

Understanding your feedback

STUDY SKILLS GUIDES

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Reflecting on the feedback you receive on your work is an important step in building and improving your academic skills. It helps you to acknowledge your current strengths and to make plans for how to address your weaker skills in future assignments.

However, it is not always easy to understand what your feedback means. Your lecturers may use terms that you are not familiar with or you may not understand what aspects of your work they are referring to. Even if you do understand what they are saying, it's not always obvious how you can 'fix' the problems they point out.

Here are some common phrases found in feedback and an explanation of what they mean:

Feedback

"Your work is not critical enough/ too descriptive"

"You need to work on your evaluation"

"There is not enough evidence of application of knowledge"

"You have not used enough sources/good quality sources"

What it means

At degree level, your tutors are not looking for you to simply demonstrate how much you know by outlining facts. Instead, they are looking to see how well you understand your subject.

You can demonstrate this by analysing your sources – explaining how their findings are significant to your topic and comparing and contrasting them with other points of view on the same subject – and then evaluating the evidence by coming to a conclusion that explains what this tells us about the subject you are writing about.

It's important that all of the points you make are based on evidence taken from high-quality sources (journal articles, academic books and textbooks, reliable websites) and that you cite this evidence in your work.

Feedback like this may indicate that the evidence you have used is out of date or from non-academic sources, or that you have not included enough evidence to convince the reader your points are correct.

You may also have relied too much on websites for your evidence, rather than also looking at academic research in journals.



Feedback

What it means

“Work on your sentence structure and grammar”

“Proofread your work”

“Your structure is incoherent”

One of the most difficult parts of academic writing is communicating your ideas to others. Feedback like this suggests that you are not getting your thoughts across clearly in your writing and that it is difficult for your reader to follow your argument as a result. This may be because your sentences are too long or are broken or because you haven't made clear the links between one piece of evidence/topic and another.

You may also have attempted to use too many 'long' words, resulting in your writing being unnecessarily complex and difficult to read.



“Your referencing is inaccurate”

It's important that you reference every source you either quote or paraphrase in your work and that your referencing follows the correct format. This feedback might mean that you have missed out citations in your text or that you have not structured your citations and/or reference list correctly..