

ECT Mentor session

Module 4: Making productive use of assessment

Week 5: Planning effective and manageable marking and feedback

Session Elements



analyse
artefacts



collaborative
planning



sharing of
practice



discuss with a
mentor

Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn that:

6.7 Working with colleagues to identify efficient approaches to assessment is important; assessment can become onerous and have a disproportionate impact on workload.

Your ECT will learn how to:

Make marking manageable and effective, by:

- 6l.** Recording data only when it is useful for improving pupil outcomes.
- 6m.** Working with colleagues to identify efficient approaches to marking and alternative approaches to providing feedback (e.g. using whole class feedback or well supported peer- and self-assessment).
- 6n.** Using verbal feedback during lessons in place of written feedback after lessons where possible.
- 6o.** Understanding that written marking is only one form of feedback.
- 6p.** Reducing the opportunity cost of marking (e.g. by using abbreviations and

codes in written feedback).

- 6q.** Prioritising the highlighting of errors related to misunderstandings, rather than careless mistakes when marking.

Introduction

In their self-directed study session earlier this week, your mentee extended their knowledge of planning effective and manageable marking and feedback, using the Research and Practice Summary to inform and strengthen their practice. They considered different approaches to providing efficient feedback that maximises time spent in relation to learning gains for pupils. Your mentee reviewed their own approaches to giving feedback and spoke to a colleague about how they make assessment as efficient as possible.

In this session, you will help your mentee build on their self-study, focusing in more detail on the practical enactment of efficient approaches to assessing and giving feedback. You will also consider the benefits of using verbal feedback instead of written marking and explore the use of codes and abbreviations in written feedback.

Research and Practice Summary

Reducing the opportunity cost of marking

Sara stretched her stiff neck and arms and put down her pen. Finally, she had finished marking her pupils' books. After hours of carefully annotating each piece of work, she was fed up with highlighting common errors and writing the same comments again and again. It was clear to Sara where she needed to focus her teaching in the next lesson to address pupils' learning needs, but she was just too tired to get started on planning this now. The lesson would have to wait.

What could Sara have done differently in this situation? How could she make more efficient use of her time to assess pupils' work, respond to this in her teaching and give pupils feedback?

Efficiency can be thought of as 'the reduction of waste'. The most common resource wasted in teaching is time, leading to an overall increase in teachers'

workloads and negatively impacting learning. Reducing wasted time is a key priority for teachers and school leaders.

It can be helpful to think of efficiency as the relationship between time taken and quality of outcome (i.e. 'value for money'), because it doesn't always follow that reducing time spent on an activity is a good thing per se. Teaching is intellectual labour, and some parts of a teacher's work legitimately take time because they are hard to do well. For example, when planning to introduce a new, foundational concept, rushing the planning of a lesson may mean that pupils do not learn that concept securely, affecting many future lessons.

Schools and multi-academy trusts develop their own policies and practices around assessment, marking and feedback. They are encouraged to be mindful of the impact on teacher workload of assessment practices, especially around written marking on individual pieces of work, which can be onerous. You need to be aware of your school's expectations of marking; you should also seek ways of minimising the potentially negative impacts of marking to excess. Time invested in marking and giving feedback must be used efficiently in order to make the most of the limited resource that you have. Self-assessment and peer-assessment both have pedagogical benefits and can help reduce marking workload for teachers, too.



To help you save time without significantly impacting the quality of outcomes, you could make marking manageable and effective by:

- recording data only when it is useful for improving pupil outcomes
- working with colleagues to identify efficient approaches to marking and alternative approaches to providing feedback (e.g. using whole class feedback or well supported peer- and self-assessment)
- using verbal feedback during lessons in place of written feedback after lessons, where possible
- understanding that written marking is only one form of feedback (other forms include verbal feedback, peer- and self-assessment)
- reducing the opportunity cost of marking (e.g. by using abbreviations and codes in written feedback)

