

## **Juggling Cats: Investigating Effective Verbal Feedback in Graphic Design Critiques**

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**Theme:** Teaching and Assessment in the Context of Quality Assurance

**Abstract:** A university's mission in today's economic performance-driven model of higher education is to assure quality learning and teaching contexts which produce the work-ready graduates demanded by employers. In this context strengthening the links between assessment and graduate qualities through authentic assessment activities has become a priority in many institutions. Project-based assessment, which is meaningful and related to real-life applications, is an established practice in art and design schools.

The question of interest for design educators in today's quality-focused context is how to ensure this authentic assessment practice is effective in meeting the needs of the student, the teacher, the university and the profession. To be effective in the design context authentic assessment must prepare students to give and receive feedback. While most design educators are familiar with the broad parameters defining effective feedback the application of these parameters in particular learning contexts is not as well articulated.

This paper reports an action-orientated process in which students, a design lecturer and her colleagues collaborated to develop guidelines, and examples of effective verbal feedback practice, in a design critique context in a final year graphic design subject. Outcomes for the students and the teacher included shared understandings about effective feedback in the designer-client context. As graduates these students will enter their profession with a better understanding of the practice of effective feedback.

### **INTRODUCTION**

A university's mission in today's economic performance-driven model of higher education is to assure quality learning and teaching contexts which produce the work-ready graduates demanded by employers. As noted by Orrell (2004):

*For universities to prosper in a competitive education market, it is essential to ensure that their students are equipped with relevant discipline knowledge and skills as well as generic, transferable skills. (p.1)*

In this context strengthening the links between assessment and graduate qualities through authentic assessment activities has become a priority in many institutions. Assessment "is a powerful tool in determining the type of learning skills and outcomes that we wish our graduates to achieve" (Johnston, 2003, p.221). Authentic assessment tasks either, call upon the student's knowledge of the 'real world', or have the student complete

assessable tasks which replicate 'real world' activities or processes. "Students respect assessment tasks they believe mirror the skills needed in the workplace" (McInnis & Devlin, 2002, p. 10). Project-based assessment, which is meaningful and related to real-life applications, is an established practice in art and design schools. The question of interest for design educators in today's quality-focused context is how to ensure this authentic assessment practice is effective in meeting the needs of the student, the teacher, the university and the profession.

To be effective in the design context authentic assessment must prepare students to give and receive feedback. The ability to give and receive feedback (both positive and negative feedback) in an emotionally charged context where the focus of the feedback — the design — is a public expression of the designer's self which must also fulfil the hopes and desires of others — the client — is an essential attribute of a design professional. However, as Piccinin (2003) notes "giving and receiving feedback is not as easy as it appears" (p.14). Indeed Brookfield (1990, cited in Bennett, 1997, p. 11) describes the task of giving evaluative feedback as "one of the most difficult, demanding and complex tasks a teacher has to face". In the context of an authentic assessment task, constructive and supportive feedback can be "one of the most significant spurs to learning" (1990, cited in Bennett, 1997, p. 11). Indeed as Yorke (2003) suggests, the "importance of the student's reception of feedback cannot be overestimated" (p. 488). Effective feedback can assist students to form accurate perceptions of their abilities and to establish internal standards against which they can evaluate their own design work. When feedback is vague, judgemental, ill-timed or person-focused rather than task-focused, students receiving feedback on an assessment task can be embarrassed. They can feel diminished, discouraged and dejected by the feedback they receive. These feelings can be accentuated when students perceive the feedback they are receiving is unrelated to their learning needs. For design teachers too, giving feedback can be stressful, emotionally draining and time consuming.

General principles for giving and receiving effective feedback have been widely reported. While most design educators are familiar with the general principles defining effective feedback the application of these principles in particular design learning contexts is not as well articulated. Schon (1983) has written extensively about the interactions of teacher and learner in the design studio. Bennet (1997) reports the process and outcomes of a research project which tackled the problem of giving quality individual feedback to design students working in large studio groups. Cruikshank (1998) describes the implementation and evaluation of the use of video as a method of delivering feedback to art and design students. Conan and Pinkard (2001) investigated design students perceptions of giving and receiving asynchronous feedback to each other in the online learning context.

