

ECT Mentor session

Module 4: Making productive use of assessment

Week 4: Giving high-quality feedback

Session Elements



scripting



collaborative
planning



rehearsal



discussion
with mentor

Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn that:

- 6.4** To be of value, teachers use information from assessments to inform the decisions they make; in turn, pupils must be able to act on feedback for it to have an effect.
- 6.5** High-quality feedback can be written or verbal; it is likely to be accurate and clear, encourage further effort, and provide specific guidance on how to improve.
- 6.6** Over time, feedback should support pupils to monitor and regulate their own learning.

Your ECT will learn how to:

Provide high-quality feedback, by:

- 6h.** Focusing on specific actions for pupils and providing time for pupils to respond to feedback.
- 6i.** Appreciating that pupils' responses to feedback can vary depending on a range of social factors (e.g. the message the feedback contains or the age of the child).

- 6j. Scaffolding self-assessment by sharing model work with pupils, highlighting key details.
- 6k. Thinking carefully about how to ensure feedback is specific and helpful when using peer- or self-assessment.

Introduction

In their self-directed study session earlier this week, your mentee extended their knowledge of giving high-quality feedback.

Your mentee will have considered their feedback practice by looking at previous feedback they have given. They may have spoken to pupils to find out their views on feedback they have received, how they interpreted it and what they did with it. They may also have spoken to a colleague to understand more about realistic expectations of students' independence and self-regulation at different ages.

This session can build on your mentee's self-study activity and focus in more detail on its practical implications, such as how to scaffold effective self-assessment and peer-assessment. In this session, you will help your mentee understand the importance of skilled feedback and why developing skills of self-assessment and self-regulation are important to the learning process.

Research and Practice Summary

Giving high-quality feedback

Helen and Aaron have been marking their Year 3 English books together and are really pleased with how much their pupils have improved since September. They have been discussing how to make the most of feedback and realise that they disagree about some key ideas. Helen believes the following:

- the more feedback you give pupils, the better
- written feedback is more powerful than verbal feedback

Aaron disagrees. He says that Helen has developed some common misconceptions about feedback.

What do you think? Who do you agree with? In your judgement, what is most important about effective feedback?

Feedback is information given to the pupil or teacher about the pupil's performance relative to the intended learning. It is a key component of high-quality teaching and can dramatically affect learning, both positively and negatively. When giving feedback to pupils, it is important to get the details right – details both of what feedback is given and how it is given.

Last week you learned about how to use approaches to assessment to gather useful information about your pupils' understanding, including any misconceptions that they might hold. This data gathering is the first stage of high-quality assessment practice, as it provides feedback to the teacher. The impact on pupils' learning depends on what is done next with this information:

- first, the teacher needs to process the information that they collect: ask yourself 'what does this tell me about pupils' current understanding?' and 'who needs to take what action now to move pupils' learning on?'
- then, the teacher needs to take, or support pupils to take, the action identified. This might be adapting teaching so that it takes account of current pupil understanding (perhaps to address misconceptions or to build on sound existing understanding); it might also be to give feedback to pupils so that they can do something to improve their learning further

There are lots of ways to categorise approaches to giving high-quality feedback to pupils, including:

- **what the feedback is about** – it can be about the person (e.g. how much effort was put into the work), products of learning (e.g. a piece of written or practical work) or about the learning process itself (e.g. how the pupil approached a task)
- **who gives the feedback** – feedback can be provided by a teacher, peers, pupils themselves or using digital technology
- **how the feedback is given** – it can be written, verbal, non-verbal (e.g. a nod of reinforcement, a physical gesture that models a practical activity)
- **when the feedback is given** – feedback can be immediate or delayed

- **how public the feedback is** – in busy classrooms, even one-to-one feedback can sometimes be picked up by other pupils: the message in the feedback should determine how public the feedback should be

There is no one 'best' approach to giving feedback. When providing any feedback, it is necessary to match it to your pupils' characteristics and learning needs and to the nature of what is being learned. A quick verbal correction during a class discussion or a brief one-to-one chat while a pupil completes an extended activity are sometimes as powerful as detailed written comments in a pupil's workbook. Messages of praise may be given publicly, whereas more challenging feedback may best be given privately and with the opportunity for pupils to clarify understanding in detail.

