Feedback and Grading Guidance

Think about how you will grade your assessment activities in advance to ensure that the grading workload is manageable, and to ensure that there aren't extraneous aspects of the assignment that will not be graded or that are not a priority for your learning outcomes.

Develop clear instructions for the assignment and explicit expectations for student performance (see the Assessment Checklist for key questions to consider, and the Assessment Outline in the CRDI Assessment planning guide, p. 39-40 for a template to draft your assignment instructions). Provide the grading criteria to students well in advance of the assignment due date so that students can use the criteria as a guideline.

Grading criteria should be flexible to account for access issues (e.g., a student is unable to participate in a synchronous learning session due to internet or technological issues).

Frequent, timely feedback supports student engagement and learning in the remote environment. Give feedback early and ensure feedback is focused on what will help students in their future assessments. Have students practice with the grading criteria to become familiar with the grading criteria and expectations. For example, students can use parts of the rubric or checklist to self-assess a draft version of their assignment. Students can use the grading criteria in a peer feedback exercise on a draft version of the assignment.

Use Rubrics to Grade Assignments with a Variety of Submission Formats

When providing students with choice to determine the format of their assignment submission (e.g., a video presentation vs. a podcast vs. an infographic), design a single rubric that will fairly assess all submissions, regardless of their format. Carefully consider the weighting for the technical and delivery aspects of the assignment versus the content. For example, a student can produce a beautifully delivered podcast from a technical standpoint, but that lacks application or synthesis of course content. The weighting should be based on the learning outcomes for the assignment and your course. Ask students to help you co-construct the rubric (see A Crowdsourced Rubric for Evaluating Infographics).

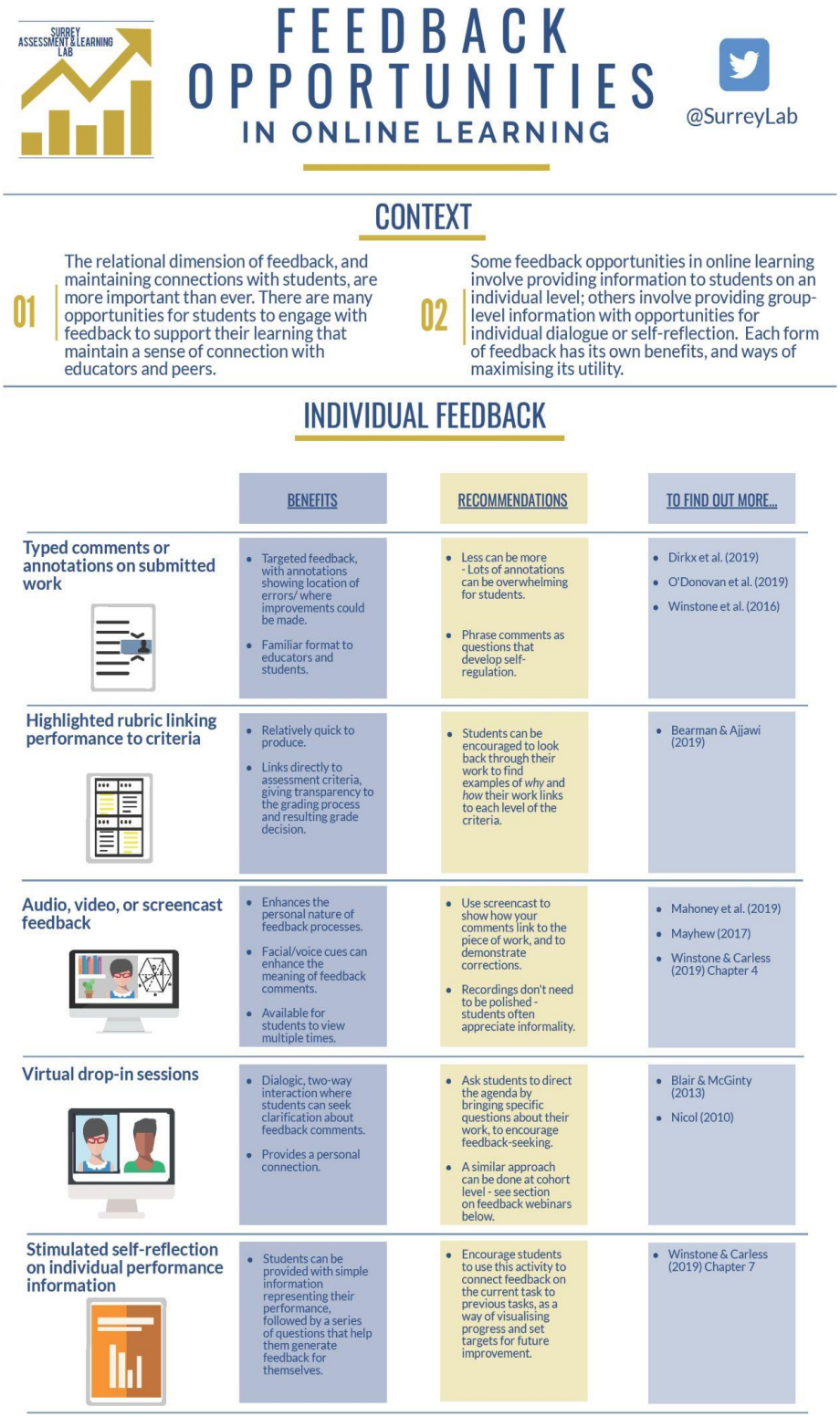
Sample Rubrics for Multimedia Assignments

