



**MEMO**

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**Re.: Examples of feedback at UCPH**

**UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SERVICES**

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**Preamble**

In a questionnaire issued by the Task Force for Feedback, heads of studies and student representatives on the study boards at UCPH were asked to identify teachers whom they consider particularly good at providing feedback or who make a particular point of incorporating feedback into their teaching. This document describes how some of these teachers work with feedback in their teaching. The teachers' descriptions provide fresh insight into the classrooms and the current feedback situation at UCPH. Hopefully, they will also serve as inspiration for other teachers and for further feedback work at the University.

**Flipped classroom, quizzes and discussion forums**

Jan Halborg Jensen teaches Physical Chemistry for Biochemists on the bachelor study programme. The course involves approx. 100 students and includes both lectures and team-based calculation assignments.

The students watch 4–7 webcasts in preparation for each lecture. Each video contains one or two questions, to which the students are given the answers right away. The students then take an online quiz on Absalon on the content of the videos. They are immediately told whether their answers are right or not, and keep going until they have answered all of the questions correctly. The videos and the quiz are compulsory. Jan Halborg Jensen contacts students who fail to complete the quiz.

He doesn't actually lecture students during classroom sessions. Instead, he asks questions for the students to discuss and vote on via Socrative. The students are told straight away whether their answers are right or wrong.

The calculation assignments take the form of a multiple-choice test on Peerwise. Once the students select an answer, they receive a detailed overview of the assignment. For each question there is a discussion forum. The students access the forum once they have submitted their answers, and receive additional feedback there from other students.

Jan Halborg Jensen says that setting up the course for the first time is time-consuming, but becomes less so in subsequent years. He continues: "Feedback is probably one of the most important learning tools, but to be effective, it must be given immediately after the student has answered. This is now feasible with IT support."

### **Process writing and instruction in peer feedback**

Jan Juhl Lindschouw teaches French translation and writing skills at bachelor level to a class of 30 students.

Both he and the students provide feedback during the course. He uses peer feedback for free-written communication assignments, particularly when students work with the same text over several classes. The students work in pairs, preferably made up of different linguistic levels. "This lets you get the most out of peer feedback, because students on different levels provide different input during the writing process: some are good at coming up with ideas, others are good at structuring the text, others are good at grammar, etc."

After a brainstorming session, the students write a draft at home. Following the teacher's instructions, they give each other feedback on areas on which they should focus before the next class. In the next class, they talk briefly about the outcome, and then once again make corrections at home and send them to their partners. The focus then shifts to grammar, which is discussed in the next class. They again make corrections and submit the outcome to the teacher, who now provides "indirect" feedback, i.e. that something needs to be corrected, but without giving specific answers.

At the beginning of the course, students study a research article on the relevance of peer feedback (Tsui, A.B.M. & Ng, M. 2000 "Do Secondary L2 Writers Benefit from Peer Comments?". *Journal of Second Language Writ-*

ing 9:2.), and Jan instructs the students in giving peer feedback. “Experience shows that if you fail to do this, many students won’t know how to give each other feedback, and many will automatically concentrate on correcting language mistakes.”

In his study *Kammeratfeedback og skriftlig akademisk formidling i fransk på universitetsniveau (Peer feedback and written academic communication in French at university level)*, Jan ascertains that one of the benefits of peer feedback is that it gives students autonomy as writers. They learn to take ownership of their own text and only make revisions with which they agree. Jan says that students are highly positive about the work being process-oriented, with written language production. “They feel that they get better at identifying their own mistakes, which boosts their confidence as writers.”

### **Individual, oral and cluster feedback**

Jens Ladefoged Mortensen is the course co-ordinator and one of the teachers in International Relations at bachelor level. The course consists of two lectures per week, each lasting two hours, by full-time members of academic staff and by guest lecturers, and two classes per week, each lasting two hours, by student instructors. There are approximately 200 students. The exam consists of a pass/fail writing exercise after six weeks of teaching and a graded oral exam based on a short, project-oriented synopsis (not graded).

