Mid-Quarter Check-Ins

Learning & Teaching Commons
Fall 2023 Resource Packet

Compiled by Julie Levin Russo

sourced primarily from the Canvas site Teaching at Evergreen and other LTC resources

The Week 5 Check-in: A Guide

Julia Metzger

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aHv3nWYydptVnhEEgc4dJ2cE2A0rOFyBqzVspaSqqLU/edit

GOAL: Every student begins the 6th week of the quarter with a progress report of where they stand and a plan for success.

Providing students with a status report mid-way through the quarter equips students with the information they need to plan for success when they still have time to respond to feedback.

What?

Mid-quarter feedback provides students with a snapshot of how they are performing academically in a program or course. The progress report communicates to students where they stand academically and what they need to do moving forward. In particular, the report should let students know if they are on track to earn credit (or not). The report is not (necessarily) indicative of the student's final evaluation. On the contrary, mid-quarter feedback gives students sufficient time to refocus on what they need to do to be successful or seek support.

Why?

Mid-quarter check-ins provide students the opportunity to course correct. Students often don't clearly understand the impact of missing an assignment or if the quality of the work they have prepared is appropriate.

Furthermore, most humans aren't that good at judging our own progress towards developing a skill or learning a concept. For a myriad of reasons, we have a tendency to either overestimate or underestimate our learning. You can help the learner by communicating where they are in the learning process - and where they stand in terms of meeting the goals you've set for them. As an expert learner, you have a perspective that can be incredibly valuable to a novice or intermediate learner. You can help them understand what steps they need to take to move forward in their learning journey.

A remarkable amount of evidence has emerged that places directed, actionable feedback at the top of the pile of effective teaching (and learning) strategies. A meta-analysis of over 800 meta-analyses (Hattie 2008) identifies formative assessment and feedback among the interventions with the highest rate of return for student learning. Systematically providing a feedback report to students mid-quarter not only provides students with information and advice to improve learning *but also* lets them know if they are making sufficient progress towards the academic goals for the course or program. This information is critical to supporting the student in making informed decisions about how they will proceed and what support they might need to seek.

How?

There are many approaches to managing successful mid-quarter feedback. Some suggestions and ideas are listed below.

- Use a template: Create a simple template that is easy to amend for each student.
- The Canvas meeting scheduler (or more user-friendly external tools like Doodle) makes easy work of having students sign up for short (10-15 min) appointments.
- Use class time: Pull students out of a lab, workshop, or other activity where learners can work at their own pace.
- Share the load with your teaching partner (if you have one).
- Create a legend (see below): Save yourself time and provide clarity by creating a legend that helps students know where they stand on a learning scale (emergent, developing, accomplished, mastery).

Hattie and Timperley's highly cited article, *The Power of Feedback*, used a systematic study of research on feedback to develop a powerful but deceptively simple model for effective feedback that addresses three questions:

1. <u>Feed Up</u>: Where is the learner going? - Articulate clear learning goals
2. <u>Feed Back</u>: How is the learner doing? - Describe what the student has accomplished *and* the gap between where they are now and the goals.
3. <u>Feed Forward</u>: Where to next? - Help students determine the steps they need to take to achieve learning goals.

There are many ways to approach providing feedback in these three domains. In [Seven Keys to Effective Feedback](#), Grant Wiggins offers seven considerations in offering high-quality feedback that can be used. Below I've converted his advice into a checklist of questions you can use to evaluate feedback you've prepared.

1. GOAL-REFERENCED: Does the feedback explicitly connect to the learners' goals?
2. TANGIBLE & TRANSPARENT: Does the feedback describe achievable results connected to the goal? Does the feedback communicate to the learner information about their performance they can understand?
3. ACTIONABLE: Does the feedback provide specific information that the student can use to improve?
4. USER-FRIENDLY: Is the feedback personalized and use language the learner understands?
5. TIMELY: Does the feedback come before the experience fades?
6. ONGOING: Does the learner receive feedback at predictable intervals?
7. CONSISTENT: Does the feedback come in a familiar format?

Looking for ways to save time? Create a legend

Save yourself time and provide clarity to your students by creating a legend that explains the meaning behind the adjectives you use to communicate the level of a students' academic performance. For example, consider this [creative legend Deborah Bracke co-created with students](#).

