

Giving Students Written Feedback - Challenges and Possibilities

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Outline

- LC Module Example
 - One Y1S1 EAP Module Written Feedback
 - Benefits and Challenges
 - Feedback Possibilities
- Colleagues Feedback, Thoughts and Suggestions

LC Context

One Y1S1 EAP Module

- Genre: argument essay
- Format: two formative writing tasks plus unspecified feedback limits; one summative essay with alternative topic
- First draft feedback and final feedback

Writing Tasks

Year 1 Semester 1 Coursework 1 – Essay Body Paragraph

You will write the **first body paragraph** of an essay based on the title and one of the following introductions below. Your paragraph should have clear organisation, including an appropriate topic sentence and relevant supporting sentences.

Year 1 Semester 1 Coursework 2 – Argument Essay

You will complete the essay which you began for Coursework 1 using one of the provided introductions. Your essay **must include at least 2 body paragraphs and an appropriate conclusion.**

Year 1 Semester 1 Coursework 3 – Argument Essay

Considering the seriousness of the risks of nuclear power, many people believe that **nuclear power is too dangerous and should be banned in all countries.** Please pick one stance (for or against the opinion) and write an essay to try to persuade the readers through the use of argument and evidence. Your essay should have clear organisation, including: an introduction with a thesis statement, at least two body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Feedback Examples

Moreover, it is widely believed that Chinese is very difficult for people except native Chinese speakers to master. Firstly, Chinese characters are difficult to write, there are huge number of Chinese characters and they are not very phonetic. So it is difficult to remember. Secondly, Chinese does not have the common alphabet like English which makes Chinese more difficult to learn. Thirdly, the culture differences make the language more abundant and complicated. Finally, the tones of Chinese and stress habits are difficult for foreigners to remember and to pronounce. Thus, although Chinese has much more native speakers than English, that is unnecessary for everyone in the world to learn Chinese.

The second reason is about culture and history. Every language has its own culture background and is tightly connected with its culture and history. China is one of the oldest countries in the world which makes Chinese also become one of the oldest languages in the world. The unique culture and long history gives Chinese very profound connotation and a lot of established rules. For instance, the change of the pronunciation in certain situations, and the meanings of some certain words are not what they look like because of their allusions or the habit of using them. All the above profound cultural connotation of Chinese are quite difficult for foreigners to understand completely. Hence, it is difficult for people with other cultural backgrounds to understand Chinese culture and speak Chinese well. Moreover, to make Chinese popular would also take much longer time than English because of the difficulty of spreading Chinese culture.

English Language and Study Skills I for Mathematics (EAP 019) 2016-2017 Semester 1

Feedback on Coursework 3 First Draft

Name: _____ XXX _____ ID Number: _____]

Core Task Requirements	Yes	No
Word Count: 600-800 words (excluding title and references)	*	
You have included an introduction, at least 2 body paragraphs and a conclusion	*	
You have made reference to two English sources provided and followed the Harvard Referencing Style.	*	
You have followed the standard formatting for written assignments (please refer to your Coursework 3 Task Sheet)		*

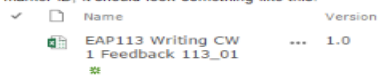
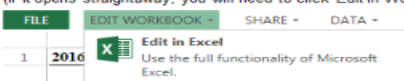

Other Key Requirements	Yes	No
You have included the correct coversheet ("Language Centre Language Centre Cover Sheet 2016-17 FINAL") and saved your file as "EAP019 Coursework 3"	*	
You have picked a stance (for or against the argument) and your thesis statement gives a clear indication of your ideas discussed in this essay	*	
Each of your body paragraphs contains a clear topic sentence	*	
You have referenced all sources you use with the Harvard Referencing system (e.g., you must include in-text citations, use quotation marks around directly quoted material and include a complete and matched reference list at the end of your work.)		*
You have paraphrased and summarized source material appropriately.		*

+

Overall Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Format of essay needs to be improved. There are sources without being properly cited. Format of both citation and reference is wrong. Also the citations do not match with the references, and the references are not in alphabetical order. Your use of grammar is often weak especially when it comes to long complex sentences, and there are many run on sentences. Make sure you have a clear subject and verb for each sentence. Proof-read carefully and make corrections. Turnitin has picked up many sentences poorly paraphrased. Check and revise! Check your capitalization. Check your unity.

