

Feedback, Marking and how they can Improve Learning

Introduction

Feedback is one of the most common features of successful teaching and learning and amongst the top influences on achievement (Hattie, 2009). However, on closer inspection, the effectiveness of feedback is very variable. In some schools, feedback is seen as marking – a one-way process in which the teacher spends hours every week writing detailed comments in pupils’ books only for their ‘feedback’ to be poorly received and hardly used in the revision of the work. For some good history teachers, the damaging impact that a heavy marking load has on work-life balance is the main reason they leave the profession. It is time to start asking some serious questions. Why mark books? Is all that time spent marking worthwhile? What impact does it have on outcomes? What constitutes effective feedback and how can it be built into our schemes of work?

Feedback matters but feedback and marking are not the same thing. A teacher can spend hours marking but it might make little difference to pupil outcomes as little in the way of useful feedback is provided. Student progress is determined not by the amount of feedback we provide, much more by how we provide feedback. We have tried to address this by placing ‘marking’ within a 6 stage feedback cycle (see below). Our aims are to:

- reduce teacher workload
- increase the extent to which pupils take responsibility for their learning
- improve outcomes by developing effective study habits in history – routines that make sure students review, redraft, respond to feedback and reflect on progress

As you will see, this is very much work in progress and we welcome comments, ideas and further practical strategies from within the history teaching community.

The Feedback Cycle

STAGE 1: When the work is set – establish clear success criteria

STAGE 2: When pupils are working on the task – make the most of oral feedback

STAGE 3: Just before pupils hand in their work to be marked – build in self and peer assessment

STAGE 4: When marking the work – aim to save time and maximise impact

STAGE 5: Returning the work – build in opportunities to respond to feedback

STAGE 6: Reflection – create a dialogue about learning

How does marking fit into the feedback cycle?

As you can see ‘teacher marking’ only occurs during one stage of the feedback cycle (stage 4). We see marking as serving three main purposes:

1. **Feedback for progress:** To provide students with feedback on how to improve and thereby reduce the gap between where the students are and where you want them to be.
2. **Diagnostic purposes:** To assess the effectiveness of the teaching and learning that has taken place and to become aware of where students are struggling or their misconceptions. Evidence of student achievement is interpreted in order to make a decision about what to do next so marking therefore informs our next steps as a teacher.
3. **Emotional purposes:** To provide recognition to the student for their hard work. The pride that students take in their work soon drops if their books go unmarked for months. Pupils need to know that they are valued and that you care about their progress. The way we feedback to pupils has a significant influence on their motivation and self-esteem (which are in themselves a crucial influence on learning).

STAGE 1: When the work is set – establish clear success criteria

When planning new units (such as thematic units or depth studies at GCSE) it is essential to have a clear idea of the outcomes you want to achieve. Rather than starting from the textbook or your favourite activities, start with the desired pupil outcomes. Move from the outcomes you want to see, back to the learning intentions and success criteria, then to the activities and resources that are needed to meet the success criteria.

Further advice on planning thematic studies and depth studies is provided here:

<https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Issues/attainment/AttainmentThemes.html>

<https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Issues/attainment/AttainmentDepth.html>

A clear understanding of the success criteria is just as important for the pupil as it is for the teacher and it forms the crucial first step in our 6 stage feedback cycle. This stage is informed by three key principles:

1. **Visible Learning:** students need to ‘see’ what a good response to the task looks like
2. **Co-construction:** pupils should be actively involved in the construction of the success criteria
3. **Transferability:** pupils need to be able to transfer ‘generic’ criteria to new learning contexts

Visible learning

We should avoid a tokenistic approach to sharing success criteria. It is important not to rush this crucial stage of the feedback cycle. For students to make progress they need to be aware of the gap between where they are and where they need to be. A photocopied list of criteria, handed out with limited explanation or discussion can confuse pupils. Instead, we need to make sure that students are given time to think through what the criteria means in practice and to ‘see’ what the end result looks like.

It is therefore crucial to make sure that all students know what quality work looks like. Modelling the success criteria benefits lower-achieving students the most. Many higher-achieving students already have a clear idea of what successful work looks like but others do not. For improvement to

occur the student must have a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher. This means that deconstructed, annotated examples of high quality responses should be on display, available in the classroom (perhaps laminated and in placed in pockets on the wall) and accessible from home via a learning platform. Models of excellence (especially those produced by a previous year group or another class) can create high expectations, inspire students and create the ‘can do’ mentality in the classroom.

Co-construction

As much as possible, students should be actively involved in devising the success criteria with the teacher and have the opportunity to apply the criteria to their own work. Our most common approach is to start with a good model (this could be from the work of a previous class, a model provided by the exam board or an exemplar produced by the teacher). Use this model to identify the key features of an effective piece of work. Key features identified by the students then form the basis of jointly constructed success criteria that the students feel a sense of ownership with. This type of approach means that students will be far more likely to apply the learning intentions and success criteria to their own work.

Generic versus task specific feedback

Detailed, task-specific success criteria can be counterproductive. If you specify in detail what students are to achieve you are in danger of providing a straight-jacket that restricts thinking, limits opportunities to learn from mistakes and reduces the chance of students constructing original lines of argument. We therefore need to think carefully about how we model success criteria and the amount of support we provide pupils when they work towards them.

Also, to be successful at GCSE and A level history, students need to be able to transfer their learning to a different context. During the learning it is therefore important to build in a degree of generality into the success criteria – so as to promote transfer across tasks. Enquiry is at the heart of Key Stage 3 History – it should be at the heart of the GCSE and A level courses too. Ian Luff argues that only if we assess through structured enquiry alone do we assess history holistically (See *Teaching History* Feedback and Assessment edition, 2016).

It therefore seems to make sense to build in generic, enquiry-focussed success criteria to each task. These could focus on the key steps in the enquiry process:

- **Decoding questions:** Has the student identified the conceptual focus of the question? Do they focus on the right chronological period? (see **page 8 of this document**)
- **Research and use of sources:** Has the student used a range of sources? Do they consider the provenance of the sources? Have they selected appropriate information and deployed it effectively to support arguments?
- **Construction of argument:** Has the student considered a range of arguments? Are these evaluated in order to establish a clear line of argument?
- **Organisation and communication of ideas:** Has the student used paragraphs to organise their work effectively? Is the piece of writing coherent? Does it show a developed historical vocabulary?

History progression grids like the one below can help pupils get a better idea of what getting better at history looks like.

