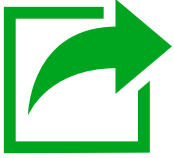# COMMUNICATION

Giving and receiving feedback

Giving and receiving feedback

Strategies to share with students

Suggested ideas and practices educators can share with students to support awareness of the topic and development of the skill. Strategies can be adopted/adapted as needed.
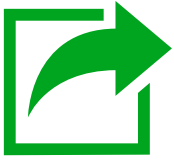

Giving feedback

☑ **When giving feedback, it should "SPARK" something beneficial.** To spark is to be specific, prescriptive, actionable, relevantly timed, and kind. Feedback should be met with reception. Below are strategies for giving and receiving feedback.

- *Specific*: pertains to something particular about the task
    - "Your thesis statement is unclear. It should focus more on _____" (as opposed to: "the whole essay is poorly written")
- *Prescriptive*: offers a solution or strategy for addressing the highlighted issue
    - "If you hold the scalpel this way, you will have better access to the area" (as opposed: to "you're doing it wrong")
- *Actionable*: references something that can be changed or improved
    - "If you speak more slowly, your audience will find it easier to follow your transitions from one point to the next" (as opposed to: "It is hard to understand your presentation")
- *Relevantly timed*: occurs or is made available in close temporal proximity to the assigned task
    - Whenever possible, return feedback well in advance of the next task so that it can be incorporated and implemented appropriately. Also, be mindful of when feedback is offered. Although close temporal proximity is ideal, choosing an appropriate setting and offering a one-on-one exchange may be important to ensure constructive comments are not perceived as criticism.
- *Kind*: the goal should always be to support the recipient's improvement
    - Consider intercultural competence here because different people expect and react to feedback in different ways. Understanding who you are giving feedback to and the ways that would benefit them most optimizes the interaction.

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Receiving feedback

☑ **Review feedback carefully. Be sure to consider both areas for improvement and strengths.**
- Knowing what you did well is useful for replication in future assignments.
- Understanding areas for improvement gives you the opportunity to address them. Consider seeking additional services and/or resources as needed.

☑ **Listen to the feedback provided and be open to new ideas and perspectives.** It's acceptable to ask for clarification but try to avoid being defensive. This reaction will take your attention away from learning and instead will situate it on your response, which is less helpful.

☑ **Reflect on the feedback provided and decide what to do with it.** Hearing about a shortcoming can be tough. Take some time to digest what you have heard and read, consider its validity and relevance, and make a plan for how you will address it moving forward. Not all feedback is good feedback, but if a credible source offers it, it is likely worth considering.

Giving and receiving feedback

Strategies to share with students

Suggested ideas and practices educators can share with students to support awareness of the topic and development of the skill. Strategies can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Receiving feedback

☑ **There may be times when feedback is not provided and you need to solicit it yourself.** Feedback can be requested before or after a task is complete or due. It could be as simple as asking someone to watch or review a presentation or paper.

☑ **Follow up with the person who offered feedback and practice gratitude.** Offering feedback takes time and effort and often a degree of selflessness. Acknowledge this effort by thanking your feedback source.

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Giving and receiving feedback

Tips for course design and delivery

Ways educators can bring awareness of the topic and incorporate development of the skill into post-secondary course design and delivery.

Giving feedback

☑ **Provide opportunities for students to seek individual feedback** on their performance on assessments.

☑ **Provide opportunities for students to engage in feedback activities with their peers**. Peer feedback, both giving and receiving, can enhance student's work without focusing on students grading each other.

☑ **Be mindful of when you provide students with feedback**. Make sure students have their feedback in advance of subsequent related tasks. Think about when the feedback is released and if that is an opportune time for students to process it.

☑ **Share feedback that emphasizes what was done well** as opposed to simply giving feedback that highlights areas for improvement.

☑ **Train teaching assistants to provide effective feedback.**

☑ **Give students feedback ahead of the grade**. By releasing the feedback before the grade, students have an opportunity to consider the comments and reflect on their work. This method can also lessen potentially reactionary responses, which may happen upon receiving an unwanted grade.

☑ **Collate whole-class feedback from a task or assignment and share it with all the students**. Students benefit from individual feedback on their own work, but it can also be helpful to address overall feedback that is based on collective class performance. This approach can help individuals who might find it challenging to seek additional feedback.

Giving and receiving feedback

Tips for course design and delivery

Ways educators can bring awareness of the topic and incorporate development of the skill into post-secondary course design and delivery.

Receiving feedback

☑ **Create a safe environment** where students feel comfortable providing feedback by encouraging respectful interactions. Seek feedback about course design and implementation of key course components at critical times throughout the term. By actively engaging and listening to students, educators can be better equipped to adjust future offerings of their courses for a better student experiences.

☑ **Identify student ambassadors to collect ongoing feedback** from their peers and engage with the instructor to present ideas.

☑ **Explicitly state when you have incorporated feedback into course material** so that students know their voice is present.

Giving and receiving feedback

Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Reflection on Feedback

Overview

These reflection questions are intended to be answered by the student after completing a task or assignment. They support students in using feedback they have received to inform future work.

Review the Educator Activity Guide before getting started with this activity.

