Acting on feedback

In this post, you will reflect on how to prioritise your feedback to create a personalised action plan.

# Introduction

The final stage in making the most of your feedback is setting a plan of action for yourself.

To create a plan of action, you need to **actively engage with your feedback**and decide what to **do** with your feedback. All types of feedback you receive can be fed forward to your next assignment or piece of work.

# **The main steps of prioritising and actioning your feedback**

In this section, we will take you through the main steps of prioritising and actioning your feedback:

1. Identify areas for further development
2. Prioritise which areas are most important for your next assignment
3. Create an action plan to help you develop those aspects of your work

Reflect: How do you currently prioritise actions from your feedback?

You may not always be able to fully address every issue raised in your feedback in time for your next assignment (this is perfectly fine!). Therefore, you should think about what you can do in the short, medium and long-term.

Categorising your priorities in this way will help you decide what actions you will need to take.

## **Reflect: Which of these tools could you use to help prioritise actions from your feedback?**

**Options:**

* Past marking criteria
* Future marking criteria
* Future assignment brief
* Module descriptors

There are no right or wrong answers and you may have other suggestions. You could use all of these tools to help decide what to prioritise from your feedback. They can each tell you what your tutors expect in future pieces of work.

**Student tip:** Always download and save your feedback for future use.

## Practice activity

Take a look at the latest piece of feedback you received on your work, and compare this to an upcoming assignment by looking at the assignment brief or marking criteria. What area of your work do you need to develop?

# Prioritising your feedback

## How academics prioritise feedback

Watch [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JALUSYebhUA), or read the transcript below, with advice from academic Harsha Parmar on how she prioritises her own feedback.

### Transcript:

**“**So I’m an academic. I’m a senior lecturer at the University of Manchester and I get feedback in all sorts of different ways.

“So for example if I was writing a journal article I would send it off to the to the journal, to the editor, and then they would get some peer reviewers to look at that feedback.

“And actually that can be quite a brutal process because you’ve spent months and months on end putting a piece of work together, you’ve had colleagues who’ve also worked on that piece of work and it becomes really close to you and it’s a piece of work that you’re really proud of. And then six weeks, eight weeks down the line you get an email to say “sorry we’re not going to accept it unless you make these changes” and it’s actually quite horrific but you kind of even learn that when you send something away you’re always going to get comments back because actually that’s just part of the process, and because you’ve been working on it so closely it’s always good to get another pair of eyes on it just to see how you could improve it.

“So you almost have that belt and braces approach where you’re expecting you know some pretty harsh comments to come your way but once you’ve gotten over that read them through, that’s what I do, I read them through but then I need to take a few deep breaths before I do that and then I start prioritising and saying okay, these comments are quite significant, this is something that I need to take back to my team and work on in a little bit more depth, but these ones aren’t too bad and it’s something that you can manage in a smaller space of time.

“And always, always, always remember to have a look at the good stuff as well. It’s quite often with feedback you’re just going straight in “what didn’t they like?” and “what is it that I’ve done wrong?” but look at the good stuff as well because that will probably help you to address your style of writing and things like that.

“And so that’s one thing that I do when I’m receiving feedback from journal articles.

“As an academic you have peer reviews as well so we do have other academics that come in and look at our teaching to see how we’re performing, what we’re doing well, what we could improve on, and I kind of see that as a nice process so it’s not someone coming and watching you as such and trying to find faults with what you’re doing and they may see things differently to how you perceive them going on so very often people will come in and they’ll say “I really liked what you did there you could see that students were engaged” so you think okay I’ll carry on doing that but there may be things that they pick up on that you’ve not seen or mentioned before — perhaps there are certain phrases that you use too often, perhaps you’re talking about or over emphasising certain points — so you have to not take it too personally because feedback is not meant to be personal in terms of you as a person it’s very much about a product of what you’ve produced and you have to kind of take yourself almost remove yourself from that situation and imagine like you’re a helicopter and you’re looking down at what’s happening around you and try and look at it objectively it’s taken me a long time to do that. I always did take things very personally and to heart and became disappointed with some of the outcomes that I got but you know as I’ve become older and wiser dare I say it and you learn to remove yourself from the situation and just see it for what it is.”

## How students prioritise feedback

Watch [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFXuMwA-JaI), or read the transcript below, in which student Simone shares tips on how they prioritise their own feedback actions.

Transcript:
**“**So firstly what I like to do is I like to identify which areas need development, and then I need to see which of these areas is most important for my next assignment. So, for example, this could be referencing or better transitions.

“And then thirdly you want to develop an action plan to help you develop those areas. So for example for referencing you could look up the correct ways to do it and try it on examples online, and for smoother transitions you can look up transition words and use them in text to try. Thank you.”

### How will you prioritise feedback?

**What are your key take-away points from listening to these videos?**

## Reflect: What new strategies will you now use to prioritise actions from your feedback?

# The Action Organiser

The interactive Action Organiser tool will help you create an action plan to work on your feedback.

After identifying what you need to prioritise from your feedback, it is important to take the time to carefully plan how you will take those priorities forward.

To help you do this, we have created an Action Organiser that you can use to identify and prioritise your next steps so that you can make best use of your feedback.

The Action Organiser will ask you the questions below:

* What feedback did you receive for this assignment?
* What did the marking criteria ask for?
* What did you do well?
* What do you need to improve?
* What targets will you set yourself?
* What actions will you take to achieve your targets?
* How will you know you have achieved your targets?

First, write down your assignment title, unit code, and date completing this. Now answer the following questions:

* What **feedback** did you receive for this assignment? Summarise the feedback in words.
* The **marking criteria**: Compare and contrast your feedback with the marking criteria. What did you do well?
* Looking at **both the feedback and the marking criteria**, can you identify where you did well for this piece of work? Summarise this.
* **Improvements**: Looking at both the feedback and the marking criteria can you identify where you could improve your work? Looking at where you could improve, set yourself three targets that you can aim for in your next piece of work. Try using the “I aim to” starter sentence.
* **Assessing your targets**, what action would you undertake to aim to meet those targets?
* **Definition of done**: How will you know that you have improved? What will demonstrate your development?

Use this tool to actively engage with feedback throughout your time at university.

## Other Ways you can use the Action Organiser

### Do you have an upcoming meeting with your Academic Adviser?

This tool can help plan your discussion with your Adviser. Use your feedback to fill out this tool and ask your Adviser for suggestions on how you can work towards your goals.

### Do you have upcoming reflective assignments or portfolios?

Keeping a record of your feedback and development by completing the Action Planner with each assignment or practice placement will give you a record of your own progress, which you can base your reflections on.

### Progressing to a new academic year?

If you keep a record of your completed Action Organisers from all your assignments in one year, you can use these to plan your own development before starting the new academic year. When doing this, try to identify recurring comments or suggestions across all the individual pieces of feedback.

# Summary

To get the most out of feedback, use the skills you have learnt and the Action Organiser tool in this post each time you receive some feedback. Building time into your own study to prioritise and act on your feedback can help you develop your academic skills from one assessment to the next.

The strategies and Action Organiser introduced here work with all types of feedback. Our ‘Different Types of Feedback’ post will help you become familiar with the many ways lecturers and tutors will give feedback on your work. The advice and techniques in “[Understanding Academic Feedback](https://medium.com/%40mlemanchester/understanding-what-feedback-is-72e782b3a3b4)” will help you make more specific and clear action plans. You can read all of these posts in the further support section below.