	Question focus	Organisation	Line of argument	Supporting information
High level 	The answer is consistently focused on the question.	The answer is structured very carefully and explanations are coherent throughout.	The line of argument is very clear and convincing. It flows throughout the answer.	Supporting information has been precisely selected and shows wide-ranging knowledge and understanding.
	The answer is mainly focused on the question.	The answer is well organised but some parts of the answer lack coherence.	The line of argument is clear, convincing and generally maintained through the answer.	Support information is accurate and relevant and shows good knowledge and understanding.
	The answer has weak or limited links to the question.	Some statements are developed and there is some attempt to organise the material.	The line of argument is partly convincing but not maintained through the answer.	Supporting information is mainly accurate and relevant and shows some knowledge and understanding.
	The answer has no real links to the question.	The answer lacks organisation.	The line of argument is unclear or missing.	Supporting information is limited or not relevant.

From *Medicine Through Time c.1250-present* by Ian Dawson, eds. Dale Banham and Ian Dawson, Hodder Education, 2016

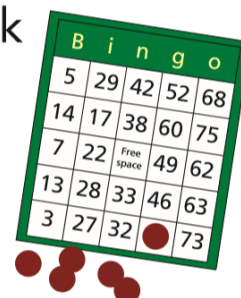
These can be developed into bingo cards that can be used to establish consistent, generic success criteria for most answers. An extra line can be added to provide task specific criteria when needed. These bingo cards can also help to focus self and peer assessment, as well as teacher feedback and target setting.

Writing better history

Self-assessing and peer assessing your work

It is important that you check your own work before you hand it to your teacher to be marked. Sometimes you may be asked to assess the work of someone else in your class. In both cases you need to know what you are looking for. What are the key ingredients of great writing in history?

You can use the **bingo card** as a checklist – get competitive and try and show that you have covered all the squares and got a full house of ingredients!



The answer starts with a clear focus on the question (there is no long introduction). Key words from the question are used during the answer. For longer answers, each paragraph is linked to the question.	Statements and arguments are fully developed and explained – showing good knowledge and understanding. Arguments are well supported by accurate, relevant and well selected evidence.	Connectives are used to help prove arguments and show significance/impact. Look for phrases like: <i>this led to ...</i> <i>this resulted in ...</i> <i>this meant that ...</i>
There is a clear line of argument at the start of each paragraph – think of it as a signpost for what follows. The rest of the paragraph supports this argument. The line of argument flows throughout the answer building up to a clear conclusion.	Paragraphs have been used to provide a clear structure. Each paragraph starts with a different cause/factor (12-mark explain questions) or a different theme/criteria (16-mark judgement questions)	The answer shows wide ranging knowledge and understanding. It considers a range of factors/causes (explain questions) or explores the evidence for and against a statement ('judgement' questions)
The language used helps to construct very precise arguments – showing how important the writer thinks a cause/factor, event or individual is. A good range of specialist historical vocabulary has been used.	There is a clear conclusion. For explain questions factors/causes are prioritised or linked. For judgement questions there is a focus on 'how far' the writer agrees with the statement.	The answer has been carefully checked for spelling, punctuation and grammar. The meaning is always clear throughout the answer.

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Additional strategies for developing pupils' understanding of success criteria

- The teacher provides 5 samples of work from last year's classes. Pupils work in groups to decide whether some are better than others and give reasons for their views. This feeds into the whole class construction of success criteria.
- Using work produced by previous classes (or models produced by the teacher) students work in pairs and then groups of 4 to spot errors and weaknesses in the responses. Pupils tend to be better at spotting errors and weaknesses in the work of others rather than their own! They use their findings to produce a 'What Not to Write' checklist which can be used for self or peer assessment.
- Students complete a question or task for homework and hand it in to the teacher. In the next lesson they are then given 3 copies of successful essays. In small groups they discuss why they have been judged as high quality, thus identifying the key features of a successful answer. They are then invited to redraft their own piece of work before it is 'marked' by the teacher. This is useful because it provides a concrete example of excellent work and students can compare their own work with the samples provided before 'closing the gap' between their own work and the 'models of excellence'.

De-coding exam questions

The examiners are not trying to catch you out: they are giving you a chance to show what you know – and what you can do with what you know. However, you must stick to the question on the exam paper. Staying focused on the question is crucial. Including information that is not relevant or misreading a question and writing about the wrong topic wastes time and gains you no marks.

To stay focused on the question you will need to practise how to 'de-code' questions. This is particularly important for Section B of the exam paper. Follow these **five steps to success**:

Step 1 Read the question a couple of times. Then look at **how many marks** the question is worth. This tells you how much you are expected to write. Do not spend too long on questions only worth a few marks. Remember it is worth planning the 12- and 16-mark questions.

Step 2 Identify the **conceptual focus** of the question. What is the key concept that the question focuses on? Is it asking you to look at:

- the **significance** of a discovery or individual
- **causation** – the reasons why an event or development happened
- **similarities** – between the key features of different periods
- **change** – the extent of change or continuity, progress or stagnation during a period?

Step 3 Spot the **question type**. Are you being asked to:

- **describe** the key features of a period
- **explain** similarities between periods or why something happened
- **evaluate** how useful a source or collection of sources is
- reach a **judgement** as to how far you agree with a particular statement.

Each question type requires a different approach. Look for key words or phrases that help you work out which approach is needed. The phrase 'How far do you agree?' means you need to weigh the evidence for and against a statement before reaching a balanced judgement. 'Explain why' means that you need to explore a range of reasons why an event happened or why the pace of change during a period was fast or slow.

Step 4 Identify the **content focus**. What is the area of content or topic the examiner wants you to focus on?

Step 5 Look carefully at the **date boundaries** of the question. What time period should you cover in your answer? Stick to this carefully or you will waste time writing about events that are not relevant to the question.

Look at the exam question below. At first glance it appears this question is just about Jenner's vaccination against smallpox. This shows the danger of not de-coding a question carefully. If you simply describe what Jenner did you will not get many marks as you are still not focusing on the actual question.

The conceptual focus is significance – you need to reach a judgement on how far Jenner's work was a 'major breakthrough' in the prevention of disease.

The date boundaries for the question are c.1700 and c.1900. If you include references to events in the twentieth century you will waste time and not pick up any additional marks.

6. 'Jenner's vaccination against smallpox was a major breakthrough in the prevention of disease in Britain during the period c.1700–c.1900.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

(16 marks)

16 marks are available – this means the question requires an extended answer. It is definitely worth planning this answer!

The content focus is more than just Jenner. It is exploring a wider theme – the prevention of disease in Britain.

