Marking exercise: group activity

Collection: Assessment

Resource: Feedback and marking strategies

Approximate duration

40 minutes

Learning outcomes

As a result of carrying out this activity participants should attain a clearer grasp of the processes of marking and preparing to give feedback.

Introduction

Feedback is the area in which most departments have scored lowest in the National Student Survey: students are concerned both about the timeliness and usefulness of feedback. It is also all too often the case that the discursive worlds of those giving the feedback and those receiving it fail to overlap.

It is all too easy to fall into a set of automatic responses when marking written work, dispensing comments about grammar, spelling and referencing conventions and cryptic instructions such as 'Be more critical', or 'too descriptive'. It is equally easy to write far too much--discussing student work with an attention to detail that would be invaluable to the students were they to take it on board properly, but which, all too often, is bypassed by essay-writers keen simply to know what their mark is.

This activity will help participants focus their feedback on the needs of students more effectively.

The activity

1. The 'Word' files containing the three different student essays with the title 'Discuss the 'Fallen Woman' as a Familiar Feature of Victorian Writing' are available from this resource folder in the assessment collection in HumBox. Print and hand out copies of one of essays.

   - essay one
   - essay two
   - essay three

   Tell the participants about the module for which it is supposed to have been written: a second-year literature module.

2. Ask everyone to read and annotate the essay in whatever way they prefer.
3. Ask each group to discuss the way they have each annotated the essay, and to decide upon the best way to produce feedback for that particular student.
4. Groups share their thoughts. Run a general discussion on feedback methods, perhaps using some of the material listed below, in 'Links and References'.

Moderation and second marking

There is quite a bit of evidence that markers (especially but not exclusively those new to the profession) are worried about what colleagues may think of their standards, and want in some way to prove themselves. Obviously, the effect of this will usually be to depress marks.

For a pair activity: take a straw poll of who gave which marks in the marking exercise. Pairs are formed consisting of someone who gave a higher mark with someone who gave a lower one. Each pair role plays the argument they would need to have in an attempt to justify their own mark.

Links & References

- Minimal marking. Summary of an approach to marking devised by Richard Haswell putting the onus of detailed correction onto students.
  [http://www.iwu.edu/~writcent/minimal_marking.htm]

- Deirdre Burke and Jackie Pieterick, *Giving Students Effective Written Feedback* (Open University Press, 2010)
- Catherine Haines, *Assessing Students' Written Work* (Routledge, 2004)
- John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* (Jossey-Bass, 1996). Despite its title, an inspiring and practical book.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Areas of Activity 3**: Assessment and giving feedback to learners
- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Core Knowledge 5:** Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching
- **Professional Values 1:** Respect for individual learners
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.
http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/

Resources in the Assessment Collection

- Assessment: introduction to the collection
- Assessment audit: resource overview
    - Auditing English: individual activity
    - Auditing English: group activity
- Designing and running innovative assessments: resource overview
    - Creative assessments in Literature: outcomes, criteria: individual activity
    - Creative assessments in Literature: outcomes, criteria: group activity
- Assessment SWOT analysis: resource overview
    - SWOT analysis: individual activity
    - SWOT analysis: group activity

- Mix and match: resource overview
    - Matching assessment to outcome: individual activity
    - Matching assessment to outcome: group activity
- Creative assessment: resource overview
    - Creative criticism
- Feedback and marking strategies: resource overview
    - Marking exercise: individual activity
    - **Marking exercise: group activity (*you are here)**
- Computer-aided assessment: resource overview
    - Writing multiple-choice questionnaires: individual activity
    - Writing multiple-choice questionnaires: group activity
- What is assessment for? : resource overview
    - Balancing the interest groups: individual activity
    - Balancing the interest groups: group activity