This paper adds to the growing literature on feedback in design education contexts by reporting an action-orientated process in which students, a design lecturer and her colleagues collaborated to develop guidelines, and examples of effective verbal feedback practice, in a design critique context, in a final year graphic design subject. The following section describes the methodological approach used to investigate feedback practice (action inquiry) and the design education context in which this investigation was undertaken. The stages in the action-oriented process, and the actions and outcomes of each stage, are then described in detail. Outcomes for the students and the teacher, which include a shared understanding about effective feedback in the designer-client context, are discussed in the final section of the paper. The paper concludes by

suggesting that as graduates these graphic design students will enter their profession with a better understanding of the practice of effective feedback.

## THE CONTEXT

The purpose of an action inquiry is to learn about our professional practices with a view to improving them. In an academic context action inquiry is a process which facilitates the teacher as researcher to reflect on their teaching and through the stages of this reflection discover ways to improve their teaching and the learning of their students. It involves "learning in and through action and reflection" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p.15). The process of action inquiry consists of a number of phases: initial reflection, planning, action and further reflection. Investigating an aspect of teaching practice often involves the teacher/researcher in a number of cycles of these phases. At a very practical level the process has been described as:

- Review current practice
- Identify an aspect you want to improve
- Imagine a way forward
- Try it out, and
- Take stock of what happens
- Modify your plan in the light of what happened and continue with the action
- Evaluate and modify again
- And so on until you are satisfied with that aspect of your work (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p.72).

The action inquiry reported in this paper was undertaken in 2003 – 2004, within the context of the fourth and final year of studies in the subjects Graphic Design (GD) 4.1 & 4.2 of the Bachelor of Graphic Design course at the University of Canberra. The principal objectives of this final year of study are: preparing students to reach a suitable level to enter the profession; preparing an individual graduating professional portfolio; developing student abilities to work independently; refining students' communication skills; and producing creative and individual project works. To achieve these objectives students undertake self-selected and self-directed studies while consulting vigorously with their peers, colleagues and staff. As the year progresses, students take increased responsibility for their personal studies through to almost autonomous operation by the end of the year.

Throughout the fourth year program, the lecturer/teacher facilitates, rather than performs as a didactic teacher. As a 'consultant' and sometimes as a 'client' the teacher acts as a sounding/testing board and gives verbal feedback to the student. Verbal feedback can occur in formal or informal situations, is often impromptu, and it can occur in very public arenas. Feedback may occur informally, one-on-one in the car park, formally in a class of fifty students, or informally in a tutorial of fifteen to twenty students.

Complicating the feedback interaction, whatever the context, is the nature of the design being critiqued. Often the work has never been viewed before. It is at a development stage, rather than a finished product. This situation is challenging both for the students and the teacher. The teacher has to give feedback that is encouraging and motivating, that may contain negative elements, often without adequate time for reflection and preparation of a response prior to the feedback interaction. The stages of the action inquiry

undertaken to examine the challenging process of giving constructive feedback to final year graphic design students are described in the following section.

## STAGES OF THE ACTION-INQUIRY PROCESS

### Cycle 1: Initial Reflection

The starting point for this study was a meeting with a colleague in the University's Centre for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Scholarship (CE LTS) and the development of a Student Feedback on Teaching Questionnaire and a Student Feedback on Subjects Questionnaire. These questionnaires were administered to students enrolled in the subject Graphic Design 4.2 in semester 1 2002. The review and analysis of the students' responses prompted a reassessment of the teaching methods, and particularly the verbal feedback strategies, in the final year of graphic design subjects. Developing a 'Checklist for Constructive Verbal Feedback' became the objective of an action inquiry process.

### Planning

Planning the inquiry began with a brief literature review to tap into the extensive literature in the area of giving constructive feedback (see for example: Brinko, 1993; Kayrooz, 1995; Verderber, 1999; Wajnrb, 1993; Weisinger & Lobsenz, 1981). This review suggested the task of delivering constructive feedback was a complex balancing act.

