

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY




STOP
LOOK
LISTEN

Student's Guide
to Feedback

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Always make
sure you
collect your
feedback!

Welcome to the School of Psychology Student's Guide to Feedback

Why do I need this guide?

Recently the Students' Union talked to students about their **feedback** and what it meant to them. One thing which emerged was that students needed more information on exactly how to use their **feedback**. This guide will make sure you get the most out of the **feedback** you receive on your assessed work- it is going to make sure you are fully aware of just what **feedback** is and how to use it.

Why should I bother using feedback?

Simple answer... to improve your work and your grades. You need to learn from your mistakes and learn what you are doing well. Your lecturer doesn't give **feedback** for the fun of it, they do it to help you progress. You should be able to see a progressive rise in your grades, and you should find that you are more easily able to complete your work safe in the knowledge that what you are doing is on advice from your lecturer on previous work.

Below is a case study of a UCLan student who used their **feedback** throughout their time at University and has seen a progression in their marks. This student has now graduated from UCLan with a degree they were extremely pleased with:

`"The feedback I received on my course was excellent and the fact that I used it properly and didn't just skim read it for the grade meant that I was able to greatly improve my work throughout my degree. Of course I had to work extremely hard for three years to gain the standard of degree I wanted but I know that my feedback directly contributed to this."`

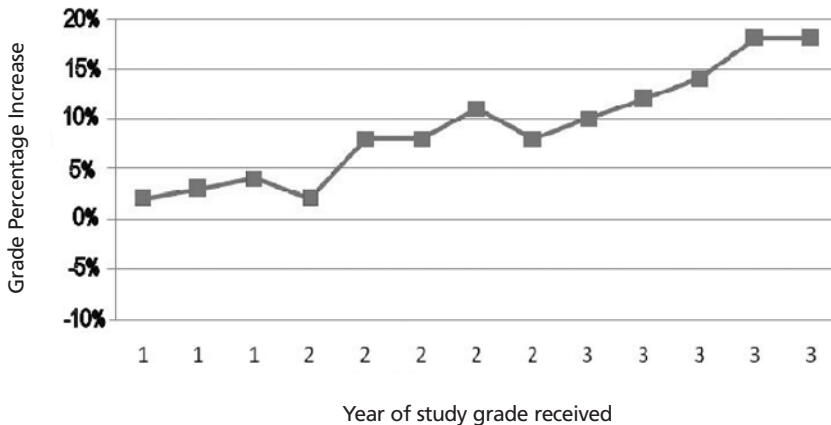


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Below is a graph of this student's grade progression throughout their degree (note these grades are for written assignments only and not for the entire module grade). Of course, every student works at a different level but the same story of continuous development can be seen no matter where you start from and finish.

You should be proud of any progress you make.

Graph to show progression of student grades when making full use of feedback



What exactly is Feedback?

That really is the question isn't it? Feedback is part of everyday life. You are always assessing people and situations and giving your thoughts and opinions on them. This in itself is **feedback**. UCLan students have said that they mostly understand **feedback** to be written comments on their work and verbal comments to go with the written comments...

Is this wrong? No, not at all, but it is a simplistic view of what **feedback** really is. **Feedback** is much more than just the comments on your work. It is a continuous learning process and a vital part of your student experience. It can be peer to peer (with course mates) and it can also be received in a class room situation. It also teaches you to accept criticism and praise and be constructive with it.

If this is the first time you've studied at a university, you may be used to being able to hand in numerous drafts of an assignment in order to increase your grade. University works differently and whilst your tutors will be happy to answer questions about your assignment, they will not read, review or edit your work before submission.

Feedback can be received in two ways, as **individual feedback** and as **generic feedback**.



Great...but what does that mean?

Individual feedback: Individual **feedback** is what you would consider 'formal **feedback**'.

Often students are not satisfied until they receive this. Your individual **feedback** would be the grades on your work, the written comments on your assignments and your 'official' meetings with your lecturers to discuss your work. It usually comes after the deadline when your work cannot be changed.

Generic feedback: Generic **feedback** is something which is often not recognised by students as being **feedback**, when actually it is a very important form of **feedback**. It can often take the form of a conversation with a lecturer about your work before you hand it in. It could come from another student in a group discussion about your work. It could be your lecturer addressing the class with generic comments. Whatever form it takes, generic **feedback** is what it says, **feedback**. Just because you have not received your work back with detailed written comments all over it yet (individual **feedback**) does not necessarily mean you have not received any **feedback** at all. You will though always get individual **feedback**.

This is what you would expect individual feedback to be written on and this is normally what the feedback sheet would look like in your School. Image for reference only.

