Different types of feedback

In this post, University of Manchester staff explain how they provide feedback and outline the different kinds of feedback that you might encounter.

# Introduction

You will receive feedback at different times and in different forms throughout your time at university. It is important to seek out as many opportunities as possible to generate and gain feedback.

In this post, we will look at different strategies lecturers may use to give feedback on your work. But before you find out what they said, let’s reflect on the feedback you have received so far whilst in education.

Consider all the types of feedback you have received throughout your education and list them.

# Feedback strategies used by lecturers

We asked lecturers at University of Manchester three questions about feedback. In this section, we will look at and comment on what they said.

## Question 1: How do you give feedback?

### ****Jennifer Rose****

“I give feedback constantly when teaching face-to-face or online. Students who put their hand up in class or write in the chat box with a question or an answer to a question will instantly get feedback on it. This might include if it is correct, how it can be expanded on or if it is relevant. I give feedback in lectures when I use polling — I can get an idea about what students need to focus on and give feedback on if they have chosen the right answer, as long as they take part!

“In all my discussions in workshops and even in the corridor, I give students feedback on what they need to improve on or where they need to focus their efforts. I use discussion boards to give feedback for students who ask questions on Blackboard and quizzes which give student’s instant feedback on their answers.”

### ****Dr Nick Weise****

“For large group teaching, I provide bespoke time in the lecture (at least 20 minutes) for students to attempt exercises and receive feedback on their work from myself and / or teaching assistants. The interactions I have with students are used to inform general feedback which can be given to the whole class, either as a plenary demonstration / address at the end of a workshop, or online as model answers.

“For some units, I will also construct online quizzes with feedback for correct and incorrect answers. I also collate a feedback document (mostly consisting of ‘frequently asked questions’ from throughout the module) and make this available to the students. For small group teaching, I provide feedback on individual written work and in general during tutorials, also using the written work and common issues / problems to tailor the tutorial to the needs of the students.

“For examined material, I provide general feedback on exam performance overall and feed forward on exam performance from the previous year to this year’s students. In addition, students are always welcome to receive feedback in person at my drop-in sessions, which I run every week during term time.”

### ****Juliette Kendall****

“For taught units, I provide formative feedback via quizzes and test questions with pre-populated answers within the course materials. We use discussion boards to provide advice and feedback. We ask students to discuss and feed back on selected topics via student-led discussion groups. We provide summative feedback on written assignments.

“Feedback from the first assignment can be used formatively to help with the second assignment. As Unit Lead, I sometimes answer individual queries sent by email. For MSc dissertation supervision, we provide extensive one-to-one formative feedback on each chapter of the dissertation as it develops. This is sent to the students as comments on Blackboard and as edited Word documents using the Review tool.

“Sometimes we communicate with our students via email; we try to avoid this as it is easier to keep a full record of our feedback when communication is recorded in Blackboard. Even more occasionally, we will have telephone conversations with our students, if there is a particularly difficult issue to address or particular urgency to providing the feedback.”

### ****Harsha Parmar****

“For large units, I produce detailed written feedback to the cohort post-assessments. This is followed up with bespoke feedback to individual students who would like to discuss their work in more detail. During workshops and seminars, I provide verbal feedback on students’ work and this is instant feedback. In lectures, I often use quizzes to see if material has been understood – and if not, this provided an opportunity to review learning and signpost to additional resources.”

## Question 2: What kind of feedback do you provide?

### ****Jennifer Rose****

“Verbal feedback is the most common, from discussion with students and from seeing their work in workshops. I prefer this way of giving feedback as it is a two-way dialogue.

“Written feedback is given to individuals on assessed coursework and exams.

“I also give written or video feedback to the whole cohort – this allows students to learn from others’ experience or work through the solution to an exercise.

“Sometimes I give feedback on assessments (e.g. presentations) prior to the final assessed presentation. If this is the case, then I expect the feedback points to have been implemented and show improvement in the final assessment.”

