

# A3.1 Being inclusive in assessing work and giving feedback

## Establish a course team approach to feedback practice

### How?

Appendix 7 of the [University Assessment Policy](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/AssessmentPolicy.pdf) provides guidance and reflective questions for course teams. It also suggests a framework for providing feedback based on two or three positive comments and two or three developmental comments.

More is not necessarily better in terms of feedback for student learning. The University’s guide [‘Making feedback on assignments effective’](https://rteworcester.wp.worc.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/effective-assessment-feedback-guide-august-2018.pdf) provides further guidance.

### Why?

Students are far more likely to engage with feedback and perceive it as fair if there is some consistency across markers. Volume, style and tone of feedback are all important aspects of inclusion and good practice. Getting feedback right and checking this via the moderation process will help in developing best practice among the team.

## Mark written work against the assessment criteria

### How?

All student work should be marked against the published assessment and grade criteria and in accordance with the relevant University policies and procedures. For written assessments, the assessment criteria should include a requirement to demonstrate proficiency in communication skills, including in English language (spelling, punctuation and grammar). In marking work where there are inaccuracies in use of English, consideration should be given to:

* Clarity of meaning in terms of communicating key ideas and lines of argument
* Context in which the assignments was completed, e.g., whether it was under timed examination conditions
* The importance of technical proficiency for the purpose of the assignment
* General considerations in terms of improving student communication and technical proficiency skills

Minor inaccuracies that do not impede understanding of how the content of the assignment relates to the assessment criteria are unlikely to significantly impact on the grade awarded. However, marks cannot be awarded where the meaning is not clear.

Feedback to students on the quality of their technical proficiency should be in line with good practice and should signpost the student to additional support where necessary.

The University’s [Policy and Procedures on Inclusive Assessment, Reasonable Adjustments and Alternative Assessment](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/InclusiveAssessmentPolicy.pdf) should be followed.

### Why?

Assessment should focus on criteria that reflect the learning outcomes for the assessment and the rubrics published in the assignment brief. This ensures academic standards are maintained and that all students are assessed fairly.

Some students - such as those with SpLDs, students for whom English is not their first language, or those with pre-linguistic hearing impairments - may experience challenges in English language proficiency. The importance of proficiency and how it impacts on grades awarded should be discussed with students and guidance provided as to what and how they can improve skills, such as using the [Language Centre](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/language-centre/language-support-services.aspx).

Errors can persist for those with disabilities despite extensive proof-reading or use of spellchecks. Where accuracy and presentation are stipulated as assessment criteria, students with SpLDs may need help in developing strategies to meet required standards. Appropriate feedback should be provided if this requires improvement.



## Provide clarity for marking group work and apply inclusive marking principles

### How?

Provide clear information in the assignment brief on how marks will be allocated for group and individual contributions. See [‘Using group work for assessment – an academic’s perspective’](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/i-love-group-worksaid-no-student-ever) for tips on how to get the best out of group work. The University of Warwick discusses [how to design group work tasks and determine the assessment criteria](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academic-development/assessmentdesign/methods/groupwork/) while Advance HE’s [guide to assessing group work](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/assessing-group-work) provides a summary of some suitable assessment methods.

### Why?

There are many ways to organise and assess group work at different levels. Students have different outlooks regarding group work, so it is important marking is perceived as fair. Many dyslexic students may have strengths in collaboration and lateral thinking so having a good understanding of where marks are allocated will help them to see where their strengths may be rewarded. This will also help those for whom English is not their first language, and students with less experience in academic writing.



## Provide clarity for marking assessed presentations

### How?

Specify the skills that are being assessed and consider whether it is necessary for each student to present to the whole group or whether alternative means can be considered, such as presenting to a smaller subset of the group, to the tutor on a one-to-one basis or submitting a video of the presentation.

### Why?

Students with a disability may have difficulty with presentations and it is useful to consider whether they would still achieve the same learning outcomes with alternative arrangements. These considerations may apply to female students who wear a veil for religious reasons. Note that alternative arrangements may need to be considered in light of standardisation and moderation ([University Assessment Policy](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/AssessmentPolicy.pdf)).



## Be positive and constructive

### How?

State what has been done well at the start of the feedback before discussing weaker areas of the work. Explain what is required for the students to achieve higher grades and give examples if appropriate. Be aware of the [principles of good practice for feedback](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/full-guide/principles-of-good-assessment-and-feedback). A compilation of papers in the Advance HE publication [‘Assessment and feedback in a post-pandemic era’](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/assessment-and-feedback-post-pandemic-era-time-learning-and-inclusion) has a section exploring inclusivity.