Marking Criteria	Met	Met	Met	Met	Comments (see discussion for feedback sheet)
Structure For example: Is the essay content introduced in the first paragraph? Is material summarised in the conclusion? Are paragraphs of an appropriate length and ordered logically? Does the essay have a clear point?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Coherence/Logic For example: Is the essay coherent? Is the argument clear? Is the evidence relevant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Relevance For example: Does the essay answer the question? Is the material relevant? Is it clearly the information required?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Knowledge/Content For example: Does the essay demonstrate understanding? Are the ideas expressed in the student's own words?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Explanation of Details For example: Is the student able to explain details appropriately (e.g. in a research paper)? Is the use of data/sufficient to support the point?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Referencing For example: Are sources cited appropriately in the text? Is there a reference list? Does the reference list follow conventions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Style For example: Is the essay well-written, with few spelling and grammatical errors? Is it written in an academic style?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Originality Does the essay demonstrate independent thought, supported with evidence from academically 'appropriate' sources?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	

OVERALL COMMENTS (including areas of strength and areas for improvement): _____ Mark: %

Marker's name: _____ Date: _____

When should I expect feedback?

The Card says you should expect feedback on assessed work in 15 working days.

- ▶ You should expect at least generic **feedback** on any **written assignments, presentations, logbooks, performances** or other such **course work** projects in 15 working days. Note that 15 working days means days that the University is open and functioning, so this would not include a Bank Holiday, and over Christmas when the University is normally closed for up to 6 working days.

If you are considered a distance learner please note that you should expect feedback on assessed work in 20 working days

- ▶ On your **written examinations** you should receive generic **feedback** within 15 working days of publication of the results. This **feedback** may be verbal, written through e-mail or other means. Individual **feedback** should follow this generic **feedback** on written examinations, e.g. you will be able to ask for your individual marks and to discuss your performance with your personal tutor or the module leader.
- ▶ For your **dissertation or final project** you can ask for individual written **feedback** from your supervisor, but will not receive generic **feedback**.
- ▶ For any assessment that you do at UCLan which contributes to your module mark should receive some form of individual **feedback**.
- ▶ Please note that if your lecturer can not get your **feedback** to you in 15 working days, they should inform you so you know when to expect it.



What should I expect in 15 working days?

- ▶ The University academic regulations say that in 15 working days you should expect generic **feedback** on your assessment.
- ▶ Generic **feedback** could be in the form of a class discussion, a conversation with your lecturer, an emailed report or peer **feedback**.
- ▶ Your lecturer may be able to provide you with individual written **feedback** in 15 days which is great, a real gold standard. Please note, if you do receive your work back within 15 working days, with individual **feedback**, then you will probably not also receive generic **feedback**.
- ▶ Module Leaders may not be able to meet with you to go through every piece of work you do. This is especially true for modules with large numbers of students. However, you should be able to discuss your work with the person who has marked it or with your personal tutor.
- ▶ As previously stated, if your lecturer is unable to deliver generic **feedback** in 15 days they will let you know.

Ok, so now I've got some feedback- what do I do with it?

- ▶ **Don't just look at the grade**
Yes, the grade you receive is important but that is all it can tell you. You need to read the rest of your **feedback** to know how to improve your next grade and how you got there with this one. If your mark is better than you expected you need to know why so you can build on your strengths and improve your weaknesses. You cannot change this grade, but you can use your **feedback** to help to improve your next grade.
- ▶ **Read it or listen to it**
In whatever form it comes to you, whether it is written on paper, on an e-mail or in an audio file, take notice of it. Your lecturer has spent time doing this to help you, and just as **you expect them to read your assignment, they expect you to spend time reading or listening to their feedback**.
- ▶ **Make sure you understand it**
You need to make sure you know what your lecturer means. If you do not understand your **feedback**, it is no use to you. You should see your lecturer for clarification if you need to.
- ▶ **Think about it**
How can the **feedback** you've received on this assignment help you with your

next piece of work? Were there comments about your general writing style, presentation, referencing? Each piece of assessed work you do does not stand alone: these sorts of general comments can be applied to other pieces of work.

- ▶ **Talk about it** Whether it is with your lecturer for clarification and more detail, or if it is with your course mates, talking about your **feedback** can help you to better understand it. You and your course mates can also learn things from each other. But remember, you should never give your work to another student.
- ▶ **Do some more work** If there are comments on your work that suggest you need to improve your style or some other aspect of writing or planning, then please do look at books on study skills, or at what is available online. If your tutor says you have not understood a point, then please go back to your source material and re-read it.
- ▶ **Keep it** Even though you read your **feedback** when you get it, chances are you may have forgotten what much of it says when your next assignment is handed in, so make sure you keep it so you can refer back to it. It is also nice to have a look back at how much your work has improved from one year to the next.

