Feedback from academics

Why is feedback important?

Getting feedback on assignments helps you develop your discipline-specific knowledge and understanding.

It can provide vital clues on what your lecturers expect from your assignments in terms of the content, the organisation of your ideas and your English language expression.

Receiving feedback on assignments can be exciting and rewarding – but also at times disheartening. However, we often learn most from our mistakes or when our shortcomings are pointed out to us.

It’s important to understand why lecturers and tutors give feedback and its role in academic life.

Getting the most from feedback

- Listen to lecturers’ and tutors’ comments about assignments during tutorials and in lectures. They will give you a sense of their expectations.
- Check that you followed the marking criteria guide when you wrote your assignment.
- Read all of the written feedback on your work when you receive it.
- If the comments seem harsh and unfair, put your essay aside for a day or two and cool down. Read the comments again when you feel calmer.
- You need wisdom, time, and the right mental head space to benefit most from critical comment about your work.
- If you don’t understand the comments or disagree with them, make an appointment to discuss your concerns with your tutor or lecturer.
- Learn to change your mind. The ability to change facilitates learning.
- Refer to previous feedback when writing your next assignment.

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

An ongoing process of communication between you and your lecturers / tutors.

Assessment of your worth as an individual.

Feedback helps you

- identify strengths you can build on,
- focus on weaknesses you can address, e.g. how to develop your critical thinking skills or refine how you incorporate into our writing the ideas of authors you have read.

Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.
- Albert Einstein
More tips:

- Ask yourself questions. Does the feedback make sense? How would my work be improved if I implemented the tutor/lecturer’s suggestions?
- Mark any questions you cannot answer for follow-up with your tutor/lecturer.
- Alternatively, consult a STUDYSmarter Learning Skills Adviser at WRITESmart Drop-in.

Final points
Feedback from your tutors/lecturers is part of an academic conversation that starts when you sign up to study. Their feedback may or may not be welcome, but is an inevitable part of learning.

Over your university life, constructive feedback on your work will be delivered in many different ways by a variety of people but almost certainly, it will help you to grow as a scholar, intellectual and professional. So consider their feedback carefully, and continue the ‘conversation’ by applying the tutor/lecturer’s advice to future assignments.

What if I don’t ‘get’ it?
Feedback that puzzles or distresses you can be dealt with through direct discussion with the marker. It’s worth remembering that disheartening or negative feedback can serve as a valuable learning experience.

By absorbing, evaluating, and integrating the parts of the feedback you find most useful, compelling or challenging, you continue in your learning process.

What if I disagree?
If you think your mark or the feedback is unfair, etc. further action can be taken through the appropriate grievance procedures within the University. Plenty of information can be found on the University’s appeals and complaints page. http://www.student.uwa.edu.au/life/complaints

The Guild has Student Assist Officers you can contact through http://www.guild.uwa.edu.au/welcome/support

Visit a Guild Education Officer to discuss any grievances: www.guild.uwa.edu.au

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