

How to get students to read your feedback

The type of assessments you give will direct the nature and method of feedback you provide students. Feedback provided through the semester can be essential for guiding student learning. However, if students miss seeing your feedback or if they don't understand what you are saying, their learning experience can be negatively impacted. Or, they may forget what you said by the time the next assessment rolls around. Here are a few ideas for making sure that students pay attention and address your suggestions through the semester.

WHERE IS IT?

Tell students up front and often where you are providing feedback and how they can view it. Will it be in the Blackboard Grade Center? In Blackboard, it may not be obvious to students where to find your feedback. [Provide instructions](#) for Blackboard or other feedback locations in your Getting Started section for class.

SEPARATE GRADES FROM FEEDBACK

Provide critical feedback with at least a few tangible improvements on a draft of the work without the grade. If you are concerned about quality for the initial draft, a credit/no-credit for the draft could be used. For the final grade, students must resubmit the work and reflect on specifically how they responded to the feedback. Feedback you provide for the first-round submission should be detailed while the final grade feedback is limited and based on improvement.

INCORPORATE A REVISION CYCLE

Give students the opportunity to submit revised assignments based on your feedback, with the incentive of recovering some of the points lost on the initial submission. Rubrics can help express what your specific expectations are for improvement. Give yourself plenty of time to return drafts for revision.

SYNCHRONOUS 1:1 CHECK-INS

Ask students to meet with you virtually 1-3 times a semester to discuss feedback verbally. You could choose to give only verbal feedback and students could take notes during the session if they wish. Alternately, you could provide written feedback in advance and ask students to bring a few questions based on specific elements of your feedback. Give points for attending these meetings. Set up meeting times using [Google Calendar appointment slots](#) or a service like [Calendly](#).

PEER FEEDBACK

Give students the opportunity to be more aware of feedback by giving it themselves. Provide guidelines and task students with providing feedback to their peers. Students then review feedback they received and respond with a revision or defense of their work.

SELF GRADING

Allow students to grade themselves and have them answer specific questions to support their work. This is another chance to provide feedback and then allow a revision.

PROVIDE STATISTICS

Students want to know how they are doing relative to the class as a whole. Keep all statistics anonymous, but let students know where they fall when you provide feedback. A little competition may go a long way in focusing effort for future assessments.

TWO-WAY FEEDBACK

Feedback works both ways. Use a form or quiz to ask for student feedback and questions on your feedback for an assessment. Check for understanding by asking how your feedback relates to assignment guidelines and what questions come to mind as a result of your feedback. Give points for this exercise.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

If your class is engaged in a lot of discussion provide feedback to the entire class through an announcement. Call out quotes from specific students each week and highlight their contribution to discussion and explain why what they said is important. Choose different students each week.

ASK STUDENTS

How do students want to receive feedback? What will be most useful for their learning experience? We don't necessarily know, and they may have had another instructor whose approach is something we could learn from. Why not ask students what works for them? Conduct a poll or quick survey near the start of class and mid-semester to confirm what is working and ask what you could change. If you do make changes to your approach let them know in an announcement how valuable their feedback was and how you changed your practice.

Finally, we all need to feel safe and valued. This is a reminder to take into consideration the diversity of student experience and compose your feedback with intention accordingly. Know that, especially during these unusual times, students may be experiencing additional barriers to their learning experience beyond their control. Try using the ['feedback sandwich' model](#) as a guide for better sensitivity: Compliment on something they did well, list specific changes they could make to improve, and end with another compliment or inspiration.