During the course, many different forms of feedback are used: individual oral feedback on the writing exercise, written feedback on Absalon, instructor feedback on presentations and classroom discussions, collective feedback in seminar clusters on draft synopses, and, finally, oral feedback immediately after the final examination.

Cluster feedback on the draft synopsis is given in the week before synopsis submission and exam registration. Students upload their drafts and are assigned clusters of approx. six seminars. They are not expected to attend other clusters. Students must prepare for the meeting. Each participant presents his or her own draft and critiques another student’s draft.

The critique lasts about five minutes. A presentation by the examiner is followed by a discussion. Jens Ladefoged Mortensen says that the seminars have proved to be highly constructive forums for discussion, in which unresolved issues can be discussed with the examiner. “They provide a space in which sketches and ideas are tried out, verbal analytical skills are tested in a risk-free environment, and the lecturers and students meet and engage in academic discussions outside of the lecture theatre. The vast majority – although not everybody – attends the seminars. The students have also been very positive about this.”

Jens Ladefoged Mortensen describes the benefits of individual feedback and cluster feedback:

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“The individual feedback allows closer contact between students and academic staff outside of the lectures. It enables students to feel that they and their work are being taken seriously, and to receive tangible and robust commentary on their written work. They are given an indication of their weaknesses and priorities, there is dialogue between teacher and examiner, and discussions are held about written communication, which the students find useful at a later stage in the study programme, e.g. in connection with the bachelor project.

The cluster seminar helps optimise the learning process, facilitates closer contact and specifies the requirements for the exam. Within the group, students often experience surprisingly good collective learning, as the subject is discussed, analytical skills are developed and good academic discussions held. It is especially good for students who aren't in study groups.”

### **Individual, oral feedback**

Jørgen Bæk Simonsen teaches Middle Eastern History at bachelor level. He provides individual oral feedback to the approx. 70 students on their ten-page take-home assignment on a compulsory subject. The students are asked to reread the assignments prior to the feedback meeting. “The most positive thing is when I meet them later in study programme and they still remember what was said when their first written assignment was evaluated after the first semester – and it is even more positive when the student concerned has clearly made progress.”

### **Blended learning and Absalon quizzes**

Lisbeth Høier Olsen teaches Veterinary Pharmacology and Toxicology to approx. 200 bachelor students. She uses blended learning. The format of the course is brand-new and will be evaluated for the first time in June 2015.

The course is divided into six modules. Each module is followed by the compulsory submission of multiple-choice questions (true/false, with immediate feedback on Absalon) and a written assignment (50 groups of four students). The students then conduct a compulsory peer review of another group's assignments, which are also submitted via Absalon. This ensures that all groups receive a student peer-review of their assignment.

The module culminates with a discussion lecture that reviews one of the groups' assignments and the associated peer review. The students can also

ask the teacher questions in Socrative. The students prioritise the questions by voting in Socrative.

Lisbeth Høier Olsen says that she spent a great deal of time on the new course design and on developing the feedback system in collaboration with the new Centre for Online and Blended Learning at HEALTH. However, she expects that the preparation time next year will be the same as for ordinary lectures.

The first module ended in February. “All 50 groups submitted assignments and conducted peer reviews after one module, and the students seem motivated and positive,” says Lisbeth Høier Olsen.

### **Report-correcting class**

Stefania Baldursdottir teaches and runs exercises in Pharmaceutical Technology and Engineering at bachelor level. The course consists of six alternating laboratory exercises, on which the students work in groups of 3–5 in the laboratory. After each exercise, they write a report. Previously, reports were handed in to the supervisor and then corrected – often more than once – at meetings between the supervisor and the group. However, students found the repeated revision very demotivating, and were not sure exactly what the teacher wanted.