### ****Dr Nick Weise****

“I provide a range of feedback including verbal (during lectures / workshops / tutorials), written (either specifically for tutorial work or generally provided online for workshops / examinations / quizzes) and visual (as demonstrations in lectures / workshops).”

### ****Juliette Kendall****

“For the taught units, most of the feedback is in the form of model / correct answers. These can be supplemented with individual comments specifically addressing issues for individual students to consider. Discussion boards responses are generally answering specific questions and signposting to additional resources. Sometimes tutors can provide prompts / questions within online discussions in order to encourage deeper thinking and further discussion.

“For Dissertation students, supervisors will provide feedback which points out issues with current drafts, suggests improvements that might be made and provide positive and encouraging feedback to support their continued engagement with their project. We also send through additional articles or point to online resources that are suitable for individual student projects, to supplement our course learning materials.”

### ****Harsha Parmar****

“To clarify formative and summative in language they understand, I provide written and verbal feedback for both draft work (formative work) and also summative work. Whilst it is useful to gather feedback before submitting an assessment, it’s really important to reflect on the feedback that is given so you can draw out what you need to develop and what you do well so you can keep on doing that too.”

## Question 3: What other sources of feedback exist for students to make use of?

### ****Jennifer Rose****

“Students should try to get feedback from peers, for example, just getting another student to read an essay can help both the reader and the writer improve their writing skills. By reviewing peers’ work, skills such as assessment literacy and critical thinking can be developed and ultimately, the student can learn to improve their studying by self-assessing their own work. I remind students that feedback needs to be:-

* **Forward-looking**statements which enable something to happen differently next time
* **Evidence based** on what you actually experienced
* **Expressive:** describe how things made you feel and what the outcome was for you
* **Descriptive rather than judgmental,** rather than something being ‘good’ or ‘bad’, explain what worked or didn’t work for you
* **Behaviour-based** rather than based on the person, try to use adverbs which describe action, rather than adjectives which describe qualities
* **Actionable** provides guidance about the action which should be taken either now or for next time
* **Constructive:** giving helpful guidance, not mindless dismissal
* **Kind:**consider how the person giving feedback might feel or react when reading the statement

### ****Dr. Nick Weise****

“Other students are a valuable and abundant source of feedback, for example, during workshops, they should discuss ideas with those around them and they should also attend Peer-Assisted Study / Peer Mentoring sessions (the latter for non-assessed work).”

### ****Juliette Kendall****

“Via discussion boards, our students have access to Library staff and e-Learning staff. Our administrative team provide support to our students and will forward questions and queries to academic staff as appropriate. Within the Division of Dentistry, our dissertation students have access to a substantial number of specialist academics who sometimes provide guidance on particular topics where specialist knowledge is required.

“As far as I am aware, our students use social media to communicate in groups (across programmes or units and in sub-groups) as well as individually, to support and provide feedback to each other.”

### ****Harsha Parmar****

“Written comments in practical books are helpful as well as asking for feedback on individual performance perhaps in a role play or teach-back activity.”

# Activity: Reflecting on what you have learned

It is important to recognise that you will receive feedback in many different forms throughout university. Feedback is more than just written feedback given on assessments!

Have you received any of types of feedback described by the lecturers above, and if so, how useful did you find them?

# Summary

Having heard about the different types of feedback and how lecturers present that, you might now consider looking for how feedback is shared on your course.

You should also take a look at the post ‘Analysing your feedback’ and ‘Acting on Feedback’ so that you know what to do with it once you have it.

# Special thanks

Thanks to our academic colleagues who helped to produce this resource, you can find links to their professional profiles below:

* [Jennifer Rose](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/jennifer.rose.html)
* [Dr Nick Weise](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/uomchemistryblog/2019/11/meet-the-department-dr-nick-weise/)
* [Juliette Kendall](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/juliette.kendall.html)
* [Harsha Parmar](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/harsha.parmar.html)