Feedback Examples

Coursework feedback: Rationale and instructions

<p>1 Research into the nature of feedback and its efficacy for students can be broadly divided into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance-gap information Feedback should contribute to learners developing an awareness of the gap between actual and ideal performance (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). Positive feedback Feedback is more effective when it contains both positive and negative comments. In fact, students are more likely to accept negative comments and take on board the implied suggestions if there are also positive comments (Hyland & Hyland, 2000). However, the balance of these is important – overly negative comments damage student motivation, while overly positive comments may give students the wrong impression of their level of achievement. Feedback clarity Students, particularly EAP learners, need to understand feedback. Therefore, students should not need to translate excessively academic or meta-linguistic language (Chanock, 2000). <p>Furthermore, Lizzio & Wilson (2008) offer the following criteria that students feel are valuable when receiving feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouragement, such as recognising effort and providing considerate criticism that does not belittle the students' work. Meaningful criticism that gives students the feeling that their work has been considered in depth, and that they are not merely receiving generic, computer-generated comments. Developmental focus – the extent to which students consider that they can make use of or apply the feedback provided. This includes identifying goals for students to achieve in future assignments, suggesting strategies by which to achieve these goals, and justifying the received grade. <p>Finally, section 4 of the Student Assessment Feedback Policy (effective from Semester 1, 2016-17) covers the principles of giving feedback. In particular, feedback must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be closely related to the intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria; and Commend student achievement and clearly identify areas for improvement. 	<p>2 Bearing the items in point 1 in mind, and to ensure a standard approach to feedback across the LC, when giving Writing Coursework feedback, tutors should:</p> <p><i>Mechanics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure comments are clearly linked to specific features from the marking descriptors. Check that comments are clearly separated, i.e. a separate line for each feature discussed. Write a minimum of 1 positive comment and 1 comment addressing an area for improvement. Be professionally courteous, clear and helpful. Write in full sentences. Write 80-200 words. Generally, 1 positive and 1 constructive comment will take up about 80-100 words. If you have difficulty seeing what you have written, increase the row width. <p><i>Approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address the student – use 'you'. Ensure comments are personalized and specific. Write in a way that will be easily understood by the student – avoid jargon, and overly complicated language. Give some evidence/examples taken from the student's work (given word count limitations). Don't copy/lift from the descriptors – remember that students will receive information about which criteria they have and haven't met, so repeating this information in your comments represents a lost opportunity for more useful feedback. <p><i>Possible themes/things to write about:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback/encouragement Performance-gap information Suggestions for future performance and strategies for achieving this Justify the grade Remember: not everything can be covered, so prioritize areas for feedback. Academic Infringement Penalties <p>NOTE: If there are problems with Academic Infringement in the coursework, comments on this should be prioritized. Refer to the Plagiarism and Collusion page on ICE for samples of appropriate feedback. Note that these comments are included (not in addition to) the expected 80-200 words.</p>
<p>3 Procedure for writing feedback</p> <p>a. Open your feedback spreadsheet. This will be saved in your module's assessment folder on the Portal and will have your marker ID; it should look something like this:</p>  <p>(If it opens straightaway, you will need to click 'Edit in Workbook' and then 'Edit in Excel'.</p>  <p>If it says 'We're sorry. We can't open the workbook in the browser', click 'Open in Excel' and then click Edit Workbook on the yellow line at the top)</p> <p>b. Locate the student whose feedback you want to write. Click once or twice in the corresponding 'Comments' cell and start writing. A separate line is needed for each feature discussed. In order to do this, hold down 'Alt' and press 'Enter' on the keyboard concurrently to go to the next line. You can do this as many times as necessary. (Note: Do not use bullets. See FAQs for more detail.)</p> <p>c. Once you've finished writing your comments, re-read them to ensure they make sense and you are meeting the criteria in</p>	<p>4 Frequently asked questions</p> <p><i>Can I copy and paste comments from other cells/documents?</i> Yes; in fact, a number of tutors prefer to type up their comments in Word first before copying it over to Excel. Note, however, that doing so may affect the formatting of the destination cell. If your comments appear in one very long line rather than in paragraph format, click on the cell once, then click 'Wrap Text' at the top of the page.</p>  <p>Also note that copying over bullet points from Word is not advised as this results in comments being spread across several cells. When copying and pasting, always check that the comments for an intended student appear correctly next to the student's name and in the same row.</p> <p><i>Can I go back and make changes to comments?</i> Yes, but make sure you double-click the cell before writing or you might lose everything already in that cell.</p> <p><i>Why can't I choose 'Save as' to save the document?</i> Doing this creates duplicate documents and potentially endless confusion for everyone concerned. Don't do this!</p> <p><i>I'm really not sure what or how to write. Can you show me some examples?</i> Examples of acceptable and not acceptable feedback are available: a. On the next page b. On the Assessment Marking and Feedback page on ICE c. On the Plagiarism and Collusion page on ICE</p>