Instead, a report-correcting class has been introduced, lasting 45 minutes every two weeks. Groups that worked on the same exercise attend the same report-correcting class, at which problems specific to the particular exercise are discussed. The students have four days to submit their report, as it is important that the teacher reviews the reports before the class in order to prioritise the discussion. During the report-correcting classes, the students sit in their laboratory groups. At the start, the teacher hands out the corrected reports, and gives the students a moment to read the comments. A brief discussion is then held about any practical issues that arose in the laboratory. The teacher goes through the report, discussing both practical and theoretical problems. This discussion, along with questions from the teacher, seeks to give the students a better understanding of the subject. After this, the students reach a conclusion about which factors are key to the given subjects. This also provides a great opportunity for the teacher to introduce, discuss and clarify any misunderstandings and misinterpretations in the students’ work.

Stefania Baldursdottir says that the report-correcting classes encourage students to reflect on and critique their own work. The method is popular, and the students themselves identify improvements in their learning and understanding of the subject. “The students need to play an active role in order to

make the most of the class. They are responsible for correcting the details of their own report during and/or after the class. This method of providing feedback also clearly saves the teachers time. Each report receives brief feedback, and is then evaluated as ‘acceptable’ or ‘unacceptable’.”

### **Facilitation of peer feedback**

Tina Hansen and Trine Dich teach on the course Animals, People and Society, which consists of project work at bachelor level. They provide process-oriented and academic guidance on the students’ project work. Peer feedback is also used. The two teachers have drawn up guidelines for peer feedback for both the midway seminar and the final project seminar, and help to facilitate the organisation of peer feedback, including what elements to include:

*Try to justify your criticism with arguments for why something is good/could be better:*

- *Be precise and clear in the criticism, rather than just using general terms such as “it’s good” – cite examples from the presentation. But be careful not to be too detailed.*
- *Try to suggest alternatives/new angles on the group’s work.*
- *Always start with something positive – everybody needs recognition.*

*In your comments on the group’s problem analysis/presentation, consider the following questions:*

- *Is the problem well-founded and well-documented (in the problem analysis)?*
- *Is the problem clear and relevant? Is it well defined? Is it clear what the group is seeking to achieve with the project?*
- *Is there a strong link between the problem formulation and the synopsis?*
- *Was the oral presentation clear and coherent?*
- *Were the accompanying slides well-structured and clear in their layout?*

Trine Dich and Tina Hansen say that peer feedback alone is not sufficient. A first-year student may find it difficult to provide academic, methodological and constructive feedback and may be reluctant to be too critical of fellow students. They also need feedback in the form of process-oriented and academic supervision, but peer feedback helps develop their academic competencies. Thinking about other people’s work helps them think about their own.

### **Feedback and dialogue**

Bente Gammelgaard teaches Instrumental Analytical Chemistry at bachelor level. The teaching is exercise-based. The lectures (19 in total) provide a theoretical overview of the various techniques and are, to a great extent, related to the exercises. Theory is taught through the exercises (18 x 4 hours), as students use specified techniques to conduct analyses and answer a series of questions related to the underlying principles. For each exercise, the students (in groups of two) write a report consisting of calculations and answers to the questions. The report is submitted for approval.

After correction, the reports are returned personally by the teacher, who discusses misunderstandings, explains errors, comments on the academic language or simply provides positive feedback if all is well.

“We often ask questions in order to get a picture of the level of understanding. This gives students the chance to discuss, ask questions, etc. about each exercise report. A differentiation is also made in the teaching: very keen students may receive a lot of feedback, while those who are only interested in passing may get less. There are 13 reports, and therefore 13 feedback situations in which students receive 2:1 supervision. The students also have the chance to ask questions and get help writing reports. For two hours, twice a week, one of the experienced teachers (in addition to the permanent team of one experienced and two less experienced) is present in a room adjacent to the laboratory for the express purpose of answering questions,” says Bente Gammelgaard.