An important strategy for maximising efficiency when marking is to prioritise the highlighting of errors related to misunderstandings, rather than careless mistakes. Mistakes are usually accidental – the pupil could identify and self-correct the mistake if prompted to. Errors can be more serious for learning because they arise from a lack of knowledge or misunderstanding. Although it can be tempting to point out to pupils the full range of mistakes across a task, this has two potentially negative consequences – the increased time it takes you to mark and the chance of overwhelming pupils with comments across their work. Aim to focus feedback on errors relating to the core concepts of the lesson. To reinforce the importance of good literacy across all subjects, you might correct the first three mistakes of general spelling, punctuation and grammar in a piece of work, then focus only on errors related to misunderstandings in the rest of the task. A general prompt to proof-read work carefully might be useful if careless mistakes are a common occurrence, but the focus of your feedback time can then be dedicated to securing and deepening pupils' understanding of the concepts most central to their learning.

Using codes to improve Sara's approach to marking

What could Sara do differently in the situation described above? Rather than spend time repeatedly writing individual comments in pupils' books, Sara could note the common comments across her pupils' work and capture these as a set of codes. In the same way that 'SPaG' is often used as a code to indicate the need to address Spelling, Punctuation or Grammar, other codes can be used to represent common subject- or phase-specific comments. Marking each piece of work then becomes a case of noting the codes on each pupil's work, saving the teacher many minutes or hours. This time can then be used to plan lesson activities that support pupils to understand and act on what the codes in their work mean.

Using codes in your teaching:

- what comments do you often find yourself making on your pupils' work?
- can you group these comments into categories that are helpful for making sense of the type of feedback being given? For example,

presentation (e.g. underlining titles, writing clearly), subject-specific assessment criteria (e.g. English AO2 – effect on reader), conventions of the subject (e.g. describing scientific experiments, drawing graphs, safe use of equipment)

- what codes would usefully capture these comments for your pupils in your context, relevant to your specialism?

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 your 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. Discussion with mentor

Ask your mentee to talk you through the activities they completed during self-study this week. Discuss with your mentee the most efficient approaches to feedback they have used in their own practice. Use this discussion to develop your mentee's ability to analyse the decisions they make about their practice and the factors that influence these decisions.

You could ask your mentee:

- 'what approaches to feedback do you use most frequently?'
- 'what do you consider when selecting approaches to feedback?'
- 'how does research inform your thinking when selecting approaches to feedback?'

You could also contextualise this discussion with reference to your school's assessment policy and practices.



2. Sharing of practice

Focusing specifically on **verbal feedback**, where the teacher speaks with individuals or small groups about their work during lesson time, share with your mentee how you use verbal feedback during your own lessons in place of written feedback after the lesson.

When sharing your practice, you could:

- model to the mentee how you use verbal feedback effectively to give accurate and clear feedback which encourages further effort and provides specific guidance on how to improve

- pick a specific example of verbal feedback that you have given and explain:
 - what you did
 - why you did it
 - why it had positive impact in that situation
 - how your mentee could apply this approach in their own practice



3. Collaborative Planning

Work together with your mentee to plan an opportunity within one of their upcoming lessons where verbal feedback could be used instead of written marking. This should improve learning by combining high-quality feedback with efficient use of time.

As you work on this together, you may wish to:

- explore the specific benefits of verbal feedback, rather than written marking, in this lesson
- consider benefits relating to time taken and quality of pupil learning, in particular
- challenge your mentee to identify likely challenges they will face in making good use of verbal feedback
- support your mentee to plan how best to address these challenges



4. Sharing of practice / analysis of artefacts

Share with your mentee how you reduce the opportunity cost of marking activity – i.e. how you make your marking efficient so that you free up time to support learning in other ways or to make your overall workload more manageable.

To support this activity, you could:

- use examples of your pupils' work and show the mentee the codes or abbreviations you use
- explain how you help pupils to make sense of these codes/abbreviations
- demonstrate how and why you prioritise the highlighting of errors related to misunderstandings, rather than careless mistakes, when marking
- contextualise your discussions with reference to your school's assessment policy and practices

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.