



# DELIVERING EFFECTIVE ONLINE FEEDBACK: A THREE STEP PROCESS

Step 1

## PREPARATORY FEEDBACK



### Clarifying and sharing an understanding of assessment criteria

Learners need to have a good understanding of the purposes and requirements of assessment, as well as be practically aware of the assessment processes in which they are involved.

Clarifying and sharing an understanding of the learning intentions behind assessment activities early on with learners is a crucial formative step in student learning development.

Engage learners early on in the assessment process with reviewing multiple exemplars of high-quality, task-relevant, work. These exemplars should be analogous to, but not the same as, the module assessment task (i.e. different focus and content).

Create time and space for meaningful dialogue around exemplars by setting up an interactive activity - i.e. a discussion forum in Blackboard or a small group chat or breakout room in MS Teams - where learners are encouraged to discuss and evaluate the exemplar work using a pre-prepared assessment rubric.

Follow this with tutor-led dialogue around the strengths and limitations of each exemplar, to draw out the similarities and differences between initial learner evaluations.

Set up a shared 'class' form using MS Forms or OneNote where students can review details of the assessment task and associated criteria. Ask students to capture their response to pre-set discussion questions around what they think would represent quality work in relation to the stated task and criteria. This could also easily be facilitated and captured via a class discussion board or MS Teams chat.

It is a good idea to release assessment details along with pre-set questions ahead of your online session leaving enough time to allow students to review key information. Keeping the shared form 'live' post-session can also encourage continued student engagement assessment criteria, allowing them to return to initial 'shared' responses.

Create a screencast recording that takes students through the task and associated criteria. A recorded overview of the assessment task provides the means to cover each section/component in detail, as well as the means to make explicit connections to other resources and guidance.

Digital assessment guides can also be co-produced with students when combined with other preparatory feedback activities such as a shared analysis of assessment criteria. Create a screencast recording that draws on initial student responses to reviewing the criteria, providing further detail and clarification based on the level of student understanding.

### Reviewing Exemplar Work

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

Devising regular and varied opportunities for students to actively engage with criteria for learning through the analysis of exemplar work using rubrics, can have positive effects on learning, helping students to 'see' standards and criteria in concrete ways and develop their capacity to regulate their own work.

Encouraging dialogue around exemplar work is a key feature in helping students understand how academic judgements are made, preparing them to transfer insights to their own work.

Whatever the format, the focus here is on eliciting student thinking and reasoning about exemplars and providing opportunities to consider divergent viewpoints on what represents quality work.

### Shared Analysis of Assessment Criteria

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

Collaborative notetaking tools are a useful means of encouraging student and peer engagement in real-time discussion around assessment criteria and can encourage shared ownership and collective understanding of assessment tasks and processes.

Monitor class progress throughout the activity via a separate device to get a sense of responses. Once all questions have been covered facilitate a whole-class discussion exploring emergent themes and issues.

It can also be useful to encourage students to record any questions they might have regarding the task or criteria directly on the form. This will allow you to respond to any general misunderstandings at a group level.

### Digital Assessment Task Guides

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

Producing an audio-visual recording of assessment guidance creates a digital artefact for students to access and review at different points in time as they develop their understanding of key concepts.

Invite students to pose questions, confidentially, for clarification and guidance in relation to particular aspects of an assignment. This a relatively straightforward way of actively engaging students with digital assessment guides. This can be completed through an anonymous discussion board activity in Blackboard or via MS Forms where students can also be asked to rate those aspects of the assignment they require further clarification around.



# DELIVERING EFFECTIVE ONLINE FEEDBACK

It is important we supplement 'end-point' feedback information with opportunities for students to receive feedback at each step in the assessment process.

## Creating opportunities for assessment practice, rehearsal and review

It is a good idea to 'design in' opportunities for learners to practise key aspects of assessment tasks as a means of engaging them in the experience of practically doing a task and what is expected of them.

Providing early formative feedback on learner practice as an indication of how well they have performed prior to final summative work encourages them to appreciate the time, effort and strategies required to successfully complete an assessment task.

Step 2

## PROCESS FEEDBACK



Make use of live polling or quiz tools to provide students with quick fire opportunities to gauge their understanding of topics, concepts, and criteria and to discuss progress in assessment tasks. Using tools like Socrative during face-to-face (and online) sessions can boost engagement with assessment criteria by quickly checking students' grasp of key information, promoting timely (formative) feedback dialogue.

Consider framing student interactions with topics and ideas central to an assessment task using quick quiz-style consultation at regular intervals in the assessment process. This is a good way of gathering insight into student progress and identifying gaps in knowledge. This instant feedback can be used to inform subsequent interactions with students to address gaps in real-time, through dialogue and targeted support.