*... there is a central paradox - that feedback is both important and difficult ... It seems to me that what we supervisors need is a corpus of strategic skills that will allow us to address ... goals of supervision while also meeting affective and relational goals ... feedback is a professional speech event involving multiple goals, the satisfactory resolution of which requires considerable expertise.*  
(Wajnrb, 1993, pp. 74-75)

Wajnryb (1993) emphasises the importance of affirmative, neutralising and negotiating language as "social lubricants" in the feedback context (pp. 79-80). She also alerts the reader to the disproportionate significance negative feedback may assume for the receiver of the feedback suggesting a ratio of 80/20 (80% positive feedback and 20% negative feedback).

Kayrooz (1995) discusses constructive feedback as an interaction, rather than simply a didactic situation, alerting the reader to the important issue of how the listener receives the feedback. In suggesting strategies to avoid distress for the recipient of critique she notes that "learning is nearly impossible when one's defences are up" (Kayrooz, 1995, p. 31).

The nine principles of feedback suggested by Brockbank and McGill (1998) seemed to encapsulate, the ideas of Wajnryb (1993) and Kayrooz (1995), and to be readily transferable to the design teaching context. They suggest "useful feedback is:

- Given with care
- Given with attention
- Invited by the recipient
- Directly expressed
- Fully Expressed
- Uncluttered by Evaluative Judgements

- Well Timed
- Readily Actionable
- Checked and Clarified" (p. 2).

### **Action**

Having identified some principles for giving constructive feedback it seemed appropriate to observe feedback interactions in a design teaching context. Two design colleagues agreed to be observed and to have their feedback interactions with students tape recorded.

Colleague A co-teaches in GD 4.1 in a digital media specialty tutorial. Colleague A had only just commenced teaching this subject at the time of observation. The session observed with Colleague A was a one-on-one feedback consultation, held in an office.

As an observer it was difficult to understand what Colleague A was doing in this feedback session as the subject area required specialist knowledge, especially when no actual projects were in evidence. The main observation from this session was that Colleague A adhered to the 80/20 rule noted previously.

A feedback tutorial session of approximately 15 students was observed in the studio environment with Colleague B. Colleague B has at least ten years teaching experience and also co-teaches in GD 4.1, specialising in general graphic design.

Again, the main observation was that Colleague B adhered strongly to the 80/20 rule. Colleague B started with the positive and was very sensitive in the delivery of critical points. It was noted that Colleague B grounded the feedback in evidence and used the third person, that is, the target audience, as a reference point. The feedback focused on actionable suggestions. There was a great deal of rapport and good humour apparent, and a lot of positive interactions between all the students and staff.

### **Cycle 2: On-going Reflection**

Reflection on the outcomes of cycle 1 of the action inquiry, and on the teaching context for the subjects Graphic Design 4.1 and 4.2, suggested the inquiry focus on verbal feedback occasions where, while there might be a chance to prepare beforehand, in the majority of cases the feedback must be instant and effective. That is:

- One to one, in the corridor, consultation in the teacher's office or in studio sessions.
- In small groups/tutorial groups where an individual student project is reviewed for the benefit of the individual, and the group overall.
- In large groups, where both individual pieces and groups of pieces are reviewed for the benefit of individuals and the whole group.

More specific occasions where assistance in giving constructive feedback would be of benefit were identified as:

- The most obvious example that happens to all design teachers is the clearly inadequate presentation of design project work. Everyone presents their

submission and there are one or two projects that are so unsuccessful that you struggle for words.

The usual response is to say it is an inappropriate solution; or the technical aspects need some work. The teacher recognises the project is of inadequate quality and therefore must give a clear indication of the expected result, but this is very challenging under the circumstances.

