# Effective feedback: principles and process

## 1. Criterion -referenced and performance benchmarked

* Does the student understand the Criteria and the Performance Standard?
* Does the feedback relate to the Criteria and the Performance Standard?

## 2. Understandable, clear and transparent

* Does the student understand the feedback?

## 3. Specific and accurate

* Is the feedback accurate?
* Is the feedback precise enough to allow the student to understand how it relates to their work and how they can use it?

## 4. Neutral

* Is the feedback free of criticism, praise or value judgements?

## 5. Personalised and empathic

* Does the student feel that the teacher is interested in their work and cares about their learning and progress?
* Does the student feel the teacher understands their efforts to learn and demonstrate their learning?

## 6. Reinforcing

* Does the feedback provide students information on what has been performed at a high standard, as well as what could be improved?

## 7. Key areas

* Is the detail and complexity of the feedback overwhelming and confusing, or is the feedback clearly focussed on the most fundamental, important aspects of their performance that they need to address at this time?

## 8. Manageable amount

* Is the amount of feedback too overwhelming for the student to absorb, reflect on and take action on it?
* Is the feedback broken up into manageable amounts and builds up in complexity and detail over time?

## 9. Tangible

* Does the feedback provide information about the impact or outcomes of the performance?

## 10. Provides actionable information

* Does the feedback provide the student with information they can use to improve their performance on a subsequent task?

## 11. Timely

* Is the feedback provided in sufficient time for the student to be interested in it and able to act on it?
* What other sources of feedback can be harnessed in the assessment design to speed up the performance, feedback and improvement cycle? Is it possible to provide feedback in real time?

## 12. Ongoing

* Are there multiple feedback sources and episodes that provide the student with many opportunities to reshape the performance to better achieve the learning outcome?

## 13. Consistent

* Do all markers and teaching staff involved in the assessment understand and agree on the criteria and standards?
* Does the feedback the student receive over time provide a cohesive set of information that is stable, accurate, consistent and trustworthy, not contradictory or confusing?

## 14. Participatory and dialogic—how are students involved in the feedback process?

* Have students had the opportunity to reflect on their current skills and knowledge and set their own learning goals?
* Were students involved in creating or refining the criteria or standards?
* Have students sought feedback from a range of sources?
* Have students used the rubric to evaluate examples, or their own or peer’s work?
* Do students respond to the feedback?
* Do students use feedback to improve their performance?
* Do students reflect on how they have used the feedback and its impact on their performance?

(Adapted from Nicol cited in Boud & Malloy 2013, p.117)

## References

Boud, D & Malloy, E (eds) 2013, Feedback in higher and professional education: understanding it and doing it well, Routledge, London and New York.

Hattie, J & Timperley, H 2007, '[The power of feedback](http://visible-learning.org/2013/02/john-hattie-helen-timperley-visible-learning-and-feedback/)', *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 77, no. 1, pp. 81 – 112, [Infographic summary](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el201209_takeaways.pdf).

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| Element of the Feedback process | Specific actions | Impact on student learning |
| Standards | | |
| Understanding the standards | All markers discuss, test and develop a consistent understanding of the standard | **Students receives feedback about their level of performance on key Assessment Criteria** |
| Observation | | |
| Careful observation of the student’s performance | Objectively view the performance, seeking evidence for achievement against the Assessment Criteria | **Students are provided information about how their performance measures against the standard, both achievements and gaps** |
| Vague judgements about the person or work | | |
| Using value statements that judge the student or their work | Markers use statements that refer to the student or their work as “good”, “poor” etc | **No useful information about progress against the Criteria** |
| Locate and fix errors | | |
| Identifying errors | Marking the location of an error or low standard  *e.g circling a word or sentence* | **Low.** |
| Describing errors | Describing an error or low standard  *e.g labelling a grammar mistake or describing a need for evidence* | **Depends.**  **Useful if students knows what this means and how to do it.** |
| Correcting errors | rewriting or editing student’s written work  e.g. changing language | **Caution!**  **Useful if students can learn from the example. May foster dependence.** |
| Providing useful information about the students’ performance | | |
| Specifying the performance standard of that Criteria | Stating the required element or characteristic  e.g *“the task was to synthesize the findings”* | **Students develop a richer understanding of what a good performance is (this is key to learning).** |
| Explain the gap between the standard and the student’s performance | Highlighting and locating particular aspects of the student’s work that meet or do not meet the standard | **Students develop a more accurate understanding of how their work does and does not meet the standard** (useful for high performing students to understand the qualities of their work too). |
| Comparing good and bad examples | Indicating instances where student’s performance was high and where it was lower and explaining why one was better than the other | **Students learn to see and evaluate more clearly the quality of their work** |
| Feedback on the process | | |
| Feedback on the student’s cognitive or metacognitive processes | Indicate the effectiveness of their critical thinking such as reasoning or assumptions | **Students understand how the quality of their thinking and reasoning contributed to their performance** |
| Feedback on the student’s planning and self regulation | Provide feedback on the strategies used to undertake the work | **Students learn to observe and refine their critical thinking** |
| Advice | | |
| Advice on Performance | Explain or provide examples of what the student could do differently next time to improve their performance | **Students understand what is required to improve their work** |
| Advice on Learning and development | Explain what the student could do to learn or develop the skills or knowledge required to attain a higher performance | **Students develop a clear picture of the steps they need to take to develop these skills** |
| Encouraging and motivating the student | | |
| Empathy | Demonstrating understanding of the student’s effort or attempts | **Students believe that the marker values their efforts to learn and demonstrate their learning** |
| Belief in development | Demonstrate belief in the ability of the student to develop and improve | **Students know the marker believes they can improve and develop (this is key).** |
| Encouragement | (if struggling) encouragement to work towards achieving the standard | **Students understand this one assessment does not represent their potential.** |
| Grades | | |
| Assessment | Providing marks and grades | **No useful information about progress against the Criteria**  **Lumps together very specific information about student’s performance on difference skills into one number that hides the useful information.** |

# Written feedback: suggested process

1. Read the whole paper or view the performance, actively seeking evidence of student’s achievement of the Assessment Criteria, and their standard as outlined in the rubric.
2. Identify specific examples in student’s work that provide evidence of their level of achievement against the Assessment Criteria.
3. Decide on the standard attained in relation to each Assessment Criteria.
4. Provide specific information about the student’s level of performance in relation to each Assessment Criteria, illustrating with one or two examples in their work. Whether the student has achieved a high or low level of performance, provide specific information about their performance with examples.
5. If the work has repeated grammar, spelling or referencing mistakes, do not correct them all! The goal is to flag the issue and help the student learn. So, identify those in the first paragraph or two only, providing a clear example of how it may be done well if you wish. You can then summarise the problems that occur throughout the paper and make recommendations for improvement in the final feedback statement.
6. Choose one or two key Assessment Criteria that are most important for the student to improve at this time, and provide guidance about strategies they can use to improve this.
7. Final encouraging statement:

* characterising the assessment and feedback as a developmental process, and
* demonstrating a belief that the student can learn and improve.