

## **Giving Effective Feedback on Student Writing**

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Website link to workshop handouts: <http://www.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/workshop-index.htm>

### **1. INTRODUCTIONS**

### **2. OVERVIEW**

### **3. PREPARING TO EVALUATE & RESPOND**

- a) Evaluation and response begins with good assignment design
- b) Always give students written guidelines and grading criteria
  - i) Guidelines should include task, form/genre, role and audience, format, sequence, grading criteria
  - ii) “Sequence” = a recommended set of steps to follow to complete the assignment
- c) Strategies to help students fully understand your grading criteria and expectations
  - i) Provide a scoring guide (aka rubric, checklist) and brief description of each item or score
  - ii) Hold an in-class “norming” session
  - iii) Put annotated models on library reserve

### **4. EVALUATING & COMMENTING**

- a) Establish checkpoints during the sequence: give students guidance while they work on the assignment
- b) Get students off to a good start
  - i) Hold a brainstorm session
  - ii) Require a Question+Thesis or Prospectus
  - iii) Discuss the scoring guide (aka rubric, checklist) and/or models
- c) Give comments on drafts only (comment on final versions only if aimed at next assignment OR if re-writes are allowed)
- d) When possible, conference

### **5. WRITING COMMENTS**

- a) Adopt the role of coach. Shed the role of corrector, editor, judge, or justifier of grade. Don't correct! Don't justify! Guide!
- b) Find a positive and comment on that first. Be specific: why is it a positive?
- c) Limit your suggestions to 2-3 things

- d) Use these questions as a way to structure how you approach commenting. Start with higher-order concerns. Once higher-order concerns are satisfactory, move to lower-order concerns

Higher-order concerns<sup>1</sup>

1. Does the draft follow the assignment?
2. Does the draft address an appropriate problem or question?
3. What is the quality of the argument (or quality of the ideas presented)?
4. Is the draft organized at the macro level?
5. Is the draft organized at the micro level?

Lower-order concerns

6. Are there stylistic problems that you find particularly annoying?
7. Is the draft free of errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation?
8. Does the draft follow style guide rules for citations? (if library or external data sources are used)

## 6. GRAMMAR ISSUES

- a) Play the role of coach, not editor
- b) If correct grammar is required, inform the students in writing and include the “penalty” for final drafts with many grammar errors
- c) Tell students to proofread and edit before submitting their final draft
- d) Teach them to proofread and edit. Three common strategies:
  - i) Read aloud (and point to each word with a pencil to make sure it’s read as written)
  - ii) Read and check the last sentence of the text, then the second to last sentence, and so on until first sentence is read and checked
  - iii) Find a friend to help proofread & edit
- e) If you want to edit the student text, thoroughly edit only one or two paragraphs as an example of the amount of work required before the draft is ready for submission as a final version.

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<sup>1</sup> From John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, Jossey-Bass, 2001.

## Scoring Guides (also known as rubrics, criteria grids)

### Generic

Text Feature	Excellent	Good	Needs Work
Clear purpose			
Quality evidence supports each point			
Grammar, spelling, & punctuation			
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS			

### Mechanical engineering memo

Weak	Satisfactory	Strong	Criteria	Reader's Comments
			Introductory paragraph explains purpose of memo	
			Body paragraphs present test results in a condensed form	
			Results are presented in a way that gives the reader confidence	
			Final paragraph contains recommendations for improving design	
			Tables are clear and concise	
			Tables are meaningful and support conclusions in the memo	
			Memo is free of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors	
			<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	

### Primary Trait Scoring: Lab Report

	5 Excellent	4 Good	3 Satisfactory	2 Poor	1 Unsatisfactory
Title & Abstract					
Introduction					
Methods					
Results					
Discussion					
Additional Comments					

### Primary Trait Scoring: Lab Report

	Points possible	Points awarded
Title & Abstract	0-15	
Introduction	0-30	
Methods	0-15	
Results	0-15	
Discussion	0-35	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	

