10 Tips for Offering Feedback and Grading Efficiently

1. ***Use technology wisely.***
   Using Blackboard can save you time because it automatically enters scores into a Grade Center, preventing you from having to enter scores manually into a grade book or other location. Using Blackboard tools like rubrics and quizzes can also save time tabulating total scores and, in the case of quizzes, can mark objective test question answers correct/incorrect and offer feedback.
   Blackboard is only one of many educational technology tools available to you. If you would like to speak to a consultant about technology options, contact the Center for Teaching and Learning at teaching@pitt.edu.

2. ***Consider group assignments.***
   Not every assignment translates well into a group assignment, but some do. Ask yourself whether students could make the same level of progress toward achieving learning objectives if they worked with peers. Even transforming one individual assignment into a small group assignment will save you substantial time grading.

3. ***Create feedback comment banks.***
   If you find yourself giving the same feedback repeatedly from semester-to-semester, start creating banks of comments organized by topic and/or assignment. If you grade electronically, you can copy/paste banked comments onto student work. If you handwrite feedback, marking schemes can serve the same purpose.

4. ***Avoid editing your students' work.***
   If a student makes the same error multiple times, correct it 2-3 times, then make a comment about how to fix this type of error. Similarly, if they make the same mistake throughout the semester, just write, "See my feedback on assignment 1" on all assignments after the first few.

5. ***Cut down on "goods" and "needs works." Focus on how students can improve.***
   Research suggests that the most helpful type of feedback gives students specific suggestions on how to improve. Rather than marking every place where a student does something well or poorly, offer a few comments about how the student performed relative to an ideal performance and concrete steps they can take to get better.

6. **Outsource feedback when appropriate.**
   If your students would benefit from guided self or peer assessment and you give them tools to help (ex: you can give students a checklist derived from your rubric and ask them to use it to assess their own or peers' work and provide explanations for their responses.), it can save you grading time. Although you may need to check their feedback to make sure they're giving one another good suggestions, by the time you assign a grade, you shouldn't need to spend as much time on feedback because they would have already received it during peer review.
   Also, if a student is having trouble with a skill that someone else (like a writing center tutor or librarian) could help them with, you can recommend that they seek out those sources for feedback before submitting work to you so that you can concentrate on their performance in your discipline.

7. **Offer feedback on class trends to the entire class.**
   Instead of offering very detailed feedback for every single student, put down a single word or phrase for anything you identify as a trend in performance strengths and weakness and discuss that with the entire class rather than writing it out over and over. So instead of writing, "This evidence does not strengthen your claim because… do this instead…." you could just write "insufficient evidence," then discuss what that means and how to address it in class. *If you opt to do this, do not speak about individual students' performances in front of the group, even if what you'd like to say is positive.*

8. **Embrace rubrics.**
   Consider developing rubrics for assessments that aren't dichotomous (correct/incorrect, complete/incomplete). If a rubric is detailed, just by circling levels of performance, you identify how the student performed vs. ideal performance, so students can see the gap between the two. Simply put – the rubric delivers most of your feedback for you.

9. **Set a reasonable time limit for grading each assignment (and stick to it).**
   If you find yourself dwelling too long on individual students' assignments, time yourself as you grade the first few, use the average to establish a reasonable time limit, then use that time limit as you grade the rest. If you run out of time, focus on providing a few meaningful, global, improvement-focused statements, then move onto the next assignment.

10. **Incentivize engaging with feedback.**
    If you encourage students to reflect on and make changes based on feedback (as opposed to glancing at the letter grade and stuffing the graded assignment into their backpack), you'll spend less time repeating the same feedback. Incentives might include asking students to jot down 3 steps they will take to improve future work based on assignment feedback or offering a low quantity of points for revised work.