The phrase 'How far do you agree?' means that this question requires you to reach a judgement about the statement in quotation marks. This means analysing the impact of Jenner's work and its limitations. It also means weighing its significance against other important breakthroughs (such as Snow's work on preventing cholera).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Look at the other questions in Section B of the exam paper on page 149.

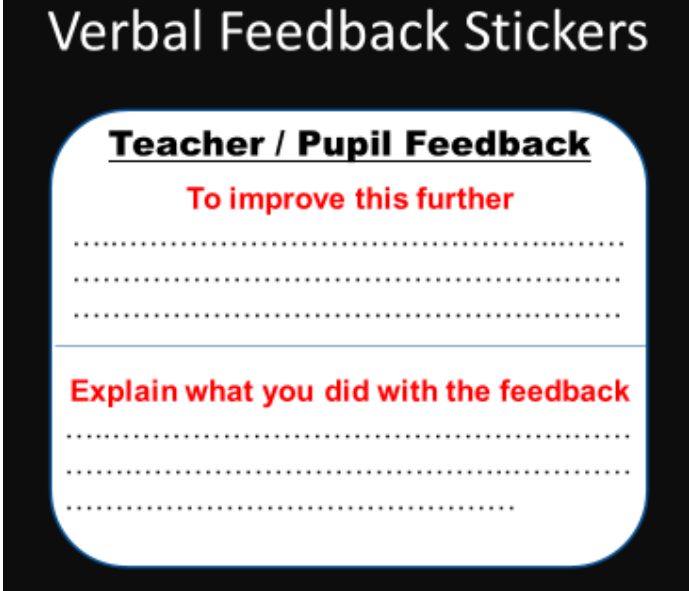
Break each question down into the five steps and check you have de-coded the question effectively.

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STAGE 2: When pupils are working on the task – address misconceptions and make the most of oral feedback

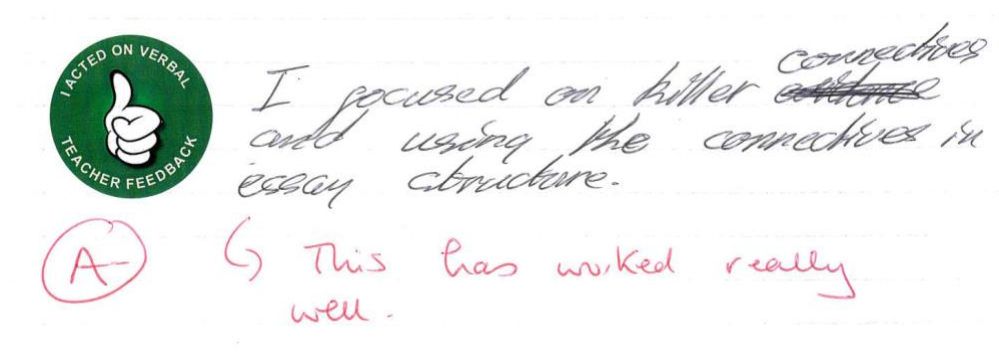
We have all faced the experience of writing the same comment on 20 plus books because the students have left the classroom before we had discovered that the students had not understood a crucial point. Far better to identify areas of misunderstanding before the students leave the class and address problems and misconceptions before marking. However, this is only going to happen if we think carefully about the questions we ask in class. Dylan Wiliam talks of the need for questions that provide ‘a window into students’ thinking’ and these need to be planned carefully into lessons and schemes of work. It is important that the ‘hinge questions’ focus on the central points of the lesson, link to the success criteria and address potential misunderstandings that you have identified. These ‘hinge questions’ should take no longer than 2 minutes for the students to respond and it must also be possible for the teacher to interpret a full range of responses quickly. This is where mini-whiteboards can come in very useful.

When students are working on the task is also the time to make oral feedback really count. It is an opportunity to circulate round the class and provide personalised feedback to students. However, oral feedback can get lost and it is important that students record key pieces of advice in their book. Stickers such the one below focus the student on using the oral feedback.

A template for a verbal feedback sticker. It has a black background with the title 'Verbal Feedback Stickers' in white. Below the title is a white rounded rectangle with a blue border. Inside this rectangle, the text 'Teacher / Pupil Feedback' is written in bold black. Below this, 'To improve this further' is written in red, followed by three dotted lines for writing. A horizontal line separates this from the bottom section, which starts with 'Explain what you did with the feedback' in red, followed by three dotted lines for writing.

In addition, stickers such as this also make key pieces of advice stand out in pupils’ books. Teachers can direct students to look back at previous pieces of advice before they begin a new piece of work, thus helping to transfer learning to new contexts.

It is also important that pupils regularly reflect on how responding to feedback and incorporating advice or new learning strategies into their work leads to progress. When pupils hand in their work they can use 'Responded to oral feedback' stickers (see below) to highlight where they have used advice from teachers or peers to improve their work. This helps us as teachers check that pupils are responding to oral feedback and that it is having a direct impact on improving the quality of their work. As can be seen in the example below, we also get students to annotate how they have used the oral feedback to improve their work. This encourages pupils to reflect on how responding to feedback leads to progress and it makes them more likely to transfer key tips and strategies to future pieces of work.



STAGE 3: Just before pupils hand in their work to be marked – build in self and peer assessment

Self-Assessment: Key principles

The most important assessment that goes on in a school isn't done to students but goes on inside students. As Ron Berger observes 'Every student walks around with a picture of what is acceptable, what is good enough. Each time he works on something he looks at it and assesses it. Is this good enough? Do I feel comfortable handing this in? Does it meet my standards?' The challenge for us as history teachers is to 'get inside students' heads and turn up the knob that regulates quality and effort.

It is therefore important to establish the rule "self-assessment before teacher assessment". Building in self-assessment and a little more time for checking and redrafting makes it more likely that it is their best piece of work. Why should we spend time marking students' work for spelling and punctuation when they have not even checked it themselves before handing it in? Why should we mark work when the student knows they have rushed it and it is not the best they can do? Why mark work when the students have not even used the success criteria we have provided?

Self-Assessment: Strategies

We need to make sure that students take responsibility for the work that they hand in. Aim to embed the following strategies into your teaching:

1. Provide (or co-construct with the class) minimum standards for the work that is due to be handed in. These can take the form of a checklist. Pupils have to tick off the standards before handing in their work. If the minimum standards are not met, do not mark the work - return the work and ask the pupils to do it properly.
2. Insist that pupils highlight within their work where they have responded to a previous piece of feedback (using the 'Responded to feedback' stickers shown earlier)
3. Insist that pupils highlight where they feel they have successfully met specific success criteria.
4. In order to encourage pupils to check their work before handing it in, allocate 10 minutes of lesson time for them to review their work. Provide the pupils with purple pens that they

must use to make corrections (this makes it clear if they have made the effort to check their work!) If there are no dictionaries in the classroom ask pupils to circle words that they are unsure of.

