

Workload vs impact



Tom Sherrington and Sara Stafford

What's the idea?

Using a range of effective marking strategies in your daily teaching practice ensures that timely, effective feedback can be sustained without creating an unmanageable workload.

What does it mean?

Managing marking is one of the greatest workload challenges faced by teachers. With growing class-sizes, many teachers find themselves responsible for reading and responding to hundreds of students' work every week. A creative approach to feedback, however, can make this task achievable, enjoyable and impactful.

Replacing a rigid, prescribed marking structure (which, even with the best intentions, may be doomed to failure when things get really busy) with a more flexible diet of varied

strategies allows teachers to give meaningful feedback to all the students in their care.

You can experiment with a range of different strategies to find the combinations of feedback that are effective for your students; it will not be a case of one-size-fits-all. Try verbal feedback, whole-class feedback, self-marked quizzes, tick-and-flick book checks, peer critique, numerical marking and WWW (what went well) / EBI (even better if) reflections, alongside occasional deep-marking of selected pieces and formal, graded assessments.

What are the implications for teachers?

Think about your marking schedule as a medium-to-long term project. Plan a varied diet of feedback over a period of weeks, perhaps culminating in a piece of work that is deep-marked or more formally assessed.

Consider all of your classes and their needs. If you know that one class is working on six-page essays that will all need to be marked closely, for example, then plan less teacher-heavy feedback (such as verbal feedback or whole-class marking) for your other groups on that week.

As with all written feedback, ensure that you plan enough time for students to engage and respond. You can turn this into a habit by building in regular time for response in the starter or plenary of your lessons.

Top tips:

Evidence shows that some forms of feedback may be more effective than others, but this varies depending on individual pupils and contexts. It's important to give your students a varied diet of feedback which includes basic, proven strategies, even if this is occasionally more time-consuming.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- » Sherrington T (2018) Great teaching. The power of diets. Available at: <https://teacherhead.com/2018/09/26/great-teaching-the-power-of-diets/> (accessed 11 January 2019).
- » Kirby J (2015) Marking is a hornet. Available at: <https://pragmaticreform.wordpress.com/2015/10/31/marketing-is-a-hornet/> (accessed 11 January 2019).