The Feedback Guide:

A Guide to Northcentral University's Approach to Online Teaching

Prepared by:
The Center for Faculty Excellence

Version:
January, 2013

Preface: The Purpose of this Guide

Northcentral faculty teach through the relationships they develop with students and their feedback on student work. Teaching is a complex, multi-faceted activity, and even the best teachers spend their careers perfecting their work.

Every student is different. Every assignment has multiple facets. The journey to successfully completing a program and writing a dissertation requires mastery of many skills and the acquisition of many dispositions. Even the simplest guidance to faculty ("Teach." "Say something a student can use to improve later work.") has many elements and can be applied in many ways. There are many ways to give good and bad feedback on every assignment. Teaching is called an art informed by research for good reason! It requires teachers to use their content area expertise, understanding of course and program objectives, and wits to help each student reach their educational goals.

This guide offers core principles, examples, guidance on applying principles, and some specific requirements for feedback. It doesn't offer an algorithm or a checklist for how to teach. It requires every faculty member to practice and experiment with its ideas to see how they can best develop relationships and give feedback that leads students to graduation, mastery of program learning outcomes, and becoming valuable contributors to their communities and within their professions.

Contents

Section 1: Teaching at Northcentral

Your Role as a Faculty Member at Northcentral

Your main role as a faculty member is to help students transform! Student transformation is a two-way street; it requires your effort as well as the students'. There are necessary steps faculty must take to ensure that they are creating an environment conducive to student transformation, or learning. These steps repeat themselves in a cyclical fashion as faculty continue to work with individual students throughout a course (See Figure 1):

1) **Prepare to Teach**: Read and learn about the University mission, vision, and values, the program learning outcomes (PLOs) and course sequences of the programs you teach in, and, especially, know the courses you teach.
2) **Build Relationships with Students**: Send welcome letters, create audio welcomes, schedule first-week calls, help students understand when and how to communicate with you.
3) **Read Student Work**: Read student work closely and carefully. They deserve this from you!
4) **Assess Student Work:** Student writing gives you clues as to who a student is as a learner. Make hypotheses about attitudes toward learning, writing skills, reading skills, critical thinking skills, etc. Assess whether students have achieved the objectives of each assignment.
5) **Teach Through Feedback**: Once you have done the necessary preparation, built a relationship with a student and read and assessed work, you are ready to teach them! At Northcentral your feedback is the vehicle through which you teach.
6) **Conduct Action Research**: After you provide feedback, assess whether students have understood and used your feedback. If not, try something new.

This guide will focus on defining the core concepts of Teaching Through Feedback—the art of teaching at Northcentral!

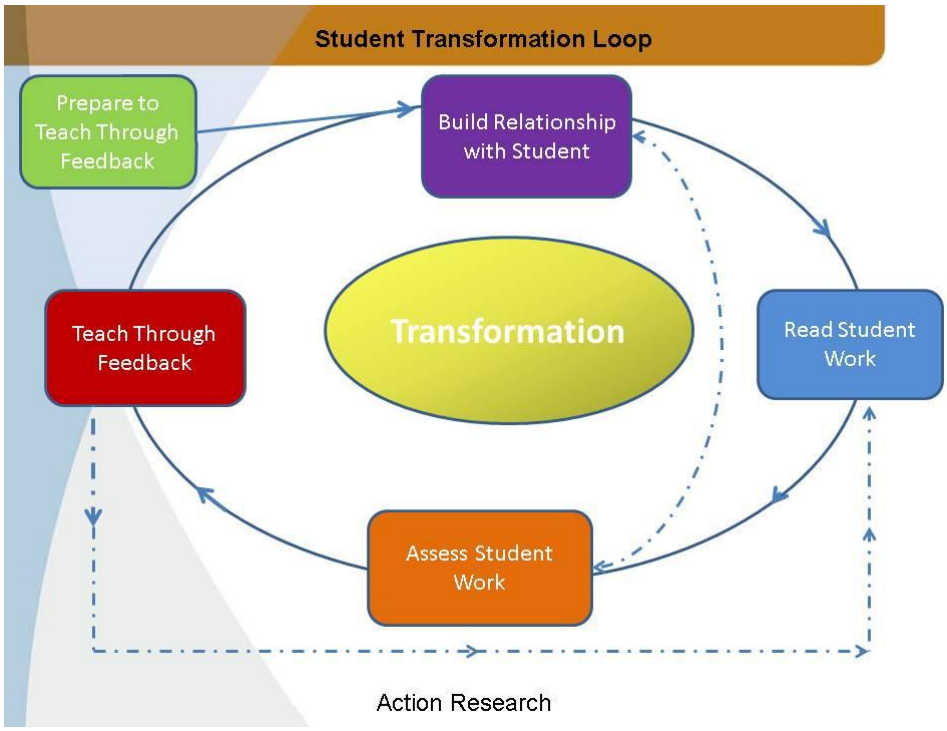


Figure 1 Student Transformation Loop

Northcentral Faculty Teach Through Feedback.

Feedback is Teaching, Feedback is Transformative

The purpose of feedback is the purpose of teaching: to help a student change. This change takes the form of a student transforming themselves into having what a program identifies as the core competencies of its graduates. For Northcentral graduate students, this means becoming a scholar/researcher/subject matter expert/professional, and so acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to become these.

Your job is to provide guidance and affordances that enable students to read accurately, write clearly and persuasively, integrate and synthesize learning into a coherent view of a field and the world, be passionate about something in the field, become enculturated into a profession, become self-directed learners, to know the foundational texts in the field. . . These are part of an ancient, wonderful, and noble task—teaching!

If you are a member of the Northcentral faculty, you are first, foremost, and deeply, a teacher. (See Appendix D for the essential characteristics of Northcentral faculty.)

Every communication you make to a student is teaching. Every communication directly or indirectly moves a student closer to or farther from meeting the learning outcomes of the student's program. Tone, chit-chat, interest in the

student as a person, passion for a subject. . . all influence a student's motivation, sense of self, commitment to learning, and, ultimately success in school

Grading and correcting work is the least of what we do as Northcentral faculty. At our best, our feedback and the relationships we form with our students can radically transform how students view themselves as learners.

Teaching is an Ethical Activity

Teaching, like any activity that attempts to change others, is an ethical activity. Teaching is a profound activity that touches the heart of what it is to be human. Concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, languages of virtue are at the core of teaching. McGovern offers a workbook, Faculty Virtues and Character Strengths, faculty can use to refresh their identities as teachers and reflect on the values and virtues that animate their teaching.

What is Feedback?

Schute (2007) writes: "Formative feedback represents information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner's thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning" (p. 1). Hattie and Timperley (2007) define feedback as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of . . . performance or understanding" (p. 81). "The main purpose of feedback," they argue, "is to reduce discrepancies between current understandings and performance and a goal" (p. 86). Feedback is then any information that can help a student close the gap between current knowledge and program learning outcomes.

This guide follows Hattie and Timperley (2007) in seeing no distinction between teaching and feedback. The easiest way to see how feedback teaches is to distinguish giving feedback from grading. Grading is providing information about performance on a specific assignment. It consists of giving a grade, indicating aspects of the assignment that are correct and incorrect, and making corrections. Feedback encompasses grading, but its primary purpose is to impact a student's knowledge, skills, and dispositions so that work on future assignments is better than it would have been without the feedback. (See here for more on the distinction between grading and giving feedback.)

Feedback Is Positive

Brookhart (2008) explain that:

> Feedback should be positive. . . Being positive means describing how the strengths in a student's work match the criteria for good work and how those strengths show what the student is learning. Being positive means pointing out where improvement is needed and suggesting things the student could do about it. (pp. 25-26)

We often think of feedback as positive vs. negative—positive says what is good about the work, and negative what needs improvement. But effective feedback blends these—it illustrates both what the student has done well and how the student can move forward. Good feedback lets students know what they have done well, what this means they have accomplished/learned, what an ideal assignment would look like (so they can see how theirs falls short) and how they can progress from their current level of work to a higher one.

At Northcentral, this translates into: helping students understand: the purpose of assignments and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), how well they have achieved the purpose of assignments and PLOs, and what they can do to further their progress toward achieving the purpose of assignments and PLOs. It is important that feedback help the student understand all of these areas, but the last one "What can the student do to make better progress?" must receive the most attention. Feedback that relates to this question is called "feed forward" feedback and coaches students in what they can do to learn, to transform. We discuss feed forward feedback in the next section.

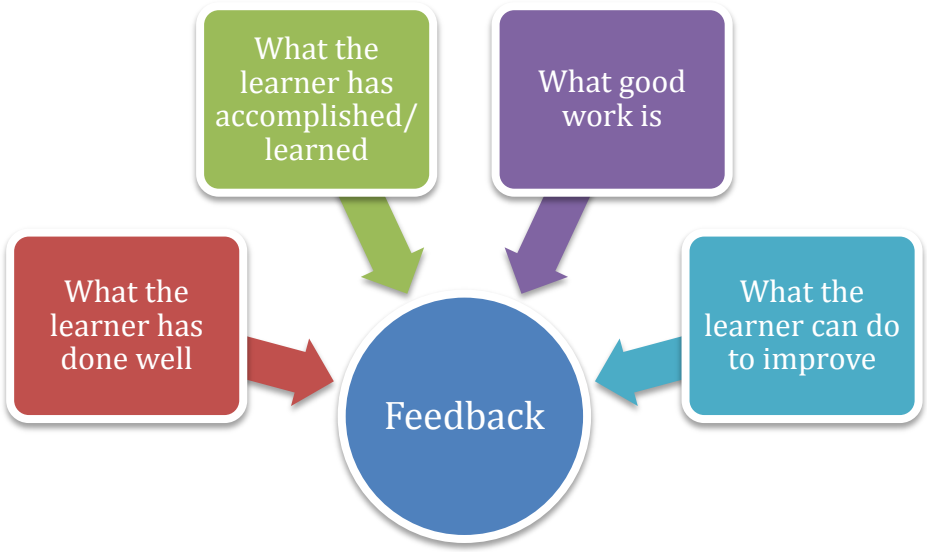


Figure 2 Feedback is Teaching (based on Brookhart, 2008)

Feedback motivates and offers information and guidance students can use to improve their work and meet program learning outcomes. All feedback, all teaching, at least at the university level, is premised on the belief that adults want to become competent and succeed. Feedback motivates because it gives students information that they can use to succeed.

Positive feedback affirms student strengths and accomplishments, it describes characteristics of good work commensurate with meeting learning outcomes, and it feeds forward with guidance on how to build on strengths to do better on future work. This requires faculty to identify real strengths and accomplishments and to discuss them in relationship to program outcomes and skills expected of graduate school graduates. Even when an assignment has weaknesses, it is possible to identify something a student did well and let them know how they can build on it. We discuss how to do this below.

Feed Forward: Give Direct Guidance on How to do Better on Future Assignments

Direct guidance on how to do better on future work is called "feed forward" feedback. Feedback should not just let students know how they did on a current assignment, but how they can do better in the next assignment, in the next course, in their dissertation research. Feed forward feedback helps students understand what a doctorate requires and how they can write one.

Compare and contrast the examples below. In example 1, the feedback does not feed forward; in example 2 it does:

Example 1: This paragraph is difficult to understand because it lacks a topic sentence. Example 2: This paragraph is difficult to follow because it does not include a clear topic sentence that lets the reader know what the paragraph will be about. Next time, remember to include a topic sentence in each paragraph that states what the paragraph is about. Doing so will help your reader follow your writing more easily. To learn more about writing topic sentences, see this. . .

This feed forward feedback says: Here's what you can do to improve future work, and here's why it will help.

Feedback that feeds forward can include suggestions, direct instruction, and pointers to resources that help a student develop learning habits that apply to many types of assignments. That is, feeding forward can aim at helping students do more than acquire new skills; it can teach them to be better learners, more autonomous learners.

For example, feed forward feedback can suggest goals to focus on in the future or offer specific strategies. This type of feed-forward information has power to stimulate transfer of learning to future tasks: if students see how a strategy they are taught can be used outside of the context in which they are taught it, they will be better equipped to use it on future tasks.

Nicol and Draper (2008) write:

> 'feed-forward' . . . is advice about improvement in future performance... Examples might include suggesting goals to focus on in future when trying to improve or specific strategies that might be applied. Feed-forward information has more power to stimulate transfer of learning to future tasks. However, feed-forward advice might not go far enough. Instead of just 'telling,' students might also need to be 'shown' what is required through exemplification; for example the student might need to see what a 'good argument' looks like. Providing exemplars of assignments (good and poor) and asking students to rewrite parts of their assignment would be effective here. (p. 10)

An example of feed forward feedback that aims to teach students a strategy that can be used on many type of future assignments is:

Your assignment is missing quite a few required components. It is important to get into the habit of reading assignment instructions carefully and scheduling ample time to complete assignments correctly and completely in the future. I recommend using a highlighter to highlight the required components as you read the instructions or creating a checklist for yourself to follow. Also, schedule at least one block of time after you complete an assignment to look back at the instructions to check to see if you completed everything prior to submitting your work. The attitude of careful thoughtful reading needed to understand course readings and articles for your dissertation are the very same ones you need to bring to reading assignment instructions!

To be effective, feed-forward needs to both show and tell. If students knew how to organize ideas, support their arguments, or use sources better, they probably would have done so without your feedback! Effective feed forward provides models and resources to show students how they can improve.

There are many ways to show a student how to improve: examples, stories, resources, outline of steps in a strategy, etc. Here is an example of feed forward feedback that shows and tells:

This reference is not quite correct. For an electronic book chapter, use this format:

Author, A.A., & Author, B.B. (2012). Title of chapter or entry. In A. Editor, B. Editor, & C, Editor (Eds.), Title of book (pp. xxx-xxx). doi:xxxxxxx

Note you include a comma after the word "In" and this should not be there. Also, you need to include the book authors' correct names and the book title should be in italics. It is important to consult the APA manual as you write your citations to ensure that your formatting is correct.

Most of your feedback should be of this type. Ask yourself, 'What does this student most need in order to move forward?" and focus your feedback there. As Brookhart writes, "your feedback should give students a clear understanding of what to do next on a point or points that they can see the need to work on" (p. 12).

Feed-Forward Encourages Autonomous Learning

Feed-forward feedback can aim to change more than students' skills and knowledge. It can aim to transform how students learn. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) report that "research shows that feedback both regulates and is regulated by motivational beliefs. External feedback has been shown to influence how students feel about themselves (positively or negatively), and what and how they learn" (p. 201). They present a model of "good feedback practice" in which feedback affects knowledge, skills, and motivation. According to them, good feedback:

1) helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
2) facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
3) delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
4) encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
5) encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
6) provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7) provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching.

(p. 205)

Good feedback helps students become autonomous learners who have clear ideas about good performance, the motivation to succeed, and the ability to evaluate their own performance. The Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) article is worth reading in its entirety. Good feedback can transform a student's self-concept as a learner and socialize students into their future profession and a community of scholars.

Here are eight ways you can give feedback that helps students develop a self-concept as an efficacious, autonomous, and self-aware learner:

1. **Point out progress.** Pointing out that a student has made progress can help the student develop a view of self as an efficacious learner—as someone who can face a challenge and succeed. For example, "Susan, I remember at the beginning of the course, you found searching for library resources (or looking at material with a critical eye, or reading difficult texts, or understanding research design) very difficult. It's so great to see you really mastering this skill."

2. **Ask students to reflect on their learning skills**. Point out progress, or lack of it, and ask the student to reflect on its causes. This site calls such feedback, "Non-Controlling." Avoid using parental or judgmental language—"Great job!" or "You should always follow APA style." Instead, allow students to evaluate their own work. Put them in charge of their learning. For example, mid-way through a course, ask, "Looking at your own progress in the course, what type of study skills have worked for you? What do you need to learn to do better? What types of habits have interfered with your learning? Why not write down a mid-course plan for success?" Asking students to focus on their learning process turns them into self-mentors! You lead the student to think such thoughts as—"Yeah. *I* did it! This is how *I* did it. These are the skills *I* have. This is what I need to work on."

3. **Tell a success story about a peer**. Stories can inspire a can-do attitude: "If she can do it, so can I"! For example, "Larry, one of the best dissertations I've ever seen was written by a student who had the same problem you do in learning to write concisely. He learned to be stingy with the amount of words he used and to write succinct sentences with a clear sense. I'm sure that with practice, you can do this as well. Remember I'm here to help, and our Writing Center can be a great support too."

4. **Encourage metacognitive reflection**. Lay down a stepping stone to becoming an autonomous learner by making responses that promote metacognitive reflection. Ask questions such as "Which database did you find easier to use? Why?" that lead a student to ask *themselves* questions such as, "Why do I prefer this database? What criteria are implicit in my evaluation?" Questions that promote thinking about thinking are quite different from questions that attempt to do your teaching for you—e.g., "why didn't you include information about Brickman in this paragraph?" We discuss these types of questions in below in Tell, Don't Ask.

5. **Break tasks down into small pieces to increase the chance of success**. This is especially easy to do with students working on a dissertation. Rather than ask for a new draft of literature review for a concept paper, ask for additional annotated bibliography items, the building blocks of a literature review. Rather than ask for additional annotated bibliography items, ask for two- to three-sentence summaries of design and findings.