Peer assessment: key principles

Peer assessment strategies can decrease teacher workload but do have some potential pitfalls. Does the higher ability pupil get the feedback they need if they are paired with a lower ability pupil? Will any assessment be accurate? Will pupils receive the feedback they need to improve?

We tend to avoid involving students in summative assessments. This is because the purpose of peer assessment is to help the individual being assessed to improve their work before they reach the stage of a summative assessment. If peer assessment tasks are carefully modelled, structured and monitored they can reduce the burden on the teacher, increase motivation, improve the social cohesion within the group and encourage students to reflect on the strategies they used to progress. On occasions it might be a peer in the classroom who can find the right language to explain a tricky concept to another student. Also a pupil who is struggling might be more likely to interrupt a peer for clarification or to ask a peer to slow down and go over something again until it is understood

If peer assessment is going to work effectively it is crucial that time is set aside for modelling what effective feedback looks like. Use a visualiser or camera to display feedback provided to the class and ask the class to discuss whether the comment is useful. Use the outcomes from the discussion to identify the key features of the best feedback and display these regularly before students provide peer feedback. Effective peer assessment also relies on clear success criteria or checklists that students understand and can apply to their own work and the work of others.

On most occasions, pairing pupils together of similar ability seems to work best. However, for peer tutoring pairing a higher ability student with a less able student can work very well. Dylan Wiliam argues that 'If the students engaged in peer tutoring are providing elaborated explanations rather than just answers, then there is compelling evidence that both those who give and those who receive help will benefit.' Make it clear to your students that to be a good historian simply getting a good grade on a task is not enough, you need to understand why and you need to be able to communicate this to others. Encourage students to focus on the process rather than the outcome, the key is to be able to explain how they arrived at a successful answer.

Learning Critiques

Ron Berger has shown the power of two types of peer critique:

- Gallery critique – where the work of every child is displayed – the focus is primarily positive – students select examples that impress them and discuss why.
- In depth critique – the class looks at the work of a single student or group and critique it thoroughly. This provides an opportunity for teaching more specific things such as the use key vocabulary, connectives and sentence starters. Begin with the author of the work explaining the ideas and goals, and explaining what particular aspects of the work they are seeking help with.

Ron Berger's book also encouraged us to shift the focus of our work in the classroom from quantity to quality and to develop an ethic of craftsmanship and excellence. Quality work needs re-thinking, reworking and polishing. Students who do this should be celebrated for their commitment. Berger suggests that teachers take critique to a whole new level and make critique a habit of mind amongst students and the cornerstone of their classroom practice.

The protocols for peer critique (established by Berger) also form a useful set of guidelines for any form of peer assessment:

- Critique the work not the person.
- Begin with a positive and then move on to constructive criticism.
- Be kind - the environment must feel safe and free from sarcasm.
- Be specific - avoid comments like 'It's good' or 'I really like it'; these are timewasters.
- Be helpful - the goal is to help the individual and the class, not for the critic to be heard. This, too, wastes time.
- Use I statements – for example – 'I am confused by this...'
- Use a question format – for example – 'I am curious why you chose to begin with this' or 'Have you considered including...?'

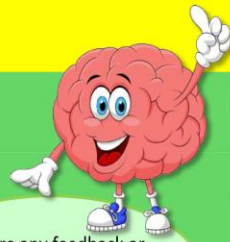
Additional peer assessment strategies

- Speed-date peer assessment - students move round the class and meet with 5 or 6 other students. Each 'date' is short and has a different focus. The focus for the dialogue about the work needs to be very specific, for example evaluating the effectiveness of key signpost sentences at the start of a paragraph or the clarity and power of the conclusion.
- Peer assessment bingo – criteria can be placed on bingo cards – students can provide feedback to other students in their group – the aim being for everyone to get a full house by responding to the feedback and working collaboratively to meet the criteria in all the boxes.
- Pre-marking checklist – before a student submits their work to the teacher to be marked it has to be 'signed off' by a peer – or the group. Remember to create a measure of accountability for the student doing the peer marking or the group.
- Students complete practice exam questions for homework. In the next lesson, in groups of 4 pupils review responses and discuss what the best answer would be – they then compile the best composite paper.
- C5B4ME (an extended version of C3B4ME) – before a student is allowed to ask the teacher for help, assistance must have been sought from 5 other places, including peers in the class within their group.

C5B4ME

GREEN Try and solve your own problems first...

1. Use your **brain**, stop and think ...



2. Look back in your **book** or **folder**.



Is there any feedback or advice you have already had that could help?

3. Use the **resources** in the classroom.



- Is there something on display that could help?
- Could a page in the textbook help?
- Would a dictionary or thesaurus help you find the right word?

AMBER See if someone else in the class can help you...

4. Ask the **person next to you** if they can help.



5. Ask your **group leader** if they can help.



RED See me... Ask for advice.

Remember to show how and where you have used this advice in your work (so that I can check that you have understood my feedback and advice).



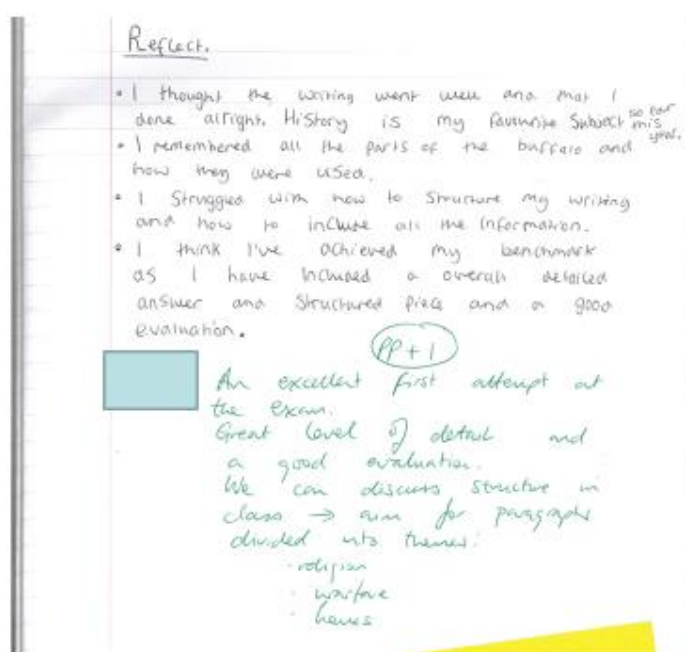
STAGE 4: When marking the work – aim to save time and maximise impact

Marking should identify where the student has made progress and inform their next steps. Feedback is only really effective if the information fed back to the learner is used by the learner to improve performance. It is therefore important to provide time for pupils to respond to feedback in class (see Stage 5). Feedback can be accurate but not helpful, for example, if it describes what needs to happen but does not show how the student can improve. For feedback to be helpful it is important that the student knows how to use the feedback to improve - saying what is wrong is not enough – feedback should provide ‘a recipe for future action’.

