

# ENHANCING THE STUDENT ROLE IN MASTERING FEEDBACK

*This guide was developed by our [UCD Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning](#). This is a resource for students by students.*

Welcome to your quick guide on learning about feedback (which included the idea of feedforward) and how to enhance your role, as a student, in the feedback process. It is built on a series of conversations with UCD students on their experiences with feedback and acknowledges that UCD has a variety of feedback options available for use in supporting student learning (UCD T&L, 2024).

Previous experiences in school or even some college modules may have given the impression that feedback is just something lecturers<sup>1</sup> hand out and students merely receive. Well, we're here to flip that narrative on its head! We've outlined six tips to help reshape your idea of feedback. That means enabling you to "make ongoing judgments about the quality of work using internal and external feedback, manage the effect when being confronted with critical feedback, and use a variety of strategies to follow up feedback productively", all to help get the most out of your learning experience (Zhan, 2023, p.687).

This guide will help you unlock your key role in making the most of the feedback that you get and the potential to develop the skill of judging your own work. So, let's get started!

## Tip 1: Refine Your Understanding of Feedback

First things first, what is feedback used for? After you submit an assignment, you usually get back all these comments telling you how to level up your work. These insights might point out punctuation slips, suggest content changes, or even recommend sharpening up your referencing game. These comments are like gold dust because they show you where your work could use a little attention and how you can make it shine.

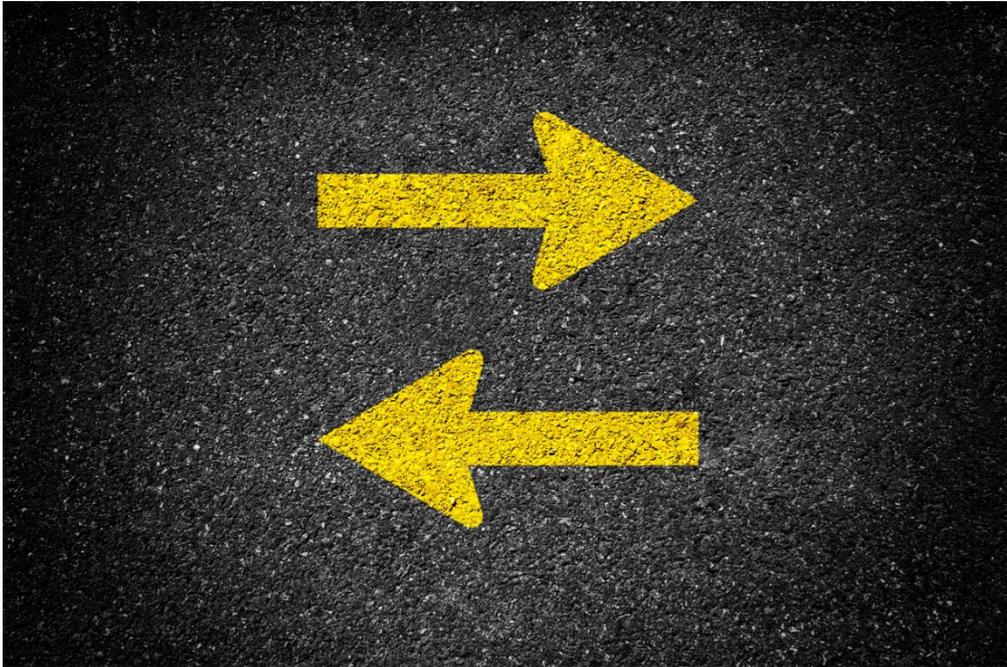
But feedback isn't just a one-way street where you sit back and wait for your lecturer's verdict. Nope, think of feedback as a skill you can wield to analyse, critique, and refine your assignments even before you hit that submit button.

You also need to grow your own ability to judge your own work; your lecturer won't always be around. Feedback is a two-way street. By granting yourself the opportunity to self-guide and refine your work,

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in this piece is being used a term to include all staff who teach, i.e. tutors, demonstrators, etc

you're not just fostering learning and growth but also setting yourself up to secure those better grades - a win-win situation!



## Tip 2: Let's take action!

So, you're pumped to start giving feedback on your own work, but you're not sure where to start. Well, the first step is to take initiative and really enhance your chances of being a good self-critic! Here are some pointers to get you started:

- Honesty is the Best Policy: Recognise that solo reviewing your work requires honesty. Keep your key points in mind and scrutinise your work through that lens. Identify areas where clarity falters or where additional references could bolster your arguments.
- And hey, this doesn't have to be as boring as it may sound! Print out your work, grab your favourite pen, (snacks are optional), and let your inner professor loose.
- Delve deep into what works and why, pinpointing areas for improvement. It's way more fun than it sounds!
- Hit the Books: Feeling a bit lost on your assignment topic? Dive into some research! Whether it's digging up literature to beef up your arguments or finding articles that make your point crystal clear, a little research can go a long way in shaping your work.
- Leverage Guidance and Rubrics: When you're polishing up your assignment, don't forget to check the lecturer's guidance to you. This can be done by checking back on the lecturer's instructions or by further examining the criteria/rubric. It's like your secret weapon for making

sure your work ticks all the right boxes. Compare your assignment to the criteria/rubric to see where you can make those final tweaks and improvements. And if your module does not have one, feel free to email your lecturer to get an idea of what they'll be grading you on to help shape your work based on that.

