Strategies for Effective Feedback

Imagine the following scenario.

You are an online student and all you have received from your instructor are low grades without feedback, how would you know where to get started in making improvements to master the content?

Students need much more support and feedback in the online environment than in a traditional course. No matter the grade, include feedback to guide your students in the right direction.

To learn more, review the following article titled [Grades versus comments: Research on student feedback](#).

In online learning, effective feedback helps build a partnership and trust between the instructor and student. It can help promote interaction with students and enhance instructor presence. Consider the following strategies for providing feedback in the online classroom.

1. Communicate Clearly

Here are some examples:

- Choose your words carefully. Don't be haphazard, for your words can humanize or intimidate. Set the tone in your course. Your students should feel comfortable to engage in your course.
- Explain the expectations of the course and why the course is important beyond a grade or degree requirement.
- Clearly communicate exactly how students will be graded. This information should be available on the first day of the course and included within the CCO. The weight each assignment carries with due dates are important information to show up front. To learn more, review [how to weight the final course grade](#).
- Offer tips or create a FAQ page on how to do well in the course. These tips can come from your past experiences in teaching the course. These can include items you look for in assignment submissions and discussion posts.
- Let students know you are available and that you want them to succeed in the course. On your instructor page include a picture, video, and contact information. Providing this information will help students learn more about you and start the bonding process.
- Consider providing pre-recording audio or video feedback. Written feedback can be beneficial for students but may be less clear or engaging in comparison.
- Make it a routine of sending reminders or follow-up messages using the Inbox or Announcements. This can significantly smoothen the workflow between you and the learners.

2. Personalized Feedback

Meaningful feedback on assignments enhances critical thinking, reflective practice, and develops instructor-student relationships which is important in an online environment. While feedback fosters reflection, correction, and performance extension, it also increases student motivation as they feel the instructor is interested in their success.
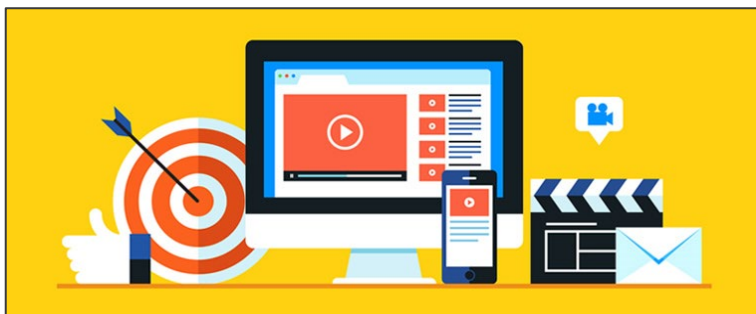
Here are some examples:

- Make comments that go beyond simple questioning or agreement to model the critical thinking you expect of your students. Make descriptive comments.
- Motivate your students. Feedback can help motivate students to persevere with difficult material, take creative risks, or explore new angles and perspectives. Thoughtful feedback is one of the most powerful and versatile teaching tools an educator possesses. It can offer encouragement, spark new ideas, and challenge students to realize their potential.
- When responding to a student's communication to you, always start by using their name.
- Take note of students who don't participate and contact them.
- Respond privately to personal messages within 24 to 48 hours of receipt.

Note: Do not comment on every student posting. Much like in face-to-face class discussions, let the conversation develop and give students a chance to participate before jumping in with in depth comments/feedback or analysis.

3. Share Audio or Video

- Even when composed with care written feedback can be unclear in its tone, intent, or meaning.
- Avoid confusion by sharing audio or video recordings, or by streaming live, which not only makes it easier to present your feedback clearly, but also saves you time on writing.
- Statistics also suggest that video may be more engaging than text, which means students may have an easier time retaining video feedback.
- Zoom and Canvas Studio are just a few examples of the tools you can use to stream video, record audio, or use screen capturing — a great technique for personalizing your feedback.

4. Timely Feedback

- A timely response is an effective approach especially in online courses. It helps to avoid content disconnection and student isolation. If students must wait several weeks for a grade on an assignment, feedback may not offer the opportunity for students to reflect, correct, and extend their performance.
- Students should be able to use feedback on assignments to influence the product of future work.
- A short turn-around time of grading and feedback supports the idea of facilitating a mentoring or coaching relationship with your students and in turn facilitates a more connected learning environment.
- Return graded items to students within 1 to 3 days.

For additional support, please reach out to the Office of Academic Affairs SPS.