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Progress Reporting for Private and Small Group Students

by Deanna Berget

The burden of providing effective feedback for every individual learner is often placed on teachers and their limited administrative time outside of class. This can often result in less than effective feedback, negatively impacting learner motivation and progress.

Our primary goals in overhauling our feedback procedures were to address learner preferences in receiving feedback and to decrease the workload placed on teachers. We expected that this would also, as a result, increase the timeliness, level of detail, and actionable value of feedback given as well as the motivation and improvement awareness of our learners.

Our first step to changing our documentation was to elicit feedback from learners on when, how, and what feedback they would prefer to receive. Their suggestions included:

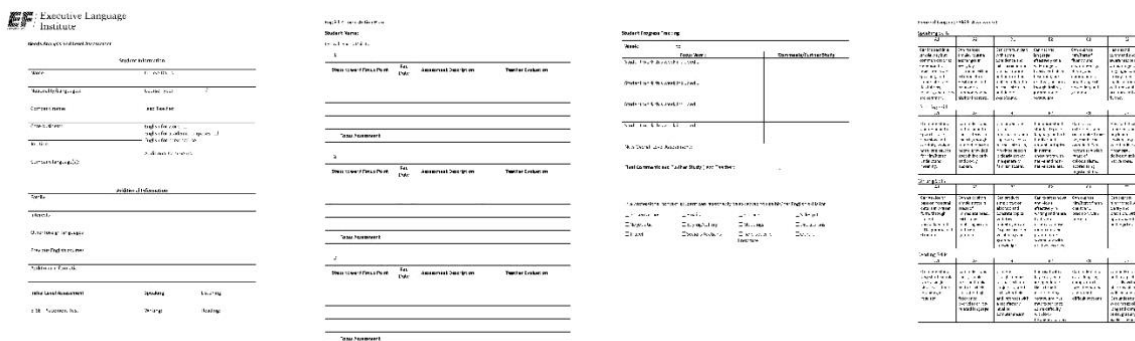
- Timely and specific feedback on real world uses of English (presentations, speeches, etc.)
- Weekly feedback and goal setting for the next week
- Final overall comments on progress
- Suggestions for further study (during and after the course)

We also considered teacher preferences, as they would be the primary users of the new documentation. Their suggestions included:

- Less paperwork
- Less time spent on gathering and producing cumulative feedback
- Better tracking for class material and progress towards goals
- Better teacher-teacher and teacher-administrator communication

Our first working version attempted to address both learner suggestions and teacher suggestions.

Using *Office365*, we created a macro template for our document in Word and shared it with relevant staff via *OneDrive*¹. Academic management owns the document, but teachers can easily view and edit from any computer, even as someone else is working on it. The macro ensures that every document maintains the same formatting and limits the input required from teachers.



¹ Other online tools include Google Docs, Hightail, Dropbox, and Amazon Drive. Using online platforms does also create the need for a computer and internet access in every classroom.

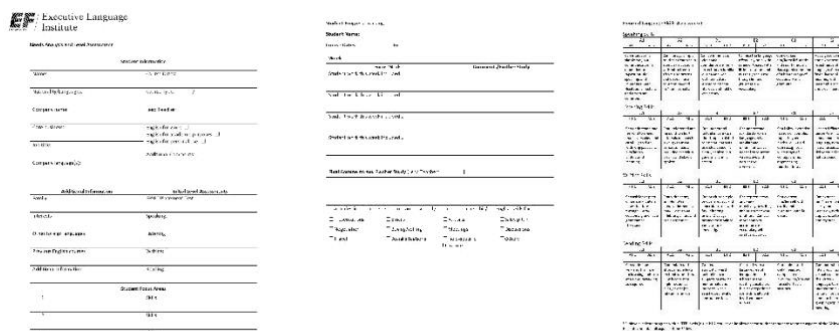
Initially, 3-4 teachers trialed the form with only a handful of students, using predetermined guidelines for procedures and input. These teachers were able to work out the technical kinks (including accessibility and procedural issues) and allow additional teachers to be trained on faster. Once more than half of the teachers were using the form, all staff participated in a workshop to determine the minimum standards for using it, including what information should be entered in each section, who should enter it and when. This gradual roll out ensured that there were a number of ‘cheerleaders’ already on board to help spread enthusiasm and positive brainstorming on best practices and that potential problems were mitigated.

Implementation in private classes went quickly, as teachers could use the document as the basis for the discussion. This helped to limit the amount of admin work outside of class and put more responsibility on the student. Weekly input included topics covered, work towards student-specific goals, comments on progress, and suggestions for further study. For small group classes, teachers were required to update any deviations from the curriculum and only enter week-cumulative comments on progress and/or suggestions for further study for each student in the group.

Office365 allows the document owner to view all changes, who entered them, and when. This makes for easy follow-up with teachers and monitoring completion and quality.

This original version was used with over 300 students over 9 months to ensure we made a solid attempt, had time to work out technical and logistical kinks, zero in on student preferences for feedback, and brainstorm ways to improve the form and the process.

New feedback has suggested that we focus on the day-to-day work, leaving it to the advising teacher to make the connection to the student’s focus areas and goals. It has also been proposed that we place more emphasis on student interaction with the form and the feedback process to increase students’ language improvement awareness. We are currently starting trials with an updated version.



We have also begun to address the need for learner input in feedback for small group classes. While the report can easily be opened and updated in class with the student playing an active part, doing so in a group class is much more complicated. Teachers did not feel comfortable opening one student’s report to the whole class and making time to meet with each student individually during class time was not feasible.

As a result, we have introduced an alternative way to give whole class feedback, get feedback from all students in the group, and submit it to each individual student’s report. We have done this using Office365’s Forms tool, which allows users to easily create things like surveys or quizzes and share them to collect responses. Using QR codes, teachers can use their personal devices or iPads provided by the

school to access the feedback form, discuss it in class with the group students, enter comments and feedback, and submit it to academic management, who then uses it to update the individual students' reports.

The image shows two smartphone screens displaying a 'Group Class Feedback' form. The left screen shows the title 'Group Class Feedback' and a request to fill in information by the end of the Thursday class. It includes a 'Required' section with two questions: '1. Level' with radio button options for Beginner, A2, B1, and B2+; and '2. Block' with radio button options for 9:00am-10:20 and 10:40-12:00. The right screen shows questions 3, 4, and 5, each with a text input field: '3. Strengths or successes this week', '4. Things to continue to practice', and '5. Individual student comments'. A green 'Submit' button is at the bottom of the right screen.

This current document and procedure have helped to minimize how much paperwork is necessary and cut admin work outside of class, minimize repetition of material due to better recordkeeping on student work, and improve and focus teacher-teacher and teacher-staff communication regarding student work and progress. Other benefits include increased student input and awareness of progress and needs, easy quality control and monitoring, a professional-looking document in both digital and paper formats, and we can include both progressive and cumulative feedback in a format that is accessible and beneficial to the student.

Deanna Berget is an academic director with 10 years of experience supporting highly motivated students and teachers in their endeavors for personal and professional development. Co-author of three jokes and lover of efficiency, Deanna hopes to spread passion for education through humor, teamwork, and cultural experiences.