- Use those Office Hours: Your lecturers are not just there to dish out grades. Proactively seek guidance whenever you need it, whether it's a week before your deadline or during their office hours throughout the trimester. Again, they'll be able to offer tailored feedback which addresses your concerns directly. They're here to help you shine, so don't be afraid to ask for that extra boost!
- Consistency is Key: Developing the ability to give unbiased and effective self-given feedback is a skill that needs a little bit of work. By continuously fine-tuning your work, you'll find that the feedback you eventually receive from your lecturer will be much more targeted and constructive, hitting on the points you might not have been able to work on. That means their comments will be like the cherry on top of an already delicious cake, helping you sharpen your analytical and critical thinking skills for next time. So in order for the process to continuously help you, you'll also need to help yourself! Remember: "Committed effort is crucial for maximising the effects of feedback on learning!" (Zhan, 2023, p.694).

### Tip 3: Peers are a Resource!

While self-reflection shapes feedback, peer insights play really pivotal roles in honing your work. Your classmates are a goldmine of fresh perspectives, offering feedback that's honest and unbiased. A bonus is being able to engage in reciprocal feedback. Not only will it enhance your understanding of what makes and breaks an assignment, but it'll further help to develop those critical skills when analysing someone else's work. Having this communication with your peers can effectively allow you to see material in a nuanced way, developing your comprehension skills along with critical thinking as you try and structure your work around these new points and ideas.

So if you've ever found yourself a few points short of an essay, engaging with peer feedback can help you engage more deeply with your texts and give you those few hundred words you need to finish that assignment.



## Tip 4: Embrace Different Advice

Navigating a range of diverse opinions and suggestions requires a lot of analytical thinking. But don't stress! Developing a good eye that helps you judge which feedback comments are helpful, along with being able to self-regulate and develop feedback resilience, are all key to being able to sift through feedback effectively.

If you're utilising a range of resources to receive feedback (peers, teachers, self-feedback) you'll need to accommodate the different opinions you receive to figure out what the best approach to refining your work is. Comments on your work may range from content, structure, punctuation, and so on. How you analyse these comments will help you see where your strengths and weaknesses are.

A helpful way to do this is to organise the feedback you receive into different groups. This way, you'll be able to visually see which areas of your work receive the most comments, either for improvements or for compliments, enabling you to understand which areas need revision attention right away (Zhan, 2023, p.693).

How you choose which feedback to take into consideration should come directly from the criteria or rubric presented by your lecturer. This will also help navigate feelings of confusion and conflicting advice. Remember, it's all about being as objective as possible with your work and integrating valuable insights while questioning and refining your choices.

## Tip 5: Review and Revise!

So, you've submitted the final piece and have finally got your feedback in hand. This time is crucial and ideal to review your work just one more time. (I know, it sounds like a lot, but hey: no one said shining like a star was going to be easy.) While the comments are fresh, take time to thoroughly review the feedback and the final work you submitted.

Read it, re-read it, and then read it again. Take notes and annotate where you nailed it and where you could use a little extra polish by using the rubric. Structure and comment your annotations around specific categories (referencing, phrasing, sentence structure) to create a structured approach to feedback assimilation.

If you're feeling brave, why not take a crack at rewriting your assignment in alignment with the feedback? It's a great way to put that feedback into action and level up your work even more.

And of course, seek further clarification from lecturers where needed and even to check if your revisions are appropriate for a better grade.

## Tip 6: Cut Yourself Some Slack

After reviewing your work at least ten times, using as many resources as possible, and overloading your schedule with library sessions, you're not crazy for expecting to get an A++. So if you're feeling overwhelmed and a bit disappointed about your grade, take a deep breath and take a step away. Student to student, those days are the ones where you need to close the laptop, put away that rubric, crawl back into the blanket, and shed those tears.

There's no rush to read the feedback the very next day or two and you don't have to get to analysing and assessing the day after that either. Your lecturer's office hours won't disappear and you can always drop in a few weeks later to have a chat. So, take your time and come back to it whenever you want.

And remember to separate yourself from the grade and realise a bad, or even failed, assignment/ exam is not going to define you or your academic journey and goals. So make that distinction for your own well-being. After all, you still make a mean batch of brownies and everyone knows you take the crown at Monopoly.

Once you feel ready to face the feedback, do it objectively and know that it's something of the past that can't be changed. At the end of the day, a bad grade really does happen to the best of us. So, take your best foot forward and just focus on the next step ahead.

## Finally

So you've made it to the end of our student-focused feedback guide! Remember, feedback is your ultimate sidekick on the road to academic success. And it's not just about nodding along to what your

lecturers say; it's about taking charge of your own learning and turning feedback into your own effective skill.

Whether you're polishing up your work before hitting that submit button or diving headfirst into the feedback you've received, remember this: you've got the power to shape your assignments and boost those grades.

And hey, if you ever feel like you're drowning in feedback or grappling with a less-than-stellar grade, take a step back, a deep breather, and remember that one assignment doesn't define you. You're a student, which means you're also a learner on a path of growth and discovery.

So, embrace the feedback, roll with the punches, and keep on swinging with your academic hustle. You've got this!

## References

UCD T&L (2024) [UCD Feedback Strategies](#), Dublin: UCD Teaching and Learning

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