Ask students to complete and submit a sequence of short blog tasks using the course blog tool in Blackboard, capturing their understanding of ideas and topics central to the assessment process. It can be useful to provide a template for student blog posts structured around prompt questions. This creates a shared experience for students and the basis for peer-to-peer comparison and dialogue.

Create a shared blog space where students are asked to upload a draft plan or outline for an assessment task. Provide students with a protocol for peer review structured around key questions and assign them peer draft work to review, recording their responses directly on to the blog page (students could also be organised into small groups to facilitate the peer review process).

Make available a single shared 'class' consultation form using MS Forms or OneNote on which students are asked to capture their responses to series of 'process-focused' discussion questions - i.e. "what have you found the most challenging aspect of the assessment task so far - and why?" or "what concepts have you have found to be most helpful in your understanding of the assessment task?".

Encourage students to interact with the wider contributions made by their peers by posting follow-up comments and/or questions on (at least 5 other) student contributions. The point here is not to police the number of responses, rather to help students to see and understand the similarities and differences in their responses to the assessment task.

### Quick Consultation Using Online Polling

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

Live polling and quizzes can be an effective means of gathering actionable insight regarding student progress in the assessment process. Tools like Socrative and MS Forms offer a range of question formats (i.e. MCQs, single-right answer, short-answer). It is important you give careful consideration to the kinds of feedback information you wish to generate and whether this information will be timely, relevant, and useful for students.

It can be useful to curate insights around general emergent issues or gaps in knowledge in the form of a set of FAQs made available to the whole cohort. This creates a useful artefact based on students' input that can be revisited students progress through the assessment process.

### Shared Draft Work With Peer Review

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

As a formative tool, blogs permit immediate and targeted feedback on contributions from tutors and/or peers. Owing to their chronological nature they can facilitate timely reflection and the identification of student learning development over time, so taking care to sequence tasks appropriately is crucial.

It is important that such online activities are aligned with clearly stated expectations and guidance. Blogs can provide opportunities for interaction in relation to assessment tasks in ways that are often more personally meaningful to students than teacher-mediated discussion around similar topics. These interactions still need to be appropriately framed and supported to help guide students in their work.

### Slow Consultation Using Smart Editing Tools

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

Collaborative notetaking tools are a useful means of encouraging peer feedback and dialogue as students progress through the assessment process. Encourage students to act upon the feedback comments they receive by posting a summary of the changes they have made following the slow consultation on the shared form.

Consider using collaborative tools like Microsoft OneNote or Padlet to facilitate a group slow consultation task. These tools allow groups of students to produce a 'shared' response to preset discussion questions by collating and co-editing content that can be easily shared with the wider class. You can then provide a general response reflecting on and synthesizing key points.



# DELIVERING EFFECTIVE ONLINE FEEDBACK

By reconceptualising feedback as repeatable opportunities to engage in dialogue about learning we can encourage active student engagement with and timely reflection on feedback information.

Step 3

## PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK



### Providing assessment feedback that guides future student learning

Feedback at this stage is intended to guide future learning and should be focused on the learning 'process' or the management of learning strategies, rather than squarely on the quality of learners' final assessed work.

Practically speaking, feedback needs to be both specific and general, relating to the specific task or assignment, as well as identifying clear principles in practice that could be applied to future tasks.

Share general (whole cohort) feedback via a single short webinar or video summary capturing and discussing those aspects of student work that were done well/could be improved on. Release the feedback webinar ahead of individual performance feedback. This ensures students receive timely information on their work and provides a basis for reflection when students receive final individual feedback and marks.

On reviewing the feedback webinar, students can be encouraged to post questions to which you can respond in real time. Alternatively, questions can also be collated and grouped using Microsoft OneNote or Padlet according to common themes allowing you to respond to emergent themes.

Use the audio-visual function within Blackboard (via turn-it-in) to produce a voice recording of your feedback on individual student work. Blackboard affords you capacity to record short feedback narratives on student work. For consistency and efficiency it is a good idea to set some parameters for feedback information provided.

Consider the following 3 question response - 1) what are the strengths of the work in relation to the assessment criteria?; 2) what are the key areas for improvement?; and 3) How and where can students make such improvements in future work?

It can be useful to screencast your individual feedback in Review to enable you to show how your comments link to student work and to demonstrate corrections.

Blackboard and other digital collaborative tools (MS Teams and OneNote) can provide the space for students to review and check their own performance against assessment criteria. Encouraging self-reflection on performance can generate meaningful forms of formative (self-)feedback on summative work.

A relatively simple way of supporting self-reflection on performance is to ask students to complete and submit an interactive top-sheet alongside their assessed work. Students can be provided with a simple top-sheet template structured around a series of reflective questions that encourage them to generate feedback about their own work. Students can also be asked to identify how they would prefer to receive individual tutor feedback - i.e. written, audio-visual - on the top-sheet template.

