

Improving Student Writing: Best Practices for Effective and Efficient Feedback

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Introduction

Workshop Goals:

1. Practice marking/critiquing, receive peer and workshop facilitator feedback on the critique.
2. Identify and discuss the goals of written assignments and constraints on you, when giving feedback.
3. Use scenarios and discussion to identify best teaching practices for what to do:
 - before the students write
 - when writing comments on assignments
 - when returning assignments

Activity 1: Let's get critiquing

Scenario: Your second-year students have just completed a one-page short essay. The students will get this marked essay back from you, and then write additional essays during the term.

- Read the sample essay and critique it, write comments as you normally would as a TA/TM.
- Use the sample marking key and assign a grade after you finish critiquing.
- 10 minutes to read and critique.

Activity 2: Goals of Writing Assignments; Constraints of Feedback

Working with your neighbour or in a group of three,
complete the given worksheet (10 minutes).

Then we'll discuss as a group.

Activity 3: Identifying Best Practices for Feedback

- A. In groups, complete given scenario (10 mins):
 - Setting up the assignment
 - When writing comments
 - After returning the assignment

- B. Share scenarios and discuss (15 mins)

Before the assignment

Best Practice: Make expectations clear

- Have/review learning goals
- Show examples of high and low quality writing.
- Develop and communicate clear grading criteria for each assignment.
- Decide how you will write comments so there's a clear connection between
 1. your comments
 2. the grading criteria
 3. the relevant learning objectives

When writing comments

Best Practice: Avoid writing too much

- Distinguish "higher-order" from "lower-order" issues and resist the temptation to proofread.
- Limit your comments to formative feedback.
- Use editing short-hand.
- Be specific.

Returning the assignment

Best Practice: Reflect on feedback

- Review common errors with the class.
- Periodically review progress with the class.
- Ask students to submit corrected assignment with the subsequent assignment.
- Ask students to comment on assignment (difficulty, suggestions, etc).
- Ask students for feedback on your feedback.

In summary:

1. We practiced marking/critiquing, received feedback on the critique.
2. We identified and discussed the goals of written assignments and constraints when giving feedback.
3. We used scenarios and discussion to identify best teaching practices for what to do:
 - before the students write
 - when writing comments on assignments
 - when returning assignments

Wrap-up and Action Plan

Additional questions, comments?

*Best Practices handout

Action Plan:

What is one idea (or more) from this workshop that I will use the next time I give feedback on writing?

Thank you!

Notes