Working Party: Feedback on Student Work

Examples of Good Feedback at the University of Otago

Part III of the working party’s report
Examples compiled November 2000
Examples of Good Feedback at Otago

Seeking to fulfil one of its Terms of Reference, the working party sent an email to staff who had attended the focus groups requesting that they share their successes in giving students feedback. Although the request was made at a busy time of year, the response was positive, with about 20 staff contributing an example. These provided the working party with examples of a wide variety of systems and styles of feedback. We received a number of mark sheets, which appear to be a common method for dealing with feedback in large classes (several have been included here). There were also other successful and original examples that incorporated elements as diverse as on-line conferences and extensive peer assessment.

The examples have been compiled into the catalogue that follows. Each example includes a brief description of how the feedback is given, its benefits and drawbacks, and, perhaps most importantly, how students have responded. The examples have been organised into four broad categories:

- **Pre-assessment feedback**
  - Feedback that provides a student with an assessment of progress before submitting work to be marked. This is often in the form of formative feedback given by the instructor, though a couple of examples include peer feedback.

- **Post-assessment marksheet feedback**
  - Feedback that makes use of a summative marksheet or something similar.

- **Post-assessment (other) feedback**
  - Feedback in which the main focus is a summative assessment of a final submission.

- **Web-based feedback**
  - Feedback provided using CourseInfo or some other on-line means.

It should be noted that these categories are necessarily rather arbitrary and, therefore, that some examples might have been included in a category other than the one in which it appears below.

The working party would like to thank all staff who contributed to this catalogue. The examples have also been made available on the web at [http://www.otago.ac.nz/quality/feedbackwp](http://www.otago.ac.nz/quality/feedbackwp). Any questions can be directed to the convener of the working party, Associate Professor Ralph Adler (radler@commerce.otago.ac.nz or extension 7677).
Pre-assessment Feedback

Paper: BIOL112  Class size: 250

Increasing opportunities for feedback and reducing marker variation

In the first laboratory, we introduce a 1000-word essay, in which students are to discuss recent scientific research about an animal or group of animals, using at least three journal articles. CourseInfo is used to answer frequently asked questions and to establish a discussion forum for students. Students are also encouraged to bring a draft of their essay to the Teaching Fellows for comment, so that they might improve their essay before submitting their final copy. Three staff mark the work of the entire class to reduce ‘marker variation.’ The markers blind-mark several essays and then come together to discuss the marking scheme, which could then be modified if necessary. At the completion of the assignment, general comments about the essays are posted on CourseInfo and announced during the laboratory classes.

Benefits:

(i) CourseInfo proved valuable for giving students information on completion dates, grading criteria, referencing, links to on-line grammar and writing guides etc.

(ii) With only three markers, there is less chance of ‘marker variation.’ This also allows for greater flexibility in creating a marking schedule.

(iii) Student evaluations indicated that they considered the feedback to be valuable.

Drawbacks:

(i) Although Teaching Fellows are happy to discuss essays with students before submission, out of approximately 250 students last semester, only 12 sought feedback before submission.

(ii) We aimed to provide specific comments on each essay but this became very time consuming for a class of this size. It was relatively easy, however, to provide feedback in the form of a checklist so that the students could assess the strengths and weaknesses of their essay.

Student Response:

Being able to post anonymous messages to the CourseInfo forum seemed popular with students. On one occasion, a student requested a sample essay and we were able to upload a similar essay from the previous year. On our HEDC Student Evaluation Questionnaire, we asked “Do you feel the feedback on your essay will help you with future written assignments?” and received a mean score of 2.1 (where 1=yes, greatly and 5=no, not at all). This compares well with the result for our poster presentation, where we gave less specific feedback, which was 2.6). This suggests that students value the more specific, individual feedback more than the whole class feedback.
Formative presentations and peer assessment in preparation for a 20% research essay
Each student is asked to make a very brief presentation (15 minutes, including discussion) on their work in progress for their 20% essay. The presentation is itself worth 10% of the final mark. The presentation is made well in advance of the due date and criteria for quality of presentation are separately specified. Students are given up to about one page of formative comments on their presentation, on issues of structure, content, references they might look up, and so forth as they continue to work on the essay. In addition, every student in the class comments in like constructive vein on their peers' presentations. For each comment, they receive about 1% on an all-or-nothing basis (the actual amount is calculated according to the number of students in the class) up to a total of 10% of their mark for the whole course.

Benefits:
(i) Students get extensive comments from both their teacher and their classmates.
(ii) Fulfils an important learning goal for the course, developing the ability to comment on and critique the work of others. So this method of generating feedback on student projects is also enhancing the learning of the students giving the feedback.
(iii) Less time spent preparing to lecture and lecturing and more time giving feedback and resources to students.

