

## Providing effective feedback

Giving feedback is an important skill for educators in higher education and has a major influence on the quality of learning. Feedback has the potential to make a significant difference in learners' performance.

### Effective feedback conditions

- The learners need to have an idea of the objectives they have to achieve and what is expected from them.
- The feedback has to include a comparison between the actual level of the product/behaviour and the expected level.
- The feedback must provide instructions/suggest actions that will enable the learner to close the gap between actual and expected levels.

### Tips and tricks

- Give learners the opportunity to discuss the feedback with the feedback giver, for example, by setting aside set times for this.
- Organise a peer dialogue, whereby learners discuss the feedback among themselves.
- Ask learners to re-do an assignment using the feedback received.
- Limit the amount of feedback.
- Learners should get feedback as soon as possible after handing in their assignments.
- Look at the strong points of an assignment as well as the weak points: cover both the strengths as well as the not-so-successful aspects of an assignment. The suggested ratio between positive and negative feedback is 3:1.
- Describe the specific action/task in the feedback.
- Formulate some of the feedback as questions to encourage self-direction.
- Consider the way the feedback is phrased: the language used affects how a learner receives and responds to feedback. E.g. "suggestions" or "attention points" when referring to mistakes; use phrases such as "this doesn't entirely meet the criteria. This can be improved by doing ..."
- Give feedback on various levels: 1) task: specific comments relating to the task itself; 2) process: comments on processes needed to perform the task; 3) self and self-regulation: personal comments.
- Give feedforward for personal and professional development:
  - Suggest goals to focus on in the future.
  - Help define targets and a vision for success.
  - Offer specific strategies to achieve the goals.

#### Source and further information:

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