Key principles

- Feedback should be linked to the success criteria that have been shared with the students.
- Reflect on the impact of your teaching as you mark. If the whole class is receiving the same target, it is best to stop marking and plan a lesson that helps them with what they are struggling with.
- Do not forget the emotional element – feedback should not be purely analytical – it should motivate the student and help to build a positive pupil-teacher relationship. A phone call home or verbal face-to-face acknowledgement can make a massive difference.
- Keep written comments to a minimum. Feedback needs to be broken down into small, manageable and specific steps – less is often more – give less feedback but make it more focussed. For example, ‘over the next two weeks I want you to work on these two things’.
- Targets should ‘feed-forward’ into future work – expect students to write these two targets at the top of their next piece of work. Feedback should provide a focus for subsequent pieces of work.
- In terms of teacher praise, quality is more important than quantity. Praise is more effective if it is infrequent, credible, specific and linked to factors within an individual’s control - the feedback we provide should support the view that ability is incremental rather than fixed.

- The timing of the feedback is also crucial. If it is provided too early (before students have had a chance to struggle and try to solve a problem) then students become too dependent on the teacher – they think less and so learn less.
- Encourage the pupil to provide feedback to the teacher when they hand in their work. They should feel able to ask questions, let me their teacher know what they are struggling with and to ask for further support. This provides useful feedback to the teacher, can inform planning and provide a focus for marking.



Using marking codes

Marking codes can help ensure that the feedback is precise and linked to advice on how to improve (next steps). The codes can be linked to common areas where students lose marks in the exam. For example: QF (Question Focus), ND (explanation Not Developed), NC (lacks Clarity), NS (argument Not Supported). They also save teacher time - how often do we write the same comment on a number of essays? The marking codes below not only help to identify strengths and weaknesses within a piece of written work, they also provide advice on how to improve (ie – next steps).

Marking codes also aid diagnostic assessment. Codes can be recorded in our mark book and over time we can identify common problems (these can be addressed by whole class teaching) or and where an individual student is constantly losing marks (this can be addressed through one to one support). Alternatively, the class can be grouped accordingly – students who are strong in a particular area can help others or groups of pupils who need support in a particular area can be grouped together to receive a mini-tutorial from the teacher.

What the codes mean...	What you can do to improve...
QF Question Focus Some sections are descriptive and lack question focus (links between the material and the question are largely implicit).	Read the question several times very carefully. Rephrase it in your own words to ensure that you have fully grasped its implications. Highlight the key target words to which you must respond, to help you remain focused upon them. Think very carefully about the opening and closing sentences of your paragraphs. Is there a clear signpost/argument at the start and a strong link to the question at the end?
NR Not Relevant Identified sections are not relevant to the question.	Review your work carefully; cut sections that do not link to the question and evaluate/explain/support arguments.
EG Examples Arguments are not well supported by an appropriate range and depth of accurate and well-selected factual material.	Revise relevant, specific examples that will help you prove an argument. Select examples carefully and deploy them to support an argument.
O Organisation Your essay has organisational problems: e.g., you present information in a haphazard fashion in which there is no attempt to link ideas together in coherent paragraphs.	Have you moved from topic to topic, from argument to argument, in a logical manner that will not confuse and bewilder your imaginary reader? Do you need to rewrite your essay, to rearrange material, so that you can present your argument more effectively?
FE Factual Errors There are some important factual errors in the essay. It reveals limited or faulty knowledge and poor understanding of technical terms and key words.	Note carefully the errors highlighted in the essay. Re-read class notes and relevant textbooks dealing with the topic in question. Complete or correct notes that relate to this topic. Seek further help—ask for a session at lunchtime or after school to review the content.
SPG Spelling, Punctuation & Grammar Your essay contains a number of important spelling errors of technical terms and may lose you marks.	Study common spelling errors and practise writing them out repeatedly so you learn to spell them correctly—especially if they include technical words that the examiner will expect you to know. This will help you build up your “sight vocabulary”.
NC Not Clear Written expression needs some attention: e.g., your sentences miss things; sentences are ambiguous; you jump from one idea to another in a confusing manner.	Re-read what you have written very self-critically. Have you expressed yourself clearly? Look carefully at what you have <i>actually</i> written—not what you <i>think</i> you have written. Will someone else understand what you have written?
ND Not Developed There is inadequate development of arguments and critical points: e.g., you have not spent enough time building up a persuasive line of argument.	Think carefully about using connectives that prove impact, e.g., “this meant that...”, “this resulted in...”, “this led to...”, “without...”
EV Evaluation of evidence You need to critically evaluate the extent to which the evidence supports an argument.	This requires the value/weight of the evidence to be discussed rather than just a list of the evidence itself.
ICE Interpretations Critically Evaluated You need to consider the extent to which the evidence supports key historical interpretations.	Look carefully at corrections made by me to your sentences. Practise writing sentences correctly that cover the areas that you know from experience you find challenging and confusing. Ask me for punctuation and grammar exercises if you want further help.

GCSE marking codes

How do I respond to feedback in GCSE History?