### Holistic Scoring: Essay

<b>A (6) Excellent</b>	<b>B (5) Well done</b>	<b>C (4) Competent but may be inconsistent</b>	<b>D (3) Uneven</b>	<b>E (2) Weak</b>	<b>F (1) Not acceptable</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sophisticated thesis statement</li> <li>- Clearly developed &amp; organized paragraphs</li> <li>- Excellent support</li> <li>- Ideas are logical, engaging, &amp; insightful</li> <li>- No distracting errors in grammar, punctuation, and citation style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly discernible thesis</li> <li>- May be well organized</li> <li>- Good support</li> <li>- Ideas are good and sometimes go beyond the obvious</li> <li>- Few distracting errors in grammar, punctuation, and citation style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear thesis</li> <li>- May fail to tie ideas together in an organized way</li> <li>- May fail to show adequate support</li> <li>- Good insights, but may not go beyond the obvious</li> <li>- Many errors in grammar, punctuation, and citation style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May have an un-engaging or poorly focused thesis</li> <li>- May have inadequate organization</li> <li>- May have inadequate support</li> <li>- May contain superficial, uninspired, incomplete ideas</li> <li>- May be marred by distracting errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May have unclear thesis</li> <li>- May lack a discernible organizational pattern</li> <li>- May have little or no support</li> <li>- Ideas may not support the thesis or are exceedingly superficial</li> <li>- May contain frequent errors in grammar, punctuation, and citation style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May be lacking thesis</li> <li>- No organizational pattern</li> <li>- Unsupported ideas</li> <li>- Ideas do not support the thesis or purpose of the paper</li> <li>- May be riddled with major errors in grammar, punctuation, and citation style</li> </ul>

## Written Comments

<b>Weak</b>	<b>Better</b>
<p>You raise many important issues, but your organization is weak. The paper was lacking support. Where is the development of the ideas?</p>	<p>You raise three important points on your second page, which I circled. But they get lost amid all the other points you are making. On your next draft, what if you focus on just those three and explain them (with supporting evidence)? The other points are interesting, but in this short paper you will not be able to discuss them all.</p>
<p>Look at the sample again. You haven't written a summary. It's not only incoherent but you included your opinions as well.</p>	<p>In your second paragraph you did a good job sticking to the main point plus key evidence—something I hope to see more of in your next summary. In the other paragraphs you mixed in your opinions (I underlined opinions). Remember: a summary does not include personal opinions.</p>
<p>Your lit review is comprehensive. You brought in all the right studies (including a few I wasn't aware of—thank you!). But you used too many quotations.</p>	<p>In psychology we usually summarize research findings rather than quote. In your revision, try to summarize what you quoted. Your lit review will only be half as long.</p>
<p>I had trouble following your argument as I read your paper. It's not coherent. There aren't any transitions between your ideas or clues about what you are trying to say. I didn't know what your point was until I read the last paragraph.</p>	<p>A lot of this was pretty fuzzy as I read. But then I got to your final paragraph that clearly stated a purpose for the paper and the reasons why your ideas are important. I then thought, <b>YOU DO KNOW HOW TO WRITE CLEARLY!</b> Would you want to try that paragraph as your first paragraph? It could provide you and your reader with a neat outline of what will come next. You'll then have an organizational plan to follow for your next draft.</p>

## One-on-One Writing Conferences

[Source: J.C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. Jossey-Bass, 2001]

### Tips

- Have an agenda in mind before starting the conference. The agenda and the higher-order and lower-order questions (below) can serve as a guide. Finish one step/question before moving to the next.
- Encourage the student to do most of the talking
  - have students rehearse and explain what they want to say (I'll often take dictation and give the student my notes to take home)
  - have students describe where they are stuck

### Suggested agenda for the conference

1. Ask the student
  - a) Summarize the assignment in your own words
  - b) What do you expect from the conference?
  - c) How much work have you put into the draft? How much more time are you willing to put into the paper?
  - d) Write down your thesis (or purpose, hypothesis) and supporting points; then write down the main problems you see with the draft [Instructor can read/skim the draft while the student writes]

Note: Adjust (d) as needed, depending on the assignment. Examples:

- If it's a lab report, the student can write the hypothesis, primary result, and summarize the points for the discussion.
- If it's a memo, student can write the purpose of the memo, intended effect on the reader, and the main points.

2. Give the student positive reinforcement: "I really like \_\_\_\_\_" or "You do a good job \_\_\_\_\_."
3. Give the student an honest evaluation of the draft. Be specific.
4. Reassure the student that shortcomings and problems in a draft are a normal part of the writing process. Use your personal experiences whenever possible.
5. Collaborate with the student to develop a list of 2-3 things the student should work on. Start with higher-order concerns first.
6. Jot down the agreed-upon areas so the student has a list to take home. Ask the student to describe to you what he/she plans to do to work on the 2-3 things.

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### Questions to guide commenting

#### Higher-order concerns

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#### Lower-order concerns

6. Are there stylistic problems that you find particularly annoying?
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