



Principle 9: Making feedback an ongoing process which involves students

What the principle means

As Sadler (1989; 2013) would advise, students don't necessarily learn just by us telling them things, no matter how carefully and kindly we craft the feedback message! We need to guide and enable students to be agents in their own learning rather than simply recipients of comments from assessors post hoc. For this, students need ample opportunity within the curriculum for active participation in interactive discussions about the quality of work. This helps them, for example, to clarify their sense of assessment expectations, grasp the meanings of criteria, and refine their sense of what 'good' work looks like. But dialogic feedback doesn't mean that assessors have to engage in lengthy one-to-one conversations; instead, students can review each other's work, compare their own work-in-progress outputs to exemplars of various kinds and discuss work collectively in class as part of the overall learning experience (Winstone and Carless, 2019).



Questions to consider with your course team and students

- ✓ Can students have a go at relevant activities in class, compare their work with others and share discussions about aspects that have gone well or elements to improve?
- ✓ Are you providing and discussing samples of materials of different quality so they can compare their own endeavours to work of the standard you would want them to produce and so they gain insight into your expert views of quality?
- ✓ Do you use approaches which encourage students to generate and act upon feedback inputs of different forms (for instance, nested tasks which scaffold learning incrementally, carefully-planned peer review exercises, or staged sequences which emphasise self-assessment)?
- ✓ Are fellow students involved in classroom-based activities so that everyone (not just the 'worried well') benefit from these kinds of dialogic feedback exchanges?

Setting goals for assessment and feedback enhancement

Having reviewed and discussed Principle 9, as a team can you identify areas that you know to be priorities for enhancing your programme assessment and feedback strategy in the coming three years? All areas are important, but selecting too many can make genuine actionable proposals unachievable which is demoralising. Concentrate on what is feasible.



Once you have agreed on the priorities, you may wish to use the table overleaf to record your plans for enhancement under Principle 9.



Principle 9 worksheet - Making feedback an ongoing process which involves students

Principle focus	Specific actions you will take:	Responsible leader:	Help/resources needed to make this happen:	Milestones (timescale for implementation):	Performance indicators:
e.g. Feedback	e.g. Exploring dialogic feedback	e.g. Dr Jolanta O'Neill	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional learning on feedback, feedback literacy and particularly dialogic approaches to feedback. Time to work as a department team and with students. 	e.g. One academic year	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater knowledge of dialogic approaches to feedback. Records of discussions across team and with students. Compiling department generated guidance on ways into dialogic feedback.



About this resource

This resource is drawn from the *Principles-based Toolkit for Effective Assessment Design* (Brown and Sambell). This resource focuses on 'Principle 9 – Making feedback an ongoing process which involves students'. The resource can be used by teams who wish to review how this principle is enacted in their work, and who wish to plan to enhance their practice regarding this principle. The resource can be used as a stand-alone thinking and planning tool for teams, as well as being considered in the context of the toolkit as a whole.

As part of the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' project, Professor Sally Brown and Professor Kay Sambell designed a toolkit for effective assessment design. This toolkit has been designed to provide course teams at Maynooth University with guidance on periodical review of their assessment and feedback practices, in support of student success. The toolkit involves twelve principles which were proposed by Brown and Sambell, and shaped and modified by the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Advisory Group. The toolkit is available at in the Maynooth University [Assess for Success Hub](#).

The principles and the toolkit taken as a whole set a substantial agenda for action, but Brown and Sambell stress that the toolkit can primarily help local teams to set short- and longer-term prioritised targets to enhance assessment by focusing on activities that would help to ensure that assessment tasks, assignments and feedback could fully contribute to student engagement and positive outcomes.

References:

Sadler, D.R. (1989) 'Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems' *Instructional Science*, 18(2), pp.119-144, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00117714>

Winstone, N. E., and Carless, D. (2019) *Designing Effective Feedback Processes in Higher Education: A Learning-Focused Approach*. London: Routledge.



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