6. **Draw on the student's own success skills**. Ask students to reflect on times when they have overcome barriers in life in general and school in particular. Also, if the student overcomes a barrier in the course you are teaching, point this out. For example, if you ask a student to revise an assignment because it missed the mark, and the student takes initiative to complete the revision and improves his assignment, point out that his/her initiative, tenacity, and resourcefulness led to success!

7. **Always treat students with respect.** Take students' ideas as serious attempts to understand something. As you read, listen to the student! Try to understand where they are coming from and identify areas where they need help. Even if an idea is incorrect, affirm the effort to understand. Regard the student as a fellow traveler on the road to truth and understanding.

8. **Share words of wisdom**. These quotes are from here:

> There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, learning from failure.
> -Colin Powell
>
> Whether I fail or succeed shall be no man's doing but my own. I am the force: I can clear any obstacle before me or I can be lost in the maze. My choice; my responsibility; win or lose, only I hold the key to my destiny.
> -Elaine Maxwell
>
> The mind, especially the parts of it that imagine and talk to us, is what programs us for success or failure.
> -Bernie Zilbergeld & Arnold A. Lazarus

It is of course easier to give feedback on a good assignment that just needs polishing than on an extremely poor one, where you may not know where to start. In this situation, consider the strategies above. Getting students to reflect on their own learning skills and helping them break tasks into smaller sub-tasks can help even very weak learners see how to make progress. Once you realize that feedback does not only pass on information or make corrections but can transform students in deep ways, you will begin communicating with your students in new ways. You will find you can empower your students to take control of their success, appropriately evaluate progress, and take steps to improve skills that will lead to success. You will think of amazing and powerful words to say to your students and your teaching will never be the same!

Grading Versus Giving Feedback

The goal of feedback is to help students meet the learning outcomes of their program, graduate, and contribute to their profession and society. *The primary*

purpose of feedback is to change a student! Grading, assigning a grade to and indicating correct and incorrect aspects of student work, is a postmortem: The assignment is completed, over, finished and you, a grader, indicates, as it were, the cause of death. To a teacher, an assignment is an occasion to impact a student's knowledge, skills, and dispositions so that work on future assignments is better than it would have been without intervention. Teachers have to grade and justify their grades, the game of school requires this, but they do this in a way that serves learning. See here for more on the grading/feedback distinction.

Wiggens (2012) gives the examples of the following evaluation comments:

Good work! This is a weak paper. You got a C on your presentation. I'm so pleased by your poster!

He points out that these comments all evaluate (one grades), none of them gives information the student can use to see what they've done well, what they need to improve, and how they can do that. It's not feedback. Such feedback evaluates a product or a performance, but does not provide information students can act on to continue to learn.

Section 2: Giving Feedback at NCU

The First Four Questions to Ask of Every Assignment, with Commentary

How do you know what to give feed forward feedback on when giving feedback to students? What you choose to feed forward on depends on your assessment of the student's skills, knowledge, and dispositions as represented in the assignment they submit to you. Ultimately, you should give major feed forward comments on 1-3 areas the student most needs to develop in order to make progress towards program learning outcomes. In order to help faculty focus their assessment and feed forward feedback, we have identified four areas that faculty feedback and assessment should always address:

- Did the student do the assignment correctly?
- Are statements about readings and resources accurate?
- Is the writing clear and persuasive?
- Is the writing correct in punctuation, grammar, word usage, and APA style (for citations and references)?

These four questions capture pretty much everything you need to ask of a piece of student work in order to give effective feedback, a grade, and reasons for your grade. They help faculty capture and share their assessment of a student's skills, knowledge and dispositions with the student in a succinct and focused way. Your feedback on these aspects of assignments should always teach and not just serve grading. Choose 1-3 areas from these four questions as main teaching points that you will feed forward on. These questions are keyed to items in the Faculty Review Form.

1. Did the student do the assignment correctly?

Feedback on this item answers the question, Did the student do the assignment? An assignment is a communication from the course writer to the student: "If you want to learn what you need to know to acquire the skills and knowledge your program promises to teach you, please do this." The student's work is a response to this request: "Here's what you asked for." An instructor enters the conversation with an assessment of whether the student did the task: "We asked for __ and you submitted __." Feedback on whether a student submitted work in accord with instructions is basic. Instructors have to give feedback on this to complete the conversation about the assignment and as part of explaining a grade.

Sometimes it's a simple matter to answer this question: You identify each of the discrete elements of the assignment and read the assignment to see if the student completed the assignment as instructed. For example, if an assignment says to:

Review at least two of the online teaching and learning success practices in your readings. In an essay, summarize and evaluate the effective teaching and learning practices. Determine what elements make these practices successful. Include 3-5 scholarly sources to support your position. Length: 5-7 pages (app. 350 words per page)

You check to see if the student:

a) wrote an essay (as compared to, say, an outline or collection of notes),
b) addressed at least two success practices from the readings,
c) summarized the practices,
d) evaluated the practices,
e) identified the elements made the practices successful,
f) used 3-5 proper sources, and
g) wrote 5-7 pages.

If the student did what was asked, you say so, with applause, if not, you say what was missed or done incorrectly.

Sometimes, it's not a simple matter to answer this question. For example, if an assignment says:

Using the guidelines and resources provided for this activity, create an Annotated Bibliography consisting of the two articles listed as resources for this Activity.

Feedback would indicate:

a) whether or not the student wrote an Annotated Bibliography item on each of the two articles **and**
b) if the student used the guidelines and resources to write the entries.

Assessing a) is easy. Assessing b) requires you to read the entries in light of the guidelines and resources and indicate specifically how the student did or did not follow them.

Notice how these examples of feedback not only indicate whether a student did an assignment but help the student develop important habits useful in later work:

The habit of using the assignment resources when completing an activity.

Feedback example: "Lydia, in your paper, you referred to the contributions of Gardner to further the career of young psychologists. Did you notice, too, that the assigned article (Gardner, 2003) referred to his contribution of a new definition of intelligence? Carefully reading and taking notes on the assigned readings can help you prepare a top-notch paper."

The habit of applying the criteria laid out in an activity instruction.

Feedback example: "Jay, you did a fine job in identifying each psychologist and describing his main contribution to the field. I see, however, that you didn't mention the resistance that each encountered. Perhaps seeing how other psychologists dealt with resistance to their ideas and programs, yet persevered to become leaders in the field, might help you some day deal with your own career challenges? Also, please keep in mind that you need to cover all of the items that you are asked to address in the activity. Instructors are required to deduct points for incomplete answers."

Notice how the following bit of feedback shows how a really big thing—success in graduate school—depends upon success in a little thing—doing what a assignment asks.

Please note that these elements of the assignment are missing ____. Assignments are designed to help students meet course learning outcomes, so it's important to read and follow them exactly. A large part of success in graduate school (and most things in life!) is simply doing what you are asked to do. It is just as important to read assignments carefully as it is to read articles carefully or to pay careful attention when a supervisor gives you instructions. Creativity, critical thinking, and the like are very important, but these skills must be focused on addressing the assignment or task as given. If something is not clear, please speak up, in this and all other courses! Please use my You Can Book Me account to schedule a time to discuss your work. I think I can help!

The message to the student here is:

There's a deep reason why it matters if you do everything an assignment asks. It's not just that learning to do what assignments ask is important to earning a good grade. It's also that the habits of paying attention, taking care, and asking when you don't understand are vitally important to success in school and life.

2. Does the student understand the readings?

Graduate learning is essentially book learning. Graduate students, especially doctoral students, are on a path to becoming not just knowledgeable in a discipline, but also an authority on a topic area within a discipline. Our students

need the help of faculty in order to understand and enter meaningfully into conversations in their field. This help begins with faculty asking a simple, diagnostic question of every assignment they read: *Does the student know what he or she is talking about?*

Students cannot achieve their PLOs if they do not have a solid understanding of course readings. Period. Problems with reading comprehension are the root of poor writing, poor analysis, poor synthesis. **Being able to read graduate level material is essential to meaningful success in graduate school!**

One of your most important tasks is to assess whether and why a student misunderstood readings and provide feedback that addresses what you see as the root of the misunderstanding(s).

A very telling diagnostic question is:

Does the student know what she is talking about?

All schools have outcomes related to critical thinking and effective communication. These are outcomes because we believe that students generally do not enter Northcentral with these skills and have come here to acquire them. We promise that we will help them acquire these skills. These skills depend on the ability to read with understanding. This is not a program outcome, but many students are not good readers, and so you must help them with this too.

The foundational skills upon with success in graduate school and success in meeting the other program outcomes, then, are the ability to read with understanding, think critically, and communicate clearly and persuasively. This is the triad of skills that most feedback should address.

Ask yourself:

Do you believe the student's claims? Does she represent her sources accurately? Does she use reason and evidence (sources) to support her claims? Does she successfully marshal evidence (sources; and if appropriate, grasp of an entire body of literature) and reason to support claims?

If a student accurately represents the readings for an assignment or the literature in an area, point it out. Use your feedback to start a discussion about it, or point to a further resource. If a student makes claims that are not true or accurate, you must not leave the student with the impression that incorrect understandings and misrepresentations of a body of literature are correct.

To emphasize this point, here is the bottom line, minimal standard of all work with students: **Thou shalt not confirm students in their ignorance, errors, and misunderstandings**.

It is impossible to correct all misunderstandings, and it's always bad pedagogy to load a paper with comments on everything that is wrong. It is, though, always necessary to tell a student that there are errors and provide help in remediating some of them. To leave students with the impression that their understanding and knowledge are correct is the opposite of teaching!

Here are some ways assessment of reading skills can be tied to feedback:

If you assess a student to lack graduate-level reading skills, refer the student to reading resources in the Writing Center or resources you know of (please send links to cfe@ncu.edu so we can share them with your colleagues!). Indicate a general problem with accuracy and correct one or two misunderstandings as an example. Remember that feedback should always be sensitive, respectful, and non-judgmental. See example in Appendix B.

If you assess a student to possess graduate-level reading skills, but is just careless or mildly befuddled, explain and correct the error and if possible, refer the student to an outside resource on the topic. For example, "Although you make some key observations about Freire's work and life, you did not seem to understand the main tenets of Freire's philosophy in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This is a key work in the philosophy of education so it is important that you understand its main ideas. I recommend that you reread the section on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and then watch this short video on Freire: [insert link]. After you watch the video, I would love to hear your ideas on how his ideas are relevant in today's schools."

If the student has good understanding, start a conversation: "I agree Williams makes a strong argument for the importance of a well-articulated business model as a part of a business plan. You present his case very persuasively. But I wonder if you are both overestimating . . . "

Actually, start a conversation anytime you think can engage a student!

3. Is the communication clear and persuasive?

In the previous section, we made the point that graduate school learning is essentially book learning. The companion to this observation is: Graduate students show what they know and contribute to their fields through writing. Being able to communicate effectively in writing is a goal of our graduate programs, not a requirement for enrollment. We expect that students, by taking our courses, using

our support services, and following faculty guidance and teaching, will be able to write effectively by the time they near the end of their graduate studies.

Graduate school-level writing must succeed in two ways: It must be clear. It must be compelling. A successful essay makes sense and marshals reason and evidence to make a credible case for its points.

Clarity. ALL graduate students should write clearly, that is, so you can understand what they are saying! They do not all write clearly. Part of your job is to help them do so.

Enter into the "world" of a student essay. Get a sense of how a paper does or does not hang together. See each assignment as an argument: Words assembled to support one or more points. Read to see a student's mind at work on a task. Read past punctuation, grammar, and APA errors to ascertain the meanings the student communicates or tries to communicate and how the meanings are organized. Read work closely and ruthlessly. Do not generously credit the student with what you think they mean; evaluate what they *say*.

Reading an assignment carefully is a great and necessary gift to students. There's an excellent chance that our students have never had a *real* reader—a reader who seriously engaged and responded honestly to their work. As a consequence, many students may have false ideas about the quality of their writing and thinking and do not take seriously the task of developing and clearly communicating their ideas to an audience.

A close reading reveals what is and is not clear and compelling in a paper. To give effective feedback, use your knowledge of what works and doesn't work in a paper and your judgment of where a student is in the process of becoming an effective writer to determine the most important aspect of writing for a student to address.

Ask yourself: Does the writing make sense? Are the sentences clear?

For example, these sentences do not make sense:

The study only consisted on one subject, a pseudonym, called Steven.

You know she means: The study had only a single subject, whose identity was protected with a pseudonym. But what she said is nonsense: A study cannot be constituted of or on a pseudonym, and a subject cannot be a pseudonym.

The studies conducted find that a student's background, demographics, and his or her present academic abilities were important predictors of a student's ability to be successful in post-secondary education graduation with a higher percentage rate compared to those in adverse situations.

This shows that the student does not understand the research he's describing or even what research can do (with few exceptions, it doesn't allow you to make predictions about individuals).

Ask yourself: Are the sentences organized meaningfully into paragraphs? Paragraphs into wholes? The Writing Center material on the writing process defines what we mean by well-organized, effective writing.

For example, this is a collection of loosely related questions, not a proper paragraph:

> What are common core values of psychologists? The mental health profession has a set of values that are intended to create avenues for emotional and mental wellness while doing no harm to clients. What about individual counselors? What about client core values? Are they similar to the counselors? Do they differ, and if so, how much? How do counselor values and client values compare to an established ethical code of standards?

Persuasiveness. ALL communication in graduate school is persuasive communication. It is intended to convince the reader that the student author understands the readings (see above), can deploy the readings to support a point, and argue that a point is true or correct and worthy of serious investigation. Even a reaction or reflection paper requires substantive *reasons* in support of reactions or points of view. "I like what Freud said" is empty, a level of reaction that has no place in grad school. "I like what Freud said, because. . ." is the start of something that could be interesting. ". . . he was Austrian" is silly. ". . . his theory of defense mechanisms has some support from recent research. . ." is a graduate-level personal response.

How can you use your feedback to help your students improve the clarity and persuasiveness of their writing? The following tips are a start for faculty who are not used to teaching writing through feedback:

1. **Refer students to the Writing Center** material on the writing process. This material defines what Northcentral means by well-organized, effective writing.

2. **Become thoroughly familiar with the material available in the Writing Center** and use this material to inform your feedback. Students whose writing warrants a referral to the Writing Center resources will probably be working on their writing their entire graduate career. They will need faculty help in applying writing process ideas. Use the language of the writing process in your feedback. Use the ideas and materials in the Center to inform your guidance. Make specific suggestions about pre-writing, writing drafts, crafting and introduction, etc.

3. **Describe, don't judge**. For example, in response to this student sentence—"The study only consisted on one subject, a pseudonym, called Steven."—say something like: "This sentence says to me that the subject of the study was a fictitious *name*. I think what you meant to say was, 'The study had a single participant, whose identity was protected with a pseudonym.' Do you see the difference?" This helps the student see how her words come across and how she can make them clearer. Saying, "This does not make sense to me." or "Studies don't have pseudonyms or any other *names* as subjects." doesn't help the student improve.

4. **Give specific, explicit guidance** that the student can use. For example, if an essay lacks a thesis, simply writing "What's your thesis?" or "You don't have a thesis." probably will not help a student write an essay with a thesis. The student may not understand the concept of a thesis, how to identify one, or how to organize a paper around a thesis. Use your knowledge of what the student knows and needs to know to inform your feedback. Again, refer to material in the Writing Center to support your feedback.

Here is an example of feedback that helps a student use assignment instructions to create an introductory paragraph.

Dear Student,

Here's a suggestion that can help you write a stronger paper: Use the assignment instructions to develop an introductory paragraph that tells your reader what you will do in your essay. This is a neat way to ensure that your work fully addresses the assignment that also helps you communicate clearly and effectively to your reader. Here's how you can do this with this assignment.

The key directions in the assignment are: Choose key points in this chapter, explain them fully, and tell why you consider them important to the field. Finally, reflect on your own views on these ideas.

Here is a process you can follow to turn these directions into an introductory paragraph:

a. Decide which chapter ideas you will discuss. In a three page paper, two or three will be plenty.

b. Write down the points and the author's reasons in support of them.

c. Draft your reactions, giving reasons why you think the points you selected are important and why you agree or disagree with them. See the Prewriting Strategies in the Writing Center for help. This source can help you give powerful reasons for your views—The Discovering Ideas Handbook: Support Your Claims.

d. Once you've identified the points you will write about, your views on them, and how you will support your views, write a single introductory paragraph that has a statement that says what you will do in the paper. That is, announce that you'll be discussing points A, B, and C, briefly describe their importance, and indicate that in the rest of the paper you will further discuss these ideas, their importance, and offer your reflections on them.

By restating the activity directions, along with your main ideas, you will have prepared an introductory paragraph for your essay and informed the reader of what to expect in the rest of the paper! See "revising the draft for focus" in the Writing Center for help on developing a thesis sentence.

5. **Develop a tool box of writing guidance**. Draw on Internet resources for ideas. This document from Johns Hopkins University has excellent suggestions. You might include in your toolbox:

- examples of successful writing
- Writing Center articles
- online resources for students
- specific guidance for addressing common problems

6. **Be patient**. Writing well is hard. If your feedback is not successful, try another tool from your toolbox or schedule a conversation!

4. Is the writing correct in punctuation, grammar, word usage, and APA style?

This is the 4th and least important question. Helping students complete assignments as instructed, understand assignment readings, and write clear and persuasive essays are far more important. If a student doesn't understand the readings and cannot write clear organized sentences that make a case, why focus on problems with technical and style aspects of writing? There are bigger fish to fry! Identify a couple of errors, explain why they are wrong, correct them, and refer the student to Writing Center resources.

