

Feedback and marking strategies: resource overview

Collection: Assessment

Learning outcomes

This resource is designed to help individuals and participants in a group session on English teaching think about the dimensions of marking and feedback. Carrying out this activity should enable you to gain awareness of the objects of assessment and the constraints to which you as marker are subject.

Overview

The procedures of marking and feedback have changed enormously in recent years. Generally, there has been a trend towards increased transparency and specification in all domains of learning. Specifically, students have very reasonably been demanding clearer guidance about what they need to do to improve their essays and other assignments. This resource seeks to give you a broad sense of the pressures shaping the performance of marking and feedback and enable you to think more precisely about how you carry out this important element of your role as an academic.

Despite the forces of historical change there are still strong disciplinary traditions in marking - for example the tendency in Humanities subjects (and to the dismay of students used to school marking regimes) to mark within a relatively narrow band of marks, rarely going above about 75% or below 35%. But marking and feedback are also shaped by a number of forces extrinsic to the discipline concerned. Traditionally, marking in the Humanities has been carried out holistically (or as its critics might say, impressionistically). Markers reached a judgment on an essay or other piece of work as a whole. In recent years there has been considerable pressure to spell out how marks are allotted. Humanities academics have put up considerable resistance to the A-level or



1 | *This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.*

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school system by which marks are accrued for meeting specific assessment objectives, and then, effectively, added up. This means that university marking is now something of a compromise: assignments are still being marked as a whole, but against sets of criteria. Those criteria fulfill a number of functions: they represent a discourse for talking to students about their achievements and weaknesses; they help academics focus on what they are looking for, and they enable them to justify the marks they award. The criteria may take the form of a printed cover sheet where you circle or otherwise indicate relevant points, or they may be arrayed in a separate document (often reproduced in module and programme handbooks). The activities in this resource require you / course participants to work with the marking criteria used by your department or school.

Bear in mind that one of the major shifts in UK student culture in recent years reflects major shifts in the assessment of A-level. Students are increasingly attuned to the relationship between the fulfilment of assessment objectives and the acquisition of marks. For good or for ill, you are going to have to be aware that more and more students will challenge your mark or press you to find out how their mark can be improved.

The essays linked to this resource are used by kind permission of Dr Cris Yelland and Teesside University.

Activities within this resource

- Marking exercise: individual activity
- Marking exercise: group activity

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



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- 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 (*you are here)**
 - Marking exercise: individual activity
 - Marking exercise: group activity
- 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

