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# GIVING FEEDBACK: THE ALMOND JOY APPROACH

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## Purpose

This job aid is to provide a quick and practical guide to giving constructive feedback to students.

## Background

An important part of instructing is giving students feedback to inform them about their achievement of a learning goal (Wiggins, 2012). Sometimes as we work towards a goal, there is natural feedback. For example, if you are working at your basketball shot, it is clear to you whether you are progressing towards the goal of hitting a three-pointer with 90% accuracy or not. Other times, you rely on someone else to let you know how you are progressing. Feedback can come from an instructor, a peer, an experience, or a book (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). As an instructor, it is part of your job to ensure that students are getting the opportunity for that feedback.

Feedback is an essential part of student learning. As such, the quality of the feedback matters. The type of feedback and how it is delivered can change its impact. The Almond Joy approach can help ensure that the feedback you give is given in an effective way.

## How To

The Almond Joy approach is to first give positive feedback, then give constructive feedback, and then end on a positive note.

Start with the first layer: positive feedback – this is the light and fluffy coconut filling of the Almond Joy bar. Address what the student has done well or correctly. This can assert what the student has done for the assessment, as in “Great work on completing this case study. You identify the major factors in the case accurately.” In this section, try to replace value-based comments such as “this project is good” with more specific comments such as “the specific instruction you included as part of this assignment would be helpful for someone who is completing the task for the first time”

Then move on to the second layer, the almonds of the Almond Joy Bar: constructive feedback. These are the harder and chewier things that need to be communicated so that students can learn. Was the student successful in meeting the assessment’s learning outcomes? Did they miss any key parts of the assessment? Is there feedback you can provide them with here that

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has a real-world application around the workplace, or essential and employability skills? These morsels will help them to develop skills and knowledge necessary for the workplace. For example, “Please be sure to explain the reason for your choice. When you are in the work world, you will not only have to make a choice you will have to justify it” If they did well on the assessment, what would be the next step in their development? If they struggled to meet the assessment criteria, how could they do better next time?

For the final layer – the sweet chocolate coating: end on a positive note to encourage students towards future learning. For example, a comment such as “I look forward to seeing you apply the skills you applied here on your final project” will help students carry their learning forward.

## References

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