

## Introduction

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In this video guide, we will cover the principles of providing constructive feedback. During your time at Westminster, you will be invited to provide feedback through a variety of ways, including surveys.

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Examples of these include the Mid module check in the National Student Survey, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Student Union surveys, amongst others.

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There are other ad hoc feedback mechanisms too, such as UniTu.

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The principles of constructive feedback can be applied throughout your studies at Westminster.

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Doing so is a great way to ensure that your feedback, your voice and your views are not only conveyed in an appropriate manner, but that they can be acted on for meaningful change to further enhance your university experience.

## Principles of Constructive Feedback

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There are multiple principles to consider when providing constructive feedback. As mentioned, these principles are not exclusive to the Mid-Module Check In, and can be applied to all university surveys or feedback opportunities.

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At the core of these principles is remembering that a person is on the receiving end of your feedback.

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A cornerstone of providing constructive feedback is having empathy towards the recipient.

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So, first, feedback should be respectful. Treat providing feedback like you would treat having a face-to-face conversation.

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Your feedback should not be defamatory or harmful, and it mustn't make the reader or subject feel bullied or harassed.

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Feedback should also be depersonalized. In a similar vein, the feedback you provide should focus on specific actions and behaviours rather than blaming individuals or criticizing personal traits. Keep the feedback focused on your experience of teaching and learning rather than making personal or emotionally driven comments.

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Feedback should be balanced. Including positives and negatives in your responses helps us to identify what works for students and what can be improved or altered for greatest benefit to everyone.

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Feedback should be accurate.

Provide feedback without exaggeration.

This kind of objectivity allows us to understand the point exactly and ensures feedback is credible and actionable.

## Principles of Constructive Feedback 2

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Feedback should be specific. Alongside being objective and without exaggeration, including specificity in your feedback is a good approach.

This is key as your individual experience matters greatly, but it may not be universal to all students on the module. So, using a short example to illustrate the point you make helps us to identify specific actions and behaviours to adjust.

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Feedback should be solution focused.

We want to know how your experience of teaching and learning can be further enhanced.

You certainly don't have to have all the right answers, but suggestions of ways that would improve your experience are welcomed.

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Feedback should provide context.

Just like being specific in your responses, adding context to your feedback helps us in our interpretation of it.

Context in your feedback helps us to understand the circumstances and reasoning behind your feedback.

## Example: Teaching Style

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So what do the principles of constructive feedback look like in practice?

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Let's review some examples of unconstructive feedback and see how they could be improved.

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Our first example focuses on teaching style.

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"I don't like how Joe teaches. They just read from slides."

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Immediately, we can see that this comment is directed at an individual.

It does provide some specifics about what isn't working well for the student.

However, it doesn't identify changes that would be beneficial to the student's experience.

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If we depersonalise the comment, bring in some context about the impact on the student's experience, and suggest a solution, this comment quickly becomes actionable constructive feedback.

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The result might be something like this.

"Listening to a long presentation is tiring for me. I would feel more engaged by a variety of teaching approaches such as group working activities."

## Example: Assessment Guidance

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Our next example focuses on assessment guidance.

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“Assessment guidance is confusing.”

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The original comment is objective and does describe the impact on the student but doesn't give much more than that.

If we make the comment more specific, add in a suggested solution, and explore the potential benefit for students, this comment becomes much more constructive.

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The outcome might be something like “The assessment briefs for our essays don't make it clear what parts of the content we should focus on for assessment. I'd like more opportunity to discuss this, so everyone understands the assignment.”

## Example: Learning Resources

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Here is a final example to show positive feedback about the module.

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“The resources provided support by learning outside of the classroom.”

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It is great to read that the resources for the module are helpful to the student. It would be good to know why. A small amount of added detail, specificity, and context can help us to understand ways in which this positivity can be capitalized upon.

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The outcome might be something like “It's really helpful for me when slides and reading materials are uploaded a few days before the lecture. This gives me time to organise my independent studying, ensuring I can review the materials and come to class with specific questions in mind.”

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Next, we'll move on to address some other considerations you can make when providing the Student Voice through your feedback.

## Things To Consider

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When providing feedback, first consider the use of slang or emojis in your responses.

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Using slang, colloquialisms, or even emojis can be helpful in some cases and can be a good representation of your individual voice, but we encourage you to limit your use of these when providing feedback.

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This is because we won't have the opportunity to follow up and clarify what is meant by an emoji or a specific term you have used in your feedback.

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To make sure that your feedback is completely understood, consider writing out in full what you mean. This is a positive habit to form now, as providing feedback in a constructive and professional manner is an essential skill for any future workplace.

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Similarly, it's important to consider that your feedback will be received and reviewed in a digital format.

Unlike an in-person conversation, this means there are not visual clues or tone of voice to help us interpret your feedback.

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You may also be responding at a time of day when someone is on the other end to receive your feedback immediately.

Because of these added dimensions, being clear and thorough in your responses is key to providing impactful and constructive feedback.

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Lastly, you may be concerned that you could be identified by your responses to a survey.

Rest assured that responses used in reporting are anonymous.

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Refraining from including identifiable personal detail in your responses helps maintain anonymity. However, the anonymous nature of any feedback shouldn't be seen as an opportunity to provide potentially harmful or overly critical feedback about someone else.

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The principles of constructive feedback should still be observed.