KEY TARGET	CODE	WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE ...	Explain questions ... Why did something happen? Why was someone/something important?	Evaluation questions ... To what extent or how far do you agree with a statement?
Organisation	O	= Organisation = Your essay is not well organised 1. Plan your answer. Use paragraphs to link ideas together. 2. Rearrange material, so that you can present your argument more effectively. (a) For ‘explain’ questions have one paragraph for each reason why something happened or someone was important (b) For ‘evaluation’ questions look at the evidence that supports the statement first then the evidence that challenges the statement		
Link	L	= Link = You have not linked information to the question. You ‘say’ but you do not ‘prove’ 1. Think carefully about your opening sentences to each paragraph . They should provide a clear argument and act as a signpost for what follows. 2. Check that you have built up a persuasive argument in each paragraph. Remember to PROVE IT! 3. Use ‘ killer connectives ’ to prove that an individual, a discovery or event had an impact. Use the ‘How to write great history’ key connectives [this meant that..., this resulted in..., this led to..., without x providing ... y would not have been able to ...] 4. Prioritise information. Use the ‘how to argue’ ‘ key pointers ’ that show that you recognise that some things are more important than others [most importantly ... perhaps the best example is ... this is particularly shown by ...]		
Conclusion	C	= Conclusion = You have either missed out a conclusion or it is weak and does not answer the question (a) For ‘explain’ questions ... (1) start by conceding that there were a range of reasons/factors ... (2) then prioritise which reason/factor you think was the most important ... (3) then give your key/killer reason for this final judgement (if you can explain how it links to other reasons/factors) (b) For ‘evaluation’ questions ... (1) start by conceding that the weaker argument does have some evidence to support it (give the best example) ... (2) then say what you think is the strongest argument ... (3) then give your 2 killer/key reasons for this final judgement		

Specific Examples	EG	= Examples = Arguments are not well supported by specific examples that will help you prove an argument. 1. Look back at revision/research notes. 2. Find examples and 'killer evidence' that supports your arguments and add them to your work.
Accuracy	FE	= Factual Errors = There are some important factual errors in your answer. 1. Note carefully the errors highlighted in the essay. Re-read class notes and relevant textbooks dealing with the topic. 2. Complete or correct notes that relate to this topic. 3. Seek further help — ask for a session at lunchtime or after school to review the content.
Relevance	NR	= Not Relevant = Some sections are not relevant to the question. 1. Read the question several times very carefully. Put it in your own words to make sure you understand it. 2. Highlight the key target words in the question. Make sure your answer is focussed on these in each paragraph. 3. Review your work carefully. Cut sections that do not link to the question. Cut long descriptive sections that do not answer the question (make sure information you have included supports your argument or explains your argument)
Clarity	NC	= Not Clear = the meaning of some sections is unclear. You confuse your reader! 1. Re-read what you have written very carefully. Have you expressed yourself clearly? Look carefully at what you have actually written—not what you think you have written. Will someone else understand what you have written? 2. Are some of your sentences so long that the meaning is unclear? Is your handwriting clear?
Spelling & Punctuation	SP	= Spelling & Punctuation = Your essay contains spelling and punctuation errors that lose you marks. 1. Study common spelling errors and practise writing them out repeatedly so you learn to spell them correctly. 2. Learn key words — use the glossary at the back of your book to check how key names/events/discoveries are spelt. Make sure you understand what they mean. Ask someone at home or a friend to test you. 3. Check your work for punctuation. Have you used capitals for names and at the start of sentences? Are some of your sentences too long because of missing full stops

The uses and value of question prompts

Read the student's work – when you see something on which you would like the student to reflect place a numbered circle at that point in the text. Underneath the student's work write a question related to that numbered circle – leaving lines for the student to respond. Aim to write 2 or 3 questions. These might not necessarily address an area for improvement. Instead, for example, you might want to encourage the pupil to reflect on why a particular section of their work is impressive or shows progression from previous attempts.

Part of the next lesson or a subsequent homework should be allocated to pupils responding to the questions. This allows teachers to personalise the feedback and the next piece of homework does not simply become making corrections (this can leave high achievers with little to do). 'Why?' questions work particularly well – Why do I like this paragraph? Why is this paragraph not as good? Why would you drop marks here?

Question prompts can get students to think about the learning process and develop a dialogue in students' books. John Hattie highlights the following categories of question prompts that can be used for feedback:

- Organisational prompts – How can you structure this in an effective way?
- Elaboration prompts – What examples can you provide to support this? What examples conflict with this? Can you create links between ...?

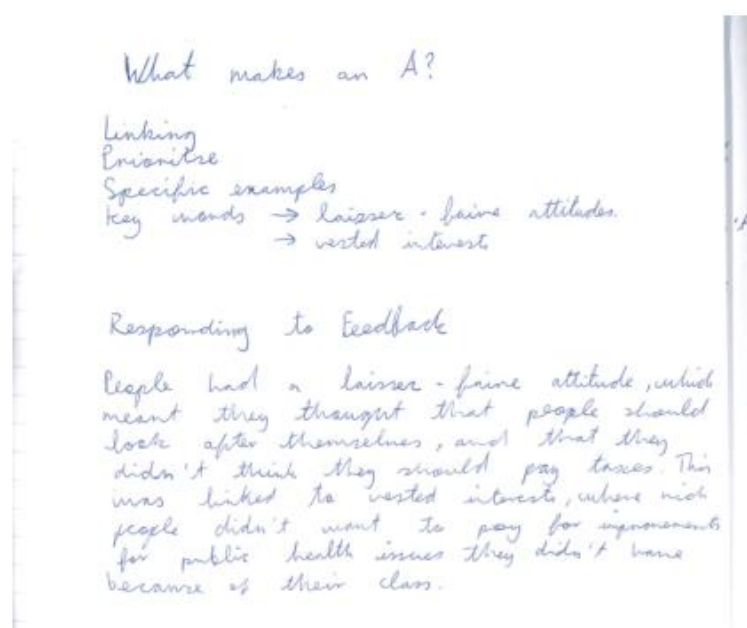
- Monitoring progress prompts – What main points have you understood well? What main points have you yet to understand?
- Task level prompts – Does this meet the success criteria? What other information is needed? What have you done well?
- Reflection prompts – What strategies did you use? Why did you use them? How successful were they?

STAGE 5: Returning the work – build in opportunities to respond to feedback

Dylan Wiliam states that feedback should cause thinking and result in ‘more work for the recipient than the donor’. This means that we should not provide students with detailed feedback unless we plan in time for students to use the feedback to improve their work. Initially it is best if time to respond to feedback is built into lesson time, however once an ethos has been created and routines established this can be built into homework tasks.