- <u>Snorkel</u>—Student demonstrates a deep understanding of content; connections between assigned readings, class discussion, and additional liberal arts classes are crystal clear; student explores issues and ideas; student is well-equipped and well-prepared; effort and exertion is notable.

- <u>Surf</u>—Student demonstrates a thirst for exploration but doesn't quite achieve it; connections between assigned readings, class discussion, and additional liberal arts classes are a bit muddy; student skims the surface of issues and ideas; student is adequately equipped; effort and exertion is discernible.

- <u>Float</u>—Student is in survival mode; student is paddling through the assignment with a shallow understanding of content; connections between assigned readings, class discussion, and additional liberal arts classes are aimless; effort and exertion is adrift.

- <u>Sink</u>—Student demonstrates no real interest in surviving; floatation devices have been offered, but they have not been accepted.

Resource Toolkit

Scheduling tools

- Canvas Scheduler: [Faculty Guide](#) | [Student Guide](#)
- https://doodle.com/en/

Whenever possible meet with each student and guide them towards developing a plan for successfully completing the quarter.

Feedback Letter outline

Provide every student with written feedback that clearly articulates where they stand for each credit designation. What should the letter contain? A good letter has the following parts:

1. A welcoming introduction that describes the purpose of the letter.

2. A reminder of program/course policies: your criteria for awarding credit, policies about accepting late or missing work.

3. An analysis of the students' achievement in the course or program thus far.

4. Identify opportunities for improvement that help the student focus their time where it is needed most.

5. Your recommendations for what the student should do moving forward (checklists can be very helpful).

6. The available campus resources that can help this student succeed.

7. A plan for closing the loop: How will the student follow through on making a plan to address the advice in the letter?

Supporting students in crisis

Sometimes students aren't able to attend sufficiently to learning because they are facing personal or family situations that require their emotional and cognitive capacities. In these cases, you may wish to refer students to resources on campus or make a [CARE report](). The CARE Team is a group of professionals largely in student support offices, working to get students connected to the right resources, both on and off campus.

Additional Campus Resources

- [Academic and Career Advising]()
- [Academic honesty]()
- [Access Services for Students with Disabilities]()
- [Alcohol/drug use]()
- [All Official College Policies]()
- [Assistive Technology (AT) Lab]()
- [Basic Needs Center]()
- [Code of student rights and responsibilities]()
- [COVID-19]()
- [Conflict Resolution]()
- [Counseling Services]()
- [Evergreen's Social Contract]()
- [BLISS:]() BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Intersectional Support Services

- [Free Speech Guide]()
- [Library]()
- [Media Loan]()
- [Non-discrimination policy]()
- [QuaSR: Quantitative & Symbolic Reasoning Center]()
- [Science Support Center]()
- [Sexual Misconduct reporting and resources]()
- [Student Activities]()
- [Student Employment]()
- [Student Wellness Services]()
- [The Writing Center]()
- [TRIO Student Success and Disability Support]()

Readings: Essays & white papers

Metzker, J. K. (2020, October 30). [Use Wise feedback to foster learning](). *Learning and Teaching Commons at Evergreen State College.*

Fiock, H., & Garcia, H. (2019). [Advice Guide: How to Give Your Students Better Feedback With Technology](). *Chronicle of Higher Education.*

Mandernach, B. J. (2016, November 29). [Dos and Don'ts of Effective Feedback](). *The Teaching Professor.* [[Handout]()]

Mandernach, B. J., & Garrett, J. (2016, December 1). [Effective Feedback Strategies for the Online Classroom](). *The Teaching Professor.*

Weimer, M. (2016, April 20). [Conceptions of Feedback](). *The Teaching Professor.*

Orlando, J. (2014). Feedback for Learning [White Paper]. *Magna Publications.*
Hattie, John. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning.* Routledge.
Wiggins, G. P. (2012, September 1). Seven Keys to Effective Feedback. *ASCD.*

Research: Peer-reviewed publications

Wisniewski, B., Zierer, K., & Hattie, J. (2020). The Power of Feedback Revisited: A Meta-Analysis of Educational Feedback Research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 3087. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03087

Winstone, N. E., Nash, R. A., Rowntree, J., & Parker, M. (2017). 'It'd be useful, but I wouldn't use it': Barriers to university students' feedback seeking and recipience. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(11), 2026–2041. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1130032

McLean, A. J., Bond, C. H., & Nicholson, H. D. (2015). An anatomy of feedback: A phenomenographic investigation of undergraduate students' conceptions of feedback. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(5), 921–932. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.855718

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement.* Taylor & Francis Group. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/esu/detail.action?docID=367685

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. Review of Educational Research, 77(1), 81–112.