Drawbacks:
Administration is increased. Students write their name on each comment sheet in a detachable place. After noting who wrote the feedback (giving them their 1%, if it is constructive and substantive—eg 'I liked that' is insufficient) the name is removed and the comment passed on to the presenter. Although the administrative work is greater, the system helps reduce workload in other areas, so overall the amount of time the lecturer spends on the course is not increased.

Student response:
When first trying this system, there was no ‘reward’ for commenting on the work of peers and, lamentably, some students turned up only for their own presentations. Since instituting the 1% ‘reward’ for constructive feedback, the standard of comments has been impressively high and so has the level of class participation. It certainly constitutes very useful feedback. In recent feedback from the class representative, this feature of PHIL 311 received a clear ‘thumbs up’ from students. Indeed the system has been so successful that ways of extending it into other papers, both smaller and larger, are being explored.
Formative mini-assignments:
Students write an assignment, generally according to guidelines in their course manual. These are returned with detailed comments, including citations to papers, with the emphasis on positive feedback. No grade is given, but students have the opportunity to reflect and re-submit and therefore receive more feedback on their re-submitted work. Students who have done very well are asked if their mini-assignment can be put on close reserve.

Benefits:
(i) students have the opportunity to learn from mistakes
(ii) feedback becomes a two-way process
(iii) students benefit from their peers who have done well
(iv) rewards those students who put in extra effort

Drawbacks:
Marking about 60 mini-assignments per-week and providing extensive constructive criticism takes time. However, this is largely restricted to the first semester because the second concentrates on more didactic clinical teaching, where feedback is immediately provided in the laboratory.

Student response:
Overall students do seem to benefit from the system. It gives them valuable experience in writing an analytical essay, which benefits them, in the short term, by practicing the skills they will use in their exams and, in the long term, by practicing principles that are carried through to clinical practice.
On-line student conferences

Students participate in a series of on line conferences. The theme of each is established by 3 or 4 initial postings by the lecturer. Thereafter, students describe, critique and defend examples within the conference. Subsequently, students individually write a transcript essay to summarise and reflect upon conference discussions, perhaps linking threads of discussion within a conference and hopefully among conferences.

Benefits:
(i) Students research their examples prior to posting them to avoid looking foolish in front of their peers.
(ii) Promotes student discussion in a formalised and documented manner to obviate issues associated with copying and collusion.
(iii) Promotes critical thinking by asking students to comment on another’s example.
(iv) Provides timely feedback to a student’s contribution to a conference by way of another’s critique or defence.
(v) Allows student interests to determine the flavour of their contribution thereby personalising the exercise and more generally the course.
(vi) Two part structure of the assessment element encourages student reflection of conference discussion prior to writing the transcript essay. This allows feedback to be considered before submitting the transcript essay for marking.

Drawbacks:
(i) Since conference ‘attendance’ is unstructured, some students do not participate until towards the end of a conference, leaving little time for critique and defence. One solution is to structure conference attendance into phases, for example, one week for posting examples, the next for critiques, and the last for defence.
(ii) Participation can be time consuming and require considerable effort.
(iii) Monitoring the quality of the postings is time consuming and at times demanding.

Students may be reluctant to participate as a consequence of being afraid of looking ignorant in front of their peers. To some degree, this fear can be alleviated by: allowing anonymous postings; moderation of postings by the lecturer; and a statement of appropriate behaviour in a conference.

Student response:
Only anecdotal responses have been solicited. Students find this can be very demanding in terms of time and effort and often perceive the marks awarded to be insufficient. Some enjoy the opportunity to explore an aspect of personal interest that is related to the conference theme.
Formative feedback on a combined seminar/written paper

Students submit a written paper 48 hours before their presentation; after making their presentation, students review both presentation and paper with the staff member; they then submit a revised version of the paper for grading.

Benefits:
(i) close contact with students; able to discuss problems or issues before final submission
(ii) allows for extensive formative assessment prior to summative grading (overcoming the problem of this being the final assessment of its type)
(iii) usually results in improved papers

Drawbacks:
The instructor has to familiarise him/herself with student topics, as general and vague feedback negates the benefits.

Student response:
It is difficult to say if students enjoy this system, but they seem to respond to it in the sense that the revised versions are usually an improvement on the original versions.
Reflective journal (worth 30%) with detailed mid-semester feedback

Students use the Journal to record their responses to Shakespeare’s plays, to issues raised in lectures and tutorials, and to any related matters that interest them. At the start of the semester students are given guidelines for writing the Journal and made aware of the assessment criteria. Further discussion then takes place in tutorials and with tutors. Towards the middle of the semester tutors collect the Journals, read them, and provide detailed comment, both on issues raised by students, and on the quality of what has been presented so far. The comments are designed to let students know whether they are on the right track, what they would need to do to improve, and what grade they would receive if they did nothing more. Students are expected to respond to these comments and their responses are taken into account in awarding the final grade.

