

Video Transcript:

This video is going to look at some potential hints for providing effective feedback in education settings.

One of the key elements of the EAT Framework, and in particular sub-dimension AF1, is that feedback needs to be accessible to the learner. So feedback needs to be understandable, needs to be motivational, and it needs to feed forward to future learning. A key thing to consider is the emotive impact of feedback. Good feedback can lead to students getting greater senses of motivation. Limited or negative feedback can lead to students feeling demotivated and not wanting to develop their learning and improve. As this graph from Jones and colleagues in 2012 shows, the impact of feedback can be extremely motivational. So a large number of these respondents on the survey found that the feedback motivated them or motivated them really strongly, and some found that it demotivated them. So key thing with feedback is it has this potentially really positive effect on students if it's delivered in an appropriate way.

So this video is giving you 15 top tips on providing motivational and supportive feedback.

Tip 1: Be positive

So the first one is be positive, be friendly. Students in general need to feel positive reinforcement. So if something is good, say so and say why it's good. Just saying good or excellent or well done as a piece of feedback doesn't really help because it doesn't explain to the students what they did right. Sometimes they'll do something that's good or something that's really effective without realising that they were doing that. So it's important to explain why something is good. What about it was actually good to be specific. If you need to provide criticism on something that they didn't do well, the key thing is to try and do that in a supportive way. So soft and negative, such as "Next time, do it this way" or "Next time, it would be better if you did this" is a really powerful way of doing that, and in particular focusing on the work rather than the person. So a good way to improve this comment would be "A good way to improve this approach or this essay, or this report would be this..." rather than "You need to do this or you need to do that." Point to areas of strength that can be developed, and think of the idea of the feedback sandwich, which is saying something good, something that needs improving, and then following it up with a positive comment after.

Tip 2: Don't be confrontational

The converse of that is don't be confrontational. Students haven't developed a thick skin yet. Students don't understand that robust feedback isn't meant to be aggressive. Direct focus to robust feedback can come across as being extremely argumentative and extremely aggressive. So they haven't developed those thick skins that seasoned academics, we often have developed by the time as we come to publish papers or write grants or chapters of books and things. If students feel that feedback is a negative experience for them, that they feel motivated by it, that they feel negatively impacted by, they will avoid reading their feedback. And you can see that if you talk to students

about why they're not picking up the feedback, why they're not reading or using their feedback. Usually it's because they've learned it's an unpleasant experience for them. So avoid things that are terse comments like "No!" or "!!!" or "???" . Terse or rude comments, obviously, and unprofessional comments (you do see them sometimes), absolutely avoid those. And if you need to critique something, focus on the work again rather than the person. So it's focusing on the essay or the report, or summary, or the presentation, rather than *you* didn't do this or *you* need to improve that.

A key thing to remember is that is when you get given a piece of work to evaluate, that could be the best piece of work that student has ever produced. Even if it's a low class, or a low grade, or a poor piece of work. For that student it could be the best thing that ever they've ever done. For you, it might look at something that's quite limited, so be positive and be supportive about things, even if they look like they're not very good.

Tip 3: Don't be cryptic

The third point is make sure that you're explicit about the things that you're saying in the things that you're referring to. So single words don't actually mean anything to a student. So, "Yes", "No", "Good", "Excellent", "Referencing!", ticks, crosses ... those sorts of things. They don't actually mean or convey any information. If you use the word "Excellent!". What is excellent is that it was phrased excellently, was it a good point that they were making. Is it that it was a good piece of research or was it was a good piece of critical analysis? So say *what* was excellent, what was good about it. So explaining exactly what you mean is really, really important. And you can use things like quick marks in things like turn-it-in's Feedback Studio, or copied and pasted comments that explain things in a more detailed way so you can prepare those before you do the actual marking.

Tip 4: Focus on Positives

And not just focusing on the negatives. So students, anyone really, needs to know that what they did well, they need to know why it's good and they need to have that positive reinforcement. So be specific about why it's good. Encourage them to use it again in the future. Also encourage students to share what they did well with other students as well so that they can all learn from the positive things that they did right, the things that they did effectively.

Tip 5: Clearly explain what a student needs to do to gain a higher mark

The fifth one is clearly explain what the student needs to do to get a higher mark. So this is more really focussed around justifying the mark, rather than feedback per say. But what do they need to keep doing? What do they need to avoid doing? What things do they need to do differently next time? Again, think about the context of the student's aims or needs. For example, there's no point in giving a huge amount of really detailed feedback about how they can expand their ideas and expand their conceptual frameworks, if this is a repeat piece of work and the student's mark is going to be

capped at the 40% or 50% level, for example. So think of what the context of what they're doing in that particular.