Time
☑ Under 20 minutes
☐ 20 minutes to 1 hour
☐ More than 1 hour
☐ Over several classes

Format
☑ Individual
☐ In pairs
☐ Small groups
☐ Large groups
☐ Whole class

Modality
☑ In person
☑ Online synchronous
☑ Online asynchronous

Resources
☐ Module notes
☑ Paper
☑ Pen/pencil
☑ Laptop/tablet

Giving and receiving feedback

Instructions

1. Identify a time in your course when you can assign feedback reflection questions to students. This activity should be completed after students have submitted a task or assignment and received feedback on it to support students in using their own feedback to inform their future work.

2. Personalize the questions below based on your course components or activities.

   - How do you think your session/assignment/essay/presentation (choose appropriate one) went? Did it go as planned? Explain.
   - If doing this task again, what would you do the same? What would you do differently?
   - How do you think the audience/reader received your work? What indicates this view?
   - What did you learn from this experience? What advice would you offer to someone who is about to complete the same task?

3. Offer students the opportunity to critically reflect on their feedback from a previous task in your course based on one or more of the questions. This feedback can be completed informally during a class discussion or added onto an assignment more formally.

Variation(s)

- Students can write their responses or discuss them with a partner in a think, pair, share approach.

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Giving and receiving feedback

Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Success Feedback

Overview

Students exchange their work with a peer ahead of submitting it for evaluation. Students review peer work and identify five successful aspects. Students can follow-up with each other to discuss the process elaborate on the feedback if needed. This activity reinforces that feedback is a helpful part of learning.

Review the Educator Activity Guide before getting started with this activity.

Time
☑ Under 20 minutes
☐ 20 minutes to 1 hour
☐ More than 1 hour
☐ Over several classes

Format
☐ Individual
☑ In pairs
☐ Small groups
☐ Large groups
☐ Whole class

Modality
☑ In person
☑ Online synchronous
☑ Online asynchronous

Resources
☐ Module notes
☑ Paper
☑ Pen/pencil
☑ Laptop/tablet
☑ Assignments and assignment expectations

Giving and receiving feedback

Instructions

1. *Optional*: Share some points about feedback with your students before they begin this activity.
   - Remind students that feedback serves to guide people to more efficient ways of doing something and it works to inform a path to use in the future.
   - Feedback is intended to be supportive and promising, not judgemental, or hurtful.
   - Creating peer opportunities for students to comment on what someone did well on a specific task or assignment helps students recognize or reframe, feedback as something inherently positive.
   - There may be more to gain by calling attention to strengths than there would be by casting a light on a mistake.

2. After completing a task or assignment and before final submission to their instructor, have students exchange their work with a peer. Instructors are encouraged to establish the pairings so that students are not left out and they don't match up with their friends.

3. Instruct the students to identify five distinct 'successes' in their peer's work. Students can look at the assignment expectations to from the successes they identify.

4. Set an appropriate time for students to complete the feedback (e.g., 10–15 minutes or 24 hours) and build in an opportunity for students to follow up with their peer to discuss the feedback.

5. *Optional*: Engage students in a discussion about the value of giving and receiving feedback with their peer. Many students are surprised to learn how valuable it is to provide feedback to a peer on a task that they are also completing. You can also encourage students to adopt the mindset of always seeing something 'successful' in their work.

Variation(s)

- Extend this activity beyond five successes so peers can offer insights into themes and consistencies throughout the entire assignment. Have students compare and contrast their work.

Giving and receiving feedback

Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Classroom Assessment Techniques

Overview

These feedback techniques serve as creative ways educators can seek course related comments from their students. Use these techniques at any point in the term where they support your planning and/or where they help students in writing effective feedback.

Review the Educator Activity Guide before getting started with this activity.

Time
☐ Under 20 minutes
☐ 20 minutes to 1 hour
☐ More than 1 hour
☑ Over several classes

Format
☐ Individual
☐ In pairs
☐ Small groups
☐ Large groups
☑ Whole class

Modality
☑ In person
☑ Online synchronous
☑ Online asynchronous

Resources
☐ Module notes
☑ Paper
☑ Pen/pencil
☑ Laptop/tablet

Giving and receiving feedback

Instructions

1. Model feedback by implementing various classroom assessment techniques to seek feedback from students and then apply these course-related comments.

2. Identify which techniques are most applicable to your course from the list below and where you feel like feedback is needed. Wording may be revised/added/removed as necessary.

   - *Stop, Start, Continue*: Have students divide a sheet of paper into three and in each section list: something they'd like you to stop doing, something they'd like you to start doing and something they want you to continue doing. It is important to follow up on this feedback, highlighting trends and committing to what changes you can and cannot make going forward. You can also use three different colours of paper/post-it notes that each reflect a prompt.

   - *Clearest & Muddiest Point*: Before leaving class, have students submit feedback on which topic was easiest to understand and which one is still unclear. Use these as a starting point in the next class and as an opportunity to revise your lectures moving forward. Be sure to model examples of effective feedback (e.g., being specific with your descriptions, being positive etc.).

   - *Electronic surveys*: Surveys you create electronically are an effective way to gain feedback on a topic or lecture. Ask students to answer rating questions about things like pace, workload, activity utility, and outstanding questions they have (anonymously).

   - *Multiple Choice Questions*: These questions are easy to implement and one of the best ways for students to get feedback immediately on their learning. You can embed multiple choice questions directly into your lectures and allow students to offer their answers and opinions. Use the responses to inform which topics might have been more challenging for students and adjust your teaching accordingly.

3. Engage students in a reflection on the importance of seeking feedback. Follow up by asking them why this an important skill for them to develop.

Variation(s)

- Students can apply these same techniques with their peers when reviewing each other's work or after viewing a peer's presentation.

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