

Recommendations for enhancing communication skills feedback

This resource has been created to assist academic staff in enhancing the quality of feedback provided to students regarding their communication skills. Here are the top recommendations for providing effective feedback:

1. **Emphasis, Clarity and Specificity:** Your feedback should offer clear and specific corrective advice, rather than just focus on strengths and weaknesses (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).
2. **Focus on Key Areas of Language Feedback:** Concentrate on three actionable aspects of language feedback that will have the most impact in terms of student improvement:
 - a. **Start with the bigger picture first:** Evaluate how effectively the text conveys its intended message including aspects such as organisation and structure, logical flow of ideas, and the use of discipline-specific vocabulary.
 - b. **Address the micro elements:** Where suitable, examine the sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation to ensure they contribute positively to the overall effectiveness of the communication.
 - c. **Provide forward-looking guidance:** Help students understand how to progress by offering feed-forward guidance on their next steps. You can achieve this by maintaining a repository or bank of comments referring students to course materials or self-access resources available on the [Academic Skills@ECU](#) Canvas site.
3. **Effective Feedback Breakdown:**
 - a. **Big Picture Micro Elements:** Evaluate the student's usage of:
 - i. **Style and structure:** Assess the appropriateness of flow, expression, paragraphing, and structure appropriate to audience and assessment type. Ensure the ideas are logically connected through the use of effective transitions.
 - ii. **Academic Style Conventions:** Examine the vocabulary, word choice, and use of academic and discipline-specific terminology appropriate for audience and purpose.
 - iii. **Technical skills:** Evaluate sentence structure for variation and complexity. Ensure that spelling, punctuation, and grammar are both accurate and effectively convey the intended meaning.
 - b. **Guidance for Improvement:**
 - i. Highlight what worked well (and therefore what they should continue to do in future assessments): "I like how you are presenting evidence and elaborating to show the link to the controlling idea in the topic sentence."
 - ii. Be specific about areas that need improvement: "The introduction needs more work: Introductions should provide the reader with relevant background information, identify the main points, and flow well into the thesis statement."
 - iii. Provide actionable strategies for improvement: "Take some time to review the lecture slides that cover this topic or refer to these resources for [structuring introductions](#)."

Support and advice for academic staff and students

- For additional assistance and resources, do not hesitate to contact the Senior Learning Adviser within your School.
- Encourage students to explore the [Academic Skills@ECU](#) in Canvas, where they can access valuable writing resources and support to enhance their skills.

References

Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199-218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572090>