Using the categories above may help you to think more critically about the options available to you, and the choices you make, as you plan and teach lessons.

Helen's belief that 'written feedback is more powerful than verbal feedback' is clearly incorrect. We could re-write this as 'sometimes, written feedback is more powerful than verbal feedback'. As so often in teaching, the choice the teacher makes in any given situation should draw on their understanding of critical features of the context to select a suitable approach for that situation.

More feedback is not necessarily better. Research syntheses, such as the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit, suggest that feedback is most effective when it is used sparingly, for a number of reasons.

Too much feedback, especially focusing on weaknesses, can be dispiriting. Providing excessive feedback can also cause cognitive overload, reducing pupils' ability to process the feedback successfully. Even if pupils can process a lot of feedback at once, excessive volume can be overwhelming and confusing, meaning that pupils struggle to separate out, and take on board, key messages.

Therefore, when giving feedback, you should consider what to prioritise and what may more helpfully be left out. It may be helpful to consider, 'what is the best next step in learning?'

Helen's belief that 'the more feedback you give, the better' is also incorrect. Teachers who give too much feedback in one go may actually reduce the benefit that pupils get from it.



To ensure that your use of feedback contributes to pupils' learning, you should:

- **be accurate** – effective feedback needs to be based on an accurate assessment of pupils' learning
- **be clear** – consider how you can ensure pupils understand feedback received (verbal and non-verbal feedback in the moment is sometimes more powerful than written feedback after the event, for example. Opportunities for clarification also help to ensure that pupils understand fully)
- **be specific about what pupils should do** – focus on specific actions for the pupil (e.g. rather than saying 'you need more detail here', say 'add a paragraph explaining how you reached this conclusion' and provide pupils with suitable prompts to support them in doing this)
- **encourage further effort** – recognise effort as well as attainment in the feedback you give (e.g. 'I can see that you've worked hard to make this progress in your work. Keep going; you can do this')
- **develop self-regulation** – provide feedback on the process as well as the products of learning (e.g. 'the plan that you wrote at the beginning really helped you to structure your writing clearly into strong paragraphs'). Self-regulation is also developed by teaching your pupils how to peer- and self-assess
- **provide opportunities to act on feedback** – this requires allocating lesson time or incorporating it into home learning
- **know your pupils** – tailor your language, feedback and tone to the characteristics of your specific pupils, while maintaining and demonstrating high expectations of all

Improving feedback

Aaron and Helen shared some examples of feedback that they'd written for pupils recently on some English homework. Which do you think better exemplifies the characteristics of high-quality feedback?

Helen had written:

I like your story. It was exciting, and you used some good words. It would be better if you used more adjectives.

Aaron had written:

Well done for working so carefully on this story. The way you used adjectives like 'exciting' and 'dramatic' helped to add tension, as we discussed in class. To improve this work further, you could use paragraphs to organise your writing so that the reader can follow the story more easily. You can do this during 'review time' on Thursday.

Helen's feedback is too vague to be helpful and could further confuse her pupil. They will not be clear from this feedback what 'good' words are, for example.

Aaron's feedback is of higher quality as he is more specific than Helen, both in describing what is good about the work (with specific examples from the text) and how and when it can be further improved. This means the pupil should be better able to self-assess and improve their writing in the future.

However, Aaron's comment is also quite long and detailed, which could make it harder for his pupil to act on the feedback. It also assumes that the pupil knows how to use paragraphs appropriately. Aaron could restructure his comment to make it more likely that the pupil will get the most from it:

WWW: Exciting adjectives!

EBI: New time or place = NP.

Task: Rewrite highlighted section in three paragraphs.

It might be helpful for Aaron to provide specific examples of exciting adjectives, but if he judges that the pupil clearly understands how to use them effectively, this might be unnecessary.

In week 1 of Module 4, you looked at formative and summative assessment. As part of formative assessment, peer-assessment and self-assessment can be valuable tools that enable pupils to monitor and improve their own progress against agreed success criteria. However, pupils first need to be trained in how to do this well, and the approaches work best alongside teacher assessment rather than as alternatives. Assessment can add significantly to a teacher's workload, so it is important to become familiar with your school's expectations and to learn from colleagues.

Peer-assessment can positively affect achievement and improve self-regulation.

