14 Tips for Providing Effective Feedback

1. Tailor feedback to the purpose of the assessment. Are you more concerned with improvement or evaluation?

2. When given spoken feedback, ask clarifying questions.

3. Always observe strengths as well as errors or weaknesses.

4. Fill in the gap. Explain why, not just what was wrong.

5. If you point out a problem or error, offer suggestions for how the student might improve.

6. Don’t overwhelm: indicate the most important errors and most important strengths.

7. Do not correct or copy edit student work. When students make the same error repeatedly, mark it a few times, then comment on the pattern.

8. Offer feedback and grade based on grading criteria. Don’t deduct points for grammar or format if that wasn’t in the grading criteria.

9. Avoid jargon. Use language students understand.

10. If there are other instructors grading the same exam/assignment, be sure that you are consistent in your grading.

11. Keep your tone positive and supportive (especially when pointing out mistakes). Be careful about using humor when giving feedback.

12. Recommend that students who need one-on-one help to get support at Pitt (e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Assistance Center, the Center for Creativity, etc.).

13. Give feedback on local (individual item, word, or phrase), section, and global (whole paper or answer) aspects.

14. Return graded assignments promptly.