Tip 6: Align feedback with the marking criteria

Aligning feedback to the learning outcomes and marking criteria is quite important. So the students need to understand what they did that aligned well with the expectations you had of a particular activity or a particular requirement in the in the assessment guidance. So focusing on skills, things they did well, activities they did well, approaches they did well or need to improve, rather than specific content. So focusing on critical analysis, appraisal, use of evidence developments in the argument, rather than you got this right, you got that wrong, or you need to include a full stop here or comma there. Don't ignore the factual content, but it's more important to focus on the skills or the things that you're evaluating. Thinking about feeding forward to the next time they need those particular skill.

Tip 7: Design the feedback when you design the assessment

The next tip is to design the feedback when you design the assessment. So often people design an assessment or set an assessment, and then the feedback is almost an afterthought of what they will provide once the students have submitted that assessment. So a key thing to think of is how are you supporting the development of a particular academic skill? The first thing to say is what skill is this assessment developing? Then think, "How is the best way to guide students in the use of that particular skill, and what would I expect them to be able to do differently after they've done this particular assessment?" What's the very best way to achieve that difference, to achieve that level of growth? And so how can you design an assessment that provides opportunities to achieve those new ways of thinking, those new ways of approaching things? So thinking of the way in which you're going to guide the student in how they can develop and how they can do things differently. It's important when you're thinking about the assessment, because then you can build the assessment to provide those opportunities.

Tip 8: Too much feedback is as bad as too little

The next point is really important. So too much feedback is as bad, is too little. So students can't change everything about their learning activities. So if you provide them with 40 different things that they need to change, they won't be able to do all of that. They'll only be able to do a selection of those. So it's important to focus on the things they can change that will have the most impact on their development, the most impact on their future work. So if you absolutely carpet and work with minor comments. The students will probably miss the really important points, the really key things that they can do that make a significant improvement on their activity, and on their learning. So avoid commenting overmuch on small things like spelling errors, grammar, punctuation, small factual errors. You can do blanket comments of those at the end. So, for example, "There are a large

number of spelling mistakes in this assessment. Find a way of proofreading your work before you submit it.” That’s a single blanket comment, you don’t have to point out every single error.

A good way of really focusing these down is a concept known side as the “Feedback five” or the “Feedback seven”. The idea behind The Feedback Five is, identify two things the students did well; two things that student could improve on; and one key thing they need to remember for next time. That is five things that you’re focusing on that one thing to remember for next time. That one thing could be good, could be bad, it could be something that students are doing well, it could be something the student needs to improve or need to learn how to do. But two things they did well and why? Two things they need to improve on and *how*. And one key thing to remember for next time that they need to keep keeping or change. The Feedback Seven is the same idea, but it’s focusing on three things they did well, three things they could improve on and one thing for them next time. This sort of approach can really, really work well with asking them for things that they might like feedback on. So I’ll talk about that in a moment, but getting every student to suggest three things that they’d like feedback on fits in nicely with this. So then you’ve got ten things that are key things the student can focus on and they know that that’s going to have a substantive impact on their learning.

Tip 9: Ask the students what they want as feedback

That last point I just said, is another really important and useful way of getting effective feedback, which is to ask the student what feedback they actually want. So asking the students to define three things that they would like feedback on is a really good way of identifying things that they would like to learn and they would like to develop. Because the things that we focus on might not necessarily be the things that they really feel they need to. But it’s a good idea to give them a limited number of these rather than say, what would you like feedback on? Because often then you’ll get the response “Everything!”. But if you ask them to define three things, that encourages them to prioritise things that they want the most support about. So you can give extensive feedback on those areas. And just sort of cursory feedback to other things. And this is a good thing to combine with the “Feedback 5” or “Feedback 7” approach to provide a limited number of things for the student to focus on.

Tip 10: Make feedback a dialogue

The next top tip is making feedback into a dialogue. Feedback should be a two way thing. It’s not something that the Educator is ‘giving’ to the learner, giving to the student. It should be something that you’re providing guidance and the student can ask for clarification or will develop that guidance. And develop a rationalisation for through talking to you and talking to others. So if you’ve got too much marketing or the students aren’t reading feedback, then the key thing to maybe do is really focus that summary on five or six things or, feedback five or feedback seven, and say here are a few focussed things for you to really, really focus on. If you want to come and talk to me about it, here’s a chance for you to come and ask questions or provide them with a means of doing that asynchronously, through some sort of either an email or a drop-box survey questionnaire. Bear in

mind that the students who most need feedback are less likely to come and talk to you in person about it. So you need to provide a safe space for that to work.

Tip 11: Highlight feedback when it is provided

Highlighting when you're giving feedback to students is really important thing to do. So emphasising that feedback is not just comments on written work. Feedback is any sort of guidance that you give to a student, and that could be discussions in an informal meeting, you may be talking to a student after class. It could be meetings that you might have as a supervisor with a student if they're doing a project with you or a Ph. D. So with those sorts of meetings, so meetings between a supervisor and either a project student or a dissertation or a Ph. D. student, is maybe get them to fill in a particular form. Very, very simple things to reflect on, with key outputs that they did, things that they could improve on, things to remember in the future, and then objectives for the next meeting. So getting them to really think on how they're using that interactive activity, that verbal feedback and emphasising that verbal feedback is feedback is important because often they consider feedback only to be written comments on a script.