Feedback should *focus* on technical aspects of writing and APA only if the other elements are solid. If those aspects are not solid, in general, write one or two sentences about technical aspects of writing and APA to help explain the "style and convention" part of a grade, make one or two corrections with explanations or links to explanations, and refer the student to Writing Center Resources for Writers on clear and concise writing.

APA FAQs and Guides has links to APA style guides, grammar quizzes and guides, and lots of tips for faculty on effectively responding to writing. SmartThinking offers tutoring on writing mechanics and APA style.

Faculty should not correct writing or APA style beyond making one or two sample corrections WITH EXPLANATIONS to support the writing grade (from the rubric) and a referral to resources in the Writing Center. (If one of the goals of the assignment has to do with APA style, then, of course, give APA feedback appropriate to the assignment.) Make no corrections without explanations; feedback on all aspects of writing should feed forward—teach so that the student can do better on future work and move closer to meeting program learning outcomes. Explain or provide links to explanations for all corrections. And give specific, accurate praise whenever you can!

Rather than correcting every missing period or incorrect use of italics or citation error, try one of the following approaches:

1. Be honest. If there are many bigger and more important issues for students to focus on in their papers, simply tell them in your feedback that, although there are issues with punctuation, grammar, word usage and APA style, you want them to focus on other areas first and so you did not comment on these. You can invite students to contact you if they are interested in the APA mistakes they are making.

2. Read like a qualitative researcher. Read student work in its entirety before you make any comments on punctuation, grammar, word usage, and APA style. As you read, note commonalities among errors and comment only on the one or two most prominent.

3. Teach students to fish. When you comment on punctuation, grammar, word usage, and APA style, don't just correct errors. Teach students how to understand their errors and where to find relevant resources so that they do not repeat errors. For example, instead of saying, "This needs to be italicized," say, "Titles of journal articles should be italicized in a reference list. See p. 198 in the APA Manual for an example. Then, go through your reference list and make corrections."

4. Get to know Northcentral University resources. Send students to specific Northcentral University Writing Center writing and APA resources.

5. Create a Toolkit. Collect frequently used corrections in a file so that you can copy and paste comments. Combs, Onwuegbuzie, and Frels (2010) offer a list of the 60 most common APA errors, a description of each error, and the relevant page reference in the APA manual. Download the table from their article to your computer and use it today. Or be an action researcher and create your own table based upon your experience!

6. Outsource. There are many online services that help students automatically organize their citations and format their papers in APA style. Online citation management services such as RefWorks automatically generate citations and reference lists. APA software packages such as Perrla convert word documents to documents with correct APA formatting, headings, margins, citations, and reference lists. You can find more information about these in the NCU Writing Center.

Grade Fairly

A fair grade is an honest grade. An honest grade is accurate information about the quality of an assignment when judged against the Northcentral Rubric in the Writing Center. An appropriate grade is not:

- A way of indicating an assignment has been completed
- A means of developing self-esteem in students
- A way of avoiding conflict or criticism about the quality of feedback
- A warning
- A punishment
- A reward for effort or improvement
- Anything other than an indication of the quality of a particular piece of work as judged against the Rubric and the requirements of an assignment

Following is how the 4 questions all feedback should address map to the rubric:

70% Content
1. Completion of the assignment as instructed
2. Use and understanding of the assignment resources
3. Clarity and persuasiveness of writing

30% Presentation
4. Grammar, word usage and APA style

We recommend that you use this scheme to organize your feedback. This ensures that your feedback addresses the four items and provides a simple way to tie your teaching feedback to your grades and explanations of your grades.

Recommendations for assigning grades to graduate students

The A realm (90-100)—Generally excellent. The student did the assignment, used the assignment resources, understood the material, and wrote well. *Essays will never earn 100, because there is always room for improvement. 100 is reasonable for assignments that have correct answers (e.g., Statistics assignments) or that simply ask that a task be completed (e.g., submit a brief bio).*

The B realm (80-89)—Generally good, a respectable job, but with sometimes considerable though not fatal flaws: The student pretty much did the assignment; the writing is generally good, etc.

The C realm (73-79)—Generally poor, but just good enough for you to say the student succeeded in doing the assignment

The F (72-0)— In general, students only earn grades below 72 if they have not completed the assignment or if the the grade is the result of points deducted for late submission. *If you do grade below 72 for other reasons, please tell the student how you arrived at the grade*.

The 0 realm—the void of an assignment not submitted.

Key Grading Guidelines

Only assignments that have objectively correct answers (e.g., a statistics quiz) or that require a simple task (e.g., submit a brief autobiography—either the student does or doesn't do this) or parts of assignments that can be assessed by counting can earn a 100. There are no perfect essays.

Do not give a grade below failing, except as a result of points deducted for late submission. An F (72 for graduate students) is an F—"not acceptable." The rubric

gives no guidance on how to distinguish among degrees of unacceptability, and there is no pedagogical value in differentiating among degrees of unacceptability.

Explaining Grades

Reasonable, fair-minded people will disagree about the grade an assignment deserves. If you provide a plausible rationale for your grade and follow the two guidelines above, reviewers are unlikely to challenge your grading.

Your rationale or justification or explanation of your grade is how you communicate to a student what a grade means. This rationale is part of the grading process. A 92 or an 83 or 75 is information about the quality of an assignment as judged against the Northcentral Rubric, but without an explanation, only the instructor knows what it means! Briefly explain how you arrived at every grade. This also helps connect the grade to your feedback, letting the student know that your grading is not arbitrary.

Section 3: Know How to Give Feedback

Before You Begin Teaching a Course

1. Read the University and program mission, vision, and values statements. Everything the members of institution do should serve its mission. As you give feedback, keep in mind the university mission and what we want graduates of a program to be able to do and know. The program learning outcomes should inform all that you say. This doesn't mean that you always mention them, maybe you never do, but you should use them to guide what you choose to respond to and what you say.

Key language from the catalog:

From SBHS statements:

- acquire the knowledge, skills, and values integral to the behavioral and health sciences.
- improve the human condition through research and practice.
- build and appropriately apply skills related to a relevant knowledge base, research, critical thinking, communication, competencies, and values underlying SBHS fields.

As you read SBHS student work, ask yourself questions such as:

- Does this student understand the content of the course? Is he thinking like a psychologist/therapist? How can I help him develop?
- Does the student understand research? How can I help him understand this better?
- Is the student able to communicate his ideas? How can I help him communicate better?

From SBTM statements:

- Acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to achieve professional goals, contribute to the productivity of organizations and the local and global community, provide leadership that focuses on the emerging needs of organizations.
- Effective Leadership - knowledge, skill sets, and competencies
- Reflective Practitioner - critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation

- Effective Communication Skills - oral, written, computer, and interpersonal

As you read SBTM student work, ask yourself questions such as:

- Does the student understand the content this course teaches? Do they show leadership skills? How can I help them develop?
- Does the student show critical thinking and analytical skills? How can I help them develop these?
- Does the student communicate ideas effectively? How can I help them do this better?

From SOE statements:

- prepare professional educators at all levels to become effective leaders, reflective practitioners, and successful communicators

- Improve teaching, learning, research and leadership contributions throughout all levels of education

- apply concepts of the disciplines; effectively communicate; conduct sound, open-minded research by addressing issues critically and reflectively; create solutions to problems; respect diverse cultures and backgrounds; demonstrate a commitment to the highest ethical and professional standards; foster effective discussion of theoretical problems; and nurture a commitment to life-long learning.

As you read SOE student work, ask yourself questions such as:

- Does the student understand the content the course teaches? Research and leadership? How can I help them learn more?
- Does the student apply research findings, demonstrate critical thinking, make connections between theory and practice? How can I help them develop these skills?
- Does the student communicate effectively? How can I help them do better?

You need to understand the program learning outcomes to know how to help your students (eventually, step by step) get there. You also need to let them see their progress towards these goals. Wiggens (2012) uses this example to explain how important it is to use both short and long term goals in giving feedback:

> Let's look at how this works in sports. My daughter runs the mile in track. At the end of each lap in races and practice races, the coaches yell out *split times* (the times for each lap) and bits of feedback ("You're not swinging your arms!" "You're on pace for 5:15"), followed by advice ("Pick it up—you need to take two seconds off this next lap to get in under 5:10!").

> My daughter and her teammates are getting feedback (and advice) about how they are performing now compared with their final desired time. My daughter's goal is to run a 5:00 mile. She has already run 5:09. Her coach is telling her that at the pace she just ran in the first lap, she is unlikely even to meet her best time so far this season, never mind her long-term goal. Then, he tells her something descriptive about her current performance (she's not swinging her arms) and gives her a brief piece of concrete advice (take two seconds off the next lap) to make achievement of the goal more likely.

The ability to improve one's result depends on the ability to adjust one's pace in light of ongoing feedback that measures performance against a concrete, long-term goal (Wiggens, 2012: 16).

To learn from your feedback, students need to know both where they are now and their trajectory (where they are headed). The PLOs can help you show them what the goal is, and what they need to do to take the next step towards it.

2. Know NC's Pedagogical Approach: Applied Experiential Learning (AEL). Familiarity with the AEL approach will help you understand the rationale the curriculum designers used to write the activities in the syllabus. With this approach, NCU faculty are not only expected to help students learn content, they are expected to help students apply the content they learn and to reflect deeply on their learning. If you have questions about this approach, please contact the instructional design team: IDteam@ncu.edu.

3. Know the course sequence for each specialization and how your courses fit into it. Know what courses have come before and what courses come next. Look at the course descriptions in the catalog. Knowing what preceded the course you teach gives you an idea of what the student should know so you can recognize and address gaps. Teach to what's ahead. Have a sense of how your course fits into a larger program of study. Note that not all courses have a fixed place in a curriculum, but you can get a general sense of where your courses fit.

4. Know your course. Know the syllabus top to bottom—from supplemental readings to the didactic material created by the course author. Be alert to the sequence of activities and how they build on one another. *Know the readings so well that you can make the necessary and extremely important judgment of whether a student understands the readings*. Know the readings well enough so that you can see if a student used them to complete an assignment. You must know what a student is supposed to do in an assignment and how the assignment fits into the course and program in order to give effective feedback on an assignment. Syllabi and feedback serve course and program learning outcomes. A syllabus is a tool, an intelligent, informed determination of the activities and readings that will best help students achieve the goals of the course and, ultimately, the competencies of a degree program. Feedback is another, far more flexible and subtle, means of helping students meet course outcomes. It is the job of faculty to

use their wits, knowledge of the field, and interpretation of the goals to help students meet the course learning outcomes.

Own Your Courses

Ragan's first of the 10 Principles of Effective Online Teaching is "show up and teach." He strongly rejects the view that, "since most of the course is already authored and designed for online delivery, the instructor may believe they simply need to serve as the proverbial "guide on the side" as the students navigate the learning system." (p. 6) He argues that "of all the responsibilities of the online instructor, the role as "teacher," however that is defined, is the most critical." (p. 6).

So: Whether or not you wrote the courses you teach at Northcentral, you gotta own 'em. This may not always be easy, especially if you don't agree with a course's approach to the subject, but if you're teaching a course, it's yours! (Send suggestions for improving a course to Idteam@ncu.edu.)

- *Read the syllabus, top to bottom*.
- *Read all the readings*. Open all the links. Watch all the videos.
- *Review the assignments*. Anticipate problems students may have. Have in mind a picture of how you will "help the course" take the student from something like ignorance to something like mastery in the 8 or 12 weeks of the course.
- *Be proactive*. If you anticipate problems with the assignments, send your students an email. Give them tips and resources that may be helpful. Help them see the assignment as a chance to learn.

Feedback Begins with Assessment (Diagnosis)

Students cannot learn better, faculty cannot teach better, and an institution as a whole cannot better facilitate student learning without a (fairly) accurate assessment of current realities. If you don't know where you are, you can't take rational steps to get where you want to be: *If you don't have an idea of where a student is, you'll do a poor job of helping the student progress*. Feedback takes a student from the present to the future, from current knowledge, skills, and attitudes to a next level. This is basic, fundamental, and obvious in most areas of life. A piano teacher, for example, assesses a new student's playing or precursor skills (Can she sit still? Bend wrists easily?) before beginning instruction.

Brookhart (2008) wrote,

> Good feedback contains information that a student can use, which means the student must be able to hear and understand it. Students can't hear something that's beyond their comprehension; nor can they hear something if they are not listening or are feeling like it would be useless to listen. (p.2)

So several things must happen for students to be able to use our feedback—we must write it in a way they understand, we must have established a teaching relationship where they trust what we have to say, and they must choose to attend to the feedback. While the third of these is entirely beyond our control, the first two we can influence.

Assessment and Learning

Feedback must begin with diagnoses of the student's current understandings, skills, and abilities. The free e-book, How People Learn, is an excellent guide to recent research and theory on . . . how people learn. Everyone reading this guide should read the first few chapters. Its discussion of the role of prior knowledge in making sense of new knowledge shows how important assessment of students' prior knowledge is. Students use current knowledge and ways of thinking to make sense of new information. If current knowledge is flawed so will the understanding of new knowledge. If you don't know what a student knows, you don't know what or how to teach.

From How People Learn:

A logical extension of the view that new knowledge must be constructed from existing knowledge is that teachers need to pay attention to the incomplete understandings, the false beliefs, and the naive renditions of concepts that learners bring with them to a given subject. Teachers then need to build on these ideas in ways that help each student achieve a more mature understanding. If students' initial ideas and beliefs are ignored, the understandings that they develop can be very different from what the teacher intends. . . . . There is a good deal of evidence that learning is enhanced when teachers pay attention to the knowledge and beliefs that learners bring to a learning task, use this knowledge as a starting point for new instruction, and monitor students' changing conceptions as instruction proceeds. (pp. 10-11).

What this means is that you cannot respond appropriately to an assignment without considering what it tells you about the students' current knowledge. That needs to be what you base your instruction on. If you cannot reach the student where they are, you are simply not teaching.

Writing feedback a student can understand and use starts with assessment. Nicol and Draper (2008) wrote:

> In order to be effective, however, feedback needs to be perceived as relevant, and for this to be possible, the teacher would need to know something about the student – her prior level of understanding, her ability to use the feedback advice and, in an ideal situation, something about what emotional reaction the student might have to the feedback. (p. 3)

Before you give feedback, you must develop a picture of the student you are writing to; that is, you must assess the student's, motivation, skills, and knowledge on the basis of everything you know about the student.

Your feedback proceeds from your diagnosis. You need a diagnosis to determine:

- *What a student is likely to understand and be able to use*
- *What feedback is likely to be most effective in helping the student succeed in graduate school*

This is more or less what you have to ask yourself to come up with an assessment:

1. Attitude: Does the student have an attitude toward school and learning needed for success in graduate school? Does the student have a hungry mind or the attitude of doing the least to please the teacher to get a grade? Does the student "already know everything" and is just getting a piece of paper?

2. Reading: What reading skills does the student demonstrate? Does she accurately represent the key ideas in the readings? Can she engage and question a text? Can she synthesize and compare points of view?

3. Thinking: Can the student think critically? Analytically? Creatively? Is the student a concrete thinker, unable to extract a general rule or idea from particulars? Can she evaluate rationally? Synthesize ideas?

4. Writing: Can the student write a proper essay with an intro, thesis, flow, organization? Does the student see writing as a matter of communicating to an audience and as thinking, a way of figuring out positions on matters?

5. Knowledge: What can you assume that the student knows? Can you assume she knows what a run-on sentence is or what one typically learns in a clinical psychology program or what a research design is or how to write an annotated bibliography item or. . .?

After you've written feedback, ask yourself one question: Will ***this*** student be able to understand and use what I've written? That's it! Here's an example of how this question can help you write good feedback.

Read the following annotated bibliography entry from a student, pretending you are the student's instructor. (In this case, you don't need to have read the article on which the entry is based to assess this student's skills, knowledge, and dispositions.) Read the work to get a picture of the student. Ask yourself questions about the student's knowledge and skills based on this sample of his work. Can the student read and understand research articles? Does he understand the basic

components of an annotated bibliography entry? What are his reading skills? His writing skills?

Data compiled from researchers from Tufts University and Harvard Business School examine differences in performance between children ages 8-9 years old and children ages 10-11 years old using race relevant and race neutral testing perimeters. The test was sampled using 101 children both white and black middle and upper middle class families. The children were shown photos of people and were asked a series of questions to determine performance efficiency. The results yielded the conclusion that in fact the younger age group of children did outperform the older age group in social categorization experiments involving social prejudice.

Based on your assessment of the student: Which of the following pieces of feedback is the student likely to understand and use?

1. You did not comment on the relationship of this study to other works in the area, as the annotated bibliography example in the syllabus indicates. Please be sure to follow assignment instructions completely.

OR

2. Your annotated bibliography item misses some key points and contains errors. Many new students do not accurately and clearly summarize research studies. One reason is that research articles are difficult to understand because they are a completely new style of writing for many students. Think about it: Is it easier to read a novel or a chemistry textbook? Unless you are a chemist, you probably would be happier reading a novel. One reason is that you are used to novels. You know you will encounter characters, a conflict, a resolution, and a setting in a novel, and you look for these. Scholarly journal articles have specific elements too, and getting familiar with them will help you understand journal articles better. You will be reading journal articles for your entire career as a graduate student.

