

# Evaluative and Descriptive Feedback

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Generally, descriptive feedback is recommended over evaluative.

**Evaluative feedback** provides a summary of how well a student has performed on a particular task. Hence, one might comment on an essay saying,

“This is a well written and interesting essay. However, you lost marks because your essay did not answer the specific question set. You focussed mostly on describing the stages of sleep, when the question asked about its function.”

Descriptive feedback provides specific information that helps the learner understand what he or she needs to do in future work to improve. The last sentence in the passage below is the part that makes this feedback descriptive.

“This is a well written and interesting essay. It focussed mostly on describing the stages of sleep, when the question asked about its function. Academic essays are evaluated by how precisely they answer the specific question set. For future essays, why not try starting by very carefully analysing the question, then write a plan that outlines the step-by-step argument you will use to answer it?”

**Descriptive feedback** is developmental because it feeds forward to future work. As you can see from the passages above, descriptive feedback tends to be more wordy than evaluative and thus there is the danger of it being more time consuming. However, it is also the fact that markers often overwhelm students with too many comments, pointing out too many things they need to improve. It is advised that markers give fewer comments, concentrating on those aspects that the student would most benefit from focusing on in future work.