

# Marking and Feedback

“Nothing that we do to, or for, our students is more important than our assessment of their work and the feedback we give them on it. The results of our assessment influence our students for the rest of their lives and careers – fine if we get it right, but unthinkable if we get it wrong.”

-Race, Brown, and Smith (2005)

## Good Feedback Practice

As Teaching Assistants (TAs), it is important to ensure that the feedback we provide (whether formally or informally, in writing or verbally, in the classroom or in tutorials) is easily understood and improves the future performance of students. TAs should strive for feedback to be:

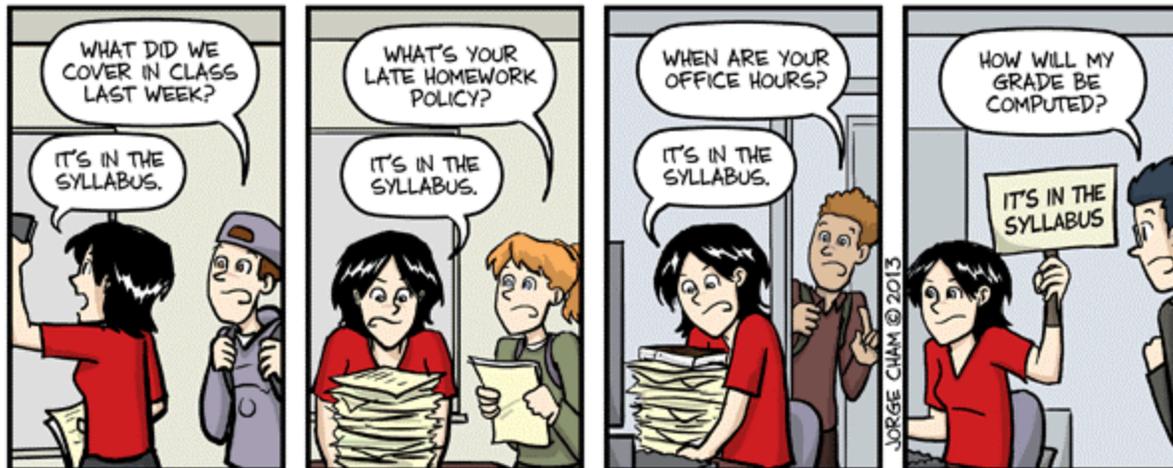
- **Timely and prompt:** Feedback should occur at the appropriate point in the learning cycle. When feedback is not prompt, students may forget what was required in the assessment and move on without connecting the feedback back to their work.
- **Encouraging and constructive:** Feedback should recognize areas of success as well as identify areas for improvement.
- **Supportive of learning:** Feedback should clarify to a student where their learning is in relation to intended learning outcomes, what remains to be achieved, and how they can reach the learning outcomes moving forward.
- **Specific and direct:** Feedback should clearly and explicitly state what students need to do in order to improve their work moving forward. Remember that it is the work that is being assessed, not the student!
- **Efficient and manageable:** Feedback should be delivered in a way that is accessible and manageable to the student and the TA. For example, it may be impossible to deliver detailed feedback to every student individually. However, common strengths, mistakes, and misunderstandings can be delivered to all students during tutorials or lectures. As well, if a student has multiple areas for improvement, consider highlighting or prioritizing the most urgent areas first to avoid overwhelming them.

## Key Points to Consider in Marking Written Work

Marking written work for the first time can be time-consuming and nerve-wracking. The art of good marking is to approach it slowly and carefully, not rushing into hasty judgments, and to build in a series of checks on your accuracy and consistency. The following are a few pointers that can help you succeed in your marking.

1. Be sure that you and your students know exactly what the expectations for the assignment are.
2. Be sure students know the marking criteria are, and what they mean.

3. Check whether the assignments will be second marked, check marked, or moderated; make sure that students know that any mark you may give is provisional and subject to the usual procedures of second marking and external examining
4. Prior to actually marking, get an overall impression of standards by reading through assignments briefly to get a broad feel of the different ways in which students have responded and the 'highs' and 'lows' of the batch.
5. Then take one assignment at a time, and mark against the criteria. For more problematic assignments, apply a 'best fit' principle - within which grade band does this assignment fit best? You can finalize the mark later.
6. When assessing online, type your initial comments on a computer before you finalize your observations and put them online.
7. Keep an organized record of your feedback. You may need to refer to your comments at a later date in order to assess and monitor the progress of your student as well as respond to marking complaints.
8. Give yourself appropriate breaks to rest your eyes and brain.
9. Give yourself time to look back and check that your approach to marking is consistent with the way in which you started marking (this is especially useful if you are marking over a few days).
10. When you have finished your provisional marking, put the assignments in rank order, from best to worst according to the marks you have given. Compare assignments with similar marks – do they still seem similar? Adjust marks accordingly where you feel you need to do so.
11. As noted in tips for feedback, make sure that when you give feedback you start with a positive, encouraging comment. Then give specific guidance about what the student could do next time to raise their grade.
12. Ask students about strategies they can adopt to rectify any weaknesses. Also, suggest strategies that can help students improve
13. End with a positive and encouraging comment. This should help prevent students from feeling negative about their marks.



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## Useful links

<https://www.cabrillo.edu/services/jobs/pdfs/giving-feedback.pdf>

<https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/giving-student-feedback/>

<http://perino.pbworks.com/f/Effective+Feedback.pdf>

<http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning/feedback/files/Teacher...>

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/assessment-and-feedback-7613.php>

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