Using the feedback from your Psychology Assessments

- ▶ **Reading feedback comments is not enough to improve your grade: feedback** comments are just the first step. The marker is simply highlighting a problem and may suggest ideas as to how to address the problem. However, as you are now an independent learner it is vital you play your part in working out ways to address the problems. For example, a marker may note that your sentences lack clarity. You now need to address this problem. You could use 'on-line resources' such as the Purdue University On-Line Writing Lab, or use a study skills book. You could chat to your personal tutor or ask a friend to look at your work and make suggestions.
- ▶ **Receiving feedback can be very emotional:** Sometimes it is great and if you have a good grade and lovely comments you can feel very positive after receiving your **feedback**. On the flip side receiving **feedback** can lead to feelings of upset. However, it is not the intention of the tutor to make you upset. All lecturers in the School genuinely want you to improve – and unfortunately this means highlighting errors and shortcomings.
- ▶ **Try not to take feedback personally:** If you are upset leave it a couple of days before you look at it. Go and see your personal tutor for advice.
- ▶ **Don't expect immediate results:** Responding to University **feedback** is complex and will require time and effort. Some errors can be quickly addressed, such as formatting references. Other skills, such as evaluating past research can take longer to develop and need lots of effort.
- ▶ **Don't look at each assignment in isolation:** In your first year it is important to look across the modules to see if there is a theme to your **feedback** comments. Have several markers picked up on the same problem with your sentence structure or lack of widely reading? If so, this is an area that you should focus on.
- ▶ **Markers will differ in the feedback they give:** Some will give three or four key comments which need to be answered; others will give detailed comments on a whole range of materials. This is similar to differences in lecturing styles. You might prefer one method over the other but this does not mean that one type is better than another.

What can I do if I'm not happy with the feedback I've received?

In most cases, the first person you should talk to is the marker. On a more general level, you should discuss your **feedback** and your approach to work with your Personal Tutor. If you are having problems with a lot of your work, you could talk to the Course Leader. If you are not happy with the response you get, then you should talk to the Andrew Churchill, the Programme Co-ordinator (Psychology courses) or Steve Atkins, the Academic Lead (CASES courses).

Before you speak to anyone, you need to decide why you are not happy with the **feedback**, and this will take some effort on your part. Whoever you talk to, it is probably best if you make an appointment, and let them know what it is you wish to discuss with them. This is much better than turning up at their door when they might be busy with other things. Alternatively, you might be able to sort a problem out via email. This should ensure you make appropriate use of staff time.

- ▶ **Insufficient feedback** There should be sufficient **feedback** for you to be able to improve your work (see below).
- ▶ **Don't know what you can do to improve your work** All coursework **feedback** should be informative and should include areas for improvement. However, **feedback** is not exhaustive and markers will tailor their **feedback** to your level of work. A very good piece of work might just have comments about doing more advanced reading or questioning a particular argument; a less good piece of work might have comments that concentrate on style or meeting the marking criteria. The marker should point out what you need to concentrate on to make an improvement in your work; they will not tell you everything you need to do to write a perfect piece of work.
- ▶ **Cannot understand the feedback** All **feedback** should be clear. Read through all the **feedback** and re-read your work. Give yourself time to consider it. If you still cannot understand it, talk to the marker
- ▶ **Cannot read the feedback** All **feedback** should be legible. All work is moderated, and this does include the comments, but apart from this markers will not know that you are having problems reading their comments unless you tell them. You might ask a friend to try to read the comments before talking to the marker. It might just be a style of writing you have not come across before and so find difficult.

▶ **Administrative error**

It could be that you think your mark has been calculated wrongly, or that part of the **feedback** is missing, or that some comment on the **feedback** suggests the marker has missed something. Please see the marker, or the Module Leader, to ensure any administrative error is corrected.

Conclusion

We hope you have found this guide useful and you now have a greater understanding about the importance of **feedback**. The **feedback** action plan table on the reverse page should prove very useful for you to be able to recognise the use that **feedback** has been to you. Fill it in when you start to receive **feedback** and we hope that you can see a progression in your work.



STOP, LOOK, LISTEN AND USE

Student's Feedback Action Plan *(complete after each piece of assessment)*

Three things I did which attracted positive **feedback**:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three things I did which attracted critical **feedback**:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three things I will do to address my critical **feedback**:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The most useful **feedback** I received was: _____

I will always use the **feedback** I receive because: _____

Three improvements I have noticed from using my **feedback** are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Use in conjunction with the 'This Way Up' Student Guide to Assessment www.uclan.ac.uk/ldu/StudentGuideToAssessment/

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