

Strategies for Meaningful Feedback on Student Reflections

Handout

Teaching Commons
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Giving & Receiving Feedback¹

Giving Feedback

1. **Start and End with the Positive:** Sometimes called the “sandwich approach” to giving feedback, this highlights behaviour that is effective and that your peer should continue doing. By starting and ending with positive comments, you solidify that your goal is to help not criticize.
2. **Concentrate on the Content not the Individual:** Feedback must be limited to the content in question not the individual delivering the lesson. This is extremely important when we consider any comments on the individual can easily become micro-aggressions—“subtle comments and behaviors that communicate negative and hostile messages to racialized persons.”²
 - a. For example: Instead of “no one could understand you” consider “as this is a video reflection, I would have benefited from a transcript.”
3. **Own the Feedback:** Your feedback is only one opinion, use the word “I” to emphasize that you are only offering your own personal reflection on the lesson.
 - a. For example: Instead of “you are not making any sense” consider “when you referred to [example], I would have benefited from some additional context.”
4. **Be Realistic:** Concentrate on things your peer can change rather than things beyond their control.
 - a. For example: Instead of “your reflection went on too long and became rambling” consider “I found your reflection on [example], perhaps you could delve into that specifically in a future reflection.”
5. **Be Specific:** Offer examples to illustrate your feedback instead of general comments.
 - a. For example: Instead of “your reflection was confusing” consider “I had a hard time following some of the connections between your experience and your learning outcomes, more detail would have helped me follow along.”

¹ This short handout pulls from the Teaching Commons *TA Feedback Guide*, the *Netiquette* guidelines, the York University Centre for Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion’s *Understanding Racism* guide and *Anti-Racism Workshop Series*, and *Receiving and giving effective feedback* from the Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo. (<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teachingexcellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/assessing-student-work/grading-andfeedback/receiving-and-giving-effective-feedback>)

² York University Centre for Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion’s *Understanding Racism*.

6. **Respect your Peer's Time:** Focus on one or two areas of improvement not a lengthy list of grievances.
7. **Consider Sharing Resources:** If specific books, articles, or workshops have helped you in the same area, offer those up for further reading should your peer wish to work more on that specific behaviour/area.

Netiquette for Online Feedback³

- Treat others as you would like to be treated. Try to minimize any possibility of your messages being misinterpreted.
- You have a responsibility to your peers. Consider how what you say (or don't say) impacts others.
- Make sure your feedback is clear and easy to follow: stick to the topic.
- Be ethical and don't break the law.
- Give credit for the ideas of others and correctly reference where required/appropriate.
 - This also includes giving credit to your peers. If a peer mentioned something in a discussion during the course that you think would be helpful, consider linking over to that other message.
- Ask questions and don't jump to conclusions. If you are uncertain about your comment, you could frame it as a question.
- For the benefit of all, put effort into your feedback. Be helpful and supportive – this will help reinforce your learning as well as helping others.
- Respect the privacy of others – if you speak to any of your peers outside of our course, seek permission to share any information sent to you.