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Coursework feedback: Rationale and instructions

point 2 above.

- d. Do a spellcheck. Click on the very top row above the 'Comments' heading (it will have a letter, probably 'I', in it), then click the Review tab at the top of the page, followed by 'Spelling'.



- e. When finished, click the Save button at the top of the document.  You may need to sign into the portal again in order to save.

Feedback Examples

Writing Coursework Feedback: Example comments

EXAMPLE 1

Comments not acceptable – lifted from descriptors

TF (G): Almost all main ideas are developed well with examples and details.

LU (C): Vocabulary is frequently not appropriate for academic writing.

LU (D): Some linking phrases and reference words have been used appropriately.

Comments not acceptable – personalized but no evidence given

TF (G): You have selected and developed main ideas well.

LU (C): You do not use enough appropriate academic vocabulary.

LU (D): You use some linking phrases and reference words appropriately.

Comments acceptable – personalized with evidence (105 words)

TF (G): You have done well with selecting and developing main ideas and you do a good job of using examples and definitions to do this – paragraph 2 is very well developed.

LU (F): In your next coursework, you need to use more appropriate academic vocabulary than 'stuff', 'kind of', or 'a bit'.

LU (G): Next time, it might also be a good idea to check your linking phrases and reference words, as you have made several errors: 'however' in paragraph 3; 'thus' in paragraph 4; and you need to vary your linking phrases: 'for example' is used too often.

EXAMPLE 2

Comments not acceptable – too short, not enough explanation or detail

TF (C): There is no clear thesis statement that shows which side will be argued in the essay.

TF (F): There are too many direct citations, e.g. in paragraph 9.

LU (D): You have used some linking phrases correctly, e.g. in paragraph 5.

Comments acceptable – reasonable length, sufficient explanation and detail (85)

TF (C): Next time you should include a clear thesis statement in order to direct the reader to the arguments you will use in the essay.

TF (F): Also, avoid so many quotations/direct citations (see, for example, paragraphs 1 and 7) as you need to demonstrate your understanding of information gained from research by explaining it in your own words.

LU (D): You use some linking phrases correctly, especially in paragraph 5 which includes some very good examples and a good variety.

EXAMPLE 3

Comments not acceptable – no bullet point used or reference to descriptors; language and feedback too complex and/or professionally discourteous

You ought to reflect on the ethical implications of your blatant lifting of source material, which is an unacceptable practice both within higher education as well as the broader academic community. See page 3. While you employ a varied and accurate academic vocabulary, there are also instances of over-confident ('Clearly', 'Absolutely') and overly emotive ('achieve the dream') language which have negatively impacted your final mark.

Comments acceptable – comments written in a clear manner which will be easily understood by the student (100)

AI (B): Parts of your report have been copied from sources without citation (p. 3), and you have received an academic infringement penalty for this. Next time, when you use information from sources: 1) Use your own words to explain the ideas (this proves to the reader how well you understand them) and 2) include a citation. Check the Harvard Guide or ask your tutor for help.

LU (F): You use a good variety of academic vocabulary very well, but in future you need to avoid being too confident ('Clearly', 'Absolutely') and too emotional ('achieve the dream') in your writing.

EXAMPLE 4

Comments not acceptable – too negative; poorly organized

TF (D): You haven't tried to organize your ideas into clear paragraphs – see all of page 2.

