

Providing Timely, Targeted, and Actionable Feedback

Feedback serves as a tool in building student confidence and motivation while also empowering continued improvement. Instructors can tap into this opportunity by ensuring that their feedback is effective. Frequent and immediate feedback has the greatest impact on learning (Fink, 2013). Research has also consistently found that positive messages lead to higher learning gains. In fact, students are more likely to recognize their own growth when instructors share the progress they have made and include clear steps they can take to continue to improve. This type of feedback is positive for an entire class as well as an individual.

Effective Feedback Is Timely

Students are motivated by timely feedback and may become demotivated if they do not receive feedback when expected (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). Therefore, it is important for online instructors to set reasonable expectations regarding when they will provide feedback, and then consistently meet those expectations. When planning assignments, take into consideration when you will be able to evaluate the work and provide feedback and schedule the due dates accordingly.

- *To the whole class: Thank you all for meeting the deadline for submission of the first assignment. I am looking forward to reading them and plan to finish scoring them by the end of the day on Wednesday. If you have not received your feedback by then or can't locate it in the course shell, please reach out to me.*
- *To an individual student: Thank you for submitting your draft by the due date. I wanted to get your feedback out to you as soon as possible. Please take a look and let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to seeing your final next week!*

Effective Feedback Is Specific

Specific feedback references the work the students have submitted. By commenting on both the successes and challenges they encountered, you are letting students know that you are paying attention to their work and ideas. When posting announcements or replying to a discussion forum, refer to specific aspects of the group discussion and highlight particular comments from individual students to recognize posts that meet your expectations.

- *To the whole class: What a nice job you all have done on your first discussion posts. I noticed right away that many of the posts referenced course readings, one of the elements in the discussion rubric. Nice job! I would like to point your attention to Danielle's and Jorge's posts. They both did a nice job of tying the readings to the question.*
- *To an individual student: I enjoyed reading your paper about nontraditional students in online courses. Your personal story made it very compelling, especially your comments about how challenging it was to find time to complete your assignments. Nice work.*

Effective Feedback Connects to Learning Goals

Provide feedback to students that connects their work with the core concepts from the class. This shows them the progress they are making in mastering these concepts.

- *To the whole class: In reading through your logs, it looks like your small group work this week was very productive. As a reminder, one of our goals for this class is to learn how to collaborate online. Your use of Google Docs for the log is a great example of this.*
- *To an individual student: I made a few comments on your use of APA formatting for both the headings in your paper and your list of resources. I know the switch to APA 7 has made it a little challenging but I'm sure we will all figure it out! Using APA formatting for all papers is one of the core learning concepts for this course. Practicing it here will make it much easier when you have to write papers in future classes.*

Effective Feedback Provides Next Steps

Feedback should be clear and actionable so that your students immediately know what to do to improve. Your comments should clearly describe the current successes and point the student to his or her next steps.

- *To the whole class: Great job of posting the initial posts to the discussion forum by the due date. It makes it much easier for the class to also meet the requirements for replying to a classmate. For next week, please be sure to respond to a classmate who has not yet received a reply.*
- *To individual students: Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts on the reading within the time frame for the initial post. Timely posts allow your classmates to respond. If you take a closer look at the rubric, you will notice that the requirements for the post also include references to readings outside the course that support your position. Please edit your post to include this information. Let me know if I can answer any questions and I look forward to seeing your additional resources.*

Sources

- Boettcher, J. V., & Conrad, R.-M. (2016). *The online teaching survival guide: Simple and practical pedagogical tips* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Coffield, F., Moseley, D., Hall, E., & Ecclestone, K. (2004). *Learning styles and pedagogy in post-16 learning: A systematic and critical review*. Learning and Skills Research Centre. <https://www.leerbeleving.nl/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/learning-styles.pdf>
- Darby, F. (with Lang, J. M.). (2019). *Small teaching online: Applying learning science in online classes*. Jossey-Bass.
- Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. John Wiley & Sons.