

AI-Assisted Feedback Writing for Learners

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Learning objective

Formative feedback is one of the most powerful tools teachers have – and one of the most time-consuming. The aim of this material is to show how teachers can use AI to draft, refine and personalise written feedback on learners' work, based on criteria the teacher has defined. By the end of the material, teachers will be able to describe the features of effective feedback, write prompts that turn their own observations into clear, constructive and motivating comments, adjust tone and length to the learner, and review AI-generated feedback for accuracy, fairness and data protection – while all assessment decisions remain their own.

Introduction

Feedback is among the strongest tools in the hand of teachers, what are influencing learning, but its effect depends on its quality: feedback that is specific, related to the learning goal and shows the next step helps learners; vague praise or criticism of the personality of the student does not (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Good written feedback takes time.



Garden-building project (Source: ChatGPT)

In a garden-building project spanning one academic year, the mentor teacher provided feedback to the pupils at the end of each stage of the work and candidly explained what had posed the greatest difficulty for him: having ten pupils write a

reflection at the end of each stage of the work over the course of a year represented an enormous workload.

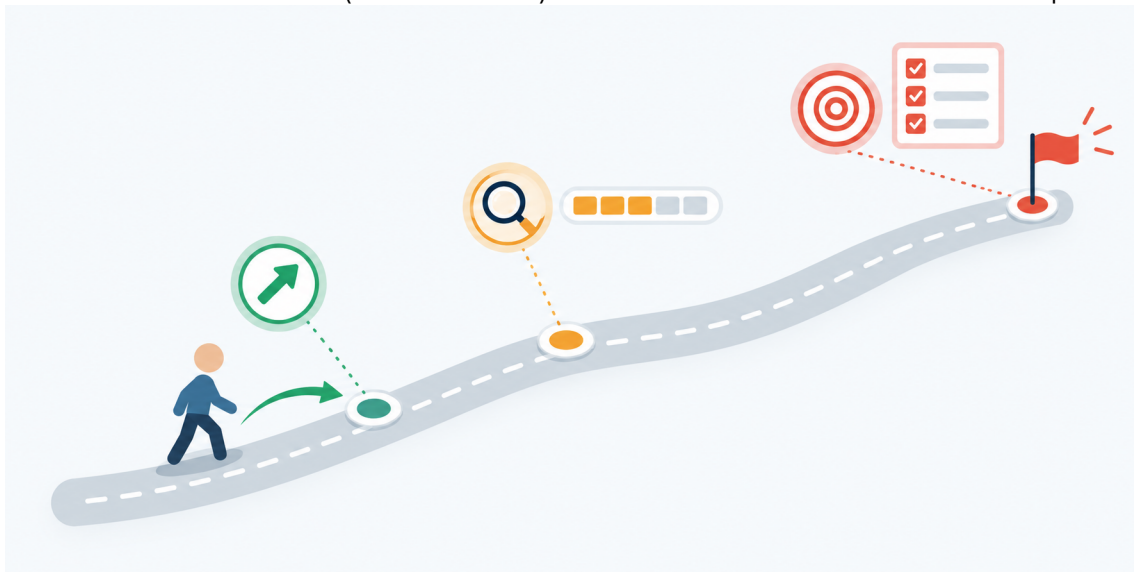
AI can reduce this workload. The teacher observes and judges; the AI helps to put that judgement into clear, well-structured and encouraging words. This material deals with feedback communication (DigCompEdu 4.3: Feedback and planning). It does not cover automatic grading or the design of adaptive learning paths, and it builds on the criteria and rubrics discussed in M4-T2-MLC1.

What makes feedback effective

Feed up, feed back, feed forward

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), effective feedback helps the learner answer three questions:

- **Where am I going?** (feed up) – what the goal and the criteria are;
- **How am I going?** (feed back) – where the work stands in relation to the criteria;
- **Where to next?** (feed forward) – what the learner should do to improve.



Feed up, feed back, feed forward: where the learner is heading, where they are now, and what the next step is (Source: ChatGPT)

Four levels of feedback can be distinguished: on the task, on the process, on self-regulation and on the person.

