)

... and the teacher returns next time, and can respond to this information on where the class is.

It gets the cycle time of teacher adaptation down from once a year (exam scripts reveal what didn't get across) to once a week.

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4. Student authored MCQs

Instead of having learners answer MCQs (multiple choice questions), have them author them.

To do this properly, they need to produce reasons for each response option as to why it is right or wrong. Producing reasons generates learning much more deeply than guessing or recognition of an answer.

Variants:

- Use student MCQs in the final exam
- Students use the MCQs as voting questions in a presentation to the class.
- Use "Peerwise" software to have students produce questions to help others revise, and to critique each others' questions (See handout for URL)

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5. Reciprocal peer critiquing (RPC)

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My current recipe for RPC

Psychology level 3 undergraduates.

Done twice, first with past (already marked) work; second for new coursework before submission.

- Students bring in and exchange work
- Prefaced by 1-3 questions they particularly want comments on
- Each critiques 2 others, address criteria plus the questions; rubric: best and worst feature
- Round table, F2F feedback, tutor chairing

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My current recipe (2)

Always goes down well with my students, once they've done it.

See Morrow (2006) for evidence.

Most enthusiastic about seeing how other students write, but also about getting feedback.

Perhaps best indicator is that having done it the first time, they commit to finishing the next bit of work a week early to allow time to do it then.

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RPC: boxes ticked

Boxes ticked = principles enacted:

- Peer assessment (the peer voice)
- Exercise the criteria from another viewpoint
- Peers see each others' work (resource for remedies)
- See how own and others' work compares in quality
- Learners proactive in formulating feedback questions
- Can act on feedback directly (in 2nd application)
- F2F delivery means dialogue around feedback, and not just clarification but multi-party discussion.
- Multiple opinions on same work: information on variability
- Teacher scaffolds first RPC, then leaves it to the learners

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NSS A&F subscale

National student survey: subscale on assessment and feedback.

- ✓ 5. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.
- 6. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair
- 7. Feedback on my work has been prompt
- ✓ 8. I have received detailed comments on my work
- ✓ 9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.

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Big scale RPC

As described above, it works for groups of 4-6.

But there is software, and numerous papers reporting experience, on how to do it with big classes (60, 600, ..)

John Hamer: google "Aropa peer"; or see handout for a URL

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A place to stop

For the slides, handout etc. see:

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/talks/dundee2.html>

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