Tip 12: Make feedback reflective

The next top tip is trying to make feedback reflective. In order to get students to use the feedback. It helps them to think about those feedback comments. So there's a very strong argument that if this feedback doesn't change the way in which the student learns, or the student approaches a task, then it isn't feedback, it's just words. So really get the students to reflect on the feedback they had previously on a skill, if you're assessing that skill within a particular assessment that you've designed. Maybe give them a mark and that requires them to reflect on that feedback. So for example, what did they do well in the last assignment? What did they need to avoid/improve or need to change and develop? And how they applied that feedback to this current assignment. So those four questions very easy to do, get the students to reflect on that. It encourages them to then look back at the feedback they had previously. It will mean that they can do that with a fairly neutral eye, whereas if they looked at that feedback, when they received the feedback initially, they might have had a sort of fairly negative emotive response to that. If you provide them that little bit of a gap of time, it means that they have a much better chance of using that feedback objectively.

Tip 13: Audio and Video Feedback

The next approach is really powerful, that is providing audio or video feedback. This is a really, really good way of conveying information to the student. And it takes a fairly short amount of time to provide some really good feedback. So you can use for audio feedback either a dictaphone or a smartphone or the audio recording software computer. And what I usually do with that is to annotate the script to have a number or a letter, and then you un-pause the recording device and say, "Right, feedback point 'B'....", and then you can describe what the feedback actually is. You can do the same with screen capture using a video where you can actually mark the assignment in real

time. They can see you going through those thought processes. You can highlight something on the screen and talk about that.

The key thing about that is the tone of your voice is really, really important. It personalises the feedback. It means that the students can hear when you're happy that they've done something well, that you're disappointed when they've done something not as good. Actually both of those are motivators for the student, and it means that often what could be considered as quite abrupt comments in written feedback, actually come across in a more supportive and positive way. So the tone of your voice is absolutely fundamental to this.

You could also use screen capture to annotate a sample or a fake answer, something that you pre-wrote or from a previous cohort if you have permission, or that you can get generative A.I., like ChatGPT, to write for you. And that means you can then highlight good, and limited or problematic points, on a sample or a fake answer. But the key thing with audio and video feedback is the tone of your voice and hearing that personalised approach. And actually you'll find as you are recording those comments, you're also then scanning through the piece of assessment to see the next point that you want to talk about. So I personally have found in the past that if you can provide about 15 minutes worth of content in terms of feedback on an essay that takes about 20 minutes to mark, including giving that feedback. So you're actually marking in your head as you're talking to the student in the audio or video. So it's a really effective but also really efficient way of marking and providing feedback.

Tip 14: Comment Banks

Another efficient way is using common banks. There are various different types of banks. You can either have ones that are electronic ones, such as in see here. This is from Feedback Studio, which is part of the Turn-it-in Software. Also you could use written comment banks, or just a document that you've copied and paste comments across if it's an electronic copy. I have frequently done this with hardcopy written work, where the feedback is a series of comments on two sides of a piece of paper, each one is numbered, and you identify with a number what those bits of feedback are on the script. That helps you provide pre-written guidance in quite a lot of detail for things that are common areas, things that you tend to come across quite a lot, such as poor referencing or grammatical or structural errors or key concepts that students typically get wrong within that particular assessment. And that means that you've then got a bit more time and opportunity to focus on the really important things that are specific to that particular assessment that that particular student has put in.

Tip 15: Develop Self-Assessment skills

The final tip is phrasing the feedback to encourage the student to be independent and self-critical. So what you want to do instead of saying "You did this right", "You did this wrong." or "This wasn't good", or "That could be improved." Or "This was good.", is trying to phrase that, and that make them think and make them go through that analytical process themselves. So "What is it about this

that you think you could have improved?” or “The elements of this argument are quite limiting? Think about these key points....” So you're getting them to focus on the key marking criteria, the key outcomes that you want, you encouraging them to see the errors and the good points rather than pointing it out for them. That's a really, really important skill to develop because they'll need that skill to evaluate their own work once they graduate and once they no longer have educators and such as us looking over their shoulders and telling them what's good and what's bad.

So I hope those were useful tips. Key things to consider: Be supportive; be clear, don't be cryptic; and ensure that you feed forward with the feedback that you provide, that it's looking to what the student needs to do next rather than over much what they did previously.

REFERENCES

Jones *et al.* (2012) Exploring Students' Initial Reactions to the Feedback They Receive on Coursework. *Bioscience Education*, **20** doi:10.11120/beej.2012.20000004