Your dissertation proposal will be built from annotated bibliography items. I strongly recommend that you commit yourself to mastering reading research articles! Part of your mastery will come from research courses, but much will come just from learning the conventions of research articles and refining your critical reading skills.

I recommend you read the Writing Center/Writing Handbook/*Critical Reading Strategies*, review the course resource "How to Read a Scientific Paper, and then take a shot at just summarizing the article, section by section. I think this will really help you get familiar with the parts of research articles. This resource, also called "How to Read a Scientific Paper," will put you on a path to being able to critique research articles.

I invite you to book a time to talk about this very important skill needed for success in graduate school. Succeeding in a doctoral program takes much work outside of your courses!

If you assessed this student as we have, you will hypothesize that the student has deficits in reading and writing and little experience reading research articles.

The first piece of feedback asks the student to do something he cannot do—compare the study to other studies—and which there is no point in his doing. He doesn't understand the study he wrote about, so it won't be helpful for him to compare a misunderstood study to other (likely to be misunderstood) studies.

The second piece of feedback directly addresses a hugely important skill the student needs to acquire in order to succeed in a doctoral program, which a diagnostic reading of his work clearly shows he lacks. This response speaks in a language the student can understand. For example, it minimizes jargon and uses a simple, clear analogy to make a major point. It offers specific, concrete guidance.

The second piece of feedback is based on the judgment that problems with reading comprehension and lack of familiarity with the conventions of research are the student's root weakness. It does not address everything the student needs to do to

become successful. The student has deficits in writing skills may need to develop proof-reading skills (and possibly a willingness to do this).

This is not the only effective feedback you could give to this student. You could ask the student to reflect on his learning: What obstacles did you encounter in doing this assignment? How did you address these obstacles? Were you successful? You could decide that focusing on writing skills was more important. You could help the student check his work. Whatever direction you choose, your feedback should be anchored at one end to an assessment of the student and at the other to knowledge of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes students need in order to succeed in their doctoral program.

See Appendix C for examples of diagnostic reflections on a piece of student work and feedback based on the diagnosis.

Finally, remember your assessments are hypotheses that you will test out over and over again throughout your work with students. This idea is discussed in more depth in the next section.

Experiment: Do Action Research!

Teaching through feedback is a craft informed by personal experience as much as by research and theory. Because every student is unique, faculty have to experiment with their feedback. Personal action research can provide a foundation for the never-ending process of improving the quality of your feedback. If a student is not improving as a result of your feedback, change your feedback! Action research can help.

Action Research

Action research is more or less formal research done by participants in a situation to address immediate, ongoing problems. In more prosaic terms, action research is learning from experience. It's having a goal, taking action to reach the goal, assessing if you've met your goal, and, if you haven't met your goal, trying something new and promising. If you want to get systematic, do your own action research and share your findings with your peers: keep track of relationships among student, situation (assignment, task), and intervention variables and outcomes!

Assessments (diagnoses) are hypotheses about a student's prior knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward learning. You make these hypotheses to in order to determine what feedback a student is likely to understand and use. The data you use to make your hypotheses are what a student writes and says to you. You can also draw on literature on adult students and your experience with other Northcentral students to do your best to reach tentative conclusions about a student's current state of knowledge, skill, and motivation.

Developing Hypotheses

Consider this opening paragraph in response to an assignment to "discuss the aspects of the chapter that you consider important and why. State what you think and give reasons in support of your view":

> Chapter two of the text (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006) introduced transference, counter-transference and seeking counseling as a counselor to avoid impairment and burnout. In this section, we will discuss the need for critical thinking through transference and counter-transference, counselor impairment, burnout, experience, honest self-reflection, and in-service training (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

If you read these 50 words in light of the previous section's guidance on assessment, you can generate a number of hypotheses about the student's attitude, knowledge, and reading, thinking and writing skills that will help you write feedback that the student can understand and use:

> The paragraph lacks a thesis sentence, so the student may not know how to write an introductory paragraph according to the Writing Center material on "revising the draft for focus."
>
> The student may not be familiar with the Writing Center material.
>
> The phrase, "we will discuss" is not proper academic-speak, so it's likely that the student is not proficient in using conventions of academic writing.
>
> The opening paragraph doesn't indicate why the student thinks the chosen topics are important, so it's likely that that student does not carefully read assignment instructions.
>
> The student may not know how to give reasons for why something is worth discussing and has poor higher-level thinking skills.
>
> The student doesn't place the chapter topics in a context of prior knowledge, but simply lists them, so the student may have limited prior knowledge of the material discussed in the chapter.

You could come up with half dozen more. All of them could be wrong! Maybe the student tossed the paper together in 45 minutes, and what appears as lack of skill and knowledge is actually an impressive effort to deliver "what the teacher wants" in a hurry! But, you need hypotheses to decide how to talk to the student and decide what feedback is likely to be most useful.

Taking Action

Once you've developed hypotheses, you use them to give feedback. You can't act on all hypotheses and not all are equally important. In the case of the student who wrote the two sentences, for example, it seems likely that the student has limited background knowledge on counseling, so you would phrase feedback in ways that do not require this knowledge. The student may be unfamiliar with academic writing terms, so you wouldn't use the phrase "thesis sentence" without explaining what it means and referring the student to the appropriate section of the Writing Center.

Testing Hypotheses

You can test a hypothesis by looking to see if the hypothesis holds when a variable changes. For example: You read one paper and conclude a student has serious deficits in writing skills. The next paper reads well, so you tentatively change your diagnosis to one of a problem understanding the readings in the first assignment.

You can also test a hypothesis with data from later parts of an assignment. The hypothesis that the student who wrote the opening paragraph knows little if anything about counseling would be supported if the student's entire essay is based solely on the assigned chapter.

You can test a hypothesis by looking at how the student responds to feedback based on an hypothesis. If your feedback works, your hypothesis might be correct. If it doesn't, your hypothesis probably needs to be revised.

You can improve the quality of your research by taking notes: Outline your assessment and note your interventions. For example, if you give feedback on how to write a thesis sentence, look to see if a later assignment has an improved thesis sentence. If it does, take the student a step further. If it doesn't, reconsider your hypothesis. Maybe the student could not understand your feedback or the Writing Center materials and needs help with reading. Wiggens (2012) points out that feedback only helps for learning if students get a chance to apply it. Show them how it can apply in the next assignment, and then see if they have done so. Appendix G includes a sample of a simple chart you could use to track your feedback. If you have a good system for tracking feedback and student responses, please let us know about it by emailing cfe@ncu.edu.

It's a good idea to encourage students to keep track of your feedback as well. You can discuss it with them in synchronous meetings to make sure they understand, or you could encourage them to keep a learning journal (possibly in blog form), where they document their assignment writing process, your feedback, and how they seek to apply it in the next assignment. One simple way to encourage them to track their progress is to note on the coversheet of each assignment how they applied your feedback from the last assignment.

Keep in mind that there is more than one way to change your feedback. It could be that you need to change the content of your feedback. It could also be that you need to change the format, as described in the next section.

Action research is simply a refinement of what all of us do every day. It's living life consciously and intentionally: thoughtfully characterizing something in the complex world we face every day, using that characterization to take action to achieve a goal, checking if the goal is met, and, if we don't meet our goal, revising our thinking and altering our strategies. Experimentation is part of the never-ending process of using assessment to improve the effectiveness of your feedback. If a student is not using your feedback to improve, you have to do something differently: reassess your diagnoses, change feedback, talk to the student. You can never blame the student or give up, though you may fail the student.

Make your feedback 'user-friendly'

Giving feedback that students will use is not just about what you say: *How* you say what you say matters a lot, too! There are simple things you can do, like organizing your feedback, using different feedback tools, keeping the message consistent, and making your feedback visually salient that can help you ensure that students know how to benefit from your feedback.

Organization

We recommend that you follow this structure for organizing your feedback: introduction/overview, a handful of brief margin comments, and corrections made with track changes. Think of this as the Teaching Through Feedback equivalent of APA manuscript structure. It has the same benefits as a manuscript structure. The author (instructor) has a template for creating coherent feedback, and the reader (student) knows what to expect in each section and can easily find what they want.

Introduction. The heart of your feedback is your introduction. This is where you identify the key strengths and weaknesses of a student's work, offer guidance and instruction on what to focus on to improve future work, and invite responses, questions, and conversation. As a general rule, your introduction should be no more than a page and often shorter.

The material in the introduction belongs at the beginning, not spread throughout the paper, because it is your primary message. If all you sent a student was your introduction, in most cases they could use it to improve future work and understand what they did well and what they did poorly on the assignment. The introduction can also be used to point out patterns and put margin comments in a broader context.

In general, your introduction should consist of 1-3 major feed-forward comments—comments that help the student see how to improve on future assignments. These comments address one or more of the four elements all feedback should address:

- assignment completion
- understanding of readings and concepts
- clarity and persuasiveness of writing
- presentation (grammar, usage, and APA).

As a rule of thumb, comment on all four areas, but focus your major feed-forward comments and guidance on a few key areas the student needs to address to achieve program learning outcomes and progress as a scholar. This introduction excerpt, for example, focuses only on one key area, the use of citations:

> While you've presented a compelling argument in support of your thesis that financials are the heart of a solid business plan, you don't support your ideas with sources. There is a body of work on your topic, and not referencing it diminishes the credibility of your paper. (And, by the way, proper support of claims helps keep you safe from plagiarism, though this is not an issue in this paper.)
>
> In this assignment you needed to support your ideas using references from the textbook and at least two peer-reviewed journals. I have highlighted each place where you have presented information and ideas without citing a source. In future assignments, please pay attention to supporting your claims and ideas with sources.
>
> One strategy I use is to outline the ideas for my writing, including in the outline the sources I will use to support each idea. That way I can quickly see before I start writing if I have support for my ideas.
>
> Please let me know if you would like to discuss any ideas or concerns you have regarding this or other comments I have included in the paper.

This example points out what the student has done well and identifies a major issue that the student needs to work on to improve their writing. It also gives an explanation of why the issue matters, points the student to examples in the essay, and suggests a strategy the student can use to improve their use of sources.

Your introduction should also justify your grading so that students can see a rational connection between your feedback and your grading. Because students often pay more attention to their grade than to anything else you write, pointing out the connection between your comments and the grade draws attention to the rest of your feedback.

Putting your main message in the introduction forces you to reflect on what you most want the student to take away from your feedback. The analogy with APA structure works especially well here: Your introduction, like an abstract, pulls together everything. And just as you would review your abstract to ensure that it captures the essence of the body of the paper, after you are done writing your feedback, skim the paper and read your feedback. See if your introduction addresses the most important issues the student needs to focus on next, is consistent with your margin comments and corrections, and is written in a way your audience—a particular student—understands.

Margin comments

Use margin comments to make specific points about elements of the text. Margin comments should support and extend (or at least not contradict or muddle) your introduction. For example, an introductory comment of "Great essay!" followed by margin comments correcting writing is confusing. A student may wonder, "What is true? Is the essay great or not?"

Do not make major, feed-forward points in margins, and if you do, repeat them your introduction. Major points are too important not to get top billing. Don't expect students to synthesize your various margin comments into a picture of what's good and bad about the paper and how to do better in future work.

Keep your comments to a handful. If it's hard to trace the comment to the text, you know you've written too many comments. If a comment spills out of its box, you know it's much too long. It can be tempting to comment on every error or problem, but too much feedback is as unhelpful as too little. Present comments selectively to help students know what they need to focus on.

Track changes

Use track changes only to edit text. Don't use it to make comments in the text. Track changes comments written in the text are hard to read, and, by breaking up the flow of the text, make it difficult for the student to understand how the text was flawed, as in the following:

Theoretical values It's odd to talk about values as if they are people. See if you can reword this, perhaps by including a human subject (e.g., 'Theoretical values are prized by researchers who') seek the truth and take pride in being objective and rational by allowing the data and findings to make accurate statements (Johnson, 2012). Economic Again, can 'economic' identify? This doesn't make sense. Carefully consider your wording. I find I proofread better when I read my work aloud a day or two after I draft it identifies usefulness as the most important factor being interested this is unclear, perhaps 'because they are interested only in') only in production, marketing, economics, and accumulating wealth (Johnson, 2012). Harmony is the focus of aesthetic British spelling values and bases the experience on Consider using "in" symmetry (Johnson, 2012).

If you make a correction, use a margin comment to explain what's wrong with the student wrote and right about what you say. Making a correction without an explanation, even a correction as minor as changing a period to a comma in a reference, is a waste of your time. Corrections without explanations don't teach. Like margin comments, it's best to keep minor in-text corrections focused on one or two areas for students to pay attention to in later assignments. There is no point in trying to fix every error, as students cannot learn everything at once, and excessive text edits can distract the student from bigger, more important matters, such as organization and argumentation.

Often faculty members pick one way of giving feedback (summary comments, margin comments, track changes) and only give feedback that way. Each of these ways of giving feedback has merits, but also limitations. Using all three in concert with a consistent organizational strategy provides students with user-friendly feedback they can understand and apply.

Consistency

Your feedback should stay "on message." It's important to make sure that your margin comments and in-text edits don't distract from your main message.

For example, if your introductory comments ask the student to focus on effective organization of ideas, giving a lot of feedback on grammar errors or APA formatting distracts attention from your main point. Students can't learn everything at once, so there is no point in correcting everything at once. Rather, guide students by using your feedback to shine a light on a few focused areas at a time.

A simple strategy you can use to improve the consistency of your feedback is to preview your margin comments and track changes corrections in your introductory comments. Explain how the feedback they'll see as they review the assignment relates to your points in the Introduction. You might write:

One really positive aspect of this essay is your strong thesis sentence in the first paragraph (which I underlined). You clearly indicated the stance you will take in this essay. One thing you can do to build on this throughout the essay is to write paragraphs with topic sentences that support your thesis. See the Writing Center>Writing Handbook>Drafting for more on this topic and on the difference between thesis and topic sentences.

Some of your paragraphs contain ideas that provide support for your thesis, but others actually contradict it and some are not relevant. I have commented on each paragraph below, so look at my comments to see whether the paragraph supports your thesis or not.

For your next essay, try this: After you have written a first draft, identify your topic sentence and the main idea of each paragraph. Check back to make sure that the main ideas support your thesis. You can find additional resources to help you think about this aspect of writing by going to Writing Center> Writing Handbook >Pre-writing strategies and drafting.

Let me know if you have any questions on this feedback or would like to discuss it!

The student knows from reading the introductory comments both (1) what major concerns to focus on and (2) how the feedback that follows will help them in this area.

Tone

Engage your students with a friendly, relaxed, and positive tone. Friendly, constructive, and encouraging feedback sends a student the message that they can improve. Belittling feedback ("As I told you before"; "This is not graduate-level work") and excessively negative feedback demotivate students. Effective feedback, however, must identify weaknesses and errors. Don't confuse identifying errors and explaining how to improve with being negative, or saying only "good" and encouraging things with teaching.

To keep your tone friendly, it may be helpful to think of feedback not as the final word, but rather as a conversation opener. If feedback is framed as you telling the student what to do, the active role that students must play in making sense of and applying your feedback is diminished. Instead, treat feedback as the beginning of a dialogue.

Encouraging students to ask for clarification as needed and to share responses to feedback opens up an avenue of communication that helps students actively engage with and apply feedback. Using feedback to encourage communication also helps students get to know you better, further building trust in the teaching relationship.

Appearance

Students are more likely to read feedback that's easy to read! Use color, headings, line breaks, and bullets to highlight points and topics and break up your summary text. Yes, colors! Use colors (avoiding very pale and very bright colors) to emphasize key terms. Like this:

I hope you feel more engaged and connected to the University, can envision your educational success at NCU, and can continue to use my feedback on your course activities to help you honestly self-evaluate in order to set goals for skills you would like to work on as you continue in your program.

And this:
Immediate goals have 3 parts: what, how will I measure it, and by when. See my comments below and think about these 3 parts as you write immediate goals.

When giving feedback, it's important to consider both what you are saying and how you are saying it. Providing the best feedback possible will not promote learning if students can't find, trust, or understand your feedback! Don't forget that all feedback must be premised on an assessment of the student. You may find that it makes sense to modify some of the guidance in Parts One and Two in order to speak most effectively to a particular student.

Section 4: Teaching-Learning Relationships

Your Relationship with a Student is the Soil in Which Your Feedback Takes Root and Blossoms into New Skills and New Understandings

The prose may be purple, but it speaks to the most ancient and deepest element of teaching: Teaching is a *relationship* between a teacher and a student. Your best feedback means naught to a student who is not interested in learning from *you*. For feedback to be effective, a student has to read, understand, and care about using it. For a student to want to use your feedback, you must create and nurture a relationship with the student.

Relationships take time, energy, and care. Teaching through feedback takes time, energy, and care. There is no way around this. Teaching through feedback takes time to pay attention to another person, to try to see who the other is, how the other sees self, and to speak to that particular person in way the person can understand and use. Pamela Hieronymi argues that the work of educators, like the work of coaches and personal trainers, is to train minds to make use of information and ideas rather than to fill students with ideas. This process takes time, She states, "the core task of training minds is labor-intensive; it requires the time and effort of smart, highly trained individuals. We will not make it significantly less time-consuming without sacrificing quality." We propose that one of the first steps in training minds is building relationships with students.

