

Feedback: Make the most of it!



A quick guide on how to get the most from your assignment feedback

1. Read your feedback calmly and be as positive as you can

The grade is the thing we all want to see when opening our returned assignments, but do go on to read the feedback in a quiet and private space. Accessing your feedback like this allows you to digest it.

It's easy to be hurt by feedback because we put so much of ourselves in to the work that is being reviewed. Try to step back from the idea that you are being criticised. The marker *will* have your best interests at heart so, when you read your feedback, try to imagine that the marker is speaking like a friend and wants to help you to succeed. Remembering that the feedback *is* there to help can make it easier to work with the comments.

FEEDBACK MINDSET



2. Keep a list of key feedback points and refer to it often

It is likely that you will get between 10 – 20 pieces of formal, written pieces of feedback each year. It is really difficult to identify priorities amongst all of this. Keep a running list of the main points that you need to work on. By doing this you will be able to see any issues that keep cropping up. If your list has many different items on it, this might tell you that you should focus more attention on ensuring that you fully understand what is required by the specific assessment task.

3. One **big** thing at a time

It's impossible to improve everything at once – when we try to do too much it can result in overload. Always try to address the simple issues, but choose just one significant issue at a time. Look at your feedback and the requirements of the next assessment task, and choose one priority area to *really* get to grips with in your next assignment e.g. referencing or summarising. Seek out support from online sources, workshops, learner support and from tutors. If you do this with each assignment you will make serious progress in the course of a year!

4. Re-read your work as well as your feedback

Feedback makes more sense when you re-read your assignment. It's easy to forget how you *really* addressed a task when a week or two has passed. Re-reading the assignment with fresh eyes can help to identify strengths and weaknesses in the work and can help you see what the marker meant with their comments. You might also add some further comments of your own to the work - *What would you have done differently? What can you do in future?* This is an opportunity for some feedback to self!

READ IT BACK



5. Discuss with classmates

Share your feedback and your thoughts about your feedback with classmates.

- Are your comments similar? If so discuss how to address them.
- Are your comments different? If so provide advice to each other, and share approaches on how you might address the points raised in feedback.

6. Investigate!

Feedback will make no difference to you unless you work with it. You need to make every effort to ensure that you understand:

- What the feedback means (what is it really asking *me* to do?)
- What difference will it make if I address this feedback? (e.g. to my academic writing, to my employment prospects, to my future grades?)
- What needs to be done to make a positive change?

After receiving feedback a student might ask himself or herself, what does it *really* mean when my lecturer says I “should be more evaluative when using literature”? and why is it important to “have less comma splices”? and how on earth can I “use more primary sources?”. Sit down with your feedback and think it through; make notes if it is helpful. Use the web to support your investigations. If in doubt discuss your feedback with your tutor.

7. Notice the good things

Feedback tells us what is good as well as what needs improving. Make sure you hear and note the good comments too, so that you can celebrate them *and* remember to keep doing those things in future where appropriate.

8. Know which feedback to apply

The lessons from one piece of work will not always help with the next. If you have feedback on a report, then it might not help much if the next assignment is a presentation or a practical. You will need to be selective about which feedback you act upon at different times. Filing your feedback will help you to manage this.

BE SELECTIVE



9. Ask ...

If you can't read your feedback, contact your tutor straight away to ask for clarity. If you have specific questions you could email your tutor or otherwise arrange to meet them in person. If you let your tutor have questions before the next class they may be able to address some of them with the whole group – for example, if you ask “what did you mean when you said a sustainable solution?” it would be better for the whole class to look at this together so that everyone benefits from the explanation.

10. Recognise and use the feedback that happens before submission

You should try to use feedback and advice that is available before you submit your assessment for a module. This type of feedback can make a big difference to the assignment that you submit. Particularly be aware of the following sources:

- Examples of assignments from an earlier year (*what can you learn about what you should and should not do*)
- Class discussions or tutor led sessions on common mistakes for the assignment you are working on (*make a note and avoid these*)
- Reviews of the assessment criteria to ensure you know what the task requires and how marks will be given
- Feedback that is available from tutors on draft work
- Feedback from classmates on draft work (*feedback to each other in time to make a difference*)

If you have innovative ways of using your feedback that we could share with others please let us know – email larnold@harper-adams.ac.uk Lydia Arnold, 2014