

## **Feedback on Student Writing**

This handout considers some of the range of possible choices that instructors can make in giving students feedback on their writing in addition to the research and complexities involved in making those choices.

### **Choices that Instructors Make in Giving Feedback**

#### **Types of Feedback**

Positive Comments/Praise  
Questions  
Constructive Criticism or Suggestions  
Formative Comments (geared toward revision)  
Summative Comments (explaining assessment)  
Margin Comments (included along the sides/within text)  
End Comments/Letters to Students

#### **Modes of Feedback**

Written  
Typed  
Audio  
Visual/Video/Screencast

#### **Forms of Grading**

Assignment  
Portfolio  
Contract

#### **Deep Structures (Ideology that Writing is . . .)**

Product  
Process  
Personal  
Emplaced in Time, Place, and Social Structure

#### **Some Possible Examples of “Radical” Feedback**

Feedback through Usability Testing (designed by the student)  
Feedback through Creative Witnessing (designed as response by instructor)  
Feedback through Reverse Outlining (annotated by instructor or student)  
Feedback through Translation Activity (designed by the student)

## Things We Know

- Students need to see their writing as a piece in *process*, as *wholly their own*, as something with which to *engage* and truly *revise*.  
[In researching the way students respond to feedback in 1982 Nancy Sommers notes that at times “the interlinear comments encourage the student to see the text as a fixed piece, frozen in time, that just needs some editing”(110).]
- Students need to see *positive* feedback.  
[In 1989 Daiker notes the importance of praise, but that it is rarely found by students (in only 10.6% of total comments in his study) even when a department explicitly states they will focus on praise (153).]
- Tying feedback to larger mechanisms of metacognitive thought, like *reflection* can have very positive impact.  
[In 2018 Lindeman et al. note in their CCC article that “reflection, like revision, is an essential threshold concept for student writers” (582).]
- Students and instructors can have very *different perceptions* of feedback  
[In 2017, Mulliner and Tucker completed a quantitative study finding that while only 4% of instructors believed students always act on feedback, 27% of students believe that they do (276).]

## Choices We Make

- What *modes* of feedback we use—audio comments; in-person conferencing; written feedback (interlinear, marginal, end comments, a mix); video commentary; screen capture
- Product grading (A-F grading on “finished” assignments) versus **Contract grading**, which Elbow talks about as criteria for a B, regardless of “quality.” (Elbow “A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching”)
- Our own, most dearly held **ideologies**—what is it that we want students to gain most from feedback?

## Further Complexities / Questions / Places for Pedagogical Experimentation

- We also note that feedback on student writing is part of a classroom and learning experience *ecology*, and cannot be discussed in isolation from our other pedagogical choices.
- And as part of an ecology, feedback is indicative of the “**deep structures**” of a teacher’s thoughts about writing as the following:

evaluative, with completed products; formative and continually in flux; developmental and best seen in portfolios; and contextual noting the students’ emplaced positions within institutions, past experiences, and discourses (Phelps 59).

## Works Cited

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