Examples	for	comments
On the task:		<i>"The centre of your pastry has sunk by about 1 cm and hasn't cooked through completely."</i>
On the process:		<i>"Check the dough temperature before proving."</i>
On self-regulation:		<i>"Compare your work with the reference sample before handing it in"</i>

On the person: “You are talented.”
These tend to be the most useful, while praise aimed at the person carries little information for improvement.

Features of good feedback

- **Criterion-based:** it refers to criteria the learner knows, not to a general impression.
- **Specific:** it names exactly what is good and what needs to change.
- **Focused:** one or two priorities instead of a list of every mistake.
- **Actionable:** it contains a concrete next step the learner can take.
- **Timely:** it arrives while the learner can still use it – before the next attempt.
- **Respectful and motivating:** it addresses the work, not the person, in a tone that suits the learner’s age.

The formative assessment does not rank or judge, but shapes learning – it reveals successes and difficulties and makes correction possible.

The teacher-in-the-loop workflow

The key principle is that the AI does not assess the work – it puts the teacher’s assessment into words. The teacher’s own observations are the input, and the AI turns them into a readable text:

1. **Criteria** – use the rubric or criteria the learners already know.
2. **Observation** – note your own judgement in keywords: two or three strengths and problems per learner, linked to the criteria.
3. **Anonymisation** – remove names and personal details; use codes instead (e.g. L07).
4. **Drafting** – ask the AI for feedback in a fixed structure, based only on your notes.
5. **Review** – check, correct and personalise every comment; add what only you know about the learner.
6. **Follow-up** – give learners time to act on the feedback, e.g. in the next practice session.



The teacher observes and takes notes, the AI drafts, the teacher reviews – and the learner acts on the feedback in the next attempt

Example prompt for feedback on a practical task

"You are an experienced vocational teacher of bakers. Write formative feedback for a first-year apprentice (aged 15–16) on a practical task: baking a plaited loaf.

Criteria: preparing the dough, shaping, proving and baking, hygiene and organisation of the workstation.

My notes: ingredients weighed precisely; dough well kneaded; strands of uneven thickness, loose plait; proved too long, loaf flattened; workstation clean.

Structure: one specific strength; at most two points for improvement linked to the criteria; one concrete next step for the next practice.

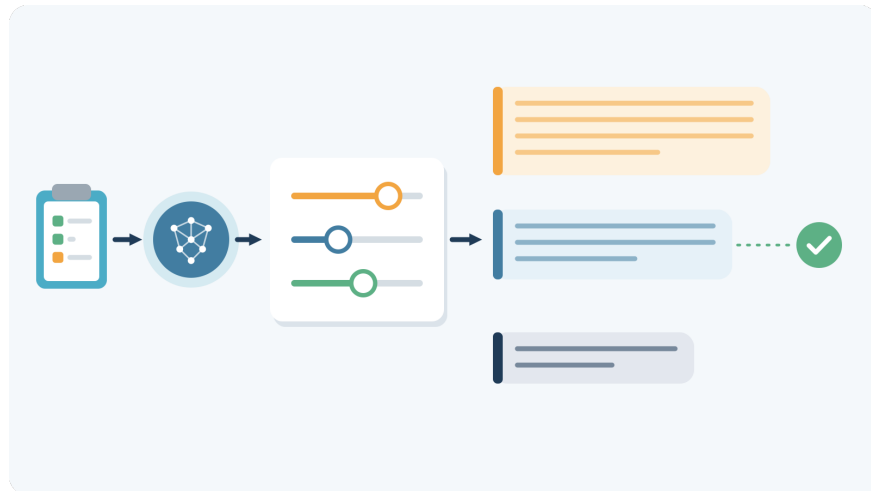
Friendly but professional tone, addressing the learner directly, maximum 90 words. Do not add anything that is not in my notes, and do not give a grade."

Once the prompt works, it can be saved as a template and reused for the whole group – only the notes change. The same structure works in other trades: for an electrical installation task ("label each conductor before connecting it, then check the circuit against the diagram"), for a welding practice piece ("practise on scrap plate at a steady travel speed and compare your bead with the reference sample") or for a customer-service role play ("summarise the customer's complaint in one sentence before offering a solution").