Benefits:
The Journal is designed to help students to engage more fully with the course, to develop a deeper understanding of Shakespeare’s plays, to provide practice in textual analysis, and to encourage critical reflection. More specifically it
(i) encourages communication between staff and students
(ii) is an important formative component of the students’ learning in the course because comments made in the mid-semester diagnostic reading regularly improve the scope and quality of the writing
(iii) provides feedback on various aspects of the course, including the use of a journal as a method of assessment. Such reflection is encouraged and many students use their final entry to appraise the journal in general and their own in particular.

Drawbacks:
(i) The time commitment is manageable, if students begin promptly, but this is not always easy to ensure with a large class.
(ii) Reflective journals are new to many who major in English and hence rather daunting at first. Students who can turn out an essay or two in a semester by merely following the pattern of earlier courses must now think in new ways and with more freedom and responsibility.

Student Response:
Some students are ready by their final BA semester to respond to this more challenging mode of learning. Others find it difficult, until they complete enough entries to get relevant feedback from tutors. Thus the diagnostic reading, which is very detailed, is the point at which many journals blossom. Comments in the journals typically recognise this, and it is reflected also in the final grading of the journals. The effect on exam performance cannot receive comment at this point, but is carefully monitored.
Post-assessment Marksheet Feedback

Paper: ENGL121    Class size: 300

Giving students an insight into the collective mind of ‘the Marker.’
This is not a feedback mechanism as such, but rather a way of using a feedback sheet not only to give our students feedback but to provide them with a better understanding of how their work is assessed.

To prepare students for writing the 10% literary critical essay in ENGL121, we run a tutorial on essay writing. As well as answering questions that students may have about the essay writing process, presentation and marking, we give them an authentic student essay on a text they have already studied and ask them to mark it in accordance with the marking criteria in their guidebook. They also fill out the ‘Essay Feedback Sheet’ identical to the one they will receive when their own essay is marked. Students usually form groups to discuss and grade the essays and then report their conclusions to the tutorial.

Benefits:
(i) Ensures that students are aware of the criteria used to mark their future assignments
(ii) Also helps the students understand what the criteria mean
(iii) Allows students to see the marking process from the ‘other side’
(iv) Students are familiarised with the feedback sheet they receive after their own assignments are marked

Drawbacks:
Sometimes the tutorial does not achieve its potential because students have not prepared adequately. Consequently, time that could be spent analysing the essay is used for reading the material.

Student Response:
Informal feedback suggests that students find this a valuable exercise for its insights into the collective mind of ‘the Marker.’ To a certain extent, students seem to appreciate the tutorial because it ‘demystifies’ the marking process and reassures them that it is not arbitrary. In the tutorial they usually express surprise when the actual mark received for the essay is revealed, most of them typically restricting their assessments to the safety of the B range. Some interesting discussion usually results.

The Essay Feedback Sheet is shown on the next page.
Department of English
Essay Feedback Sheet

Student’s Name: _____________________ Essay Grade: ______
Paper and Group: _____________________ Essay Mark: ______

STRUCTURE OF ESSAY

Effective introduction stating thesis clearly [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Lacks effective introduction
Well structured argument [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Argument diffuse or repetitive
Accurate and adequate presentation of evidence [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Insufficient or inadequate evidence
Effective conclusion [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Lacks effective conclusion

COVERAGE OF TOPIC

Essay relevant to topic [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Little relevance to topic
Topic covered in depth [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Superficial treatment of topic

WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Paragraphs well constructed [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Lacks well constructed paragraphs
Expression is fluent and clear [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Expression is muddled or opaque
Correct grammar and syntax [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Incorrect grammar and syntax
Punctuation and spelling correct [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Incorrect spelling and punctuation

PRESENTATION

Yes No
Legible
Well set out
Reasonable length
Correct citation of references
Adequate acknowledgement of sources
Includes bibliography
Using a marksheet to aid marking consistency across a large number of markers

Benefits:
The marksheet helps standardise marking across many (approximately 28) demonstrators. The main benefits are:

(i) Students perceive it as means of standardising marks
(ii) Students can see exactly where they may need to improve for next time

Drawbacks:
(i) It's optional—demonstrators don't have to use it. Some students have complained that they're missing out (so we plan to make it compulsory in future).
(ii) Some demonstrators see it as an extra hassle to complete, as it is in addition to the detailed comments they write on the reports. This means that often the feedback form is completed as an after-thought. As a result, the final grade might not reflect what the student can see on the feedback form (eg - might get 61% yet all rows ticked "very good" on the form).

Next year we plan to check some of the marking and feedback before reports are returned to the students. Hopefully this will help improve any problems.

Student response:
The form has helped students to understand how to improve their work, as it supports the comments made throughout their assignments by visually indicating how well they performed in each area.

