BEL+T ESS Guidance

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

Built Environments Learning and Teaching Group

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Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

https://msd.unimelb.edu.au/belt

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Based on student feedback and a series of conversations with ABP subject coordinators, BEL+T has produced a set of **Tactics for Useful Feedback**. The objective of this process was to identify the characteristics that students attribute to subjects with clear expectations to inform teaching practices. In addition to student commentary, the following guidance includes tactics used by subject coordinators as well as things to consider for their application.

Themes

ABP student voices described "useful" feedback as:

1. Well-Planned

Frequent opportunities for students to engage with feedback – these are timed to relate well to assessment tasks and overall subject design.

2. Constructive and Supportive

Feedback tone and focus aim at supporting student learning, professional development and wellbeing.

3. Credible

Feedback draws on multiple credible perspectives and is relevant to the cohort's diverse expectations for professional futures.

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2

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

1. Well-planned

Frequent opportunities for students to engage with feedback – these are timed to relate well to assessment tasks and overall subject design.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Scheduling regular synchronous feedback sessions for students, with teaching staff and/or between peers	– Time is allocated in each tutorial for weekly feedback on student progress – Prompts provided to suggest how students might apply feedback to forthcoming task(s) – Series of small group feedback sessions with rotating membership – Optional 'soft' deadlines for submissions, or mock exams, to offer ungraded feedback – Rubrics are used to structure feedback sessions to help prompt self-reflection	– Are feedback sessions supported by clear resources and expectations (for both students and tutors)? – How frequently are catch-ups with the teaching team needed to share issues raised through feedback sessions across the cohort? – Verbal communication in peer feedback may be challenging for students with English as a second language; extra resources may be needed – Refer to the MSD Studio Culture Agreement for information about feedback expectations
Using platforms/modes that allow students to access feedback asynchronously	– Canvas announcements summarise cohort-wide feedback, emphasising 'things to consider' – Discussion boards used as platform for small-group and/or cohort–wide peer feedback – Recorded modes (e.g., screen-casting, audio or Zoom recordings with markups) used for faster turnaround time than written feedback (e.g., at urgent points like just prior to final submission)	– Tutor workload and subject budget envelope when setting expectations for feedback mode/quantity, especially for large student cohorts – Notions of what is considered 'feedback' (e.g., verbal versus written) might differ between student cohorts and demand explicit signposting
Selecting feedback modes that encourage students to gauge their own comprehension	– Weekly Canvas quizzes designed to allow multiple attempts, provide immediate feedback and prompt reflection – Cohort-wide activities for peer marking and/or review of weekly quizzes – Past and/or current student work used as references to frame cohort-wide feedback sessions	– Frequency of formative feedback (e.g., weekly or fortnightly) that may most encourage development – Keep in mind that students may perceive quizzes as assignments rather than as a mode of feedback – Check-in regularly with students to confirm how much and what kind of feedback is most useful to them (e.g., graphic versus written feedback)

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3

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

Ensure feedback provision is received by students in a timely and equitable manner	– Tutor-facing semester outline with feedback windows based on their workload – Tutors provided with summary of cohort-wide feedback to inform upcoming small-group or individual feedback sessions – Tutors provided with guidance to ensure equity across subject re: amount and appropriate mode(s) of feedback – Pre-emptive strategy developed in the event of delays to feedback provision	– Timing for feedback so that students can reasonably apply it to subsequent submissions – Student diversity to allow sufficient time to interpret and apply formative feedback to final submissions – Tutor preferences for feedback mode (e.g., annotations versus summary comments) and set equivalence to ensure equity across different approaches

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4

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

Related Student Quotations

Getting weekly feedback as well as being able to see other students' works were the most helpful aspect of this subject.

The opportunity to get shared feedback, go through work, and get curated individual feedback on progress was very helpful throughout the semester.

I thought the assignment feedback structure was very helpful with the mandatory draft submissions and feedback sessions. I think this definitely helped me learn and improve rather than just learning through assessment.

The quizzes were great for reinforcing my learning and encouraging me to keep up to date with my work.

I think the Miro board was really good where the tutor could draw on it and I could go back and look at the feedback whenever I needed.

The time allocation and assignments were spread out very thoughtfully, including fast response to student feedback which helped a lot with pressure on students.

Timing for assignments could also be better, some of the turn arounds were super close and felt like there wasn't enough time to be able to complete the assignment and respond to feedback appropriately.

I found that my tutor would give me feedback to improve my Module but I didn't have enough time to execute it.

I think it would've been good if the quiz answers were released after each quiz or if they were discussed in class so that we could know that we are on the right track throughout the semester.