Receiving Feedback

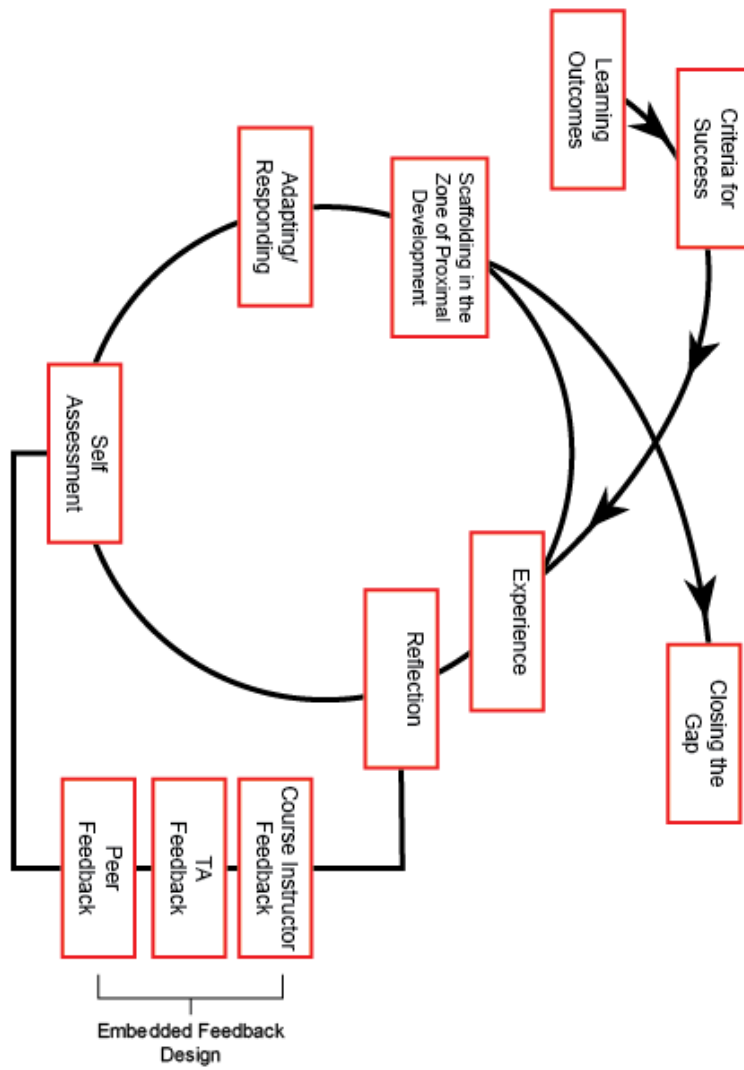
1. **Listen:** Take the time to listen (or read) all the feedback rather than interrupting and offering a defense.
2. **Be Open:** The feedback you are being given may go against your own thoughts and reflections on your experiential learning or ways of doing something. Listen to these differing views as you may find something helpful for ongoing or future learning experiences.

³ Adapted from York University Student Guide to eLearning at York University (http://elearning-guide.apps01.yorku.ca/?page_id=26)

3. **Ask Questions:** If you are unsure what some feedback means, ask for further clarification.

4. **Assume the Best:** These feedback opportunities are to help us all grow as learners, assume your peers are offering their help not attacking you. However, if you believe you are experiencing or have witnessed (if feedback is being provided in groups) a form of racial discrimination or harassment, follow the guidelines set out by the Centre for Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion to address or report the incident (<https://rights.info.yorku.ca/files/2017/03/CHRRacism-Factsheet-v3.6.pdf?x26215>).

Feedback Loop⁴



⁴ Adapted from Heritage, Margaret. *Formative Assessment: Making it Happen in the Classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2010.

Asynchronous Feedback Tools

eClass Workshop Tool

https://docs.moodle.org/400/en/Workshop_activity

eClass Assignment Tool

https://docs.moodle.org/400/en/Assignment_activity

Kritik

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNaAOv85pzY>

Support — York University Learning Technology Services

<https://lthelp.yorku.ca/>

Rubrics

Ryan-Bain

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Ryan-Bain Reflective Journaling Rubric (Revised)

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Level 1: Reporting and Responding

Choose a focus (a *critical incident*): an issue or incident that posed a problem or had a positive impact on your learning or practice. Report what happened or what the key issue or incident involved. Why is it relevant?

- 1.1 A *critical incident* is reported in sufficient detail for an audience to draw their own conclusions
- 1.2 The writer's initial reaction or emotional response to the *critical incident* is identified
- 1.3 An intellectual challenge is identified (opportunity for growth)

Level 2: Relating

Relate or make a connection between the *critical incident* challenge (1.3) and your own skills, professional experience, or discipline knowledge. Have you seen this before? Were the conditions the same or different? Do you have the skills and knowledge to deal with this? Explain.

