

tutor feedback
criteria understanding
marks grades development
peer

Making sense of marks and feedback

To get good marks you need:

- to identify the task or problem correctly
- to discover the underlying issues
- to find out exactly what is expected of you



Although all subject areas have their own assessment criteria, the following general requirements provide a good guideline as to how marks are allocated.

Adapted from "The Study Skills Handbook" by Stella Cottrell (Macmillan) 1999

Lowest Marks

The lowest marks are awarded for work which:

- has weak structure
- shows little research, thought or reflection
- is mostly descriptive, with little analysis or argument
- considers only one point of view



Tutors' comments may resemble these:

"You have just written out my lecture notes and paraphrased a few lines out of books, without considering why this is such an important issue."

"The student seems to have written out everything he knows about the subject, in any order, with lots of mistakes, and has not answered the question he was asked."

Adapted from "The Study Skills Handbook" by Stella Cottrell (Macmillan) 1999

Better Marks

Better marks are awarded for work which:

- shows some understanding of the underlying issues
- meets the set criteria
- answers the question that was put
- develops an argument or a point of view
- draws conclusions
- shows the relationship between different issues or concepts within the subject area
- reveals some thought and reflection
- organises information into a structure
- gives evidence and examples to support arguments and main points



Adapted from "The Study Skills Handbook" by Stella Cottrell (Macmillan) 1999

Highest Marks

Highest marks are awarded for work which includes all of the features necessary for 'better marks', and in addition:



- reveals a good understanding of why the topic is significant, including underlying issues and concerns, and where and why there is controversy
- reveals understanding of how the topic relates to broader issues, beyond the subject area.

Adapted from "The Study Skills Handbook" by Stella Cottrell (Macmillan) 1999

Grade System

A = 70%+

B = 60% - 69%

C = 50% - 59%

D = 45% - 49%

E = 40% - 44%

FAIL = 0% - 39%



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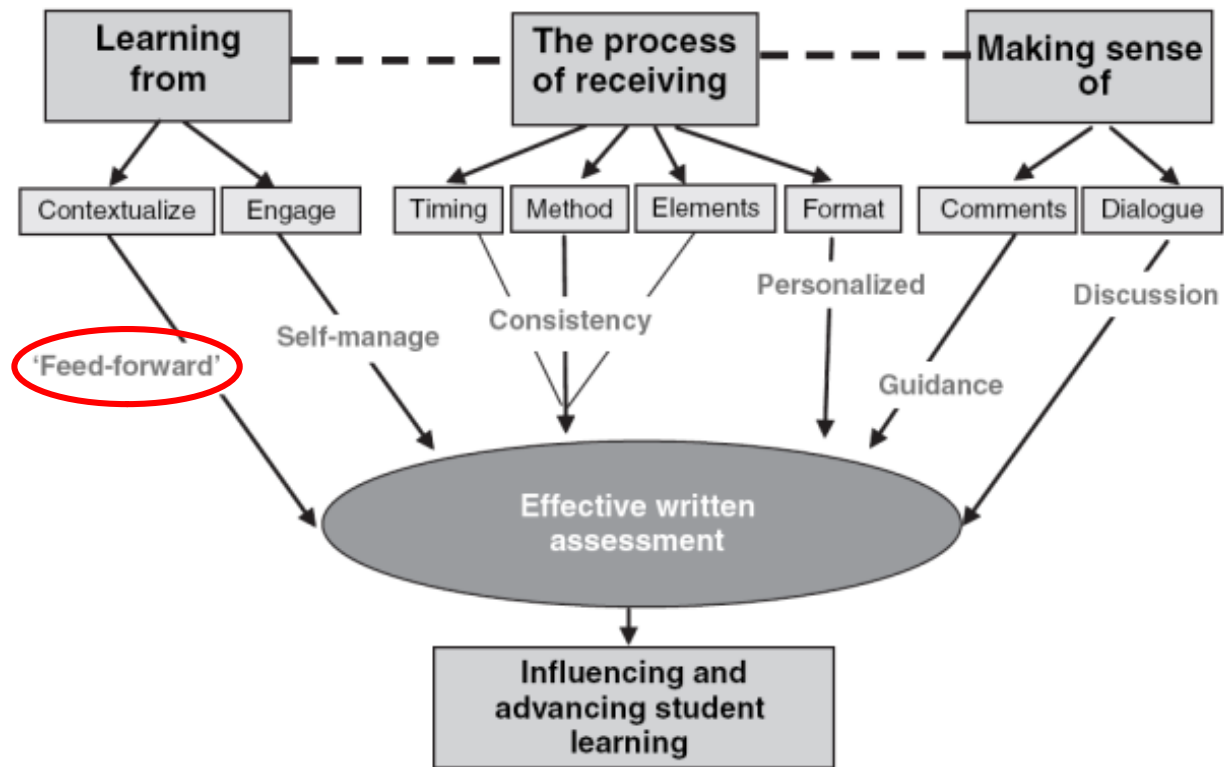