The form is shown on the next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Report topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lab no:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**TITLE**
Logical, Informative, & OK Length

**ABSTRACT**
Aim & Hypothesis(es)
Method
Results
Hypothesis(es) supported?, Conclusion
Clarity & Length

**INTRODUCTION**
Review Research Area/Set the Context
Aims/Hypothesis(es)
Structure/Organisation
Clarity & Depth of reading

**METHOD**
Participants
Apparatus/Materials
Procedure/Design (including description of manipulated variables)
Clarity/Adequate information to replicate?

**RESULTS**
Description of Measured Variables
Figures/Tables
Description of the Main Findings/Trends
Clarity

**DISCUSSION**
Restate the Main findings
Were the hypotheses supported?
Explanations/Interpretations of Results, Relate Results to Introduction
Limitations/Improvements/Future
Implications outside the classroom
Conclusion
Clarity

**REFERENCES**
Citations in text
References in reference section

**OVERALL**
Writing Style (Spelling, Grammar, & Tense)
Clarity/Organisation
Presentation and Length of report

**COMMENTS:**

(Students: Use the feedback form and comments to help improve your next lab report)
Zoology 311 Stream Project Seminar Assessment Sheet

Students are provided with the assessment sheets several weeks before preparing their presentations, ensuring that they are aware of what is required. As they prepare, they are assisted by their demonstrator (the number of hours a demonstrator helps is fixed to ensure consistency). The presentations are assessed by at least five staff members, with the final grade being the average across all marked sheets. If warranted, assessors who provide a score markedly different from other scores can be identified, the reasons for their grading discussed at the end of the lab session, and the mark adjusted. Students receive copies of the marked assessment sheets following the lab session (all names deleted), thus providing them with detailed feedback on perceptions of their talks from those assessing the talks.

Benefits:
Aims to provide students with:
(i) a detailed breakdown on the aspects of their presentations that will be assessed
(ii) detailed feedback on the assessment of their presentations
(iii) consistency of assessment across those marking the presentations

The sheets also permit rapid and transparent marking of the presentations.

Drawbacks:
Although markers usually agree about the presentations, occasionally inconsistencies arise that are apparent in the sheets handed back to students.

Student response:
Providing a guide to students before they make their presentations improves their work immeasurably, not least because it eliminates some of the 'mystery' surrounding marking.

The sheet is shown on the next page.
### Zoology 311 Stream Project Seminar Assessment Sheet 2000

**Project Title**

**Ranking:**  
1 = Poor  
5 = Excellent  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ques.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: Is there sufficient background provided for someone not familiar with the field to understand the talk?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Were the aims of the study and hypotheses to be tested explicitly stated?</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Are the methods described in adequate detail for an oral presentation.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Were the results presented clearly and in a logical sequence?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Were the key findings of the study clearly stated and supported by data?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Did the discussion clearly and logically relate back to the results and introduction?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Were the conclusions drawn from the results justified? Are there leaps of faith?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Did the study successfully fulfill the aims and test the hypotheses stated in the introduction? If the study did not, does the student explain the problems encountered?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Comment on how closely the project execution compared with that in the project proposal?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Overall, how well was the talk presented (quality of slides, clear speaking, etc.)?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Using Microsoft Word Mail-Merge to give feedback.

Using Word’s Mail-Merge feature, two files are created. One—the data file—contains students’ names, ID numbers, comments and marks. The other, called a “form letter,” contains field codes selected from the data file and any comments which are to be included for every student. When the mail-merge is run, it generates a third document which has had the field codes replaced by data from the data file. The number of form letters equals the number of students in the data file. (NB this system is also used in a second year paper of about 80 students, though not in as much detail).

Benefits:
(i) You have an electronic record of each student’s feedback, which enables you to see if the student is continuing to make the same mistakes or is improving.
(ii) You can cut and paste between student data common to a number of students.
(iii) You are able to review your comments between students to ensure similar marking strategies.
(iv) If you are team teaching it becomes easy to compare between lecturers.
(v) If copies are kept, it is possible to compare different years’ results.

Drawbacks:
(i) It is time consuming. Each report at third-year level (there are six in total) takes about 30-40 minutes. At second-year level it takes about 20 minutes.
(ii) Must mark at your computer.

Student response:
Positive feedback has been received from students about the level of detail in the comments.

On the next page, the process for creating a mail merge document is described in more detail.
How to create mail merge feedback

Using the Mail merge helper, create a main document, or “form letter,” using the data file for selecting merge fields, which appear as field headings in the data file.

The data file is created with field headings as shown. When the students' script is being read I mark in the margin letter A, B, C etc. These correspond to comments typed in the data file (A=, B= etc.). This saves defacing the students' work and avoids students having to read my hand writing.

When the mail merge is run a “form letter” is generated. The merge fields are replaced by data from the data file. As shown below. Each student has a single page.
Marksheets as a guide for both students and markers

Benefits:
These sheets are distributed to the students before they do their write ups and so act as a guide for them, so that they are less likely to leave out some component of their research write up that the lecturer considers important or essential. They also contain hints about common errors (written in italics on the sheets), which helps the students avoid these errors and also provides the markers with something they can place a checkmark by, rather than having to write a comment. Such checkmarks serve to positively reinforce appropriate responses, which contrasts with the tendency to just mark what is wrong.