Tone, length and personalisation

The same message can be worded in very different ways, and AI is particularly good at adjusting tone and length on request: "make it more encouraging", "shorten it to three sentences", "use plain language for a learner who reads slowly", "make the next step more concrete". Points to consider:

- **Age and level:** simpler sentences and everyday words for younger learners; professional terminology for advanced apprentices – but explained.
- **Tone:** warm and encouraging for a learner who has lost confidence, more direct for one who keeps repeating the same mistake – always respectful.
- **Length:** a short comment that the learner actually reads is worth more than a long one they skip.
- **No clichés:** ask the AI to avoid empty phrases ("Great job!", "Keep it up!") and to replace them with concrete observations.



The same feedback in different tones and lengths – the teacher chooses the version that fits the learner

Feedback before and after

Before: “Good work, but the plaiting could be better. Pay more attention next time.”

After: “You weighed the ingredients precisely and kneaded the dough well – that is the basis of a good loaf. The plait was uneven because the strands were of different thickness, and the loaf flattened because it proved too long. Next time, weigh the strands so that they are equal, and check the proving with the finger test, not only by the clock.”

The second version names a specific strength, explains the causes of the problems with reference to the criteria, and suggests next step that the learner can carry out in the next practice session.

Teacher review, data protection and limits

Review every comment

Before feedback reaches a learner, the teacher reads it with these questions in mind:

- Is it professionally correct?
- Does it match my own judgement?
- Has the AI added anything that was not in my notes?
- Does it fit this learner?
- Is it consistent with the feedback others received for similar work?
- Would I sign it?

Research supports this caution: in a study of feedback on around 200 essays by students in grades 6–12, ChatGPT’s formative feedback came relatively close to that of trained human raters, but the humans did better in most quality dimensions – above all in prioritising what matters most (Steiss et al., 2024).



The work is anonymised, the AI drafts the text – the teacher checks it and decides on the grade

Protecting learners' data

- Before uploading learners' work, remove names, identifying codes, photos showing faces and document metadata.
- Never enter sensitive data – health information, special educational needs, family circumstances – into general AI tools.
- Use tools approved by the school in line with the GDPR, and check whether the service uses entered data for training.
- Anonymisation also reduces the risk of bias linked to learners' names or backgrounds.

The grade is the teacher's decision

AI helps with the wording of feedback, not with decisions about marks. The teacher decides on grades and progression and remains responsible for every comment sent in their name. The EU AI Act points in the same direction: AI systems intended to evaluate learning outcomes – including when those outcomes are used to steer the learning process – are classified as high-risk, with strict obligations that, following a postponement adopted in 2026, apply from December 2027. It is good practice to tell learners openly how AI supports feedback writing, in line with the school's rules. Finally, written feedback does not replace conversation: a short personal talk remains the best way to make sure that the learner has understood the message.

Takeaways for teachers

- Effective feedback answers three questions: Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next?
- Your observations are the input: AI puts your judgement into words – it does not assess.
- Use a fixed structure: one specific strength, at most two points for improvement, one concrete next step.
- Adjust tone, length and language to the learner, and avoid empty praise.
- Anonymise learners' work, review every comment, and keep grading decisions in human hands.

References

- Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007): The Power of Feedback. Review of Educational Research, 77(1), 81–112.
- Brookhart, S. M. (2017): How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students. 2nd ed., ASCD.
- Steiss, J. et al. (2024): Comparing the quality of human and ChatGPT feedback of students' writing. Learning and Instruction, 91, 101894.
- Redecker, C. (2017): European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators: DigCompEdu. Publications Office of the European Union (area 4.3: Feedback and planning).
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 (Artificial Intelligence Act), Annex III, point 3; Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation).
- Lengyel, Zs. (2026): Concrete applications for content generation. VITA training presentation.

Links

- Hattie & Timperley (2007): doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487
- Steiss et al. (2024): doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2024.101894
- EU AI Act, Annex III: artificialintelligenceact.eu/annex/3

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