Part of building an effective teaching relationship is invisible. This is the part that happens in your head as you read a student's work and listen as a student talks and you ask yourself: Who is this person? What does she know? What can she do? What is her disposition to learning? How can I most effectively communicate to her?

Your answers to these questions and your commitment to student learning are expressed in the visible part of building and maintaining a relationship: Your communications to a student. Faculty who do the following are very likely to build effective teaching relationships with students:

- Send an email prior to each assignment with general tips or specific guidance on avoiding problems
- Invite and seek out conversations with students
- Send emails with thoughts on a student's work or topic area of dissertation research. You don't have to do this only when sending on feedback
- Use video feedback tools, such as screenr and jing
- Make it easy to schedule appointments
- Establish credibility by giving clear, useful, and correct feedback

Building a relationship with a student and teaching a student are inextricably intertwined. Wiliam (2012) points out that a positive teaching relationship creates

a safe place for students to stretch themselves. It provides a place where students can make mistakes and get help. Your relationship motivates a student to use your feedback and learn from it, so developing a positive relationship with each student provides the foundation for teaching through feedback. Below we discuss several key points of communication between faculty and students and how these can be used to build relationships.

Welcome Letter

Your welcome letter may be the most important communication you make to your students. It establishes expectations, informs of vital information, and most importantly, welcomes students into a teaching relationship that is the basis for their learning for 8 or 12 weeks.

Take care to compose it carefully and thoughtfully. See the Welcome Letter Guide. Be sure to include How to Benefit from Feedback with your letter. Most students have never received the kind of feedback you will give! Many will not know how to use it. Some will be taken aback by it.

Please, in your welcome letter, begin to educate students on how to use feedback. Teaching Through Feedback asks a lot of students as well as of instructors. It's very important to educate students on the kind of feedback you will give, why you give it, and what you expect them to do with it. See the welcome letter guide, section B for ideas on how to do this.

First Week Call

Another very important way that you build a relationship and teach is through synchronous communications—e.g., phone, Skype, chat—especially during your required first conversation with a student. Here are a few tips for making your first conversation effective and engaging.

Build a relationship: During your initial phone conversation, focus on building a relationship. Welcome the student to your course. Thank the student for taking the time to talk to you. Get to know the student. Get to know the student's motivations and interests, concerns, self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses, and so forth. Ask questions about the student's educational and professional aspirations and talk about how your course fits into this picture. Use the phone call to help the student envision being a member of an academic community.

Share something of yourself. You might share with the student what getting a Master or Ph.D. degree meant to you and how completing the degree helped you professionally.

Structure the call: Remember that you are initiating the call for a purpose: to offer the student a relationship with you that they can build on to succeed in school!

Take charge of the call and be clear to the student what you hope to accomplish with the call. Here are four reasons consistent with teaching through feedback that you can give for why you invited the call:

1. To get to know the student so that you can better teach the student.
2. To open a communication channel that you hope the student will take advantage of throughout the course.
3. To encourage the student to use your feedback. See next section for more on this.
4. To begin to develop a relationship with a student in which you are a mentor/guide to the student in the student's graduate school career. This may be only for the duration of the course. . . or for a lifetime!

Inform the student of a time limit—say, 15 to 20 minutes—so that limits are clear and awkward endings avoided.

Encourage the student to use your feedback: Explain your role in the course: to teach, not just to grade. Remind the student to read "How to Benefit from Feedback and Critiques of Your Work," which you sent with your welcome letter. Encourage the student to ask questions about your feedback, to give you feedback on your feedback, and to request more feedback. You can suggest that your students ask themselves: Does the feedback help me understand what was good and not so good about my work and give me guidance that I can use to succeed in the course and in graduate school?

Talk up your course: Share your excitement about your course! Mention a few things you really like about the course and what you hope the student will learn from it.

Be approachable: Be personal. Be professional. You may encounter unhappy students who are quite vocal about their displeasure. Although it might not always be easy, it is important that you always respond professionally and respectfully. If you can help solve the student's problem, please do so. If you can't, please point the student to resources or someone who can help.

Requirements for Student Contact

Please read the Faculty Handbook, Section Seven, Faculty/Student Contact, for current requirements for faculty student contact. Use You Can Book Me or another free online tool to make it easy for students to make an appointment with you. Use Skype or another free synchronous service so your students can see you and vice-versa

Teaching Presence

The term has more than one meaning in the literature, but at NCU it refers to two things:

1. Everything you do to present yourself to students as a living, breathing individual. It means that YOU, not a façade, not a facsimile of a professor, not a remote wise person, but YOU, a real, caring, teacher with a personality, is present. It means that you inhabit your words and speak to each student as an individual, not as a "graduate student." Who you are as a person comes through in your words. You are present in your words.

2. Being literally present: Schubert-Irastorza and Dee L. Fabry (2011) drew the following as one of their conclusions on how to improve student satisfaction with online teaching:

> *Be actively present.* The instructor needs to be a strong presence in the virtual classroom. Students want to know that the instructor is there and cares about them and their learning. They need to feel that the instructor is actively participating in the course and is readily available for assistance. Establishing a relationship early in the class, maintaining and nurturing that relationship by using the full complement of interactive online teaching tools, and responding promptly to all communications are key factors for ensuring student satisfaction. (p. 176)

Remember, your students don't see you in class. If you are not maintaining communication online, you are invisible to them.

One way to be present in both of these senses is to keep regular contact with your students. This does not need to be course related and can be quite simple. For example, some faculty members send a weekly email to all students on Thursdays or Fridays with a short personal message and a reminder of assignment due dates. This keeps them visible to students between assignment due dates. For students who have missed deadlines, it's especially important to reach out. Often a small misunderstanding can be resolved, which prevents bigger problems from developing.

Be Proactive

Send out emails before an assignment is due. These emails can contain general tips or specific guidance on avoiding problems. For example, if writing in the active voice is a particular challenge for a student, send a reminder to use the proper voice and provide a statement in both voices to make the difference clear. Outline key components of an assignment. Provide examples. Nicol & Draper (2008) report on a study showing the powerful effect of two sentences (!) included as part of feedback:

A recent study by Cutts and Draper (2008) confirms the importance of focusing students on the idea that ability is incremental and depends on effort. In a computer science class under controlled conditions they found that inserting the following comment on a feedback sheet for first year students raised performance of the treatment group by 5% compared to a control.

> *Remember, learning to program can take a surprising amount of time and effort – students may get there at different rates, but almost all students who put in the time and effort get there eventually. Making good use of the feedback on this sheet is an essential part of this process. (p. 9)*

Suggest that a student keep a journal to record learning, questions, musings. Some students have done this through blogs, wikis, and livebinders, which are great ways to get input and encouragement from around the world. If your students choose to do this, remind them to keep sensitive information, such as answers to objectively graded assignments, private. See below for information to send to your students about using these tools for reflection. Perhaps you will use one yourself!

Web Publishing Tools For Faculty and Students

Blogs: Blogs are like journal or diaries online. They allow faculty and students to post and organize entries that include reflections, thoughts, or other information about their learning or experiences in the program. Authors can allow others to comment on their entries making this platform more interactive than a written journal. You can sign up for a free blog at: www.blogger.com

Wikis: Wikis are like personal websites that are easy to create and do not require one to have any knowledge of how to write code. Faculty and students can post reflections, thoughts, information, papers, research, pictures, etc. You can sign up for a free wiki at: www.wikispaces.com

LiveBinders: LiveBinders is a website that allows students and faculty to keep virtual 3-ring binders. Students and faculty can store and organize resources from classes or research here and can share with others. To sign up for a free LiveBinder go here: www.livebinders.com

Start Conversations

Many students have narrow ideas about what a teaching-learning relationship is. They only communicate to an instructor by submitting assignments. They don't ask questions; they don't call; they don't chitchat. . . They submit eight assignments, take their grade, and move to their next course.

Absolutely, do not lock yourself into thinking that the only possible pattern of interaction with students is a sequence of assignments submitted and assignments responded to. Invite conversation. Start a conversation. Send an email with a

thought about the student's work on a previous assignment, or share information on a topic you think will interest the student. . . See what happens. Conduct conversations on email or synchronously. Ask questions. Suggest additional (non-graded) tasks like interesting books or articles to read. Write a blog and invite students to visit and comment!

Nicol and Draper (2008) argue turning feedback into a dialogue is key to students using feedback. Effective feedback is a conversation about student work. Ask students questions about your feedback. Ask if it helps. Ask what might help. Ask them to do things in response to your feedback in addition to the course. Make it clear that this work is optional and doing it or not has no bearing on grades.

Tone

All feedback should be respectful, engaging, personal, and professional. The watchwords for the tone of all of guidance are: *polite*, *gentle*, *firm*. PGF! Instructors and reviewers should "speak" politely and respectfully and be encouraging and point out positives, firm in holding to standards, and honest and direct. They should never scold, pick fights, belittle, or show exasperation or impatience. Instructors should address students by their first names.

Good examples:

- You discuss the first three, but you don't use any outside resources or mention any Northcentral resources. [This is a neutral, straightforward description of what elements of the assignment the student did and did not complete.]

- Good, but you mention only one outside resource to support your views. You do mention Northcentral Resources but don't address this—"Which resources do you feel comfortable accessing? Where do you feel you'll need more support from Faculty Mentors and Advisers?" One big purpose of the course is to encourage students to evaluate their skills and determine what they need to work on in order to get the most out of their Northcentral education. [Neutral, straightforward, with an explanation of how doing the assignment helps the student succeed.]

Bad examples:

- You didn't read the assignment very carefully
- This is something that all students should know by now
- Good job! (This is not respectful. It is vacuous praise. It is disrespectful in its assumption that the student is not interested in learning what exactly is good about their work!)
- I told you in my feedback on your last paper that this is not how to write an introduction.

As a faculty member, you may have encountered student work that makes you incredulous. You may even feel like that the only possible response is "Are you serious?" However, you don't have that luxury. As a professional in higher education, your only option is to use a professional, but and friendly, tone in dealing with your students. As a faculty member, it is your job to shorten the gap between where the student currently is and the learning target. Comments you make may not be always received in the manner in which you intended them, but if they are professional in tone, they will at least do no gratuitous harm.

Most faculty members do this well, but occasionally they stray. For instance:

Message sent to several students:

I am seeing that you are not incorporating my feedback. I was wondering what the benefit is of giving such detailed feedback. Theoretically, a grade without any feedback could do.

This is an example of the importance of tailoring one's words to the online learning environment. Said in a classroom, where everyone can see your mannerisms and hear the tone in your voice, this comment might be considered edgy, but still appropriate. You would be able to see students' reactions to your comments and guide the discussion towards an appropriate explanation of your thoughts. In a classroom setting you might get away with such a statement, especially if you react appropriately to the students' feelings about this feedback.

However, the online environment is very different. Students cannot hear your tone of voice or see your facial expressions and hand gestures. You can't gauge their response in real time and adjust. So an online student reading that message is quite likely to be offended and may likely not want to read your feedback. They also may consider that it's not professional to complain about your students to your students.

Student's comment on the cover sheet: I had planned to work on this paper on my days off this week, but you may have heard about the three teens who were murdered Wednesday here in Chicago. As a result, the Major Crime Task Force (which I'm on of course) was activated. I just got home a couple of hours ago and put together this paper as best I could. Surprisingly, I feel like it turned out okay.

Faculty response: Thanks for meeting the due date, and you are right, the paper did indeed turn out okay. So now maybe you could work on making that gang violence up there turn out okay.

If the student had brought the paper to your office, and he was looking disheveled and tired, but also relieved to be handing in the paper by the deadline, that

response would probably have been received with a laugh as the student would see you were trying to soften the situation with some levity. In a face-to-face situation, far more information is conveyed (and received) by both participants. Online, where the learner cannot hear your sympathetic tone and expression and might find your comment offensive. For the online environment, a better response that would still show you are acknowledging the student's situation might be:

It sounds like you completed this paper after a very stressful week. Thanks for meeting the due date, and you are right, the paper did indeed turn out okay.

Students have a luxury that faculty members don't. They can be more casual in the comments they make to you. A student may say something like: "Whew! That was a lot of work. I'm still not really satisfied with it, but I'm going to turn it in just to transfer the agony from myself to you!" As a faculty member, you may be tempted to say: "Whew! You're right. It was agony reading this work." But, you simply can't say that, even in jest. It's neither professional nor supportive of learning.

Blowback, Misunderstandings, Complaints. . .

Teaching through feedback can be as demanding of students as it is of faculty. Many students are used to getting inflated grades, false praise, and little or no guidance. You will give fair grades, accurate assessments, and lots of feedback that challenges students to improve. Some students may prefer what they are used to. Some may complain. Stay calm. Stay the course. Respond didactically to complaints. Remind students of your responsibilities. Remind them of the commitment the university has made to them in designing a curriculum and providing well-trained and skilled experts to help them meet the PLOs of the program in which they seek to obtain graduate degree.

Section 5: Feedback as Affordances

Many things in the world are affordances, objects, ideas, or opportunities we can use to do something with. Teachers provide affordances. Teachers can't make anybody do anything or know anything. Their words are not magic. Knowledge does not exist in sentences that pass from eyes into brain where it joins other bits of knowledge. As educational theorists and researchers have been saying for years, knowledge is constructed. Students make sense of your words as they will, as we all do of everything.

The task of a teacher is to offer affordances that, based on an assessment of a student, knowledge of how people learn, and knowledge of course readings and the field and the curriculum seem to have a good chance of being used by the student to move toward mastery of PLOs.

Your words should be pitches, well-lobbed, easy and smoothly in the center of a particular student's strike zone, as best you can. Pitches that may go over the head of one student, are easy home runs for another.

What Amount of Feedback is the Right Amount?

What you say is a lot more important than how much you say (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Schute, 2007). That said, there is a balance to giving feedback. If you give too little feedback, the student doesn't have information to work with as they seek to improve. If you give too much, the student doesn't know what to focus on, and may put effort in fixing minor issues rather than attending to big picture problems with understanding or writing. Chappius (2012) points out that "too much corrective feedback at one time can cause a student to shut down, guaranteeing that no further learning will take place." (p. 39) To be effective, you need to give enough feedback for the student to see what they've done well on and where they need to improve next, but it needs to be focused. We don't learn everything all at once, so there is no point in correcting everything at once.

What you are looking for then is balance and focus. It may be helpful to read through the assignment one time focusing on the big picture, What are the most significant issues? What change would have improved the assignment the most? What major understandings/misunderstandings does the student evidence. Based on your impressions, note 1-3 major areas to focus your feedback on: these 1-3 areas are your teaching points. Now read through and comment primarily on these areas. Discuss these issues in your introductory comments and use margin comments to exemplify. Remember to consider assignment completion, understanding, ideas and writing when developing your teaching points.

Your main work in giving feedback should not be in writing lengthy comments, but in diagnosing a student and thinking how to write feedback that seems to have a

good chance of being effective. Use your diagnosis to judge how much feedback a student can use.

Be careful in specifying your 1-3 teaching points. They need to be specific enough that students can reasonably be expected to apply them, and meaningful enough that if they do apply them, it will make a difference in their writing and understanding. Consider the following example:

"You have a lot of great ideas in here, but it's hard to follow your work. You need to focus on your writing so it's more clear to the reader".

This is much too broad to be helpful. Writing is a very complicated, multi-faced construct. Students cannot simultaneously improve every aspect of their writing—it's simply not how we learn to write. If you notice that the student has included interesting ideas, but the writing is hard to follow, look more closely to define the problem. What is wrong with the student's writing? Is it poorly organized, so there is no logical flow and is repetitive? Is it missing transitional phrases, so it's hard to follow the flow of ideas? Is the student using overly long and complex sentences, obscuring meaning? Are there lots of grammatical errors and poor word choices? Is it written too informally, as we speak?

Most likely, there will be more than one of these issues. That's ok! They can't learn it all at once, so you need to choose what you will focus on first. This is where you need to think about what feedback can help make a meaningful impact on their work.

Our first instinct is often to focus on what is easiest to fix, not what is most important to fix. If an essay is poorly organized so we can't follow the point, it doesn't matter if the grammar is flawless. Organization is a more fundamental issue, so it's probably a better place to start. For this student, you want to write feedback that acknowledges the range of issues to work on, while still focusing on what they needs to work on next, as in the example below.

Hi Jeff. You've made a lot of good points in the essay, particularly your discussion of Gardner's theories. I've highlighted below a few places where you use resources particularly well to support your ideas. These ideas though are obscured at times because the writing is quite disorganized. For example, you mention ideas related to kinesthetic intelligence in four different paragraphs, rather than gathering them together to make a stronger point. While there are also issues with connecting your ideas and grammar in your writing, it would help you most at this point to focus on organizing your work carefully. I do this by outlining my ideas before I write. That way I can plan what each paragraph will focus on, and how it will add to the essay, and make sure information is grouped so my writing does not become repetitive. I invite you to send me a quick outline (bullet point format) of your next essay before you begin writing to let you practice this.

This lets the student know there are many issues to work on, but focuses him on one specific issue that he can work on. If his organization is better in the next essay, you can compliment him and point him to another aspect of his writing. The point is that each time you give him feedback, you are providing enough to make an impact on assignment quality but not so much that your student is overwhelmed.

Praise?