Markers find it useful, since the sheets serve as a guide for the marker, whether staff member or graduate student, which helps keep all markers to the same standard and ensures that the marker doesn't overlook any important/essential components of the report (or their absence).

Drawbacks:
The summing of the parts of the marking schedule sometimes leads to a grade that doesn't accord with the 'gut feeling' of the marker. The 'gestalt' mark at the end is designed as a partial compensation for this lack of flexibility. In my opinion such flexibility should be limited but this opinion will not be universally supported as it does limit the marker's freedom.

Student response:
Some students have suggested that they find the marksheets useful, especially as a guide when writing up their reports.

A sample of the marksheet is shown on the next page.
RESULTS:

Reliability calculation: \[ \frac{\%}{22} \times \frac{1}{22} = \]  
What formula was used?
Is there justification for using this particular formula?

Is the formula presented specific to this study, defining what was measured and what constituted an agreement or does it merely parrot the general formula? Is there a reason presented for using this formula, rather than others? Remember that to use Kappa you need both item by item reliability and a dichotomous decision variable.

Costs vs. benefits/effectiveness calculation: \[ \frac{\%}{22} \times \frac{1}{22} = \]  
What formula was used?
Was a cost per unit change calculated?
Was this cost scaled up for a particular relevant time period?
Have the calculations actually been done or are they just talking a good fight?

Is the formula presented specific to this study, defining what was a benefit and what values went into the cost calculations or does it merely parrot the general formula?
Remember that the costs you are interested in are the costs of setting up and maintaining the intervention, not the costs of doing the research.

Data analysis, calculation and presentation: \[ \frac{\%}{22} \times \frac{3}{22} = \]  
Are data analysis (____), calculation (____), and presentation (____) appropriate? (Choice of statistical technique-statement of how that technique was applied (e.g., stats package). Are figures/graphs provided?)

Is it clear what the data consists of? Are all the items above dealt with appropriately?
If line graphs are drawn, do the data lines stop before crossing intervention lines. [They should]

DISCUSSION:

\[ \frac{\%}{22} \times \frac{3}{22} = \]  
Is discussion tied in with Introduction? With Results?

Tying the discussion in with the introduction means that this study's outcome is compared to and explained by the studies cited in the introduction. Was this done?

OVERALL GESTALT:

\[ \frac{\%}{22} \times \frac{3}{22} = \]  
How does this whole thing hang together?

SubTotal

Bonus/Penalty

Total:
Post-assessment (Other) Feedback

Paper: FINC202 Class size: 100

Targeting the written expression of students for essay writing:
A one-hour lecture identifies the important English requirements for the paper, including:

• the importance of English as a life skill
• a discussion of the essay marking schedule
• basic grammar, referencing etc.

After the first essay is submitted, it is returned edited and graded. Subsequently, each student has a 15-minute workshop with the marker to discuss the essay and target areas for improvement of expression. The workshop is constructive and informal, but attendance is compulsory for the grade to be registered. Later in the year, students complete the second essay for the course, which has little editing but includes comments and a grade.

Benefits:
(i) the approach is holistic, in the sense that students collaborate in their own learning
(ii) it is user-friendly—students gain both knowledge of their discipline and improve their ability to communicate it
(iii) the two-essay process means improvement in writing quality is visible to both staff and students
(iv) students are given the opportunity to address long-standing problems in their written expression in a comfortable environment; many negative attitudes towards writing are broken down
(v) the system proactively addresses the growing problem of poor English presentation

Drawbacks:
A qualification: the Department employs a full-time Teaching Fellow to conduct the workshops with students. This staff member is solely devoted to the written expression and presentation of students in the Department.

Student response:
Student feedback is positive, even enthusiastic. As suggested above, many students have overcome a negative attitude to writing. They also quickly learn that they can make major improvements by learning appropriate formatting, correcting common grammatical mistakes and developing their proof reading and editing skills.
**Paper: FINC301**

**Class size: 20-40**

*Individual sessions with students about their essay grades.*

**Benefits:**
- (i) seems more efficient than trying to write extensive (and clear) written comments on every paper; written comments can be briefer and the gaps filled in face-to-face
- (ii) personalises the student-staff interface a little more
- (iii) class is mainly intending 400-level students, so this provides an opportunity to further assess their suitability and motivation for postgraduate study

**Drawbacks:**

There are no essays after this one, so it is difficult to assess whether comments are taken on board. However, as noted above, this is primarily a class for returning students and I emphasise the relevance of my comments for their following year's work. If the class was any larger than 20-40 students it would be difficult to find the time.