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5

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

2. Constructive and Supportive

Feedback tone and focus intentionally aimed at supporting student learning, professional development and wellbeing.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Encouraging feedback that is focused on helping students identify how to improve, thereby supporting student agency	– Tutors provided with examples of constructive feedback (e.g., with clear and specific language) – Tutors encouraged to provide feedback that explicitly refers to marking criteria through examples – Briefing of external review panel includes tips for constructive feedback relevant to subject context and moment in semester – Review of sample feedback provided through Canvas used to monitor tone across teaching team and raise any potential concerns	– Refer to the MSD Studio Culture Agreement for information about student concerns and staff/faculty responsibility; note avenues for students to raise concerns – General statements in formative feedback (e.g., 'Well done!') may heighten expectations of final marks and/or discourage further development – Be direct with students if they are at risk of failure, and provide sufficient time and direction for them to achieve a passing mark
Aligning feedback to reasonable expectations to ensure attainability	– Follow-up meetings with individual students (e.g., after a design review) to discuss feedback and help them set/manage expectations – Sample student work shared with cohort to demonstrate attainable expectations	– Focussing feedback on the 'big picture' early in semester, then increasingly finer detail; summative feedback might then be framed against long-term/future career guidance
Encouraging consideration of how students are likely to affectively receive feedback in terms of language and non-verbal cues	– Tutor meeting to establish expectations around supportive feedback; examples provided that demonstrate sincere, constructive tone and avoid ambiguous language, etc. – Tutors encouraged to use 'empathy check' with students to inform their delivery of feedback – Debrief sessions (e.g., peer-to-peer) that offer students dialogic opportunities to reframe feedback	– Balance of supportive/challenging voices across all sources of feedback to promote academic progress and emotional resilience – Consider cultural backgrounds of students and how this might impact feedback reception – Encourage a culture of 'reading the room' to foster emotional intelligence amongst staff and students

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The University of Melbourne

6

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

Related Student Quotations

My tutor provided very clear and detailed comments, feedback and design inspiration references for the assignments which helped immensely in terms of understanding the assignment goals and developing our designs throughout the semester. Encouraging students with positive feedback while also giving justified critiques were very helpful for me at least, to feel more confident about my designs.

[My tutor] was great at guiding each student individually, her feedback was very constructive and clear. She was very positive, supportive and encouraging and patient with our ideas.

Assignment critique, particular towards the end of the subject, was mostly focused on what could've been done to develop the project further. While interesting, there wasn't a lot of criticism on what could've been improved in the work submitted– it would be nice if tutors could provide more insight into improving the current portfolio as well.

My tutor was extremely harsh with his feedback. After many tutorials, I felt discouraged and reluctant to work on the deliverables for the following week knowing that my work will just be faulted and critiqued immensely.

The level of feedback was often overwhelming, even though extremely clear. At times, this clouded the direction of the project because of its unattainability. It may be helpful in the future to provide a clear breakdown of the priority of the feedback.

Feedback should be structured to allow students to be engaged with the subject and actually allow us to take the feedback and improve our work, feedbacks such as "keep working on it" without any context whatsoever is irrelevant and not useful at all.

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7

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

3. Credible

Feedback draws on multiple credible perspectives and is relevant to cohort's diverse professional futures.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider …
Moderating feedback to ensure its relevance to learning and development	— Peer feedback sessions are prefaced by modelling/role-playing activities — List of feedback 'dos and don'ts' (e.g., ways to ensure breadth/relevance of feedback) provided to teaching team	— Flag feedback 'dos and don'ts' to students to support peer feedback sessions — Training tutors about when/how to 'step in' and redirect harsh feedback from panel members or colleagues, and how to guide appropriate feedback practice for guests/students — 'Reading the room' during peer or guest feedback sessions can be more difficult online
Encouraging authentic feedback, rooted in 'real world' and/or industry contexts	— Industry/community partners invited to participate in design of feedback procedures (e.g., by reviewing language in marking rubric) — Events organised around formative feedback from practitioners (e.g., student PechaKucha presentations or mock interviews) — Selection of guests reflects diversity of student cohort and their potential futures	— Industry perspectives from tutors may need to be explicitly highlighted to students to establish credibility — Encourage guests to align formative feedback with subject expectations to avoid mixed messages for students, and articulate this connection where necessary
Facilitating 'triangulated' feedback by inviting feedback from multiple sources (student-led, interdisciplinary guests, other academics, etc.)	— Peer feedback opportunities designed early in assessment task to diversify feedback and broaden student horizons — Past students invited to share their challenges, inspirational insights and assessment-related tips as a 'survival video' posted on the Canvas site — Commentary provided to students on any major discrepancies between sources of feedback and how they might respond to this	— Explaining feedback and marking procedures to students, especially how/when multiple staff are involved (i.e., how feedback informs marking) — The most appropriate digital platform(s) for managing multiple sources of feedback (e.g., a Miro board, Speedgrader, etc.)

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8

ESS Question 3: I received useful feedback on my progress

Related Student Quotations

The crits are key because we can receive feedback from different perspectives and it really helps us to improve our thinking and design approaches in future projects.

Receiving feedback from other senior academics within the faculty on our presentations was great.

The teaching team always assist us, and the feedback from them are really helpful not only for the project, but also for the future career.

Group feedback. The breakout rooms were a great opportunity to receive new feedback and ideas from classmates.

Introducing the cross–pollination session was helpful to see more projects and hear another tutor's feedback.

Many inputs from different backgrounds (tutor, practicing architects, engineers, ESD consultants, etc).

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9