

## Tips for Giving Effective Feedback UW Graduate School Core Programs

### Overarching guidelines:

- Strength-based: emphasizing what the student is doing well (specifically) will help them build on what is already working. Focusing on strengths can also build confidence, as long as it is genuine and specific.
- Goal-focused: feedback should align with the student's goals and (where appropriate) the program's goals so it is clearly grounded and aimed on areas of importance to the student.
- Grounded in relationships: building trust and connection, even with limited contact or online students, is important so the feedback comes from relational context.

### Additional tips:

1. Be as specific as possible. "Great job!" doesn't give people enough to go on. What specifically are they doing well (however small)? What specific behavior would help them do better?
2. Be as timely as possible. Giving feedback as close to real-time helps the student connect with the feedback and make immediate improvements. We recommend "normalizing" feedback so it becomes part of regular check-ins, and not something that gets saved up or (worse) pent up for later.
3. Focus on one thing at a time. While there may be several concerns relating to a student's performance, it can help to give more frequent feedback about one behavior at a time to give room for improvement before overwhelming someone with a long list, which can be quite discouraging. Choose behaviors that are within the student's reach and aligned with goals they want to accomplish.
4. Be as careful as possible. It can help to sign-post your feedback by explaining why you are giving it or why you are focusing on a certain area. Be explicit about why a certain expectation is important, put it in a bigger context.
5. Adopt a growth mindset. Rather than thinking "this student doesn't have what it takes," be curious and specific about what is currently getting in the way of their success. A coaching approach can help – guiding the student to do their best, rather than reaching some external or competitive standard.
6. Facilitate self-reflection and self-assessment. If the student is given the first chance to speak about where they find themselves challenged, they may take you right where you want to go with your feedback.
7. Provide examples of expected work. Illustrations can go much further than a verbal description of expectations, which can seem abstract. "Graduate level writing" means something specific to you, but it is not transparent for a student.
8. Prepare peers to be effective at giving feedback. If everyone has access to the milestones and performance expectations, it can create a less threatening and more collegial approach to feedback.
9. Summarize important feedback in writing. Feedback is best done in-person (or via videoconference) when possible. Depending on the situation, you can request the student send a follow up after the meeting to confirm what they will be working on next. This helps assure they have heard the feedback and will facilitate their ownership of the next steps. If there are significant milestones at stake, you should also summarize the feedback, including timelines and consequences for not making the agreed upon goals.
10. Elicit feedback yourself! Follow the same model you use for students. What is something you are doing well and what is something specific that would be helpful for you to try differently? Depending on trust, relationships, and numbers this can be requested anonymously or personally during regular advising.