LU (C): Sadly, parts of your essay, e.g. paragraph 3, have been copied without citation, and other parts have long quotes (e.g. paragraph 5), which holds down your score as they cannot be marked as your own work.

LU (B): In addition, you are often careless, writing short sentences that lack punctuation and capital letters (several sentences in paragraph 4 don't start with capitals, e.g. 'everyone is leader').

TF (A): You have not met the word count.

Comments acceptable – balance of positive and constructive feedback; well-structured (87)

TF (D): You have good information and interesting ideas, but you don't always structure your writing in a way that makes it clear for the reader to follow (see page 2, for example). For your next essay, try to organise your ideas into clear paragraphs.

LU (C): You have overused quotations in your essay (see paragraph 5) and have lost marks because of this. The information cited is relevant, interesting and supports your argument, so next time explain it in your own words with an in-text citation.

References

- Chanock, K. (2000) 'Comments on essays: do students understand what tutors write?' *Teaching in Higher Education* 5: 95-106
- Denisi, A. & Kluger, A.N. (2000) 'Feedback effectiveness: can 360-degree appraisals be improved?' *Academy of Management Executive* 14: 129-139
- Hyland, F. & Hyland, K. (2001) 'Sugaring the pill: praise and criticism in written feedback' *Journal of Second Language Writing* 10: 185-212
- Lizzio, A. & Wilson, K. (2008) 'Feedback on assessment: students' perceptions of quality and effectiveness' *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 33(3): 263-275

Benefits and Challenges

Benefits

- Comprehensive three rounds of written feedback for one assignment due in week 10
- Thorough unlimited feedback (in terms of word count) for formative assessments.
- Additional feedback via peer review, whole class feedback, verbal communication
- With the summative feedback – reasonably fair (the same for all)

Benefits and Challenges

Challenges

- Time constraints
- Time consuming
- Low level students are unable to respond to generic comments
- Not all tutors provide the same amount of feedback for formative work unless required to do so
- Some students will pay little attention to final summative feedback once they have received a satisfying/expected grade
- Some students only use feedback to correct current text

Feedback Possibilities

- Limited formative tasks and feedback to reduce teacher workload
- Specify formative feedback expectation for all tutors
- Make sure formative feedback is not too dissimilar to summative feedback in style
- Feedback could be staggered
- For formative feedback, guided peer review could be considered rather multiple teacher feedback.
- Marking mates, word spelling check could be recommended as language checking necessities prior to teacher feedback
- General feedback to the whole cohort with specific examples could be offered as that in final exam
- Remove summative written coursework

Questions to Colleagues

1. How many students are on your module (if you teach on a few any one is OK)?
2. Do students produce written work? Y/N
3. What type of written tasks are set? (e.g. essays, reports etc.)
4. What type of expectations are there? (e.g. word count etc)
5. Do you provide feedback on formative written work? Y/N
6. If Y how much and in what form (general comments to all, individual feedback)?
7. Do you provide feedback on summative work?
8. If Y how much and in what form (general comments to all, individual feedback)?
9. Are there any challenges with providing written feedback if provided / assuming written tasks are required?
10. Do you have suggestions for how the feedback process could be improved in your department?

