



FEEDBACK STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING

What do we mean by feedback?

Students need to know how well they are performing in their learning. Feedback has a role to play in achieving that aim. Feedback is generally understood as staff giving feedback to students on their work, i.e. staff generating the feedback. However recent definitions of 'feedback' (National Forum, 2017; UCD Regulations, 4.32) have advocated for a more nuanced and wider understanding of this term to also include the development of students' ability to monitor and judge their own learning, i.e. students generating their own feedback. Six different feedback strategies have been incorporated into UCD's module descriptor (Table 1).

Table 1: UCD Feedback Strategies

Feedback individually to students, post-assessment

This can be through different approaches, such as oral, audio, video and/or written/annotated feedback, either in-class, out of class, in meetings, through the VLE, by email, using rubrics, etc.

Group/class feedback, post-assessment

This can be through different approaches, such as oral, audio, video and/or written feedback, either in-class, out-of-class, in meetings, through the VLE, by email, etc.

Feedback individually to students, on an activity or draft prior to summative assessment

This can be through different approaches, such as oral, audio, video and/or written feedback, either in-class, out of class, in meetings, through the VLE, by email, using rubrics, etc.

Online automated feedback

This can be facilitated through, for example, online MCQs/quizzes (with feedback), essay correcting software, on-line polling activities, other automated feedback approaches, etc.

Self-assessment activities

Activities to facilitate students to self-monitor and critically evaluate their own work, such as, discussion following in-class student response systems/quizzes; discussion forums around assignments either in class/online/out-of-class; use of a self-assessment form (or rubric) when submitting their work; self-assessing their work against descriptive criteria on a rubric, etc

Peer review activities

Opportunities for students to peer review, for example: using a range of different exemplars of other students' work, either in class/online; opportunities to discuss standards required based on peer exemplars or descriptive criteria on a rubric; peer reviewing other students' work against descriptive criteria on a rubric, etc

Good practices

Feedback is a partnership with staff and students and, where possible, the process should encourage dialogue on the students' work and on their actions for change (Winstone et al, 2017; Nicol, 2010). Students should also be made aware of the range of feedback approaches, including their responsibility in the process, i.e. actioning feedback, engaging in self and peer review activities.

Wiggins (2012) gives advice on some key ways that can make any feedback more effective, noting that feedback should be:

- **Goal-referenced;**
- **Tangible and transparent;**
- **Actionable;**
- **User-friendly (specific and personalized);**
- **Timely;**
- **Ongoing.**

Technology can provide opportunities to give different forms of feedback, such as rubrics, audio and video feedback. See UCD T&L's (2019) [Six Approaches to Technology Enhanced Feedback](#) resource for some common tools, including those currently available in UCD's Brightspace VLE.

A programme approach to feedback

In order to build on previous feedback, the most effective approach to giving feedback to students is to address this across the programme. This programme approach also allows students to develop the self-monitoring and peer review skills as they progress through their programme of study. Student involvement can start in their first year and as student become more skilled and open to this approach (Evans, 2013), it can become more established in the later years. In parallel, the more staff-generated feedback approaches can be reduced towards the end of the programme. This allows students to graduate with the life-long learning skill of self-monitoring and peer review.

Some other ideas to support the incremental development of feedback:

- Giving feedforward, i.e. suggestions for what students should do in their next assignment
- Requesting students to identify and act on their previous modules' feedback in their current module
- Asking students to request specific feedback, to support them gradually taking more ownership on their feedback
- Giving feedback, and supporting students to self-monitor, on a generic rubric that is used throughout the programme, i.e. a programme group-work rubric; a rubric for critical thinking common to all major/programme modules
- Using analytic rubrics, for structured feedback in the early years, and more holistic rubrics in later years (O'Neill, 2018)

References

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