Teachers do more than feed students' minds. They also motivate students and help increase their enthusiasm for working to reach a goal. However, praise, which is popular among teachers of students of all ages, is not the best way to do this. Praise can have benefits for some students in some circumstances, but is generally not an effective way of building relationships or motivating students or developing autonomous learners. What does motivate adult students? Two things: engaged teaching and positive feedback.

Praise is:

- "an act which attributes credit to another [person] for some characteristic, attribute, skill, etc., which is positively valued by the person giving feedback" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 186).
- "the act of expressing approval or admiration; commendation" (Dictionary.com)

The literature on providing effective feedback makes it clear that praise can be harmful and its beneficial effects are contingent upon *a lot* of variables—so many that faculty cannot know when praise might work.

Variables that moderate the effect of praise on motivation include: age, gender, and culture, the self-esteem of the (mature) student, the object of the praise (personal characteristics, process/effort, accomplishment), perceived sincerity, and mindset of recipient. Using praise to mitigate the negative effects of criticism can muddle teaching points and confuse students. Extrinsic rewards, including praise, can undermine intrinsic motivation, at least sometimes. Some studies support the view that praise promotes self-esteem while creating dependency.

There is a body of research supporting the idea that praising effort (something a student can control) motivates, but praising intelligence (some a student cannot control) doesn't. But the positive effect of effort praise may only hold for students who believe that effort and ability are related, may only work at early stages of skill development, and may backfire, as some students understand it as implying that their ability is low.

Schute (2007) advises to "use praise sparingly, if at all" (p. 31). Kluger and DeNisi (1996) write that "Butler (1987) and others have noted that use of praise as feedback directs the learner's attention to self, which distracts from the task and consequently from learning" (p. 31). Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe praise (as, as "a controlling strategy that often leads to greater surveillance, evaluation, and competition, all of which have been found to undermine enhanced engagement and regulation" (p. 84). Perceiving praise as underserved can "lead to increases in self-handicapping strategies" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 95). Hattie (2012) points out that when praise and feedback is given, students tend to read the praise and ignore the feedback.

Engaged teachers motivate

Teachers motivate primarily by how they present themselves/who they are/how they engage students. Their attitudes towards learning, respect for and care about students, the seriousness with which they take graduate school work, the usefulness of their feedback, their enthusiasm for their work and belief in their students, these are what motivate. Perceived competence, genuine interest in students, passion about the subject, knowledge of the subject area at a personal level affect motivation. Adults want to become competent:

> When they have evidence (through feedback) of how well they are learning and can make internal statements, such as "I really understand this" or "I am doing proficiently," adults experience feeling of efficacy and intrinsic motivation because they are competently performing an activity that leads to a valued goal. (Motivating adult learners, p. 10).

Effective, attentive, caring, engaged teaching motivates adult learners.

Positive feedback motivates

Positive feedback calls on faculty to identify real strengths and accomplishments and to discuss them in relationship to program outcomes and skills expected of graduate school graduates. Even when an assignment has weaknesses, it is possible to identify something a student did well and let them know how they can build on it.

Let's say you receive an assignment from a student that is mostly just strings of direct quotations. This is clearly not good academic writing. But, assuming the student has provided correct citations for the quotes and used quotation marks and formatting correctly, it does show evidence of proficiency with APA style. You can affirm the student's use of APA and adherence to academic integrity standards. Then you can teach about the standards for academic writing and point out how the student can move forward by working on paraphrasing, rather than quoting, and by synthesizing ideas from various sources.

Positive Feedback Contrasted With Other types of Feedback

These examples may help to clarify what positive feedback is and how it differs from other types of feedback.

Praise: "Good job." "Super work." "I really like what you've done." "You really nailed the assignment!"

False praise: Praise that is not true.

Feedback sandwich. "Great job on this assignment. I really like what you did with Freud. Next time, please review the APA manual and work on your in-text citations. Your conclusion really made me feel that you know your sources!"

Many teachers advocate a sandwich approach to feedback: Open with praise, offer a piece of constructive criticism, end with praise. Positive feedback is not a sandwich of praise and constructive criticism *minus* the two slices of praise.

Positive feedback includes constructive criticism and "positive" statements, but it is more complex than constructive criticism, as the bullet points above and the example below show. Essentially, positive feedback teaches by identifying and affirming strengths and progress, informs about learning goals, and offers guidance on how to move closer to meeting goals.

Positive feedback is much more like, and in some ways is identical to, a master's guidance to an apprentice: "The way you've roughed out the leg on the lathe shows you have the basic skill of turning. But look at how you've knurled this part. The pattern is inconsistent. To get the pattern right you have to move the knurling tool slowly left to right. See the detail here? This is what a proper Louis XIV chair leg looks like. . .

Negative feedback. "This is poor work." "You're required to submit your work in APA style. Why did you not?" "The writing so far is below the standards expected at the graduate level. I would recommend that you contact the NCU Writing Center."

Poor positive feedback. "I thought you did a very good job with the critical thinking in this paragraph and demonstrated both conceptual understanding of the ideas and of how to look at the literature."

This is poor feedback because it does not say what exactly is good in the work (what in the paragraph shows good critical thinking), it is vague on key points (what is a "conceptual understanding of ideas" as opposed to some other kind of understanding), and offers nothing the student can use to improve.

"[The assignment instructions copied verbatim.] You've done some, but not all of what was required. You've also not quite followed the format requirements of APA. You can do most of APA editing using MS Word."

This is poor feedback because repeating the assignment instruction conveys no new information. Telling the student that they completed "some, but not all of what was required" does not help the student understand what they did well and what they did poorly on.

Positive Feedback: Julie, I noted real improvement in your paraphrasing. When you started the course, you relied heavily on quotes and almost never put authors' word in your own terms. Your hard work has really paid off! For example, [here] you represent Smith's position on random taxation accurately in your own words! And [here] you correctly use a brief direct quote—Smith says this perfectly and the quote powerfully bring home your point that random taxation is only effective in developing economies. As we discussed, your next task is to become better at grasping the essential characteristics of authors' positions so that you can better compare and contrast them so be able to sum up what is known and not known in your area of random vs. meretricious taxation.

The feedback in this example reaffirms the importance of paraphrasing, points out progress, and helps the student see what to focus on next to continue to improve her writing.

Positive feedback: "You have found sources that explain a wide range of issues related to IT security, and it has really paid on if the quality of your literature review. You've discussed each issue clearly and explained how each relate to your problem statement. This shows critical thinking skills that will be very helpful as you develop your problem statement."

This feedback points out the positive work on researching the topic and on synthesizing ideas. The feedback also makes a connection between the current assignment and the student's goal of completing a dissertation.

Positive Feedback: "Your reasons in support of your views are statements that your views are correct. When you encounter views you don't agree with and the only reason the author gives is just the claim that the views are true, would you be persuaded to change your mind? In grad school, good writing is persuasive. It offers reason and evidence in support of views. Here are links to two sources that can help you give more powerful reasons for your views—

http://daphne.palomar.edu/handbook/support.htm

http://tinyurl.com/86k6xd5

I'd love to discuss this matter with you. Please schedule a time to talk--You Can Book Me.

This feedback is positive because it conveys accurate, specific information about student strengths and accomplishments and useful guidance on how to improve.

Section 6: Try Different Approaches

Students don't respond to feedback for three reasons:

a) they don't understand it;
b) they are unable to follow it;
c) they don't want to follow it.

If a student does not respond to something you've said a couple of times and you are getting frustrated, stop and assess the situation.

If you think that the problem is a), try another approach, another way of wording your guidance. Nicole and McFarland-Dick (2006) refer to "strong evidence that feedback messages are invariably complex and difficult to decipher, and that students require opportunities to construct actively an understanding of them (e.g. through discussion) before they can be used to regulate performance" (p. 201). This means that sometimes a student who is making very little progress based on written feedback will make a big leap forward following a synchronous meeting.

If you think the problem is b), give the student examples to show them what proficiency would look like, direct them to helpful resources or teach them how to follow your direction. In this case, a synchronous meeting may be helpful as well.

If it turns out that the problem is c), well, a conversation is probably needed. Some students need quite a direct approach to understanding how important it is that they work to improve in weak areas.

A conversation (over the phone, text chat, or Skype) or a direct query can also help you work out which of these is the problem. It can be a particularly helpful check on whether or not students understand your feedback.

One helpful technique is to ask the student to restate the feedback in their own words—this lets you see quickly whether or not they understand. This can even be done in a simple email exchange (e.g., "I was about to repeat something I wrote on your last paper, and I realized my guidance may not be clear. Please help me to guide you effectively by putting this guidance in your own words. Or would Skype call work better?"). Involving the student in this process can help you diagnose whether the student understands and is able to follow your feedback. In any case, there is no point in continuing to say the same thing in the same way.

Read for Assessment

Wiliam (2012) points out that the feedback will be received differently by different students; the same feedback that were to motivate one student might

suggest to another student that they should just give up. To know what to give feedback on and how to give it to a particular student, you need to carefully assess their abilities (as discussed above in this guide). To do this sort of assessment, you need to read very carefully.

Generally, do not start reading from the beginning of a paper, make comments down the margin, and stop at the end. Use what you learn later in a paper to inform your guidance on earlier matters and to write your introduction.

Understand and enter into the "world" of the document so you can offer specific guidance. Get a sense of how a paper does or does not hang together. See each assignment as an argument: Words assembled to support one or more points. Read to see a student's mind at work on a task.

Reading an assignment carefully is a great and necessary gift to students. There's an excellent chance that most previous instructors of our students have breezed through assignments, tossing out inflated grades as compensation for the scant effort put into arriving at a grade.

You should read ruthlessly! A student must convince you that every claim of consequence in the document is true. If the student writes airily about what "the literature says," don't believe a word! If the student reports that "research shows," but shows little evidence of skill in critically reading research articles, don't believe a word! Of course, your *feedback* must be polite and gentle, but also firm.

Don't fall into the trap of reading just words and sentences. Take a step back and look at the overall quality. Read to see what a student knows and understands. Read to determine the quality of a student's arguments. Quality of thinking and understanding are far more important than quality of sentences. Yes, sentence quality often reflects thinking quality, but correcting sentences rarely corrects thinking.

A carefully, assessment-focused reading of an assignment is needed for you to see what level the student is currently working at and how to help them move forward. Unless you have given the assignment a careful reading, you cannot give clear, helpful feedback.

Make Use of Resources

Feedback Toolkit

You can create efficiencies in your teaching by devising a toolbox of frequently used resources and comments—organizing paragraphs, following APA form and style, using library resources, links to Writing Center resources, explanations of sticky points in readings, PowerPoint presentation notes, MSOffice videos, using Google for plagiarism checks etc., etc. These save time *and* allow you to give more

extensive personalized feedback without wearing yourself out retyping feedback on frequently recurring issues. You may want to post some of these in the resources for your courses and reference them in your feedback.

Know and Use the Resources in the Writing Center

Do not just refer students to the Writing Center, as if by visiting it, all writing ills will be cured. Students whose writing is sufficiently poor to warrant a referral to the Writing Center resources will probably be working on their writing their entire graduate career. They will probably need help using the resources. They will need your help. Use the language of the writing process from the Center. Use the ideas in and materials in the Center to inform your guidance. Be able to make specific suggestions about pre-writing, writing drafts, crafting and introduction, etc.

Refer Students to University Resources

Be liberal in referring students to University resources: the library, the Dissertation Center, the Writing Center, Smarthinking. As we mentioned above, be specific in the resources you are sending them to—what section of the writing center should they review? What database in the library might be helpful. When possible, supply hyperlinks in your feedback.

Don't Assume Students are not Trying

We often see feedback like:

- "Your first paragraph is way too jumbled. Try to keep things conceptually clear and simple"
- "Reorganize this section so it flows better"
- "Read the assignment carefully and do what it asks,"
- "You need to better describe the methods and results in each study, as well as your evaluation of the study"

This feedback is problematic because it assumes the student knows how to do all these things, but just chose not to. While that may be the case sometimes, in general, students are doing the best they can. If they knew how to organize a paragraph better, they probably would have done so.

These sentences are still useful, but to you, not to the student as feedback. See these kinds of sentence as diagnostic thoughts that have to translated into specific guidance. Give instruction on how write a better paragraph, organize a section, or describe studies.

It may be worth giving such advice if you diagnose a student as skilled but asleep at the wheel, but don't expect to get far with it. Assume that students are trying to do their best, that they don't, on purpose or inadvertently, write poorly organized, obscure prose that betrays a lack of understanding of the readings and of

fundamental concepts in their field. In other words: Give specific, individualized feedback!

Do Not Assume a Student Knows What You Are Talking About

As we have mentioned elsewhere, feedback is information a student can understand and use to improve their work. If the student cannot understand your feedback, it is not helpful! This means that your assessment of the student needs to include consideration of what they can understand, and your feedback needs to be framed in that way.

Do not use technical terms, unless you have good reason to believe the student knows what they mean. Don't assume that when you refer to "your argument" or "your thesis" the student sees what you see. Be specific.

Wiggens (2012) illustrates the importance of adapting feedback so students can understand it with an example relayed to him by a classroom teacher:

> A student came up to her at year's end and said, "Miss Jones, you kept writing this same word on my English papers all year, and I still don't know what it means." "What's the word? " she asked. "Vag-oo," he said. (The word was vague!)

The teacher thought she was giving helpful feedback, but because the student did not understand the terminology, it had no power to influence his work. In addition to technical terms associated with your field of study, writing terminology in particular can be unhelpful. Many students will have at best fuzzy understanding of what 'cohesion', 'transitions', and 'thesis statements' are, so feedback using these terms for a non-expert writer may not be helpful, as it likely will not be understood. We commonly write feedback like the example below:

Please revise your thesis statement. It is very unclear

Many students will not understand this, and therefore not be able to apply it. With some explanation, however, the student can understand what they need to do. See the revised example below:

Think of academic writing as an argument. You are presenting information to support a specific position. So the reader can judge the strength of your argument, you need to clearly state the position you are going to support. This clear statement is called a 'thesis statement' and should be stated as one sentence in your introduction.

There is no statement like this in your introduction now. In your next essay, make sure you include one! You can send it to me in an email beforehand to make sure you are on the right track. You don't want your reader trying to guess what your point is! Tell them so they can see how you are supporting it.

The content here is much the same—'you need a clear thesis statement', but the first example will only help a student who already knows what a thesis statement is and how to make it clear! To help a weaker student, your feedback needs to clearly explain what is needed.

As part of reflecting on your work, it's worth asking of everything you write to a student: What am I trying to accomplish? Given my diagnosis of the student, does what I wrote stand a pretty good chance of accomplishing my goals? Will the student understand it? Can they use it to improve? Keep in mind that you can't fix everything at once; effective feedback is always based on tactical thinking (e.g., Given that, realistically, I have limited time to spend on most assignments—how can I best use it?). One way to conceptualize this is to consider whether your feedback is 'actionable', that there is a clear, well described action the student can take to improve future work.

Be Crystal Clear and Know What You Are Talking About

In order for your feedback to have its intended effect, a student must be able to understand it. Be clear. Be direct. Edit your writing. Make sure your pronouns have obvious antecedents. Explain technical terms. Make sure that your language is crystal clear, that you are conceptually clear, and that you are consistent. Teaching through feedback (all feedback!) requires students to "get" what you are saying. Maybe they get it on first read; maybe after a conversation with you, but if they don't get it, they gain little. If what you are saying is unclear even to a peer, conceptually confused, and inconsistent with other things you say, your feedback is, well, worse than useless.

To give good feedback then, you need to be very familiar with the course, the content, and the assignment. If you don't have a firm understanding of what constitutes a good assignment, you will not be able to explain to the student what they have done well and what they have done poorly. Unclear feedback is befuddling and discourages students from paying attention to what you say. Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that "unclear evaluative feedback, which fails to clearly specify the grounds on which students have met with achievement success

or otherwise, is likely to exacerbate negative outcomes, engender uncertain self-images, and lead to poor performance" (p. 95)
This feedback looks clear enough:

> "Please work on supporting your ideas with scholarly research throughout your writing. Otherwise, your work becomes more of a position paper or essay – not a scholarly paper."

But the distinction it draws between a scholarly paper and an essay is inaccurate—essays can use sources—and it is false that all ideas need support. This example was taken from the work of an instructor who marked both factual claims about "what the literature says" and a claim about the personal experience of the student as needing support, further muddying the waters. A better explanation might be:

> "There are several places (highlighted below), where you make claims without citing sources. As a rule of thumb, when you present information in academic writing you need to cite a source, unless it's a personal experience or opinion or common knowledge. I've marked the places in your essay where you needed to cite sources to support your ideas. You may also want to look closely at the readings for the next assignment—note how the author cites sources. That will help you see when you need to as well. It's really important to cite sources in our writing—it helps establish credibility."

Or another example that looks like warm praise

> I thought you did a very good job with the critical thinking in this paragraph and demonstrated both conceptual understanding of the ideas and of how to look at the literature.

But what does it mean? How can the instructor have a hope that the student will understand this as intended? Does the instructor have a clear idea of what he means by critical thinking and "conceptual understanding of ideas"? Can a student use this feedback to improve later work? Better feedback might look like this:

> This is a very good paragraph. You have a clear topic sentence (highlighted) and each sentence supports it. You've cited sources each place that they were needed. You've shown a clear connection between Piaget's and Gardner's work—this demonstrates excellent critical thinking.