The incident or issue is related to:

- 2.1 The writer's own strengths, weaknesses, personal experience or learning, or to
- 2.1 Professional matters (pedagogy, curriculum, field experience)
- 2.2 As 2.1, but the entry includes a superficial rationale or limited discussion of the connection
- 2.3 As 2.2, but the rationale or discussion includes a significant insight or understanding arising from the connection made.

Level 3: Reasoning

Level 3 (Reasoning): Identify at least one key theoretical aspect of the challenges identified in the reflections. Add an additional perspective by researching what others (especially academics) have said about it. How does their experience/insight help to make sense of the critical incident?

- 3.1 At least one significant aspect of the incident(s) is carefully analysed in detail, giving consideration to such matters as:
 - existing theory and/or prior reflective writing on this subject (thought), and
 - lessons or conclusions to be drawn from this additional perspective (reflection). and
 - why the aspect challenges personal or intellectual growth (reflection)
- 3.2 In addition to 3.1, the reflection:
 - includes additional perspectives that complicate and deepen the analysis
 - includes analysis and significance of the critical incident that is expanded to consider questions of ethics or practice, as applicable
- 3.3 In addition to 3.2, the reflection ably considers inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary applications.

Adapted by Jon Sufrin from Ryan (2013) and Bain (2002) - 1



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Level 4: Reconstructing

Reframe or reconstruct future practice or professional understanding. How would you deal with this next time? What might work and why? Are there different options? What might happen if [. . .]? Are your ideas supported by theory? Can you make changes to benefit others?

- 4.1** In addition to a fully developed Level 3.1+ reflection, the paper's thought-reflection leads to a conclusion or a plan for future active experimentation
- 4.2** As 4.1, but the discussion also considers the reasons for, or possible implications of, the conclusion or plan.
- 4.3.** As 4.2, but the reasons/complications are also explored using at least Level 3.1 level analysis.

Notes

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Critical Reflection Rubric

The value of assessing reflection is that it signals to students the importance of experiential learning and provides an opportunity for you to provide feedback on their learning. Rubrics are valuable tool for students as they articulate the learning and behavioural expectations of an assignment and demonstrate alignment between an assignment and the learning outcomes for the course.

The critical reflection rubric below (adopted from Kember et al., 2008) provides a framework for evaluating reflection. This rubric can be used on its own or as a starting point upon which to layer course-specific expectations.

	Critical Reflection	Reflection	Understanding	Habitual Action/ Non-Reflection
	A: 80-100%	B: 70-79%	C: 60-69%	D/F: >60%
Reflection on Existing Knowledge	Critically reviews existing knowledge, questions assumptions, and articulates new perspectives as a result of experience	Active and careful consideration of existing knowledge and articulates new understanding of knowledge as a result of experience	Makes use of existing knowledge without an attempt to evaluate/appraise knowledge; demonstrates understanding but does not relate to other experiences or personal reaction	Automatic/superficial responses with little conscious/deliberate thought or reference to existing knowledge; responses are offered without attempting to understand them
Connection to Academic Concepts	Demonstrates superior connection between experience and class content (concepts/theories) and literature; evidence of application of theory and reconstruction of perspective	Demonstrates clear connections between experience and class content (concepts/theories) ; evidence of application of theory	Connects experience with class content (concepts/theories) but remains superficial or abstract	Connections are not drawn between experience and class content (concepts/theories) or literature
Evidence of Development	Articulates transformation of their perspective of themselves or about a particular issue/concept/problem as a result of experience	Articulates new understanding/insights about self or particular issue/concept/problem as a result of experience	Limited/superficial insight about self or particular issue/concept/problem as a result of experience	No evidence of insights about self or particular issue/concept/problem as a result of experience

Kember, D., McKay, J., Sinclair, K., Kam, F., & Wong, Y. (2008). A four-category scheme for coding and assessing the level of reflection in written work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(4), 369-379.



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