When pupils assess each other's work and give feedback, this is peer-assessment.

Peer-assessment offers multiple benefits when structured and scaffolded appropriately, including:

- helping pupils focus on the learning process, not simply the outcomes (which often happens with teacher assessment)
- it can be very timely, compared to pupils waiting for written feedback from the teacher
- pupils learn how to apply their critical process to their own work
- it can reduce the teacher's workload when done well

Peer relationships may influence the effectiveness of peer-assessment. Teachers should be careful to ensure their pupils understand the success criteria for a task before expecting them to use the criteria to assess their peers.

Self-assessment is when pupils work with their teachers to agree a set of success criteria against which they can assess their current performance. It is most useful when deployed formatively (while a task is ongoing). Self-assessment will be allied with a set of 'targets-for-self', steps the pupil sets themselves to improve upon their work. Self-assessment has similar benefits as peer-assessment and is a key element in formative assessment. It is good way of teaching pupils to monitor and regulate their own learning.

Supporting pupils in monitoring and regulating their own learning

Helen is pleased with the quality of her class' writing so far. Now she wants them to do more to monitor and regulate their own learning. Specifically, she would like her pupils to edit their own writing for common errors, including basic punctuation.

Helen decides that she can use peer-assessment to support this, especially as pupils are often reluctant to revise and edit their own work. Helen knows that effective peer-assessment takes careful planning so begins by modelling the process of self-editing for her class. She uses a visualiser and thinks aloud to share her thought processes as she assesses a short piece of writing that she created as a model. By doing this, Helen is further clarifying what good writing looks like (sharing success criteria) and supporting pupils to better understand how they can edit work themselves.

Next, Helen provides structured opportunities for pupils to peer-assess each other's work. As part of this, she helps her pupils to better understand how to give effective feedback, highlighting how to make this specific and helpful. She gives pupils a framework for feeding back on 'two stars and a wish', using sentence stems such as 'a strength of your work is...' and 'one way to improve this is...'. Her pupils are now more able to accurately review each other's work and provide appropriate feedback. As they practise peer-assessment, they become more confident and skilled in assessing the quality of writing. Finally, Helen supports her pupils in applying this new competence to their own writing.



To help you to improve the quality of peer- and self-assessment, you should:

- share clear success criteria and revisit these before (and even during) the activity - ensure that pupils understand these criteria by, for example, asking them to express the criteria in their own words
- scaffold activities by sharing models of good work (e.g. with a visualiser or interactive whiteboard) and identifying how their key features meet the success criteria
- explain why you are teaching pupils to self-assess: this helps pupils focus on

the processes behind their learning and not simply the outcomes (which can be the case when they are assessed by their teacher); self-assessment enhances metacognitive thinking

- think carefully about how to ensure feedback is specific and helpful when using peer-assessment (e.g. by asking pupils to highlight a limited number of improvements to their partner's work and to give clear examples of how to act on each improvement)
- carefully match your pupils during peer-assessment to reduce tensions that can arise when pupils provide feedback to each other
- explain to your pupils that there are benefits to giving feedback as well as receiving it - it can help the assessor to develop a better understanding of the most effective approaches to take to complete a task well
- invite your pupils to feed back to each other on how it felt to be peer assessed (this can build mutual trust and cooperation)

Combining feedback approaches as part of a learning cycle in GCSE business

Alessia has a clear structure to the feedback that she provides on substantial pieces of pupils' work. She makes sure that her feedback covers the following, using the acronym SIT.

Strengths: these are elements of the work that are good. Alessia highlights strengths throughout the text using yellow highlighter, then writes a summary at the end which helps pupils to understand why they are strengths. For example, 'This is a strong evaluation because you are using key concepts (elasticity and demand) to justify why the business should take a particular action in this situation (reduce costs rather than raise prices).'

Improvements: Alessia highlights one part of the text in green and writes guidance at the end of the work for pupils which tells them how and why this section needs improving. Pupils are expected to re-work this part of the text during dedicated classroom time. For example, 'Improve your analysis in this paragraph by explaining the steps in your reasoning that link raising prices to falling total revenue. Use connectives such as "this should lead to" and "as a consequence" to build your chain of reasoning.' Alessia keeps the improvements focused and manageable so

she doesn't overwhelm pupils.