- The student says: "But I like it as it is".  
The other students say: "We think it is fine"
- It's a major project submission and the project presented represents the equivalent result of only two nights work.
- The student has tried very hard, worked and worked, is a lovely person, but the final work is not of an adequate standard. Or they want help but you can't think of any more you could do with this project work, or that they could possibly achieve.
- "You said I was on the right track/ keep pursuing ...".  
Sometimes the student has come up with an idea and developed it. The idea may not have had a lot of potential in the first place, but it was the best project they could propose, it could be possible to succeed, or time had run out, and you as the teacher suggested they proceed further.
- "How do I get a better mark with this project? How do I fix it?"

### **Planning**

The next step was to conduct a strengths and weaknesses analysis of my personal design teaching practice, in the context of a situation analysis of the typical feedback occasions identified in the previous reflection phase. This analysis suggested my strengths might be summarised as:

1. Direct & truthful (no BS)
2. Fun and informal
3. Easy to understand
4. Tolerant
5. Take action
6. Flexible & not committed to a particular style
7. Creative
8. Appreciate good ideas

The weaknesses identified included:

1. Too direct
2. Insensitive to others sensibilities
3. Informal language and manners
4. Intimidating
5. Indecisive
6. Lack of confidence

It would seem that personal strengths are also personal weaknesses and vice versa. For example, 'not committed to a particular style' could be a strength in that a student could present a very contemporary piece, or a very conservative piece. Equal merit could be given to either style, if they were appropriate to the proposed audience. By contrast, a student may perceive an appreciation of various styles, as a weakness. The student cannot readily assess what style is expected. Another example of the dichotomy of strengths and weaknesses is

'too direct/ direct and truthful (no BS)'. 'Truthful' feedback, which is often described as 'direct', can be very well received as it is clear and precise, able to be understood and acted upon. 'Truthful' feedback can be motivational and received positively. By contrast, students can find information given in a 'direct' manner confronting and therefore ineffective as the information given creates a defensive reaction and learning is compromised.

The specific issues I recognised were that with some students, sometimes, I could be too direct, I can have difficulty disguising criticism, I tend to be quite transparent, and my manners and language could accommodate more sensitivity to other's sensibilities. It is not difficult to see that there were issues with my personal teaching style that I was not comfortable with and that I wished to explore as an educator.

### **Action**

I returned to the literature to develop a draft checklist of key words and phrases for giving constructive feedback. Armed with a page of key points and another half page of phrases, and a student feedback questionnaire (Appendix 1, adapted from Brockbank & McGill, 1998) I sought to 'test' my new found knowledge. I decided to co-teach a feedback session in week 14 of a fifteen-week semester in the subject GD 4.1. A major submission one week before final results for the semester was critiqued.

Some examples of key words and phrases I tried to include during my critique of the students' work follow.

- Might/Could
- Perhaps
- Yes, that's one way, what about...
- Let's...(meaning you, with a little help from me)
- Maybe
- "how about this..."
- "just now when we were deciding the issue, I felt that you did not listen to what others said and that you were expecting me either to accept your point of view or face attack from you."
- just now when we were deciding the issue, I felt you were expecting me either to accept your point of view or face attack from you. Please tell me what you heard said? Do you think you heard....., which is what I think the others were saying ?
- as you continue to develop as a designer.."
- "Does this make sense? Am I making sense?" What part of what I'm saying isn't making sense?
- "Have you tried...?"/ could you try
- "let's think about this"
- "I'm not quite sure about..."
- "Do you think this would work?"
- "What do you think?"
- Yes AND.... (rather than 'yes but').

The nine GD 4.1 students participating in the tutorial were asked to observe the feedback session and to anonymously complete the questionnaire. The students who received feedback were volunteers. This session was recorded and transcribed.

### **Cycle 3: On-going Reflection**

The feedback session was extremely successful both from anecdotal evidence and student survey responses (Appendix 2). Students agreed that feedback was given with care and attention, was directly and fully expressed, uncluttered by evaluative judgements and readily actionable.

However, on reviewing the transcript of the session I felt my interactions may have been too personally expressed and informal in manner, rather than impersonal observations professionally expressed. Given the successful progress I made with a little research, I was inspired to return yet again to the literature for more information.

