




Graduate Research Advanced Skills Program (GRASP)

Research Writing Series

Better feedback

Dr Petra Dumbell, Sem 2 2022



I acknowledge Whadjuk Nyungar as the Custodians of the land on which I live and work. This Country was never ceded, it always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

I pay my respects to Whadjuk Nyungar Elders past and present. I value their ancestral and continuing caring for Country practices and thank them for looking after this Country for so long.

I appreciate Indigenous ways of communication which are inclusive and respectful, and I recognise that this Country has been a place of teaching, research and learning for tens of thousands of years.

Feedback

“Feedback. It’s a prickly issue for writers. We both want it and fear it. It makes us nervous, fearful, tired, annoyed, cheered – sometimes all of these things in one essay/paper/chapter. One of the most helpful things I learned during my PhD was how to ask for feedback”

(“Getting the feedback you need”, 2014)

What is feedback?

- Provided by supervisors, peers, reviewers, conferences delegates, examiners...
- Different levels: micro, macro, ...
- Different formats: written (comments, red pen, ...), verbal, ...
 - Assessment of your work
 - Reaction to your work
 - Basis for improvement (?)

Why is feedback useful?

- Opportunity
 - to learn about academic writing
 - to improve your academic writing
 - to find your voice as a researcher

What should it look like?

- Feedback as process
- Written communication
- “Flexible, open-ended and tolerant of ambiguity” (Knowles, 2015 p. 311)
- No magic formula that suits everyone (Henderson et al, p. 1402)

How to ask for feedback...

- Avoid asking “*just for feedback*” – be specific
- Be clear what you want to get feedback on
 - Structure, flow, arguments, writing style, grammar, sentences...
- Ask for feedback whenever you need it
 - Feedback works for early drafts and polished pieces of writing...
- Can be difficult: you don't know what you don't know
 - ...but supervisors should be able to help

How to use feedback...

- Initiative to learn comes from you
- Work through it strategically (not all at once)
- Use it critically,
- ... or ignore it (?)
- Identify sources of confusion
- Create a response list

How to use feedback

Sample table:

Feedback	Response
Add an organizing statement to the end of the introduction	Completed.
The purpose statement does not align with the research questions	I believe you were referring to the word “relationship” in the purpose statement that did not match the research questions. I changed this to “experience.”
Correct all areas of passive voice	I have a hard time identifying passive voice in my writing. I addressed multiple areas but I’m not sure if I caught them all. The areas that I am unsure about are highlighted in yellow.
Consider adding a second framework to address self-efficacy	I reviewed several theoretical frameworks on self-efficacy but I’m not sure they align with my study. Can we schedule a time to discuss the theoretical frameworks that I am considering?

(Parker 2019)

Is the feedback process working?


“I see all kinds of students struggle to understand and incorporate written feedback, and the challenges can be intensified for neurodiverse students, for language learners, and for students who have not been avid readers. In fact, I see students struggle with written feedback so frequently that I have begun to mutter that writing is a lousy medium in which to give feedback about writing.”

(Tauber, 2018)



Fig. 1. "When Gloria said..." *Prime*. Twitter. Screenshot. Retrieved <https://twitter.com/PrimeVideo/status/1305971092008304640/photo/1>

"All in all, if you are finding it hard to write a PhD in English, you are doing it right – you are learning, engaging with issues, and developing new skills to be able to write a book-length, original, scholarly work!" (Firth, 2017, "Writing a PhD in your second language")



“In Latin America [academic writing is] a little more descriptive, so here you have to be very accurate with every sentence you use, be very short, but in Latin America we use very long sentences, we go around an idea. The first year it was very difficult for me to understand what was the level required **It took me a lot of reading, a lot of feedback, long sessions of supervision, long sessions of reviewing my own writing to understand what was expected from me.** At the beginning I just read, read, read a lot and tried to understand every little idea in a book ... so then you start realising that it’s more important to grasp the main idea.” (Nuria, 3rd year ESL doctoral student interview participant, cited in Odena and Burges, 2017, p. 584)

How to deal with (very) negative feedback...

You can't make everyone happy. You are not coffee!

1. Emote

tears, chocolate, songs, walks, dog cuddles...

2. Think

Is it true? Do I agree with it? Do I understand it?

3. Act

(or don't 😊)

(Adapted from Berdhal, 2022)

Questions

GRASP webpage

<https://researchtoolkit.library.curtin.edu.au/grasp/about-grasp/>

Help

LibraryResearchSupport@curtin.edu.au

Feedback (Stop – Start – Continue)

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1t7roPInys2xK_0zY69ivY9s09ZNs2iY_byLVdCSKD7M/edit?usp=sharing

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