### Why?

Many students will feel anxious about receiving feedback and will focus on negative comments. Starting with positive comments will reassure the student and make it easier for them to take a balanced view. Students need tangible advice that they can practically apply to future work.

## Be systematic with feedback on language skills

### How?

When marking technical accuracy in English language skills, consider using a coding system for errors with language skills, e.g., SP for spelling, G for grammar, P for punctuation, T for tense. Restrict this to the first page or so of the assignment and signpost to further guidance and support such as from the [Disability and Dyslexia Service](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/), [Study Skills](https://studyskills.wp.worc.ac.uk/) or the [Language Centre](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/language-centre/language-support-services.aspx).

### Why?

This will make it easier for students to get the additional support they need to improve in these areas. With the right support and advice, students can develop strategies to help them overcome the difficulties associated with academic writing.

A person wearing headphones and sitting at a table with a computer


## State how the grade has been determined based on the published assessment criteria and rubrics

### How?

If some of the assessment criteria are more highly weighted, be clear about this. Make clear that comments on spelling, punctuation and grammar are to support skills development and do not automatically result in penalties in marks. However, if they have had an impact on the assessment grade, make this clear.

### Why?

Students with disabilities which affect their accuracy in written expression may assume that their difficulties in this area have lost them marks if this is not explicitly stated or explained.

## Give feedback in different formats

### How?

Consider giving audio or video feedback as well as written feedback. If giving verbal or face-to-face feedback, provide clear written comments too.

### Why?

Some students may find it easier to access meaning from audio rather than written text. For example, it may be difficult for dyslexic students or those with high levels of anxiety to hold verbal information in their memory and this will limit their ability to make constructive use of it in future work.



## Develop student skills for effectively engaging with feedback

### How?

Feedback is one of the most important influences on learning. However, to learn from feedback students must engage with it and be motivated to translate it into action. This is part of what is now commonly referred to as ‘assessment literacy’ to promote student self-regulation and independence in making judgements about what ‘good’ looks like.

Activities to encourage engagement with feedback can include formative assessment, peer assessment, reviewing anonymised examples of student work from previous years, grading exercises, feedback guides and discussions. For a comprehensive set of resources, see the [Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/developing-engagement-feedback-toolkit-deft) from Advance HE.

### Why?

Developing student assessment literacy and confidence is fundamental to effective learning. It will also help students develop the graduate attributes that relate to lifelong learning and developing critical understanding.

# Useful links and resources

[Assessing group work](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/assessing-group-work), Advance HE, 2010

[Assessment and feedback in a post-pandemic era: A time for learning and inclusion](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/assessment-and-feedback-post-pandemic-era-time-learning-and-inclusion), Advance HE, 2021

[Assessment collaborative enhancement projects](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/assessment), QAA

[Assessment: useful resources](https://www.membershipresources.qaa.ac.uk/teaching-learning-and-assessment/assessment), QAA, 2022

[Developing engagement with feedback](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/developing-engagement-feedback-toolkit-deft), Advance HE, 2016

[Inclusive assessment](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/transforming-assessment-and-feedback/inclusive-assessment), Jisc, 2016

[Inclusive assessment](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/staff/human-resources/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/guides-to-support-inclusive-teaching-and-learning/inclusive-assessment/), Oxford Brookes University

[Making feedback inclusive](https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/inclusive-feedback), University of Oxford

[Making feedback on assignments effective: style guide for tutors](https://rteworcester.wp.worc.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/effective-assessment-feedback-guide-august-2018.pdf), University of Worcester, 2018

[Policy and Procedures for Inclusive Assessment and Reasonable Adjustments,](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/InclusiveAssessmentPolicy.pdf) University of Worcester, 2021

[Principles of good assessment and feedback](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/full-guide/principles-of-good-assessment-and-feedback), Jisc, 2022

[Transforming assessment in higher education](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/teaching-and-learning/transforming-assessment), Advance HE

[University of Worcester Study Skills](https://studyskills.wp.worc.ac.uk/)

[Using group work for assessment – an academic’s perspective](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/i-love-group-worksaid-no-student-ever), Advance HE, 2022

[Using group work to assess learning](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academic-development/assessmentdesign/methods/groupwork/), University of Warwick

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