### **Planning and Acting**

The literature review suggested strategies, key points and guidelines which I initially recorded into a broad grouping of related concepts with some overlap of the material contained in each concept. By reviewing this initial grouping, and removing overlapping material, the large initial list was reduced to seven concept areas. As I continued to sort and refine the material, I added my own anecdotally derived comments to give meaning to each of the concepts. An eighth concept area was added after some reflection and further reading. At this point I created a heading or statement to summarise each concept. These headings then became my personal checklist for giving constructive verbal feedback.

### ***Personal Checklist for Giving Constructive Verbal Feedback***

- Point 1: Feedback is given with respect
- Point 2: Feedback is neutral, not labelled.
- Point 3: Feedback is descriptive, not evaluative
- Point 4: Feedback is specific.
- Point 5: Feedback is prioritised
- Point 6: Feedback should focus on the positive
- Point 7: Feedback is focused on what is actionable
- Point 8: Feedback is an interaction

Having created this checklist I proceeded to assemble a series of succinct personally relevant dot points to give meaning to my understanding of the concepts each heading represented. I also developed an example of verbal feedback for each of the categories.

### **Cycle 4: Final Reflections**

By this point in my inquiry I had come to realise that constructive feedback was much more involved than simply devising a checklist and applying it to feedback situations. Reading the work of Tang (2000) I recognised that the discussion of feedback would be incomplete without examining the power relationship fundamental to a teacher/student relationship. Tang (2000) suggests the following four teacher/student positions:

1. The teacher as the absolute authority.
2. The teacher as the benevolent authority.
3. The teacher and student as equal authorities.
4. The student as the authority.

The position of authority needs to be considered, as does the nature and outcomes of the many roles students observe teachers enacting during their contact with each other.



Non-verbal communication can reinforce the dominant position of power of the giver in the feedback interaction. From this reflective phase came the final version of 'A Checklist for Giving Constructive Verbal Feedback' (Appendix 3).

### **Planning**

Finally, I had achieved what I set out to achieve, to create a useful checklist for giving constructive verbal feedback. In semester 1 2004 I used the final version of the checklist in the subject GD 4.1. Another CELTS Student Feedback on Teaching Questionnaire was administered at the end of this subject with encouraging results. Forty eight percent of students rated the teaching performance overall as very good to excellent. Twenty six percent of responses ranged from satisfactory to good. At the other end of the scale six percent, represented by two student responses, rated teaching as poor or very poor. When students were asked to rate feedback on assignments and prescribed work, forty-five percent gave the highest rating (strongly agree) and seventy one percent 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that feedback was adequate. Most reassuring were the individual comments (Appendix 4) to the question: What are this staff member's strengths in teaching? For example:

*Good feedback, constructive and honest.*

*MJ gives great feedback and gets the students very involved. Loved the student teacher interaction and the good direction and feedback.*

*Listening – brainstorming ideas: Think you are a great tutor – very motivated, helpful and enthusiastic.*

*Definitely has a great strength in motivation, helped kick my butt into gear. Always optimistic, even when everything I did was wrong. She helped develop my ideas and pushed me to do better work.*

### **LEARNING FROM THE ACTION INQUIRY**

In brief, I would describe the action inquiry process as gathering all the insights from the literature I could, plus anecdotal evidence from personal experiences and from colleagues experience, and editing it rigorously until some meaningful and useful groups of related concepts emerged. I then trialed any discoveries in the class room situation personally and with colleagues. I continued on to analyse and edit until I captured the essence of the information in groupings, and then in a simple statement heading combined with essential points and usage examples.

The key learning that emerged for me is to be mindful, and always remember feedback is a professional speech event. A generous dose of social lubricants, combined with sensitivity and manners from all participants in a feedback event are usually an effective means to create a positive and constructive interaction. Additional strategies emerging from the research are bonus assets.

Learning to really know the information gathered and use it spontaneously, will continue to be challenging. To 'automatically' give constructive verbal feedback requires a deep learning of the material. I'm sure I have learned much, however, giving feedback from a subliminal level of automatic response is going to take some considerable practise.