### General Feedback Webinar

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

It is a good idea to record webinars or video summaries so that students in other time zones can view asynchronously, and all students can revisit and review.

Schedule general feedback webinars to occur before students receive individual performance feedback. Students can then be encouraged to direct the agenda of subsequent discussions by asking them to offer specific questions they want to focus on based on their own experiences of completing the assessment.

This requires students to consider the nature and focus of feedback ahead of these interactions helping to develop student's overall feedback literacy.

### Audio-Visual / Screencast Feedback

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

Compared with written feedback, audio visual feedback is often perceived as more personal, and can make students feel more connected to their tutors. The audio-visual format allows you to convey nuances through vocal cues that promote understanding and encourage students to follow-up with feedback can. Recordings do not have to be polished artefacts - students often appreciate informality when receiving personal feedback on their work.

Recording a screencast of your feedback can help students better understand tutor comments and enables you to open other relevant documents such as assignment briefs, rubrics, and lectures to explain and elaborate on feedback

### Self-Reflection On Performance

### What's involved?

### Things to Consider

Flipping feedback. When deployed as part of a distributed formative process students can be supported to use such self-reflective activities to connect a feedback on the current task to previous tasks, as a way of visualising progress and set targets for future improvement.

Consider including an 'Action Plan' as part of an interactive top-sheet. Ask students to first complete a self-assessment of their work and then produce an action plan for future work based on the insights gained. This provides a basis for comparison as students consider subsequent individual performance feedback from their tutor in relation to both their own self-reflections and the implications for future practice in relation to their action plans - all of which can be revisited.



## Some Practice tips to keep in mind

**Clarify expectations** by helping students develop a working understanding of the assessment criteria on which academic judgements will be made and grades assigned.

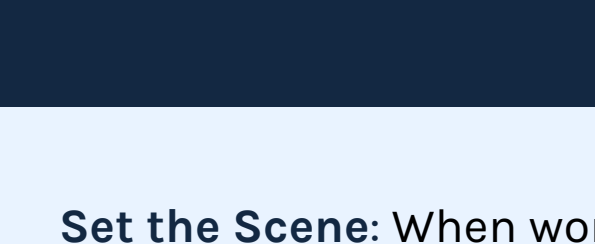
**Provide timely, relevant and task-focused information** to students about their learning and progress in relation to achieving learning outcomes or standards.

**Make it actionable** by giving students an indication of where they need to progress to, and practical insight into how they will be able to reach the expected level.

**Share in different formats** giving careful thought to how combinations of different feedback sources (i.e. tutor, peer, or self-generated) and forms (i.e. written, audio-visual) might meet the individual learning needs and preferences of diverse student groups.

**Encourage dialogue** by provide flexible, timely and accessible opportunities for learners to interact and discuss assessment tasks in different ways ways and at various points in the assessment process.

### Key Ingredients of Effective Feedback Processes

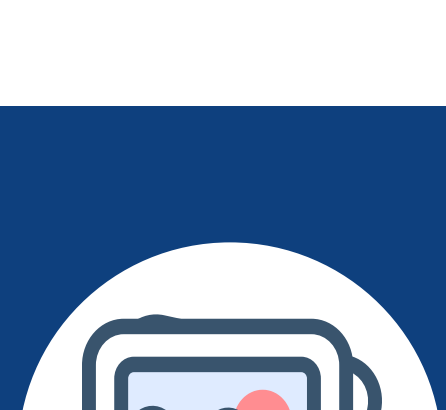


Set the Scene: When working in and across digital learning environments it is more important than ever that we recognise the relational dimension and role of feedback for maintaining meaningful connections with and between students.

Digital learning environments provide a variety of opportunities for students to actively engage with feedback information to support their learning development that also help to maintain a sense of connection with tutors and peers.

**Scale and Flow:** There are feedback opportunities in Higher Education that involve providing feedback information to students on an individual level. Other feedback opportunities involve providing feedback information to groups or whole cohorts that also include the chance for individual dialogue and/or self-reflection.

These opportunities need to be considered and planned for in the context of the broader sequence and flow of learning and teaching activities for students.



Feedback is Part of a Dynamic Learning Environment

## Where can I find further support and guidance?



### Further Guidance

See [LTE Online](#) for a range of accessible support and guidance on effective assessment and feedback in the context of online and hybrid learning.

- For further information on the Principles for Flexible Practical, see [here](#).
- For further assessment feedback around different aspects of assessment and feedback, see the [LTE Bites Assessment Series](#).

### Useful Resources

- Elkington, S. and Evans, C. (2017). Transforming Assessment in Higher Education: A case study series: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/transforming-assessment-higher-education>
- Winstone, N. and Nash, R. (2016). HEA Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT): <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/developing-engagement-feedback-toolkit-def>
- Winstone, N. and Carless, D. (2019). *Designing effective feedback processes in higher education: A learning-focused approach*. London: Routledge.