“Providing feedback on the reports means correcting them. It’s very time-consuming, but it’s advantageous to talk to the students about the reports, because it means that you don’t need to write detailed explanations in the event of misunderstandings. The advantage of feedback is that the students are in no doubt about whether their performance is satisfactory, unacceptable or brilliant. We tell them. For the teachers, this contact with the students is highly satisfying. We get good insights into what they understand – and what they do not (and that can often come as a surprise).”

### **General, theme-oriented feedback and mutual alignment of expectations**

Helle Samuelsen teaches on the course Health Systems in a Global Context. It consists of lectures, class teaching and group work and is a master’s course with 36 students. After the course and exam (written take-home assignment with external examiners and grading), she uses collective feedback.

“We set aside one hour for feedback on the submitted exam assignments. I gathered my general feedback comments under four themes, which I presented with a special focus on the most important elements of learning for future assignments of a similar nature, and future work with health systems in a global context. I invited the head of studies to attend this feedback session because it was the first time we had run the course (and the first year of the Global Health programme). After my presentation of the four themes, the students were, of course, able to ask about specific aspects, but the discussion remained on the general level, rather than individual feedback.”

“With this form of feedback, it is important that the students are aware from the start that individual feedback is not provided, and that the purpose of feedback is to equip students for the next assignment (with regard to specific knowledge about the subject concerned).”

### **Feedback in review format**

Kim Splittorff teaches Quantum Mechanics at bachelor level. This is a compulsory course with about 130 students.

“We give feedback on all compulsory assignments, both calculation exercises and in the laboratory. All students receive feedback, regardless of the quality of the submitted assignment. As it takes time to provide feedback, we have limited the number of assignments to be submitted, in order to allow us to provide in-depth feedback,” says Kim Splittorff.

“There are eight instructors on the course besides me. I am the course organiser. Before we correct assignments and give feedback, we discuss the points in relation to which it is most important to provide feedback and adopt a common stance on this. It is compulsory for the students to react to the feedback they receive on their assignments. Specifically, we use a format that resembles the review process for scientific articles. The important thing about this format is that everybody receives feedback, even if the submitted assignment is very good. The focus is on everyone being able to improve and on creating a favourable learning situation.”

The elements of the review format are:

Overall impression and comments

Comments and questions on each section

Objectives

Theory

Structure and approach

Results

Conclusion

### **Regular mutual feedback**

Elmar Josef Renner teaches Modern Indian and South Asian Studies. He provides language training at bachelor level for 15 students. Elmar continuously adapts his teaching in the light of the feedback and dialogue with the students.

“The methods in my teaching are constantly adjusted to the requirements of the students. I use feedback in order to detect the modification potential.

I ask the students for feedback by talking informally to the whole class. Asking the students for feedback usually doesn't take more than a minute. My standard question is whether they feel the activity was useful or not. While talking briefly about the activity, I try to understand details regarding:

- a) the extent (e.g. from too much to not enough or from too simple to too complex),
- b) the methodology (e.g. inductive – deductive; single/partner/group/class work),
- c) the speed in progression (e.g. regarding both grammar and lexicon)

Sometimes I can distinguish different aspects. Then I try to modify the activity for the future. So feedback is not an additional element that stands apart from the rest. I rather use it constantly in order to adjust the methods. In other words – I don't prepare to use feedback. I use feedback to prepare for the classes.

Based on my experience I plan an activity by choosing a certain method. I however keep alternative methods in mind. By constantly considering the feedback of the students, I keep adjusting the course plan to the reality of the language acquisition processes which the students are undergoing.

The students themselves have to develop a meta-consciousness in order to monitor their own language acquisition process and assess what kinds of activities are useful for them at a certain stage. While talking about the activities I try to be as transparent as possible regarding the methods and their aims.”

### **Feedback on student preparation for classes**

Tina Reeh teaches a compulsory course for first-year students in Church and Theological and Historical Methodology. It consists of lectures for two groups of approximately 70 and 50 students.