As feedback sessions are an interaction between people, it would seem logical that it is not only the giver of feedback that could benefit from some strategies to effectively deal with feedback. This inquiry has only produced guidance for

the giver of feedback, rather than the receiver, and leaves open an opportunity for further investigation. Questions such as "How do I assist students, and myself and other teachers, to distance themselves personally from critique of project work?" beg attention. The nuances of power and authority in a teacher student relationship, or the all pervasive nature of non-verbal communication, also need to be explored if a more comprehensive guide to giving constructive feedback is to be achieved.

The principles of constructive feedback can be applied to all aspects of life. Good feedback is synonymous with having good interactions. I hope the description of the action inquiry process presented in this paper will provide design educators with suggestions to address the challenge of creating a learning environment for design students that develops, through constructive critique of authentic assessment tasks, learning outcomes for students that are immediately transferable to the professional design context.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has reported an action-orientated process in which students, a design lecturer and her colleagues collaborated to develop guidelines, and examples of effective verbal feedback practice, in a design critique context in a final year graphic design subject. Outcomes of this process for the students and the teacher included shared understandings about effective feedback in the designer-client context. As graduates these students will enter their profession with a better understanding of the practice of effective feedback.

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## Appendix 1: Student Feedback Questionnaire

Useful Feedback is....

### Given with Care

Help, not hurt

Unsatisfactory      Excellent

### Given with Attention

Concentration on two way communication

Unsatisfactory      Excellent

### Directly Expressed

Specific and deals with particulars

Unsatisfactory      Excellent

### Fully Expressed

Expresses feeling as well as facts

Unsatisfactory      Excellent

### Uncluttered by Evaluative Judgements

Clearly states that these are subjective evaluations and lets receiver make the judgement

Unsatisfactory      Excellent

### Readily Actionable

Feedback centred on things that can be acted on by the receiver

Unsatisfactory      Excellent

### Checked and Clarified

Other people explore and share perceptions

Unsatisfactory      Excellent

### Comments

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## Appendix 2: Student Responses to the Feedback Questionnaire

**Table 1: Number of Student Responses by Category of Response**

Response Category	Given with care	Given with attention	Directly Expressed	Fully Expressed	Uncluttered by Evaluative Judgements	Readily Actionable	Checked and Clarified
unsatisfactory	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
satisfactory	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
good	0	4	3	3	3	2	9
very good	16	15	11	17	16	13	13
excellent	20	17	22	16	17	22	13

### **Appendix 3: Checklist for giving constructive verbal feedback in a design critique**

#### **Point 1: Feedback is given with respect**

- Genuine respect
- Acknowledge, recognise strengths and value student
- Given with care, attention and politeness
- Stay human, make allowances, be sensitive
- Not judgement, but empathy.
- Consider the needs of the person and level of understanding
- Harder on the receiver
- Decisions are student's to make

#### **Example:**

*It's great to see you here today. I see you have met the deadline and put a lot of personal effort into your typographic solutions and meeting the design brief. The design concept is very appropriate to your intended audience.*

#### **Point 2: Feedback is neutral, not labelled**

- Maintain neutrality
- Describe accurately without labelling good / bad, right / wrong
- De-personalise criticism

#### **Example:**

*When an intended audience is 65 years of age legibility can become an issue. How do you think an elderly person might feel when reading small type? How would they feel if the type was larger?*

#### **Point 3: Feedback is descriptive, not evaluative**

- Avoid evaluative judgements and language.
- Describe accurately without labelling good / bad, right / wrong.
- Use affirmative, neutralising and negotiating language
- Bad assumes a disproportionate significance
- Offer open and neutral possible outcomes

#### **Example:**

*Decorative type faces such as this create added interest and creativity to this broadsheet design. Increased legibility could be achieved by increasing the type size and breaking up the text with headings.*

#### **Point 4: Feedback is specific**

- Keep it specific
- Ground criticism in evidence
- Specific not general
- Generalised communicates as personal attacks
- Express directly and fully

#### **Example:**

*This type would be hard to read for your intended audience. Legibility is a major issue with the age group of the audience.*