**Student response:**

While this is difficult to determine, most students are quick to make appointments in the times available. This suggests they recognise some value in the system.
Feedback using marksheets, general and individual comments and an open-door

Students complete a field mapping exercise. Once marked, they receive extensive feedback in a variety of forms. They receive two marksheets, one focusing on the overall presentation, soundness and accuracy of the work and the other on the map they create. They also comment on their project and each student receives two-to-three pages of general comments on the strengths and weaknesses common to many projects, covering such issues as organisation and format, communication of ideas, standard of maps, and points of geological confusion. Finally, in the general comments, the following invitation is issued to students:

Marked projects can be collected **personally** (don't ask a friend to pick it up for you) from me on [date]. I will give you a detailed list of written comments about your project. You may wish to come back to discuss issues of the project after you have read the comments. If you **do** wish to discuss your work, you must be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What are the strengths of your work?
- What are the weaknesses of your work?
- How would you improve such a project next time?
- How do you grade your own work in terms of standard letter grades? (A, B, C, etc)

Benefits:

(i) Ensures that all students receive extensive feedback, with individualised marksheets and comments on their projects in addition to the general comments.

(ii) The option for discussion means that students who make the extra effort get more feedback. They also come prepared to discuss their projects because this is clearly explained in the general feedback. Those who do come to discuss their work are forced to be more self-critical: they spend more time assessing their performance on this project and, therefore, more time considering how they might improve their next one.

(iii) Writing general comments for all saves some of the time that would be needed to write similar comments on many projects.

(iv) When students get detailed individual feedback they feel its more personal. This is perhaps especially true of the handwritten comments on the marksheets and the projects themselves.

Drawbacks:

(i) Students may not read the comments.

(ii) Writing general comments does require a systematic approach to marking. Although it takes some effort to compile these comments, overall it saves time.
(iii) Once the class-size exceeds about 50 students, the time-commitment becomes very demanding.

**Student response:**
Students seem to regard the feedback as useful. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of this system is the one-to-one discussions following the assessment. Although students feel put on the spot when asked to consider the merits of their own work, they do find the exercise ultimately rewarding. Some students have suggested that they do go back and re-read the detailed comments when they come to do their next exercise.

The two-page general marksheet given to each student is shown on the next two pages.
Overall written treatment of major topics
[ ] abstract - not essential, but highly desirable
[ ] introduction - aims, locality, methods etc
[ ] stratigraphy - appropriate coverage of Torlesse basement, Tertiary, perhaps Quaternary
[ ] structure
[ ] other issues? (e.g. paleontology, sedimentology, slumping and landforms)
[ ] geological history, conclusions

Notebook
[ ] does it include enough field observations, with enough detail on each locality to be useful?

Written material
[ ] science - are observations documented satisfactorily? that is, rocks described properly?
[ ] science - observations - are grid references to key localities cited correctly?
[ ] science - are observations original? - representative?
[ ] science - did you give enough observations? - are observations discussed ok?
[ ] science - are observations and interpretations properly separated?
[ ] science - are conclusions supported by observations?
[ ] science - overall, is report in a logical easily-followed sequence, or is it labyrinthine?
[ ] organisation - are headings, sections, tables etc used where appropriate?
[ ] format - is it legible and well presented?
[ ] format - is length appropriate?
[ ] format - A4 format, single sided, 1.5x or 2x spaced (if typed) with appropriate margins?
[ ] style - are sentences properly constructed? - is grammar up to standard?
[ ] style - is spelling up to standard?
[ ] style - is punctuation up to standard?
[ ] style - is it succinct, or is it waffly?
[ ] sources - did you use published literature in an appropriate way in the text?
[ ] sources - are any references that you used listed alphabetically and in full at end of report?
[ ] sources - did you give credit to others (e.g. class members) whose information you used?

Section, column and illustrations other than map and cross section
[ ] is the measured section accurate and informative? - does it show true thicknesses, all units etc?
[ ] is the composite stratigraphic column accurate and informative?
[ ] are legends and other lettering on these and other illustrations clear and informative?
[ ] are your own original illustrations (sketches, photos) used?
[ ] are lines, labels, legends on these illustrations clear?
[ ] are symbols, shading and colour on these illustrations suitable?
[ ] is only relevant material included in these illustrations, or is too much irrelevant?
[ ] are key observations included in these illustrations, or were they omitted?

2ND YEAR FIELD MAPPING PROJECT, HAKATARAMEA VALLEY, 2000

ASSESSMENT OF MAP AND CROSS SECTION(S)

Name of student __________________________
Grade for map and cross section(s): _____
See page 1 for details of grading. Reminder -
   A or √√ [excellent],
   B or √ [good to very good, a clear pass],
   C or ? [on balance, a pass, but with some scope for improvement] or
   D or X [= fail; does not meet acceptable minimum standard].