In the prior section, we noted that your student needs to understand what you are saying for it to be effective. However, if you do not completely understand what you are trying to say, it will be impossible to explain it to the student. Knowing the course, the content, and the assignments, as well as understanding processes and characteristics associated with academic reading and writing, will help you see how to frame your feedback.

Write Tactically

Write like politicians talk: to cause a specific effect on your audience. Think about what you want each bit of your feedback to accomplish. Ask yourself: How will future work be better if this student follows my guidance?

If you want to say:

You have cited five sources supporting the claim that a relationship between clinging to a comfy pillow and stress reduction, but given that you propose to see if this relationship exists, the gap you are addressing doesn't exist—we already know the answer. You'll need to look at more literature more carefully in order to find a gap.

Don't say:

This paragraph does indicate briefly that there is some support for comfy pillows providing some stress reduction in several studies.

If you want to say:

You have cited only one study in support of your thesis. As assignment 2 on writing a literature review argued, a scientific community only accepts findings that have been supported by a number of studies, and reaching a conclusion about the state of knowledge in an area requires looking critically at a body of research and theory. It's really important to keep this in mind as you move closer to identifying a problem for your dissertation research. I'd love to talk to you more about this. Please use You Can Book Me to schedule a call.

Don't say:

I don't see a convincing thesis here.

Of course, not everything you say has to be tactical. Sometimes short corrections or motivating encouragement can be used.

Check Your Work

As an exercise, after you are done writing your feedback, imagine you are the students, then skim the paper and read your feedback. See if you as the students could fix the paper following your feedback. See if your feedback can answer this key question: *Will the students be able to use the feedback to improve the paper?* Reread what you write to be sure you stay "on message." Do not, for example, say in one place that a study must contribute to theory and another imply approval for a purely applied study.

Tell, Don't Ask

This relates to the earlier topic 'be direct'. Unless your diagnosis of a student's skill level leads you to think that a question will be effective (Why did you choose this point of comparison between the theories? Why did you include a 4th group n in your design? Do you think the study is sound?), be direct. Don't be subtle. Don't expect a student to see the logical implication of your questions. Remember that you want students to be able to use your feedback. For this to work, you usually need to tell them what to do; you shouldn't expect them to infer that from questions.

Tell:

This is the place in the paper where you have to explicitly describe what is known and not known about the effects of arts education on student motivation. If you need help figuring out how to do this, please set a time to talk!

Don't ask:

Didn't your sources find that the effects of arts education on student motivation are unknown?

Tell:

In the previous paragraph, you accurately described current thinking on the effectiveness of prison as rehabilitation. In this paragraph, you introduce the issue of the social cost of prison as punishment, but you don't connect this to the previous discussion. Do you see why a reader how doesn't know your mind would be confused? If you think about how the two topics relate to your thesis that the only just reason for imprisonment is rehabilitation, you will be able to come up with a nice sentence or two that transitions from one point to the next. Make sense? Book an appointment, if not.

Don't ask:

How does this paragraph follow from the one before?

Section 7: We teach People

There is No Such Thing as a Graduate Student

We do not teach 'graduate students'. We teach individuals. Each individual is unique, with different academic and professional experiences, knowledge, as well as different abilities and weaknesses. You always give feedback to a specific individual whom you know from work on assignments and conversations. You never give feedback to a mythological creature called a "graduate student." Any ideas about what student should know "by now," any expectations that your students will possess certain skills, etc., etc, are irrelevant. You teach individuals. You give accurate, substantive feedback designed to help a particular students reach PLOs. In order to know who the individual you are teaching is, it is imperative that you begin giving feedback by assessing the student.
Some adult humans who attend Northcentral have returned to school later in life and may doubt their ability to learn graduate material. They may be intimidated by demands to think critically, read and synthesize abstract and difficult material, and develop an idea for original research. Other adult humans who are entering graduate school after years of success in their profession may over-estimate their abilities and not see themselves as needing to hone their learning skills and develop new ways of thinking. In both cases, the image that students have about themselves as learners, not their actual skills or capacity to learn, may be significant barriers to learning and succeeding at Northcentral.

We probably all know the literature on teaching and learning well enough to be aware that general beliefs about self and the world can hinder or help learning, but we may not think of *feedback*, those words we type in the margins and at the top of papers, and those track changes we make in a blue font, as having anything to do with students' beliefs about themselves and about how to learn. But our words, typed on a document uploaded to a course room, can change a student's entire orientation to learning.

Faculty see only a student's work, not a student's psyche, and so may focus on improving skills and not address students' ideas about themselves that are barriers to improving skills. Students may be unaware that their ideas about themselves as learners get in the way of their learning. Instructors can learn about students' self-concept as a learner and help students reflect on this aspect of their self-concept by having conversations with students that focus on the student as a learner. Get to know your students and their attitude toward graduate study. Ask exploratory questions such as, "How do you feel about being back in school? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a student?"

Dealing with Your Own Performance Anxiety

Giving good feedback is an ethical art informed by research. This allows faculty to be creative and draw on their experience and knowledge. It may also cause

anxiety: How do I know if I am giving good feedback? How do I know if the person who reviews my work will see the same merits in my work as I do?

There are several answers:

1. Dialogue with your colleagues. When you join Northcentral or refresh your training in giving feedback, you join a community of scholars engaged in sharing, discussing, and critiquing their work. We are all learning together! You are invited to dialogue with CFE trainers and reviewers, and with anyone else who reviews your work. Make use of the VAC to discuss your teaching with your colleagues.

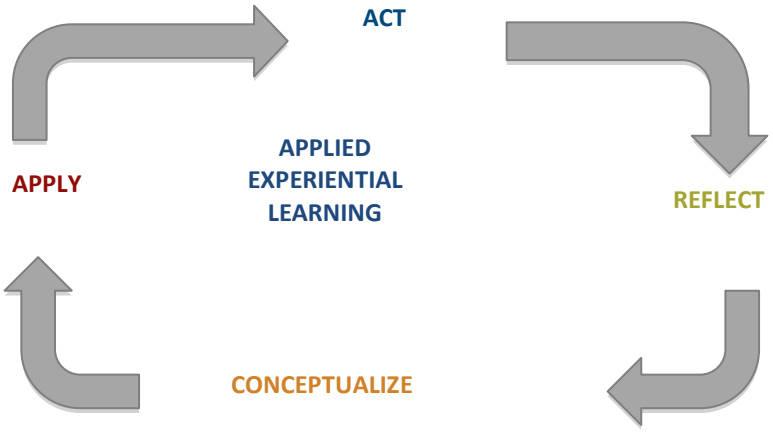
2. Dialogue with your students! Ask them for feedback on your feedback! Ask them about what works, is/isn't clear, what they'd like from you.

Watch out for the Dunning-Kruger Effect, or, Students are People with Complex Psychologies

Students are people with complex psychologies and maybe even complexes. Teachers are not psychologists and should not be counselors. They should though, as part of the diagnostic process, be alert to irrational barriers to learning. The Dunning-Kruger Effect is the tendency for less competent people to overestimate their knowledge and skills and make mistakes they don't see as mistakes. A history of inflated grades and "good job" on poor work may have encouraged some of our students in this bias. As you might imagine, people biased in this way, may misunderstand the point of helpful feedback and object to grades that are not congruent with their self-image. The "cure" for this bias (according to a blogger with no apparent expertise in cognitive psychology) is "knowledge and exposure to data performance standards." In other words, when a student objects to your grade and can't see why your view or understanding or interpretation is better than hers, stay calm and keep teaching. In the meantime, enjoy this clever video explaining Dunning and Kruger's research.

Appendix A: Applied Experiental Learning

Northcentral University recognizes the importance of providing our students with an educational experience that they can directly apply to their field. Our applied experiential approach was built internally, based on David Kolb's experiential learning cycle as well as work by other theorists. This model includes four processes: act, reflect, conceptualize and apply. Curriculum faculty will use this model in developing and revising courses from mid-2012 on. Faculty should support this model in their feedback.



ACT: A Concrete Experience. Learning from specific experiences.

- In courses students are provided with opportunities to engage in real world scenarios that apply program content.
- Students are encouraged to engage with the Northcentral community and other professional communities throughout their academic program.

REFLECT: Reflective Observation. Looking for the meaning of things.

- Within their program, students are invited to critically reflect on their experiences and learning, which leads to personal agency and an integrated understanding of their field of study.

CONCEPTUALIZE: Abstract Conceptualization. Analyzing of ideas and experiences.

- Students' experiences and reflections inform their own learning.
- Student learning is facilitated by engaged and prepared instructors.
- In courses students are provided with rich content delivered professionally in a variety of media to support reflection and further conceptualization of ideas.

APPLY: Active Experimentation. Practical application of ideas and theories.

- Based on reflection and conceptualization, students develop proficiencies applicable to their professional field of study and relevant to our times.

Appendix B: Feedback for students with reading difficulties

Here is an example of feedback given to a graduate student who lacked graduate-level reading skills:

There were several inaccuracies in what you wrote about Freire and Brickman. I point out specific inaccuracies in the margin and offer a correction. I recommend rereading the articles and revising what you wrote based on my comments and any live or email conversations you would like to have with me about the articles/assignment. Doing this will help you practice the type of close reading and accuracy that the courses in your doctoral program demand.

These articles are difficult to read. They contain very technical vocabulary about specialized areas within the field of Education. If a reader is not familiar with comparative education (Brickman's field) or Critical Pedagogy (Freire's field) then these articles are going to take a lot of time to read, digest, and understand fully. Actually a lot of the reading you will do in graduate school will be difficult so you have to start to build an arsenal of tools you can use to make the reading easier and more enjoyable. Here are a few reading tips for helping you "get through" these articles – and actually enjoy the process!

BEFORE YOU READ:
Develop Background Knowledge: If you are unfamiliar with these two people look them up before going back to the articles to get a general sense of who they are. You can look them up online on a trusted website, video clip, etc. – but pick a website that is easy and enjoyable to read ! Once you have more background about who they are, reading the articles will be easier.

Enhance your Vocabulary: The articles both have a lot of technical vocabulary. Before you read, scan through the articles and pull out 5-10 key words you don't know and look them up. Write down the definition of each and keep these notes close by to help you when you read the articles.

Scan the Articles: For this assignment you have key items to find in the articles. Scan through the article looking for answers to these questions and highlight or star areas where you think you will find the information. Unfortunately, the articles themselves are not structured to match what you need to find, so you will need to do some deep thinking about each person.

DURING READING
Read Actively!
Read the articles in their entirety with your notes from your before reading activities and the assignment directions beside you. You will most likely have to reread sections several times – this is normal and part of the fun of being a doc student!

Take Notes: When you come across an answer to one of the assignment questions, make a note and/or highlight the text.

Mark the text: Note questions you have, ideas that are interesting to you, things that are difficult to understand.

AFTER READING

Review: Read through your notes and highlights and make sure you have answers to the questions the assignment asked.

Question: If there are things you still have questions on, send a note to your professor or a fellow student. Conversation is a great way to learn!

If you have questions, let me know. It is my job to help you, so don't think you need to understand everything perfectly the first time. Ask any professor or doc student: a key to success in grad school is asking questions and seeking help for something you don't understand!

Appendix C: Sample Diagnosis and Feedback

This appendix is an attempt to demonstrate assessment in action. The documents include the assignment description and the assignment with a mentor's musings on it. These comments are not feedback to the student, but rather the mentor's attempt to use the assignment to form a picture of the student as a learner and to determine how best to target feedback. Following the assignment is a set of conclusions the mentor draws from these initial musing. These are assessment notes that will help determine how to focus and write the feedback. The diagnostic musings are personal and private—one person's reading of the student's skills, knowledge, and motivation. They are not intended to be shared with a student. You most likely will not write out musing like these; in most teaching this is mental work. But it can be a helpful task to do so, as this mentor did. It helps you understand how you are drawing conclusions about the student, and how you can use the conclusions to help you write good feedback.

The final sections of the files include the actual feedback given to the students based on assessment. Reading through these files walks you through the assessment process from initial musing to assessment to feedback.

Sample Assessment 1

ASSIGNMENT 1

REACTION PAPERS: Chapter 2 Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions.
(Learning Outcomes 3.1, 3.3)

☐ Write a reaction paper that is approximately 1 page in length (typed and double-spaced).

☐ Discuss the aspects of the chapter that you consider important and why. You may discuss fewer aspects in greater depth or more aspects more broadly. Tell me what you think and give reasons in support of your view.

☐ Include:
-information from the text,
-Information from at least one outside published source,
-Your own opinions including ways you agree or disagree with the material.

1) diagnostic musings on a student's work on the assignment

Chapter 2 Reaction

Chapter two of the text (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006) introduced transference, counter-transference and seeking counseling as a counselor to avoid impairment and burnout. In this section, we will discuss the need for critical thinking through transference and counter-transference, counselor impairment, burnout, experience, honest self-reflection, and in-service training (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

Ethical standards should be spelled out to prevent criminally-minded predators from justifying as well as innocent counselors from rationalizing their actions. Counselors do not need to be "problem free", but they do need to have control over the problems they face (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

Psychologists need to think critically with every client encounter, with every session. Ethical standards and laws cannot anticipate every possible situation, so some judicial critical thinking needs to take place – the most effective form of critical thinking is preventative rather than reactive.

When counselors do not take proper physical and emotional care of themselves, they can become impaired (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006) to the point that they lose value as a catalyst in the therapeutic process. If clients begin discussing issues that trigger painful emotions in the counselor, as the counselor is impaired, objectivity will be difficult to muster (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). At times, counselors may feel overly responsible for the progress of the client. If the client does not progress, the counselor may take it personally, owning it as part of their growing impairment to facilitate positive results for the client (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

Burnout occurs as an end result when a counselor does not seek help with impairment (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). By consciously taking care of the physical and emotional dimensions, counselors can maintain needed vitality to avoid both becoming impaired as well as devastating burnout. In the end, both the client's wellness and the counselor's career suffer. By ignoring impairment, counselors act unethically (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

It would be a fair bet to assume that counselors with several years experience would have seen plenty of situations that could be considered potential violations of ethical standards. However, by practicing critical thinking with prudent prevention, those counselors will continue to effectively treat clients without worrying about malpractice suits.

Counselors, who have survived years of practice without violating ethical boundaries, most likely spend time in honest self-exploration. The Callanan text states (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006) that honest self-exploration can help prevent ethical issues from ever arising. Some people are naturally more introspective than others. Counselors, who find introspection easy, may be much more likely to detect the effects of both transference and counter-transference. Counselors who have difficulty being introspective should seek out their own counselor to assist them in their journey to stay away from potential ethical violations. Practitioners, who have numbed themselves to their own pain actually do their clients harm. Without regular reflection, revisiting the soul, without proper in-service training stress and burnout can have devastating effects on the counseling relationship between psychologist and client (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). A psychologist

suffering from excessive stress will not be objective with conversations and interventions leading to prescriptive solutions. Because the counselor-client relationship is delicate, regular reoccurring training needs to occur. Aside from regulatory certification training, psychologists would benefit from self-development training as well as counseling sessions (as clients themselves) that could enhance a counselor's ability to be more introspective, improve listening skills, and any other self-development opportunities available. Counselors cannot go any further with clients than the counselors have gone themselves (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

This lack of inward reflection may also create another issue common in the counselor-client relationship. This is called transference and counter-transference (Herilihy & Corey, 2007). Transference occurs when a client begins to become attached, or dependent on the counselor for emotional support. Counter-transference occurs when the counselor begins depending on the client for emotional support. This can be very dangerous for the fragile relationship that exists between client and psychologist.

In a situation when counter-transference is an issue, the counselor may unconsciously shield critical facts and issues to justify the feelings stirring inside. Left unchecked, counter-transference could lead to unhealthy interactions between the client and the counselor. Counter-transference in itself is not negative (Herilihy & Corey, 2007) as long as the psychologist recognizes it and deals with it appropriately.

Chapter two covered the need for psychologists (regardless of specialty or licensure) to be proactive and consciously seek to prevent ethical violations within the counselor-client relationship (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). This relationship is quite fragile. It is able to easily rend, but very difficult to repair. In some cases the damage cuts so deeply that clients have permanently turned away from psychology as a medium to achieve mental wellness.

2) Assessment Summary

1. *Attitude*: He is certainly not intellectually assertive or hungry. He's trying to do the assignment, but either he can't or is afraid to take a stand. The assignment is longer than it needs to be. He may think that doing a lot of work will impress me.

2. *Reading*: Cannot thoughtfully engage the material. Has little prior knowledge related to ethics or counseling. This paper is pretty much a collection of concepts from the text in the order he encountered them, coupled with some alarmist ideas about therapy that are exaggerations of stuff in the text.

3. *Thinking:* No evidence of higher order thinking here. He passively received the data in the text and reported it in the paper. He doesn't have the notion that one of the jobs of a grad student is to develop an integrated picture of his field and have his own reasoned opinions about it. He didn't question anything he read. He may think all textbook authors are beyond criticism.

4. *Writing:* He cannot write an essay. Writing is something you do to complete an assignment. And he didn't do the assignment. He just reported on some stuff in the chapter.
5. *Knowledge:* He has little or know knowledge about counseling. He says nothing that wasn't in the chapter.

What is this student is likely to understand and be able to use?

What feedback is likely to be most effective in helping the student succeed in graduate school?

