



# Teaching Toolkit

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Formative Assessment: Practical Ideas for  
Improving the Efficiency and  
Effectiveness of Feedback to Students

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Date: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010

## **Formative Assessment:**

### **Practical Ideas for Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Feedback to Students.**

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Giving student feedback on their learning, often described as formative assessment, has been shown to have powerful positive benefits for student learning and achievement (Nichol & McFarlane-Dick, 2009; Juwah et al, 2004; Black & William, 1998). However, this can often be a time-consuming task in an environment with stretch resources. In addition, many staff report lack of student engagement with this feedback, for example, they may not read it (Hounsell, 1987) and students also report lack of helpful feedback (Sadler, 1989; Chanock, 2000). This can result in wasted staff efforts and ineffective feedback for students.

One of the key themes emerging to address this dilemma is to develop students own self-monitoring skills in order to help them narrow the gap between their performance and the standards expected of them (Nichol, 2009; Clarke, 2001). The timing, type and specification of feedback can also improve student ability to self-monitor. In addition, good feedback should feed into some specific actions that can be used in the next assessment (Nichol & McFarlane-Dick, 2009). Feedback need not always be from the academic staff, students themselves are a good resource to each other when given guidance on how to do this. New technologies also open up some efficient feedback opportunities.

In the recent literature, there has been much attention to the development of efficient and effective feedback and this short resource leaflet highlights a few practical ideas to support students and staff in this process. This resource is also linked with more templates and practical advice on the UCD Teaching and Learning website.

#### **Seven Principles of Giving Good Feedback (Formative Assessment)**

1. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning.
2. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
3. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards expected).
4. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
5. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning.
6. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching

(Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2009; Juwah et al, 2004)

Some Ideas	Value of this idea to student and or staff	Resources: <b>Reference, templates, or case study.</b>  See also
<p><u>1. Use of a pre-submission check-list (pro-forma):</u> Students self-assess on some pre-defined criteria and hand it in with assignment.</p>	<p>Student encouraged to self-monitor, based on assessment criteria</p>	<p>- Cathers (2007) -<a href="#">link to example</a></p>
<p><u>2. Consider feedback in different media/formats:</u> On-line, audio-feedback, verbal class feedback, use of 'clickers' in large class contexts.</p>	<p>Staff efficient feedback. Easily accessed by students.</p>	<p>-Nichol (2007a, b) -Nichol (2009) -REAP (2009)</p>
<p><u>3. Student Requested Feedback:</u> Ask students to submit specific requests for areas for feedback at the beginning of assignment. Focus feedback primarily on these areas.</p>	<p>As this is student-focused feedback it is more inclined to motivate students to act. Encourages students to take some responsibility in the process.</p>	<p>-Nichol &amp; MacFarlane-Dick (2009)</p>
<p><u>4. Evidence of Action:</u> Student have to integrate (highlight), in next assignment, where actions from previous feedback are integrated into this assignment</p>	<p>Builds students ability to self-regulate their own learning and engages them with previous feedback.</p>	<p>-Oxford Brookes: Accessed 25/11/09 <a href="http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/documents/Make%20FeedbackWork.pdf">http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/documents/Make%20FeedbackWork.pdf</a></p>
<p><u>5. Timing of Feedback:</u> Focus staff energies on mid-unit feedback, instead of end of semester feedback. This could be an in-class summary to whole class; in-class mini tests; on-line MCQ's, etc</p>	<p>Students have time to act on feedback for summative assessment.</p>	<p>-Angelo &amp; Cross (1993) -Prompt feedback: see <a href="http://www.reap.ac.uk/nss/nssAfter01.html">http://www.reap.ac.uk/nss/nssAfter01.html</a></p>

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<p>6. <u>Engage student with the assessment criteria.</u> Make assessment criteria transparent to student. Where possible, involve them in developing the criteria.</p>	<p>Improves student awareness of the desired standard and helps them narrow the gap between their and the desired performance.</p>	<p>-Rust et al (2005) -Sadler (1989)</p>
<p>7. <u>In class peer and self-assess feedback activities:</u> During class, use previous anonymous assignments or current students first drafts to peer/self assess using rubrics/assessment criteria.</p>	<p>Build students ability to self-regulate their own learning and in giving feedback they become more aware of the desired standard in relation to their own work. Builds in feedback into class-time and is efficient use of staff time.</p>	<p>-Example of rubics (<a href="#">see link...</a>) -Rust et al,( 2005)</p>
<p>8. <u>Less summative and more formative in early years:</u> Consider replacing some 1<sup>st</sup> year continuous (summative/graded) assessments, by formative assessment (and/or give students choice of considering marks from formative for use as summative)</p>	<p>Timely, early feedback to students.  Gives students more support in early University years, may increase retention.</p>	<p>-Knight (2000)</p>
<p>9. <u>Comment in actionable language:</u> Give feedback that includes actions for students to improve next performance (focus on action). Actionable comments (without grades) have been shown have been shown to be less demoralising for students.</p>	<p>Gives students more useful advice about how to change their performance.</p>	<p>-Clarke, 2001 -Sadler (1989) - <a href="http://www.slideshare.net/ewhite/does-your-feedback-feed-forward-presentation">http://www.slideshare.net/ewhite/does-your-feedback-feed-forward-presentation</a></p>

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