

# 'What would I say to the face of a student?'

## Why some teachers are giving feedback via video

July 25 2023, by Ameena L. Payne

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Credit: Karolina Grabowska/Pexels

It is really [important](#) for students to see the human side of their teachers. They need to see them as real and caring people.

This helps [students](#) feel like they belong in the classroom, whether in real life or virtually. Building stronger student-[teacher](#) connections can also [increase](#) their motivation and self-confidence with their studies.

Feedback is a [key component](#) of learning.

We know feedback can evoke [emotional responses](#) from students. Unfortunately, the design and delivery of assessment feedback is often very impersonal. Perhaps students get a single mark or grade, or a few isolated comments.

Our [study](#) looks at how teachers are using video feedback to humanize the feedback process. We spoke with ten university teachers from countries including Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, United States, Oman and South Korea.

## **What is video feedback?**

Video feedback can be [provided](#) in three ways: via a "talking head," screen recording or both.

Talking head feedback is simply a recording of the teacher speaking to the camera. Screen-recorded feedback consists of a recording of the teacher's computer screen, which enables the teacher to go through an assignment or piece of work on their screen.

Using both means the inset of the teacher is displayed within the screen recording.

## **How long has it been around?**

Video has played a part in education since the 1960s, but using it to provide feedback was [relatively uncommon](#) until about a decade ago.

Our research looks at video feedback for [university students](#), but it can be used at all stages of education, from as young as [primary school](#).

The steady increase in online learning and the most recent shifts to emergency remote teaching saw more teachers use video to complement written feedback, and to establish or maintain feelings of closeness.

Students have also reported being [more reliant](#) on their assignment feedback in online learning than in face-to-face modes of study.

Previous research has shown students [like receiving](#) video feedback. They say it feels [more conversational, friendly and personal](#). Research has also shown educators have noted [enhanced](#) student engagement and improved marking efficiency and quality.

Our research digs deeper into why it can work.

## **Using video to provide clear, kind and personalized feedback**

Some of our interviewees were motivated to use video feedback, based on their own experiences as students. (All names have been changed.) As Ishaan told us:

"I received feedback, as an undergraduate 20 years ago, and I just looked at it and think I didn't learn anything from my submissions [...] and it kind of pissed me off."

Teachers also used videos to demonstrate to students that they had really looked at their work. And so they could see their work through the eyes of their teacher.

Anthony, a health educator, uses video feedback because it gives students the feeling that "we are [together], you are sitting here with me although you are not really, and we are going through [the assignment]."

## What should feedback do?

Feedback is not about telling a student they are "wrong" or "right." Our interviewees wanted students to think beyond mere grades or marks.

They said they wanted their feedback to help students be creative and critical in their learning and provoke self-reflection. As Alannah told us, she wanted to empower students to "solve their own problems and get insight into their own gaps."

They said they wanted students to be open and receptive to feedback, so they could make use of it. As Marisol explained: "Feedback should be 'feeding-forward' somewhere or having some value that students see is going to influence the future assignment."

## Video can show and tell

Our interviewees said video helped them to give better, more specific feedback. This included being able to show examples and be empathetic in their language.

As Anthony explained: "It's not a case of being pejorative and saying this is no good [...] Sometimes it's just a matter of saying 'I can see what you've tried to do. Here's another way you could have done it that would have done what we wanted to do.'"

Interviewees recognized students could view feedback as harsh or impersonal when teachers focuses on correction. But video can feel more like a [face-to-face conversation](#). Marisol noticed how her written comments naturally emphasized students' errors. In contrast, with video feedback, she imagines: "the student watching me. I have the feeling of 'What would I say to the face of a student?'"

## But video alone is not enough

Our [interviewees](#) stressed that video feedback still needed to be underpinned by good design.

They said the feedback process would be improved if it was more interactive. As Otto said, it should be "more like a conversation [...] more frequent but less big." Marisol said there should be opportunities for students to reply.

Interviewees also talked about the need for assignments to connect or [build on one another](#), so students can use the feedback from one assignment to the next and make comparisons with their own previous work.

While video feedback is now [built in](#) to most [online learning](#) platforms, [one in five](#) Australian households only access the internet through a phone. As Farah acknowledged, video feedback may not be not feasible for all students and educators.

"We have poor connection in some areas. And some students, they don't have internet connection."

## What next?

Our [findings](#) should encourage schools and universities to incorporate video into their [feedback](#).

Not only can it engage and encourage students to learn, but it can do so with [care](#), [kindness](#).

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