Figure 1 A heuristic model of effective written assessment feedback

Rae, A. and Cochrane D. "Listening to students: How to make written assessment feedback useful" in *Active Learning in Higher Education* 2008; 9; 217

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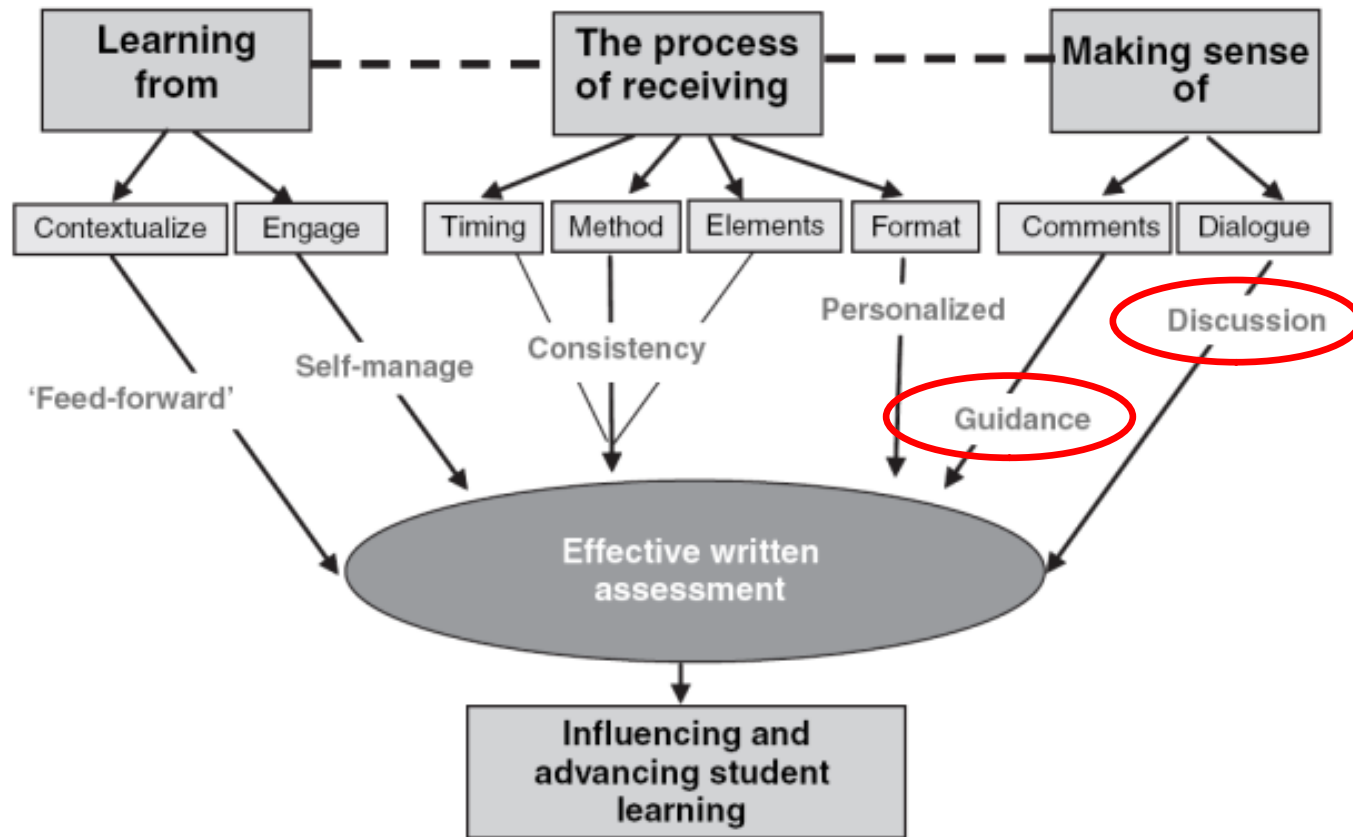


Figure 1 A heuristic model of effective written assessment feedback

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Feedback

- Accept that you are human and that you will inevitably make mistakes. What is important is that you learn from your mistakes; feedback can be an essential part of this process.
- Try not to receive feedback as criticism or interpret it as failure. Avoid getting defensive when receiving feedback which is not what you want to hear. Try to accept that you may have made a mistake and that there is always room for improvement.
- Don't just focus on the mark or grade you have received for a piece of work - the comments are usually more important.
- Don't feel inclined to throw your work in the bin if it is covered in comments. Read them as they may be your passport to better marks.
- Carefully read through the comments and check whether you understand what it was that made the tutor write it. If you are uncertain, ask for clarification.

“Starting University”, Learning Development, University of Plymouth (2008)

<http://www.learningdevelopment.plymouth.ac.uk/LDstudyguides/pdf/1StartingUniversity.pdf>