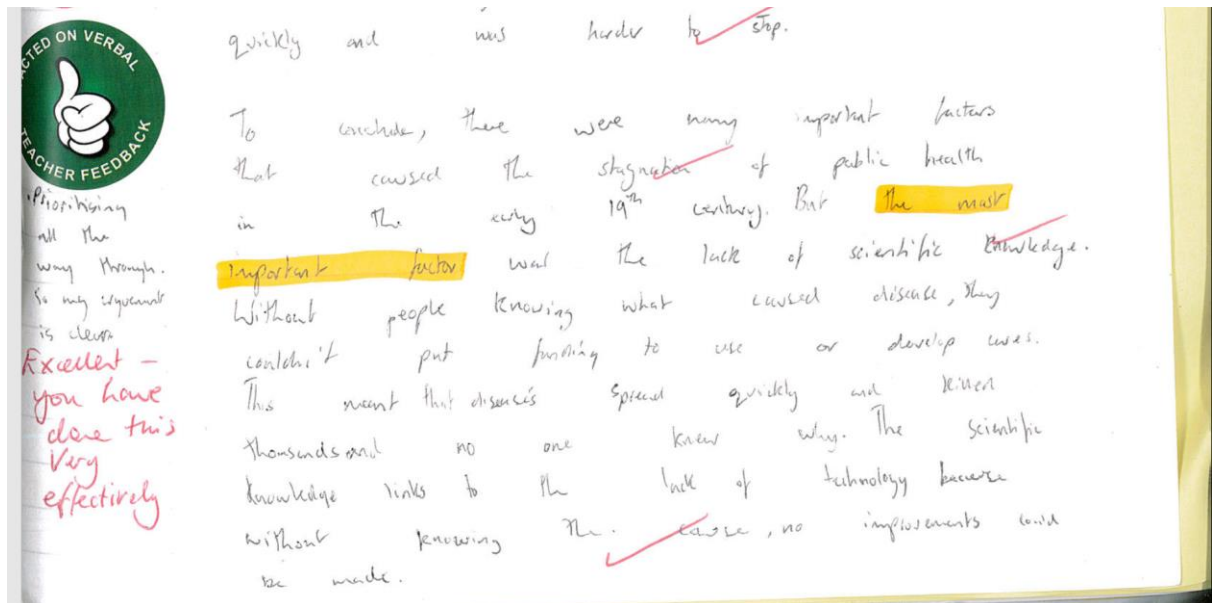
The basic principle is that pupils must engage with their feedback. Have high expectations. Expect students to spend ten times as much time as you in this process! If they spend less time reflecting on their feedback and responding to it than you did marking it, something is going wrong. You can arrange your seating plan to seat pupils with the same targets together. They can support each other and you can help them together.

Students’ books should show evidence of re-drafting and attempts to address the issues raised in their feedback. The best marking is marking that has been acted upon and where marking creates a dialogue between the pupil and the teacher about the learning process. It is far better to open a student’s book and see a few small steps of clear progress built on simple marking rather than screeds of comments that students don’t appear to have read. In the example below the student has recorded verbal feedback from the teacher on what he needs to do to move from a ‘B’ to an ‘A’ grade. They have then used the feedback to redraft a paragraph.



Strategies

- ‘Responded to feedback’ stickers – pupils are provided with an opportunity to respond to feedback in the lesson. They place a ‘Responded to written feedback’ sticker next to the place in their book where they have responded to written teacher feedback. At GCSE we encourage students to write a brief note to explain how they used the feedback.



- If the student has also incorporated feedback from a peer or oral feedback from the teacher at an earlier stage in the process they use an appropriate sticker and annotate their work in the same way. The use of the stickers and the clear expectation that they will demonstrate how they have used the feedback helps students when it comes to reflecting on their learning and makes it more likely that they transfer techniques



- Responding to feedback trackers – Roy Watson-Davis developed the trackers below to monitor how pupils were responding to feedback and to encourage good study habits. These were piloted successfully at Key Stage 3.

Advice given/page number	Work where advice used/page number
Page 1 → Use quotes to develop your work.	Page 2 Page 29 'Mining Towns'
Page 4 → Use stronger links to the question to get higher level.	Page 47-8 'Homesteaders'
Page 16 → Revise weekly. Look around the topic we are studying.	
Page 21 → Read around the topic	

- We have developed the tracker below for use with GCSE and A level students.

Name: BM:
Y10 Grade: Your target:



Take responsibility for your own learning.

Fill in the table below to show where you have responded to feedback.

Use the following codes to show who gave you the advice:

P = Peer feedback

O = Oral teacher feedback

W = Written teacher feedback

What advice was given?	Where? Page no.	Who? Code	How did you respond? Why was this important? How did it lead to progress?	Where? Page no.

- At 'A' level we also track the amount of time that students spend responding to feedback using the following reflection sheets (filled in once a week during the first term of AS or until good study habits have been established).

THE 4Rs LEARNING LOG ... Taking responsibility for your own learning				
	Use these questions to reflect on what you have been doing for homework ...	Time spent on this?	Evidence – What have you done?	Feedback to the Teacher: How have you found this? (Interesting? Easy/Hard?) What are you still struggling with? Is there anything you need support with? What do you think you are getting better at?
	How have you prepared for the lessons? What have you been reading/watching? How have you made notes? (eg - bullet points, mind maps)			
	How have you reviewed what we did in class last week/term? What revision techniques are you using? (eg – acronyms, visuals, stories, revision cards) Have you practised any exam questions ? Did you practise answering to time?			
	Think carefully about verbal or written feedback from your teacher or any peer feedback How have you responded to any feedback you have received? Make sure you show me where you have responded to feedback	Time	What feedback have you received?	What have you done as a result of this feedback?
ANY OTHER COMMENTS ...				

STAGE 6: Reflection – create a dialogue about learning

Pupils need to recognise that responding to feedback leads to improved performance. With careful coaching from the teacher they should be able to identify and evaluate how they have progressed and then establish their next steps. In this sense, over time they become far more adept at self-regulation. Dylan Wiliam highlights the importance of ‘activating students as owners of their own learning’. As teachers we need to recognise that we cannot do the learning for our students, we need to help our students develop sufficient insights into their own learning to improve it. Building in time for pupils to reflect on their learning is crucial. Wiliam argues that self-regulated learning depends on two things:

- Metacognition (one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive processes – for example, if you notice that you are having more trouble learning A than B, if you double-check C before accepting it as a fact, if you recognise that you need to develop a memory aid for D, otherwise you will forget it)
- Motivation - the learner may have the necessary strategies but does not use them. Feedback therefore needs to improve the student’s willingness, desire and capacity to learn. Promote the belief that ability is incremental rather than fixed – ‘where students think they can’t get smarter, they are likely to devote their energy to avoiding failure’. When the goals seem out of reach the student gives up. Targets therefore need to be challenging, specific but within reach.