Targets: Alessia identifies a target that each pupil should address in future work. For example, 'Extend lines of reasoning so that you always develop your arguments fully. Aim for at least 3 steps in each chain of analysis.'

When pupils start their next substantial piece of work, Alessia asks them to write their previous target at the top of their work. When they have finished the task, pupils write a comment next to the target to self-assess the extent to which they have met it. They also circle the part of their work where they feel they have best demonstrated this target.

This approach builds clarity into Alessia's feedback so that pupils understand how to improve. It combines short-cycle feedback (on the immediate task, which is addressed in the following lesson) and medium-cycle feedback (which looks forward to the next piece of work). Having pupils comment on how they have met their target also helps Alessia to judge the extent to which each pupil has understood her feedback and develops pupils' self-regulation and ability to self-assess.

Mentor Meeting Activities

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the Learning Intentions, and encourage your mentee to record key points in their Learning Log. Tailor your use of the Theory to Practice activities below in response to the Review and Plan sections of this session.

Review 5 mins

- 1) Start this session by briefly following up the actions that the mentee set at the end of last week's session. Ask your mentee to summarise:
 - a) what they did
 - b) the impact of this on pupil learning (including how they are evaluating this)
 - c) what they will do going forward to build on these actions

2) Clarify the Learning Intentions for this session with your mentee.

Plan 5 mins

At the start of this module, you looked at all of the 'learn how to' statements for Standard 6 and conducted a module audit with your mentee. In some areas, they will already be confident and skilled; in others, they will want more practice and support from you and others. Look back at this audit now and use it to help decide how you and your mentee will make the most productive use of the suggested Theory to Practice activities below.

Theory to Practice 35 mins



1. Discuss with mentor

Discuss with your mentee the relative merits of verbal and written feedback and how to maximise their impact on learning.

You might consider factors such as:

- how quickly pupils are able to receive and respond to feedback
- the time taken for teachers to give different forms of feedback
- whether or not an immediate response is needed
- whether or not a record of feedback is needed (for example, if it is part of a formal assessment process)
- the quantity of feedback that pupils are able to remember and respond to at once
- how pupils with different characteristics (e.g. age or social factors) may respond differently to each form of feedback
- how pupils with different characteristics may need different degrees of detail in feedback and time to respond
- examples of times when giving verbal feedback during lessons may be preferable to giving written feedback after lessons

- strategies for giving verbal feedback during lessons – including to individuals, groups of pupils and whole class feedback



2. Collaborative planning

Using the characteristics of good self- and peer-assessment outlined in the Research and Practice Summary, work with your mentee on one of the two options below to plan how they could build effective self-assessment into a forthcoming lesson that they will be teaching.

If the group has not engaged in self-assessment with your mentee previously, focus planning on:

- a) the key details of self-assessment as a learning process that need to be highlighted to pupils, and
- b) creating an example of ‘model work’ which will help pupils to understand the success criteria for self-assessment as a learning process.

If the group has experienced self-assessment activities previously with the mentee, focus planning on the lesson content which pupils will self-assess against. Help your mentee to:

- a) construct clear and detailed success criteria for the task, including a worked model, and
- b) plan for how they will support pupils to identify and act on clear, specific and helpful ‘targets-for-self’ as a result of their self-assessment.

To support this activity, consider the following:

- you will need to ensure that the worked model of high-quality self-assessment is itself of high quality, particularly if your mentee has little prior experience of supporting self-assessment
- if you do not work in the same phase/specialism as your mentee, you may wish to seek input from a colleague with the appropriate expertise to quality assure the success criteria and worked model and to confirm that it suits the context of the class



3. Scripting / rehearsal

Ask your mentee to identify a part of the lesson that you have worked on together in activity (2) that they feel least confident about delivering. Support your mentee to script how they would deliver this part of the lesson, and then help them to rehearse the enactment of their script.

To support this activity, you could:

- give feedback to your mentee to highlight areas of strength in their practice and offer one or two strategies for further improving their delivery
- connect your feedback to the research and practice summaries provided within this module

Next Steps 5 mins

Agree with your mentee how they will now put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these action(s) are expected to contribute to improving pupil learning
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these action(s)
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these action(s)

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, when you will check on your mentee's progress.