Sample Feedback Letter with annotations

Introduction

> Use this part of the letter to describe the purpose of the letter. Use a welcoming tone and personalize when you can to help the student absorb the feedback.

Dear <first name>,
Welcome to Week 5! This is the time in the quarter when we take stock of our progress to set a plan for successfully completing the quarter. I've enjoyed your contributions in <type in your course/thread name>

Analysis and Recommendations

> Use this section to provide the student feedback on their performance so far and let them know what they need to do moving forward. If the student is performing well, you may suggest additional readings or other ways they can expand their understanding of the course material. If the student is falling behind, help them understand the steps they can take to get back on track.

The grid below evaluates your current status with respect to the program learning outcomes. For each outcome I've provided my evaluation based on the assignments you've completed and some advice for continuing learning for the rest of the quarter.

Learning Outcome	Status	Advice
implement effective search strategies and evaluate sources of chemical information for relevance and authority	unsatisfactory	You did not submit the "Scholarly article review" assignment, so I do not have sufficient work to evaluate. If you submit this assignment by Friday, Week 6, I will review it and update your evaluation for this learning outcome.
construct strategies to solve problems with integrated concepts and evaluate solutions	satisfactory	You have consistently completed the assigned weekly problem sets. Your solutions are generally well formed and demonstrate your grasp of problem solving in chemistry.

OR: USE DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

<<a paragraph that briefly describes the degree to which the student has met the learning goals for your course or program>>

<<a paragraph that clearly articulates what needs to be done and what is possible>>

Campus Resources

Use this section to suggest resources the student can take advantage of (if necessary). Avoid providing an exhaustive list of resources. Rather identify the resources that would be most useful for the student.

- See the list of campus resources above

Closing the Loop

A common pitfall with feedback is that the student doesn't integrate or take action. Use this section to provide a roadmap for using the feedback you've offered. Perhaps you can ask students to complete a plan or write a reflection about how they plan to make use of the feedback. Structuring the use of feedback helps.

Editable Email Template

SUBJECT: Mid-Quarter Check-in for [offering title]

Hi [name],

This is the time in the quarter when faculty reach out to students to check in about your progress and, if necessary, support you in making a plan for successfully completing the quarter. I want to share my records about your status thus far (please let me know if you think this isn't accurate), along with some overall feedback.

Here's a reminder of the attendance policy given in the syllabus:
[paste section]

So far there have been [x] class meetings, and you attended [x] and missed [x].

These are the assignments that have been due so far:
[insert a list]

You have turned in all assignments [except – list missing assignments]. Your work tends to be [on time / late].

Here's a reminder of the policies given in the syllabus for credit and missing or late assignments:
[paste section]

<<Write feedback here appropriate to the student's circumstances. Try to include at least one thing the student is doing well, and at least one actionable area where they could work to improve. For students who are in good standing, this is enough!>>

<<For students who are at risk of not earning full credit based on their performance thus far, be really specific about what they need to do to succeed. Some examples of language:>>

- You have already missed several seminar assignments, so you need to complete all of them for the rest of the quarter to earn full credit.
- I can accept [certain assignments] late, but I recommend focusing on the work ahead and feeling on top of things before you try to make up assignments.
- It's important to turn in your [proposal, draft, etc.] so I have a sense of what you're working on and support your progress.

You should be aware that earning less than full credit may affect your academic standing, and in extreme cases can affect financial aid and/or result in a mandatory leave of absence from school. You can find more information at https://www.evergreen.edu/registration/credit-policies and https://www.evergreen.edu/policy/undergraduatesatisfactoryacademicprogress

[I would be glad to meet with you one-on-one to / when we meet one-on-one let's] talk through a plan for catching up on assignments and meeting expectations. [scheduling information]

I appreciate your contributions in class and [other examples of work/participation]. You can do it!

[sign off]