Podcast Rubrics	Video Project Rubrics	Poster and Infographic Rubrics
Podcast Rubric (Ecology) Podcast Rubric (Education/General)	Video Project Rubric (General) Audio/Video Presentation Rubric (Education)	Research Poster Rubric Virtual Research Poster Rubric Infographic Rubric (Nutrition) Presentation Rubric (Human and Environmental Health)

Incorporate Different Types of Feedback to Lessen the Grading Workload

This excellent resource from the Surrey Assessment and Learning Lab (screenshot of a portion of this resource below) outlines the benefits and recommendations for various feedback opportunities in online

learning. Included are different forms of providing feedback to individual students (e.g., typed comments on submitted work, audio/video feedback, virtual drop-in sessions, self-reflection) and providing feedback to the whole class or to small groups (e.g., feedback webinar, video summary, self-reflection).



Self-Assessment

Encourage students to evaluate their progress in the course and find gaps in their understanding of the content by reflecting on their performance. This self-assessment can replace some of the in-class feedback that students are missing in remote instruction.

- Have students write a one-minute paper with their main takeaway from a particular content area.
- In preparation for a major assessment, ask students to identify their own knowledge or skill gaps and devise a plan to focus their attention and effort to meet the goals of the assessment
- After completing a test or exam, have students self-assess their performance using the test analyzer self-reflection to help them reflect on their strengths and weaknesses.
- Use assignment wrappers or lecture wrappers to help students focus their learning process
- Have students write a journal or learning log about their learning progress and assessment performance each week.

Peer Feedback

Incorporate peer feedback so that students are given the opportunity to synthesize course content and teach their peers, increasing their mastery of the content. Peer feedback helps to build connection and community for students working remotely. Peer review can also be a major time saver for instructors, particular for scaffolded or staged assignments with multiple opportunities for feedback. Be sure to create a positive class culture and consider modelling effective feedback to avoid issues with harsh or unclear feedback. Provide clear instructions and criteria for giving feedback, such as giving students a portion of the grading rubric or a checklist to guide their feedback.

- Use the CourseLink discussion board so students can ask questions and provide feedback to one another.
- Have students submit a draft assignment for peer feedback. Give them time to incorporate the feedback before submitting their final assignment.
- Have students complete practice exams individually, then get into a group (virtually or in person) to discuss their responses.
- Schedule study sessions where students complete homework while their peers and TAs are available to answer questions.

Automated Feedback

- Create short graded or ungraded content quizzes on CourseLink to have students check their understanding after reading a textbook chapter or watching a pre-recorded lecture.
- Use polls in Zoom sessions or on CourseLink to gather quick feedback from students or to ask students to check their understanding of course material

See also:

- Improving Feedback to Students in Online Courses
- How to Give your Students Better Feedback with Technology (Chronicle)