I won't engage him in a discussion about ethics in counseling, as he seems to lack a knowledge base, and anyhow, there are more important things to address. Like many students, he is relatively poor reader and writer. He doesn't read critically or assertively. The most important feedback I can give him is about reading and writing.

3) feedback to the student based on assessment

ASSIGNMENT 1

John,

Thank you for your first assignment. I am excited to start working with you! This is your first course in your PhD program, and most of my guidance is "big picture" that will help you in future assignments.

I strongly recommend you immerse yourself in the Writing Center resources on the writing process and critical thinking. Reading closely and critically and writing clearly and persuasively are fundamental skills all grad students need. You are at the start of a journey to acquire these abilities at a level that will allow you engage readings as a peer of the authors and write a dissertation based on a critical review of a topic in psychology.

I would love to talk with you about your work prior to you submitting the next assignment. Please visit my You Can Book Me page and make an appointment. In preparation for our call, I ask that you rewrite your opening paragraph, following suggestions below. Using assignment instructions to create an intro paragraph will really help you write a paper that precisely does what the assignment asked. *If you choose not to rewrite the para, this will not affect your grade at all.*

Use the assignment instructions to create your introductory paragraph. Use what the assignment says to do to tell your reader what you will do in your essay. The key direction in the assignment is: **Discuss** the aspects of the chapter that you consider important and why.

1. Decide which chapter concepts or aspects you will engage. In a one page paper, 2 or 3 will be plenty.

2. Write down what the authors say about these concepts or aspects.

3. Draft your reactions, giving reasons why you agree or disagree. See the Prewriting Strategies in the writing center for help.

Here are links to two sources that can help you give more powerful reasons for your views—
http://daphne.palomar.edu/handbook/support.htm
http://tinyurl.com/86k6xd5

4. Once you know which aspects you will write about and your views on them, write your intro with a thesis or statement about what you will do in the paper. See "revising the draft for focus" to develop a thesis sentence.

You did not do the main part of this assignment (see below). It is really, really important to follow instruction assignments to the letter. This is not just because your grade depends on it, but because assignments are designed to help students meet course learning outcomes, so it's important to read and follow them exactly. A large part of success in graduate school and most things is simply doing what you are asked to do, doing the job you entered school to do. It is just as important to read assignments carefully as it is to read articles carefully. If something is not clear, please ask, in this and all other courses!

In my experience, students often skip parts of assignments because they do not understand them or because they are hard to do. If you do not understand an assignment, please shoot me an email immediately! The hard parts of assignments are the most important parts to do! They will help you grow as a researcher and a scholar.

70% Content: 53/70

Completion of the assignment as instructed
--see comments under assignment instructions

Use and understanding of the assignment resources
--You use the assignment resources, but you do not show that you understand everything in the chapter and some of what you write is not correct. See comments below.

Clarity and persuasiveness of writing
--Your meaning is not clear at a number of points. I have indicated one or two. Your writing is not persuasive because you do not make a case for your opinions and do not clearly distinguish your views from the authors.

30% Presentation: 29/30

Grammar, word usage and APA style

--Your citations and reference list are perfect. I couldn't find any grammatical errors.

Grade: 77

REACTION PAPERS: Chapter 2 Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions. (Learning Outcomes 3.1, 3.3)

☐ *write a reaction paper that is approximately 1 page in length (typed and double-spaced).*

-You wrote more than a page. What makes a paper a reaction paper is that it gives a clear and accurate picture of the arguments and concepts in the readings and your reasoned response to them. For this assignment, you need to do specifically what is stated in Discuss and Include as a way of giving your reaction to the readings. This you did not do.

☐ ***Discuss*** *the aspects of the chapter that you consider important and why. You may discuss fewer aspects in greater depth or more aspects more broadly. Tell me what you think and give reasons in support of your view.*

--Rather that selecting material from the chapter and saying why think it is important, you mostly summarized or mentioned content from the chapter. You did not tell me what you think or give reasons for your views. See my comments below.

☐ ***Include****: information from the text,*

--Yes!

Information from at least one outside published source,

--Yes!

Your own opinions including ways you agree or disagree with the material.

--You give opinions, but you don't clearly distinguish your views from those of Corey etc and you don't say anything in agreement or disagreement.

Chapter 2 Reaction

Chapter two of the text (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006) introduced transference, counter-transference and seeking counseling as a counselor to avoid impairment and burnout. In this section, we will discuss the need for critical thinking through transference and counter-transference, counselor impairment, burnout, experience, honest self-reflection, and in-service training (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

Ethical standards should be spelled out to prevent criminally-minded predators from justifying as well as innocent counselors from rationalizing their actions. Counselors do not need to be "problem free", but they do need to have control over the problems they face (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

Psychologists need to think critically about every client encounter.. Ethical standards and laws cannot anticipate every possible situation, so some judicial

critical thinking needs to take place – the most effective form of critical thinking is preventative rather than reactive.

When counselors do not take proper physical and emotional care of themselves, they can become impaired (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006) to the point that they lose value as a catalyst in the therapeutic process. If clients begin discussing issues that trigger painful emotions in the counselor, as the counselor is impaired, objectivity will be difficult to muster (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). At times, counselors may feel overly responsible for the progress of the client. If the client does not progress, the counselor may take it personally, owning it as part of their growing impairment to facilitate positive results for the client (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

Burnout occurs as an end result when a counselor does not seek help with impairment (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). By consciously taking care of the physical and emotional dimensions, counselors can maintain needed vitality to avoid both becoming impaired as well as devastating burnout. In the end, both the client's wellness and the counselor's career suffer. By ignoring impairment, counselors act unethically (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

It would be a fair bet to assume that counselors with several years experience would have seen plenty of situations that could be considered potential violations of ethical standards. However, by practicing critical thinking with prudent prevention, those counselors will continue to effectively treat clients without worrying about malpractice suits.

Counselors, who have survived years of practice without violating ethical boundaries, most likely spend time in honest self-exploration. The Callanan text states (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006) that honest self-exploration can help prevent ethical issues from ever arising. Some people are naturally more introspective than others. Counselors, who find introspection easy, may be much more likely to detect the effects of both transference and counter-transference. Counselors who have difficulty being introspective should seek out their own counselor to assist them in their journey to stay away from potential ethical violations. Practitioners, who have numbed themselves to their own pain actually do their clients harm. Without regular reflection, revisiting the soul, without proper in-service training stress and burnout can have devastating effects on the counseling relationship between psychologist and client (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). A psychologist suffering from excessive stress will not be objective with conversations and interventions leading to prescriptive solutions. Because the counselor-client relationship is delicate, regular reoccurring training needs to occur. Aside from regulatory certification training, psychologists would benefit from self-development training as well as counseling sessions (as clients themselves) that could enhance a counselor's ability to be more introspective, improve listening skills, and any other self-development opportunities available. Counselors cannot

go any further with clients than the counselors have gone themselves (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006).

This lack of inward reflection may also create another issue common in the counselor-client relationship. This is called transference and counter-transference (Herilihy & Corey, 2007). Transference occurs when a client begins to become attached, or dependent on the counselor for emotional support. Counter-transference occurs when the counselor begins depending on the client for emotional support. This can be very dangerous for the fragile relationship that exists between client and psychologist.

In a situation when counter-transference is an issue, the counselor may unconsciously shield critical facts and issues to justify the feelings stirring inside. Left unchecked, counter-transference could lead to unhealthy interactions between the client and the counselor. Counter-transference in itself is not negative (Herilihy & Corey, 2007) as long as the psychologist recognizes it and deals with it appropriately.

Chapter two covered the need for psychologists (regardless of specialty or licensure) to be proactive and consciously seek to prevent ethical violations within the counselor-client relationship (Corey, Corey, Callanan, 2006). This relationship is quite fragile. It is able to easily rend, but very difficult to repair. In some cases the damage cuts so deeply that clients have permanently turned away from psychology as a medium to achieve mental wellness.

References

Corey, G., Corey, M., Callanan, P. (2006). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Herlihy, B., & Corey, G. (2007). *Boundary issues in counseling: Multiple roles and responsibilities*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Sample Assessment 2

This is an example of assessment and feedback on an Annotated Bibliography assignment.

1) Diagnostic Musings:

Prepare an Annotated Bibliography

Apfelbaum, E. Pauker, K. Ambady, N. Sommers, S, & Norton, M. (2008). Learning (not) to talk about race: When older children underperform in social categorization. *Developmental Psychology 44* (5), 1513–1518

http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pdh&AN=dev-44-5-1513&site=ehost-live

Data compiled from researchers from Tufts University and Harvard Business School examine differences in performance between children ages 8-9 years old and children ages 10-11 years old using race relevant and race neutral testing perimeters. The test was sampled using 101 children both white and black middle and upper middle class families. The children were showed photos of people and were asked a series of questions to determine performance efficiency. The results yielded the conclusion that in fact the younger age group of children did outperform the older age group in social categorization experiments involving social prejudice.

2) Assessment Summary

I think the biggest problem here is that the student does not understand what he is reading. There are both factual issues (getting study details wrong) and also critical reading issues (the student does not know how to distinguish important from less important detail; does not recognize implications of the study). I think this is the most important area to draw the student's attention to.

A second problem is expression—the student does not express himself well. He seems to be using words that he does not really understand. My guess is this is because he is trying to make his writing sound 'academic' (possibly to cover up his confusion) and is not trying to write clearly and simply.

The student does not understand what information does/does not go in an annotation of a study. He does not understand how an annotated bibliography can be used in academic writing (e.g., to jog the memory, draw connections among studies, etc in literature review writing).

The student does show a positive learning attitude—he has clearly done this himself and found it useful (according to his comment)

3) Feedback to the student:

Dear ____

Thank you for your assignment, I'm glad you found it useful. I would recommend that you get into the habit now of annotating studies you read for coursework and assignments in all your courses. If you keep a running file of annotations, you can add to them as you work through your degree. That way you'll have an easily accessible summary of relevant research studies, which can be handy to jog your memory and also to help you draw connections between studies when you are writing essays and proposals.

For this to be useful for you, there are two habits you'll need to develop—the first is reading very carefully for details, particularly methodology details. There are a few details in your annotation that are incorrect. For example, the study did not include black children—most participants were white, and none were black. Also, the children were not asked questions—they asked questions of the researcher to determine which of the 4 people the researcher had. In fact, one of the main study concepts, "efficiency", was measured in terms of the number of questions asked to complete the task. These sort of reading misunderstandings will cause problems down the line as you use the annotated bibliography. In any academic reading, it is very important to read carefully.

The second habit I'd like you to focus on is reading critically—I noticed in your annotation that you included less important details (e.g., the universities the researchers work at) but left out important details (e.g., how concepts were measured in the study) and did not consider the larger picture (e.g., what does the study mean? Why is it important?) You need to be sure that you are reading both accurately and critically, and that your writing reflects this. I have found this resource on critical reading helpful—I recommend you review it and try out using the reading guide.

Reading accurately and reading critically are the two most important things you can do to improve your work at this stage. Later, we'll look at how you can improve your writing.

Have a look at the comments below and don't hesitate to contact me if you'd like to set up an appointment to discuss this.

Prepare an Annotated Bibliography

Apfelbaum, E. Pauker, K. Ambady, N. Sommers, S, & Norton, M. (2008). Learning (not) to talk about race: When older children underperform in social categorization. *Developmental Psychology 44* (5), 1513–1518

http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pdh&AN=dev-44-5-1513&site=ehost-live

Data compiled from researchers from Tufts University and Harvard Business School examine differences in performance between children ages 8-9 years old and children ages 10-11 years old using race relevant and race neutral testing perimeters. The test was sampled using 101 children both white and black middle and upper middle class families. The children were showed photos of people and were asked a series of questions to determine performance efficiency. The results yielded the conclusion that in fact the younger age group of children did outperform the older age group in social categorization experiments involving social prejudice.

Appendix D: Northcentral Mission, Vision, and Values

Vision

Northcentral University is a premier online graduate university and global leader in providing unprecedented access to U.S. regionally accredited higher education.

Mission

Northcentral University educated professionals throughout the world and provides an accessible opportunity to earn a U.S. regionally accredited degree. Northcentral mentors students one-to-one with highly credentialed faculty via advanced delivery modalities. Northcentral commits to helping students achieve academically and become valuable contributors to their communities and within their professions.

Values: I.D.E.A.'s Founded on INTEGRITY

Values are beliefs that the University holds in high regard and deems important in higher education and in the achievement of its Vision and Mission. Northcentral University recognizes the value of integrity as foundational to all other values and expectations that guide the behavior of the members of the institution.

Innovation: We envision new and innovative education delivery systems, and support proven concepts of teaching and learning. We encourage our community to seek solutions to educational challenges that will improve the quality of our programs and services.

Diversity: We value diversity of thought and action as a strength that allows our community to transcend organizational and geographical boundaries. We expect members of our community to treat people with respect and dignity.

Excellence: Our community is committed to excellence in academics and service. We value leadership and strive for continuous improvement in everything we do. We define and measure outcomes and take action to ensure that our community's passion for excellence is never compromised.

Accountability: We are deeply committed to holding each member of the University responsible for their scholarly and professional work and accountable for their fiscal and financial commitments in meeting the needs of our learning community.

INTEGRITY – We hold all members of our community to the highest ethical standard of professional and academic conduct and the rules and regulations of U.S. higher education.

Appendix F: The Essential Characteristics of Northcentral Faculty

1. Solid current discipline knowledge (e.g., in social psychology) and expertise in one or more content areas (e.g., identity formation)

2. Excellent communication skills: Able to write and speak clearly and concisely, to listen accurately and verify understandings, and to read closely and follow scholarly arguments; keeps meticulous records of NCU communications

3. Values online learning: Believes in North central's approach to online instruction— teaching through feedback and Applied Experiential Learning—and is passionate about creating highly interactive teaching and learning environments

4. Able to engage students (wherever they are) in the learning journey

5. Able to provide effective feedback that results in program learning outcome mastery & socialization into values and beliefs of a profession

6. Respectful, flexible, affable, passionate about teaching, enthusiastic, approachable, responsive, open to difference and new ideas, and committed to the highest ethical standards

7. Committed to excellence and continuous improvement in curricular, instructional, and professional development and to the development of Northcentral's learning community

Appendix G: Sample feedback tracking chart

Student:		Course:
Assn #	Assessment notes	Main teaching points

References/Bibliography

Duncan, N. (2007) 'Feed-forward': improving students' use of tutors' comments. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32 (2), 271–283. http://wlv.openrepository.com/wlv/bitstream/2436/3778/1/Feed-forward%20pgs%20127-132.pdf

Furtak, E., & Ruiz-Primo, M. (2008). Making students' thinking explicit in writing and discussion: An analysis of formative assessment prompts. Science Education, 799-824. http://www.educ.ethz.ch/modern_biology/speakers/Furtak_Ruiz-Primo_2008.pdf

Getting Students to Act on our Feedback. http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/getting-students-to-act-on-our-feedback/

Grow, Gerald O. (1991/1996). "Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed." Adult Education Quarterly, 41 (3), 125-149. Expanded version available online at: http://www.longleaf.net/ggrow.

Hattie, J. & Timperley (2007). The Power of Feedback. Review of Educational Research March 2007, Vol. 77, No. 1, pp. 81–112.

Konrad. (2012). The power of feedback. http://getideas.org/thought-leader/the-power-of-feedback/

McArthur, J., Hu ham, M. & Houndsell, J. (2010). Tipping out the Boot Grit: the use of on-going feedback devices to enhance feedback dialogue. ESCalate Developing Pedagogy and Practice 2009 Grant Project Final Report. http://tinyurl.com/casl3d3

Nelson, M. & Schunn, C. (2009). The nature of feedback: how different types of peer feedback affect writing performance. Instructional Science, 37(4), 375-401. http://www.lrdc.pitt.edu/schunn/research/papers/nelson-schunn-is2009.pdf

Nicol, N. & Draper, S. (2008). Redesigning Written Feedback to Students When Class Sizes Are Large. Paper for the 33rd Improving University Teaching Conference, Transforming higher education teaching and learning in the 21st century, 29 July – August 1st 2008, University of Strathclyde Glasgow, Scotland. http://www.intranet.rgu.ac.uk/files/Nicol%20and%20Draper%20Feedback%20paper_1407_dnreport1.pdf

Nicol, D. and Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self- regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice Studies in Higher Education, 31(2). 199–218. http://tltt.strath.ac.uk/REAP/public/Resources/DN_SHE_Final.pdf

Price, M., et al. (2010). Feedback: all that effort, but what is the effect?

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education 35(3), 277-289. http://www.uwa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1888530/Price.pdf

Ragan, L. (n.d.). 10 Principles of Effective Online Teaching: Best Practices in Distance Education. http://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/principles-of-effective-online-teaching-best-practices-in-distance-education/

Rowe, A. & Wood, L. (2008). Student Perceptions and Preferences for Feedback. *Asian Social Science*, 4(3), 78-88. http://ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/view/1972

Wiliam (2012)

Wiggens (2012)

Schubert-Irastorza. C. & Fabry, D. (2011). Improving Student Satisfaction with Online Faculty Performance. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*. 4(1), 168-179. http://www.nu.edu/assets/resources/pageResources/journal-of-research-in-innovative-teaching-volume-4.pdf

Schute, V. (2008). Focus on Formative Feedback. *Review of Education Research*. 78(1), 153-189. www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/RR-07-11.pdf