How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Marking

Published 12/3/2020 by Ashley Ribbel

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in the December 2020 issue

Are you feeling overwhelmed with the amount of marking and feedback you are trying to manage lately?

Image from Imgflip

The good news is you are not alone! The better news is – we have strategies and tips to help you stay on top it!

With the move to fully online courses over the past several semesters, we have seen a fairly smooth and seamless transition given the circumstances we find ourselves in. This in large part is due to the incredible dedication of our Seneca Faculty.

Despite this, online teaching can feel overwhelming at times with weekly tutorials, online office hours, creating and delivering content, and checking in regularly with students via formative assessments.

A number of inquiries have come into the Teaching & Learning Centre Team about how faculty can better manage their marking load yet still provide meaningful and timely feedback to students. With that in mind, we offer the following tips and strategies to help you effectively and efficiently manage your marking:

1. **Use instructional feedback (group feedback) when appropriate.** If you notice many students making the same errors, consider bringing that feedback to the whole class at once, rather than individually on each student's assignment.

2. **Promote thinking, but don't do the thinking.** Encourage students to make the corrections themselves. Provide a comment that explains the error, but don't correct each mistake for them. Have students go through their document to identify and correct similar mistakes.

3. **Judge when to use summative feedback.** Summative feedback is the feedback that is given at the end of a learning cycle, when no further assessment of a particular learning outcome will be conducted. There is debate as to the usefulness of summative feedback, as many students do not review it. Decide in what situations summative feedback will be helpful and only use it then. It is more important to provide meaningful formative feedback. However, always give summative feedback if asked by a student. **Make use of self-assessment and peer feedback.** Not only will this lighten your load, but more importantly, students will practice meta-cognitive and group skills.

4. **Give feedback in smaller blocks.** Resist the temptation to provide feedback on every aspect of an assessment. Identify the key points you would like your learner to work on. Consider breaking long assignments into smaller, more manageable blocks.

5. **Create Rubrics directly in Learn@Seneca.** Rubrics can be created for assignments, essays, short answers and file response questions, blogs, journals, wikis, and discussion forums and threads. Providing clear and descriptive grading criteria ensures students are clear on the expectations for assignments. Setting up these rubrics in Learn@Seneca will save you time and help you keep your grading organized and consistent.

| Purpose and Focus | ◯ Points: 15 *(15%)*

Limited awareness of audience and/or purpose | ◯ Points: 20 *(20%)*

An attempt to establish and maintain purpose and communicate with the audience | ◯ Points: 25 *(25%)*

Establishes and maintains clear focus; evidence of distinctive voice and/or appropriate tone |
| Development of Ideas | ◯ Points: 15 *(15%)*

Minimal idea development, limited and/or unrelated details | ◯ Points: 20 *(20%)*

Unelaborated idea development; unelaborated and/or repetitious details TO depth of idea development supported by elaborated, relevant details | ◯ Points: 25 *(25%)*

Depth and complexity of ideas supported by rich, engaging and/or pertinent details; evidence analysis, reflection and insight |

Rubric example from Blackboard's information in Rubrics

For more information, see the Creating a Rubric in Learn@Seneca (PDF) document from the Teaching & Learning Centre.

6. **Create a comment library.** Use the library feature of Learn@Seneca's inline grading tool to save commonly-used comments. Quickly add these comments when marking documents online using a single mouse click.
   For more information, see the Learn@Seneca Inline Grading (PDF) document from the Teaching & Learning Centre.

Employing some or all of these strategies creates a win-win for you and your students! The suggested strategies and tools will allow you to plan and organize your marking so that you feel less overwhelmed with volume while at the same time allowing you to create and provide meaningful and ongoing feedback that is essential to student success.

As always, please reach out to the Teaching & Learning Centre Team for further assistance exploring and using these tools and strategies.

View the December 2020 issue of the Academic Newsletter.

December 2020 issue

tags : blackboard, december-2020, educational-technology, educational-technology-tools, learn@seneca, teaching-and-learning, teaching-tip, the-teaching-and-learning-centre