	LC Y1 (1 Module)	LC Y2 (4 Modules)	IBSS (3 Modules)	UPD (2 Modules)	ECC (1 Module)	Biology (2 Modules)
Student No's	25 per class / 366 in the module	7 / 160* / 1065	55 / 130 / 825* Approximately	30-40	25* Approximately	40* Approximately
Written Work	Yes	Yes (lots)	Yes / Yes / No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Written Tasks	Essays and Reports	(Timed) Essays and Reports, Portfolio, PPTS	(Case Study) Reports	Essays, Reports, Posters, Presentations	Reports	Essay
Task Expectations	S1 Essay 300-600 building to 700-900; S2 Reports 1200-1600	Words 1200-2500, Sources, Referencing, Critical Reflection, Bi-weekly report reading thoughts	3000 (Y4) / 1200 Words / N/A	2000-2500 Words (plus presentation), Learning Outcome fulfillment	Stylistic, authorial presence, specialist language for general audience etc.	Topic, 700-800 Words, Literature (Content, Originality, Formatting)
Feedback Formative Work	Yes	Yes (Portfolio feedback is flexible, micro correction not permitted)	Yes / No / No	Yes	Yes	Yes / No
Feedback Form / Volume	1. General Feedback (recurring errors), 2.(a) Individual Feedback	1. General feedback (PPT), no micro correction; 2. (Optional / tutorial) Individual feedback	3. One class dedicated to feedback - 1. group feedback on progress / 4. Individual during office hours / N/A	5. (General written comments to each student via) Feedback Form, 2.(c) Comments and Track Changes	2. Individual Feedback during drafting process	1. General Comments (2.(b) Individual on request)
Feedback Summative Work	Yes	Yes (on ICE)	No (Senior Students) / Yes / Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Feedback Form / Volume	Draft stage 50-200 words (no close correction), final drafts follows university guidelines	LC Guidelines 80-200 words-individual (criteria focused) comments and assessment report with general comments on ICE	N/A / Not mentioned / General comments to all	Very general to all students / Via tutorials	Individual Feedback on final submission and rubric grading- Feedback via track changes, comment boxes and comments under marking descriptors based on rubrics	General Feedback (in Class), Individual Feedback (e-mail)
Feedback Challenges	1. Some students need a lot more help than the feedback limit allows, 2. whereas for others it can feel like writing feedback to meet the minimum expected word count	4. Time consuming / constraints, 5. Feed forward is a challenge as it requires understanding and acting on it, 6. No guarantee the feedback is read,	3. Comments on report ideas and logic - more appropriate / 4. time consuming (25 groups) / 4. Time - impossible given numbers	4. Time required, 30 individual sets of feedback is a time burden, 100 an impossible task e.g. CDE109 (History and Purpose of Planning in UPD)	Consistency is achievable and feedback welcomed. 5. How feedback is used - not an issue of provision more use - could be related to the curriculum	4. Yes - Manageable if numbers are reasonable but time consuming, with some feedback focusing on task fundamentals - 6. Questionable how valuable the feedback is if reading is too limited and instructions ignored
Feedback Suggestions	Unfortunately no - 1. accept standardization required so not sure if better alternatives exist	3. Time for conferencing, 5. Feedback models, 8. Bank of auto comments, 9. Paperless guided feedback (e.g. based on descriptor /rubric items with examples as being done), 10. Perhaps making it on request	2. Formal procedure / 3. the tutorial time and office hours effective and efficient - 4. for CW with no's above 100 and beyond staff workload should be factored in / 5. Concrete examples of comments and approaches for different sized modules	6. Different students ideally need different types of feedback; for some modules, such as studios it may not be necessary, for large modules not feasible so general feedback or oral feedback more feasible	7. Too many features to really comment on, but feedback only makes observable difference in short term to those seeking it - not a shortcut to lift academic performance	No / Depends what others in the dept. do

Types of Feedback

- All students produce written work except those on one massive IBSS module which is highly mathematical in nature
- Types of written task include:
 - Essays
 - Reports
 - Posters
 - Timed essays
 - Portfolio tasks
- Word count varies from 300 (Y1S1) words to 3000 (Y4) words.

Formative vs Summative

Feedback	Formative Written Work	Summative Written Work
Provided or not	In almost all cases - YES	In almost all cases - YES
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual feedback<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Rubric based- End/general comments- Error code- Tracked changes- Marginal comments• Group feedback• Using feedback form• Feedback given during office hours• During tutorials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual feedback (focused on each criteria)• General comments to all students• Assessment report

Identified Challenges

- Time consuming / and time constraints
- Some students need a lot more help than the feedback limits allows
- Whereas for others it can feel like writing feedback to meet the minimum expected word count
- Alternative approached may be more suitable e.g. 'comments' on report ideas and logic
- Feeding forward is a challenge as it requires understanding and acting on it
- No guarantee the feedback is even read or valued

Suggestions

- Formal procedure is suggested
- Marking loads should consider work loads
- Feedback standardization is useful
- Concrete examples should be provided for different size modules
- A bank of auto comments
- Paperless guide feedback based on rubric items
- The tutorial and office hours can be utilized for feedback
- Different students may benefit from different types of feedback
- Feedback on request
- Feedback is not a shortcut to lift academic performance



Thank You!