MAP
Geology
[ ] are main outcrops (and enough outcrops) shown on map? (did you show strikes and dips? - or crosses for outcrops without measured attitudes? - these are essential to justify map patterns)
[ ] do contacts and faults follow geologically sensible patterns across topography?
[ ] do contacts follow strike and dip information?
[ ] are outcrop patterns and widths sensible?
[ ] did you interpret problem regions ("blanks") within the map area in a sensible fashion?
[ ] is there clear evidence (e.g. outcrop pattern, strikes/dips, cross sections) for faulting?

Presentation
[ ] are contacts, symbols and lines clear and legible and of appropriate width for contacts, faults etc? (no ruled lines; thin lines for contacts, thick for faults; solid, dashed or dotted lines depending on certainty etc).
[ ] are colours on map appropriate and applied evenly?
[ ] legends - show lithologic units used, in order from oldest at base to youngest at top?
[ ] legends - all symbols listed?
[ ] legends - show line types used?

CROSS SECTION(S)
[ ] is the position appropriate?
[ ] is the position clearly labelled?
[ ] is cross section drawn to true scale?
[ ] is the scale shown?
[ ] are unit thicknesses sensible?
[ ] are faults shown?

[ ] overall, is interpretive geology (= total of map and cross sections) reasonable?
Regular systematic feedback in a course without lectures
In place of lectures all students receive a booklet containing most of the theoretical material to be covered in the course. The twice-a-week meetings are used for a range of team and individual activities including a weekly multiple choice quiz which students take individually and then in teams of about five. The individual quizzes are marked by computer and results are posted on the course noticeboard the same day. After the team quizzes have been completed the instructor reviews each question with the class, giving the correct answer and explaining why other answers are considered wrong. Teams may make formal appeals if they can make a strong argument why their chosen wrong answer should be considered correct. Appeals are assessed by the instructor after class and the outcomes announced and explained at the next class. Successful appeals gain extra marks for the team.

Benefits:
(i) The systematic approach ensures regular feedback and discussion among the class and with the lecturer.
(ii) Regular testing and discussion keeps the lecturer up-to-date with progress of students.
(iii) Students learn from each other and the lecturer.
(iv) Feedback occurs immediately (ie in the same class) after the Team Quiz.
(v) Students are motivated to make Team Appeals by possible improvement of grades; this also ensures that they consider the teacher's feedback carefully.

Drawbacks:
(i) The initial time commitment is large; setting suitable quizzes is difficult at first but skills improve with practice.
(ii) I created my own software for the computer marking because ITS found it difficult to get the results back within the short time-frame. I rely on ITS to scan the computer sheets and they email a plain text file within an hour. The first time I operated this system I provided the students with printed results for the individual quizzes IN THE CLASS within 20 minutes of them taking the test (with the help of an assistant) but since the answers were being given anyway this seemed to be redundant. My software makes simple lists for noticeboards and includes histograms of chosen answers for each question, as well as updating my marks database.
(iii) Each year there is a small drop-off in enrolments after the first week when the students see what is expected—related to the “no lectures” policy as much as the relentless sequence of quizzes perhaps.
Student response:

Students have a range of reactions to the method of teaching. The absence of regular lectures is seen as good and bad. Some like the freedom of choosing when to cover material, others hate it. Many have said that they appreciate being given the responsibility for managing their own learning. The quiz system is generally liked for the regular reinforcing of theory and the structured weekly framework that it provides. Some say that a weekly quiz is too frequent and fewer quizzes worth more marks would be better.

In the end of course questionnaire in 2000, students answered two questions on the quizzes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many tests/exams were given?</th>
<th>too many</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>too few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of class</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well were the test/exam answers explained to the class after the test?</th>
<th>very well</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>inadequately</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of class</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Web-based Feedback

Paper: BIOL112
Class size: 250

Test Results through CourseInfo
Using CourseInfo and Filemaker Pro, students are able to search a mirror of our database to check their internal assessment marks as they become available.

Benefits:
(i) Students get instant access to their results as soon as they are posted.
(ii) They are also able to access model answers from terms tests and judge how they responded to the multi-choice questions in comparison to the model answers.
(iii) Can be used—with minor modification—for other papers.

Drawbacks:
Getting this system up and running was an involved process. However, as noted above, once in place it can be used for other papers with minor modification.

Student response:
Although students have not provided any specific feedback about the system, they do let the teaching staff know the moment the server goes down, which indicates regular use.
Paper: various 4th-yr LAWS    Class size: up to 200 students

Feedback FROM students
Students are encouraged to post comments on computerised bulletin boards and chat rooms about the assignments and final exams. Check out an example—the Negotiation bulletin board—at http://www.otago.ac.nz/negot/ and enter the chat room.