Encourage the idea of personal bests

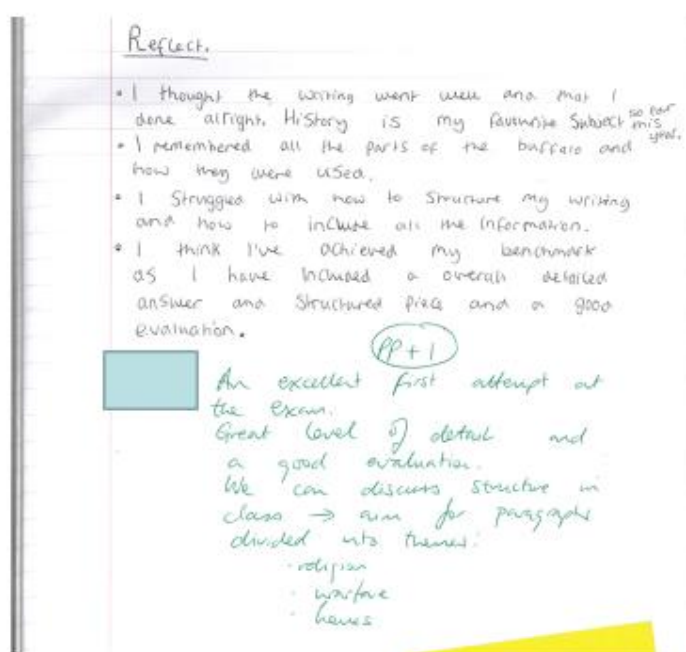
As Wiliam observes, when most students are given a score alongside a teacher comment, they first look at the score, then compare their score with those around them in the class. The feedback gets lost and ‘mental energy becomes focussed on protecting their own sense of well-being rather than learning anything new’.

Instead focus on the idea of personal bests – as well as a comment they receive a +/-/= depending on whether their work is not as good as, about the same as or better than their previous work on the topic. This provides feedback on things which are within the students’ control – rather than things that are not within their control (such as how they compare to their peers). Feedback needs to direct attention to what the pupil needs to do next to improve, rather than focussing on how well or how badly the student did on the work.

Encourage pupil to teacher feedback

Pupil to teacher feedback is just as important as teacher to pupil feedback. Opportunities to feedback to their teacher via their books can transform the learning experience for students. The shy student can make the teacher aware that they are struggling to read and understand the textbook or that they are struggling to remember key topics. This can be the start of an on-going dialogue about the learning process. As Hattie argues, the best way to raise attainment is to improve the level of interaction between pupils and their teachers. Improving feedback between teachers and their pupils, giving both parties the information they need to improve and making sure that children are sufficiently stretched is fundamental.

Examples of how we have tried to encourage an on-going dialogue within the books of our GCSE students are provided below.



bad and no warmth during harsh winters. In conclusion I think that the buffalo played a crucial role in religion, warfare and homelife. The fact that they used all of the buffalo showed that they were skilled survivors and, incidentally, they died out because the European settlers almost killed off the buffalo.

PP+1

Reflection

I think that it would have been good to see an example of the question. This would mean we would know how to structure the essay and what was good and bad. Good point → I will do this for the next essay.

I like the memory techniques we have been using, they work very well!

Good

Review

I am doing fine in my story lessons. I think I am doing well. I think I am working well at a C but I am a bit worried about the debate. I have to get something but to improve, I need to do more for my home work and need to put more info in my work.

I also struggle with the reading side of things → See me next lesson (whilst people are preparing) and I will talk a bit more about this with you.

Do not worry. Have a go and learn from any mistakes.

Younger pupils will need to be carefully coached through this process. Prompts can help encourage reflection and provide feedback to the teacher. For example:

- I was surprised by ...
- I was interested in ...
- One thing I am not sure about is ...

- I need to find out more about ...
- I might have got more out of the lesson if ...

With our 'A' level students we use learning logs to build in regular reflection and to provide feedback from pupil to teacher.

THE 4Rs LEARNING LOG ... Taking responsibility for your own learning				
	Use these questions to reflect on what you have been doing for homework ...	Time spent on this?	Evidence – What have you done?	Feedback to the Teacher: How have you found this? (Interesting? Easy/Hard?) What are you still struggling with? Is there anything you need support with? What do you think you are getting better at?
	How have you prepared for the lessons? What have you been reading/watching? How have you made notes? (eg - bullet points, mind maps)	2 hrs 30m	Watched: JFK the last tapes (doc) Killing Kennedy (film) Good →	JFK: The last tapes - it was really interesting and it helped reiterate what we had done in lesson. Killing Kennedy: was a really good film based on Lee Harvey Oswald and explained so much more about him.
	How have you reviewed what we did in class last week/term? What revision techniques are you using? (eg - acronyms, visuals, stories, revision cards) Have you practised any exam questions? Did you practise answering to time?	1 hr 30m	Reviewed Vietnam notes and wrote them up again neater. Highlighting key dates and events	You do often go too fast for me to catch everything you say and have it sink in so I have to reread them again before the information sinks in.
	Think carefully about verbal or written feedback from your teacher or any peer feedback How have you responded to any feedback you have received? Make sure you show me where you have responded to feedback	Time	What feedback have you received?	What have you done as a result of this feedback?
		1 hr	updating both Reading logs to hand in. Good ↳ hand in.	review what books I read and websites I had use looking at the notes that I didn't include in my coursework and devising my reading log to bump my grade up.
ANY OTHER COMMENTS ...				
(NS) Delete notes				

The key is to evaluate your impact on the learning of your students at regular intervals. Regularly seek feedback from your students, create a dialogue, welcome error, set high expectations, create trusting environments, foster deliberate practice and a growth mindset.

As John Hattie argues:

‘Visible teaching and learning occurs when learning is explicit, when it is appropriately challenging, and when the teacher and the student both seek feedback ... when there is

deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of the goal ... and when there are 'active, passionate and engaging people (teacher, students, peers) participating in the act of learning'.

Conclusions

Teaching is about building relationships. Student attainment is partly determined by the teacher's relationship with students and that teacher's ability to shape a culture of learning within the classroom. The nature of the feedback provided from teacher to pupil, pupil to pupil and pupil to teacher plays a key role in shaping the right culture for learning. It is what goes on in the classroom that makes the real difference. The aim of the strategies outlined in this post is to create a dialogue between the teacher and the pupil about learning.

For Alexander, dialogic classrooms are:

- collective (doing tasks together);
- reciprocal (sharing ideas);
- supportive (no negative repercussions from making errors);
- purposeful (clear success criteria).

In order for this type of classroom to become a reality we need to create an atmosphere of trust – a climate in which it is ok to make mistakes – and a climate in which students are engaged in the process of learning. Within the history classroom success should not be measured by out-performing your peers but about improving yourself as a learner and achieving 'personal bests'.

As John Hattie argues, we need to recognise that all students can progress. Achievement for all is changeable and not fixed. There are no short-term fixes for raising attainment but the good news is that the ideas and strategies outlined in this post do not cost anything, they can be easily adapted for any age group and they do not require endless hours of teacher time preparing resources or marking books.