“I make students aware of the importance of preparation when it comes to learning the material. In each class, I begin with an introductory lecture (around 20 minutes) and then I use clickers, specifically the free program Socrative. During the lecture, the students use laptops, tablets or smartphones to log in to an electronic classroom, where I have uploaded a quiz comprising 3–5 revision questions that help students extract the key elements in the material. The questions act as a form of feedback and help to adjust their preparations.

They reflect the questions stipulated in the curriculum’s learning objectives for the course, and also show first-year students what they might encounter in the exam and how to prepare for it. Another advantage is that everyone in the auditorium has to respond, and as such is actively involved. I then use the questions to structure the subsequent teaching, so that nobody is in any doubt about which answers are correct and why.

I find that the students are much more aware and active than those in the two lecture classes on the same subject last year. And they are undoubtedly better prepared. It can be tricky to find suitable pedagogical or good ‘wrong’ answers, so it is an advantage if the lectures are repeated from time to time. As a bonus, the use of clickers helps me identify where the textbook is weak/difficult to understand, and what elements that cause the students particular problems. It has allowed me to instantly correct, complement and support the students in their acquisition of the material by means of a rapid readjustment of my own teaching/lecture.”

Tina Reeh has also used a review format to provide feedback on the students’ preparation for the non-compulsory course Church and Christianity in Enlightenment Denmark-Norway, with ten students at master’s level.

“The students write a one- or two-page review (with notes) on an article included on the course. They note the assumptions, key points, strengths and weaknesses of the article and its reasoning, and relate these to other articles. The reviews show how students prepare and work with the text. The short reviews of the articles are then shared with others in the class. In plenary sessions, the class discusses whether each review is adequate, what is missing or what is superfluous. In this way, the students get feedback on their reading/preparation of the text for the class. They submit one review and then receive nine other reviews with notes on the other texts in the syllabus.

In my experience, this kind of peer feedback stimulates the students’ sense of responsibility in relation to the teaching. Their preparation and study skills improve, as does the collaborative environment within the group, and

they find studying for exams less daunting. I hope my attempt to provide feedback on the students' preparation – and their independent study – will improve their sense of ownership and responsibility for their studies, and in the long run improve the quality of their study programme," says Tina Reeh.

### **Oral feedback on group activities and written feedback on abstracts**

Mette Hartlev teaches at master's level on the course Health and Human Rights, with about 30 students.

"Prior to each class, the students prepare to contribute to group activities (e.g. by finding the legislation in their countries regarding illegal immigrants' rights to health care, abortion legislation, etc., or by identifying the key points in a ruling). Following group activities, the groups report back, either in plenum or on posters/the board. I give continuous feedback on these reports. The oral feedback on the group activity requires no extra effort, as it is based on the normal preparation work."

On the same course, Mette Hartlev also provides feedback on abstracts, which the students use in their work on the final synopsis.

"Students must write a synopsis, which forms the basis for the oral exam. On the course, there are many international students, as well as students from other disciplines, who are unfamiliar with legal synopses. Twice during the course, I invite them to choose a subject and write a short abstract (1–2 pages), following the same guidelines that apply to the synopsis. These abstracts form the basis for group activity in the class teaching. I also give each of them written personal feedback, in which I comment on their abstract and give them guidance on how to optimise their text in future synopses. The written feedback on abstracts takes about 15–20 minutes per abstract."

"Students must take the assignment seriously if they are to benefit from my feedback. They will also get more out of the feedback if they are aware of areas where they are unsure and need feedback, and are able to express this in connection with the teaching or when they submit their abstracts."

About the outcome of the feedback, Mette Hartlev says that feedback promotes a good learning environment. "The students have a sense of direction and know when they are on the right track. It also motivates them that the time students spend on preparation and tasks, is 'recouped' via feedback. When students are well prepared, it also improves group discussions and learning outcomes for the whole class."