Benefits:
(i) Anyone can post a message and anyone can answer—not necessarily the lecturer.
(ii) Students get an opportunity to vent about their assessment. They may be feeling frustrated or that they have been treated unfairly. Computerised feedback can be better than individual feedback (eg writing the lecturer a note) because classmates get to see it, and it may feel more anonymous (there is no distinctive handwriting to indicate identity). If classmates agree, one post can trigger a cascade of others.
(iii) Lecturers receive feedback about the final exams (at least if the students are unhappy), and it is not common to get post-exam feedback in any other ways. It is good to know if there is a problem, and feedback is useful for planning the following year’s final exam.
(iv) Often before exams, I get 27 students coming individually to my office and asking the same question, which I answer 27 different times (sometimes in 27 different ways). It is much more efficient to post a thorough answer on the chat forum that every student can read.
(v) The more students visit the chat room, the more they use other facilities on the web site, such as copies of hand-outs, lecture OHPs etc.
(vi) Comments can be posted/read after students have left Dunedin for the summer.

Drawbacks:
(i) It takes time for someone to read and respond to the student comments (and what is the point of having a chat forum if the lecturer doesn’t participate?)
(ii) Lack of student response (see below). It is disappointing to spend time creating a forum, and receive no responses.
(iii) Comments are public and may be anonymous and very critical.

Student response:
Students often only respond when they wish to vent. There has been no response at all to my inquiry about the final exam on the chat forum for Media Law but there has been heaps for Legal Ethics because many students did not like some aspects of the exam. (Part of this may stem from the fact that there are over two hundred students in Legal Ethics, and it is a compulsory class: more criticism can be expected than for a smaller optional class!) Anonymous letters or notes from students re the Ethics final exam have also been received.
Using your home page to teach skills and answer FAQs

In ACCT 111 (introduction to accounting), compulsory special computer labs introduce students to course resources such as email, the ACCT 111 home page, other internet sites (e.g., company annual reports) and Excel. To learn Excel, students are shown how to use screencams—short video clips giving step-by-step instructions for various tasks. Screencams are accessible via the ACCT 111 home page.

In semester 2, students take ACCT 112 (introduction to management accounting systems), which also focuses on the home page as an important resource (providing course information, past tests and exams, additional problems and solutions etc.)

Students are also introduced to Mind Your Own Business (MYOB) a computerised accounting package that is commonly used in practice. They are then given one month’s business transactions for a golf equipment wholesaler who wishes to computerise his accounts. The assignment requires students to gain an understanding of the MYOB system, setup initial information (e.g., customers), enter various transactions, customise the reports to comply with accounting regulations, and finally they must evaluate the MYOB system for this small business. This assignment is particularly challenging for students because they have to understand a new computer package, present properly classified accounts, and evaluate the system. To assist students we run computer labs each week during the assignment, provide screencams for MYOB and a “frequently asked questions” (FAQ) page.

Benefits:
The main benefit of the MYOB screencams is that students have 24 hour access to computer tutorials for each type of transaction they are required to do. The screencam player can be downloaded by students who wish to view them at home.

The main benefit of the FAQ page is not having to answer the same question 225 times. In addition, students can have their questions answered quickly, whenever they want, and they can use the bookmarks to go straight to the answer for their particular problem. The FAQ page also anticipates common student queries by including those from previous years.

Drawbacks:
The main drawback with screencams is that students still prefer to have tutors available, and they find the screencams tedious once they develop an understanding of the MYOB system.
The main drawbacks of the FAQ page include the time involved in updating the page, trying to date the changes so that students do not have to re-read the entire file, and the need to improve the design of the page.

**Student response:**
Students often comment that they only use them at the beginning of the MYOB project when they have little knowledge of the MYOB program. Student feedback from a recent HEDC customised survey showed the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you use the MYOB screencams?</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you used the MYOB screencams did you find them…</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>valuable</th>
<th>useless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you used the frequently asked questions page did you find it…</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>valuable</th>
<th>useless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is an extract from the Frequently Asked Questions Page.

**Last date updated:** 17 August 2000
Assignment is due at 5pm on Friday 18 August (no extensions and penalty for late assignments…)

**Bookmarks:** Access to MYOB8 | Screencam movies | Initial Set-up | Accounting notes | Hints on Recording Transactions, etc. | Printing instructions | Recent student questions

**Hints on Recording Transactions, etc.**
- How do you check if you have entered an incorrect date for a transaction? Display all journals up to the current date. MYOB defaults to the current date and students often forget to change the date to the correct date.
- To check whether your ledger balances are correct: Print out the journals and check what transactions you have entered to date. Manually calculate what the correct balance should be. Cross check between your computer records and your manual calculation.
- How to delete Customer/Vendor card? Go to Command Centre window, Card File icon, Cards, highlight customer card you wish to delete. Then, go to top menu Edit, delete card, OK. Note: If a card has been linked to a transaction, you cannot delete it until all the linked transactions have been removed, and it has no sales history for either the current or previous year.
• How to Edit/Delete from Chart of accounts? Click on a/c in chart. From top menu Edit, Delete Account.