#### **Point 5: Feedback is prioritised**

- Leading to point of criticism , not 'drop it on them'
- Keep it minimal and simple
- Prioritise, avoid overload
- Make allowances

- Not judgement, but empathy
- Consider needs of the student and level of understanding
- Timing is critical

**Example:**

*Perhaps the type could be hard to read for the intended audience. How do you think the type might be made easier to read? Are there any aspects of the work you feel could be improved?*

**Point 6: Feedback should focus on the positive**

- Learning is nearly impossible when one's defences are up
- Give with care
- Timing is critical
- Leading to point
- 80/20 Rule...good/bad
- Minimal to avoid overload
- Give help
- Affirmative, neutralising and negotiating language
- Not judgement, but empathy
- Preface negative with positive
- Recognise individual strengths
- Students are self critical, can confirm or deny
- Allow students to open the batting
- Harder on the student. Be sensitive
- Make allowances
- Approach point obliquely, via a third person, through the eyes of the learner
- Focus on good things, begin with good, end with good, leave with a sense of progress
- Bad assumes a disproportionate significance
- Critical points as future objectives, not past misdemeanours.
- Offer feedback can do something about, not shortcomings with no control over
- Link criticisms to strategies for improvement
- Generalised communicates as personal attacks
- Depersonalise the criticism
- Expressing conditionally softens the blow

**Example:**

*The colour is excellent and your concept is very strong and appropriate. Your audience may find the type difficult to read. What are your thoughts about the size of the type for your target audience?...Yes, this will appeal to a very discerning audience and should have a very positive result in the marketplace.*

**Point 7: Feedback is focused on what is actionable**

- Can do something about
- Well timed
- Readily actionable
- Suggest how to change
- Keep it simple
- Link the criticism to strategies for improvement
- Demonstrate or model

**Example:**

*Over the next week, could you experiment with alternative type faces to see what affect this will have on the legibility?*

**Point 8: Feedback is an interaction**

- Belongs to you. Take responsibility
- Invited by the recipient
- Allow student to discuss first, builds autonomy and a genuine dialogue
  
- Decisions are student's to make
- Involve students in discussion and decision making.
- Encourage student ownership
- Listen and be open to students
- Encourage dialogue one to one, and as a group
- Feedback is a two-way thing.

**Example:**

*Your project is a most interesting solution and takes a very creative approach to the brief. Could you tell us more about your solution?...Is there anything you feel needs improvement on an aspect of the design you would like specific feedback on?...Would the rest of the class like to add anything/ do you have any suggestions that might help (the student) progress?*

#### **Appendix 4: Graphic Design students' responses to the question 'What are this staff member's strengths in teaching?', semester 1 2004**

Student 1: Enthusiasm.

Student 2: Good feedback, constructive and honest.

Student 3: Enthusiastic about creative ideas.

Student 4: Very enthusiastic in the subject.

Student 5: MJ gives great feedback and gets the students very involved. Loved the student teacher interaction and the good direction and feedback.

Student 6: She can explain things clearly and gives examples.

Student 7: Honest feedback.

Student 8: Encouragement.

Student 9: Honest, full of good ideas.

Student 10: The ability to communicate with the student, thoughtful and encouraging.

Student 11: Listening – brainstorming ideas. : Think you are a great tutor – very motivated, helpful and enthusiastic.

Student 12: Open, encouraging.

Student 13: Standard of ideas / work.

Student 15: She is very approachable and gives positive and helpful feedback.

Student 16: Approachable, happy, insightful, knowledgeable. Can identify strengths and interests of a student and nurture these well.

Student 17: Interaction with students is great. Genuinely cares.

Student 18: Professional.

Student 20: Think the professional style of presenting work was helpful to assess our presentation skills.

Student 23: Was able to give assistance and ideas in ways to improve on projects.

Student 25: Helpful with resources ie books for ideas.

Student 26: The ability to point the student in the right direction.

Student 27: Knowledge of design, enthusiasm, empathy and discipline.

Student 28: Definitely has a great strength in motivation, helped kick my butt into gear. Always optimistic, even when everything I did was wrong. She helped develop my ideas and pushed me to do better work.