



ARK Marking and Feedback Policy-2026

How is this document intended to be used?

- This policy is intended to support ARK leaders in revising or developing school policies on marking and feedback.
- It is also intended as a training document, which can be used to structure or provoke discussion amongst Educators, Parents, Learners and Providers
- The quality of 'feedback' is a key factor in provision improvement and is a key focus of inspection; as such, it is under continual review
- ARK staff pride themselves on providing high standards of curriculum, marking and feedback support to all learners in a bespoke and individualised way.

Effective feedback

Principles

The following are features of effective feedback :

All tutors should have an understanding of these principles, which should be reflected in their practice. Subject leaders should ensure that these principles are discussed, reviewed and applied appropriately within their subject areas.

Organic to all teaching

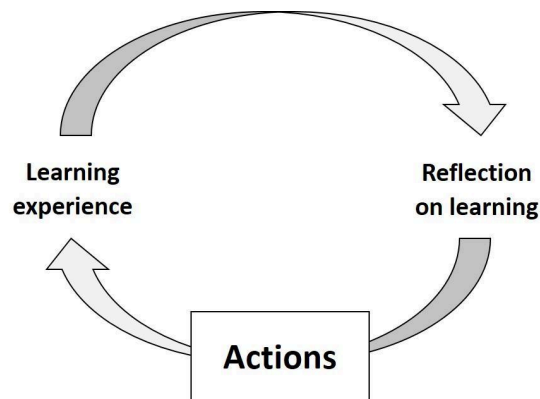
Feedback is not just something given at the end of a piece of work, or on clear 'tasks'. Students should be continually reflecting on what and how they are learning and should be continually challenged to make progress.

Tutors are providing feedback when they ask follow-up questions, engage in discussion with students, make oral comments on work, critique work in lessons, intervene in class and so on.

In effective classrooms, there is a culture of open and safe critique, in which students welcome constructive feedback from the tutor and each other, in a collective effort to improve.

A cyclical process

Feedback is not one-way, but is a dynamic process through which ARK learners are helped to reflect on and to improve their learning.



Involves action by students

Learners should always be expected to take some sort of action on tutor feedback. Usually, such action will involve either **correction** of mistakes or weaknesses, **consolidation** of skills or knowledge, or a **challenge** to go further or deeper (the three Cs).

Examples of learner actions might include attempting a similar or more advanced exercise, writing a considered responses to comments and questions, editing or correcting their work, redrafting and so on.

Effective feedback is in this sense **dialogic** and there should always be a sense that students are in dialogue with the teacher; however, this does not necessarily mean replying to questions or 'writing back', which can sometimes be superficial or a distraction.

Must be formative	When tutors give written feedback, they are <i>teaching</i> that student. Comments and advice need to communicate to students where they are, where they need to go and how they can get there. Feedback therefore needs to be specific, avoiding vague generalities.
Has to motivate, as well as inform	There is no point in an individual knowing what and how to improve, unless they are motivated to do so. Effective feedback therefore is dependent on, and is an essential part of, the relationship between ARK tutor and ARK learner. If it is too dry, too impersonal, too negative or too demanding, then it will not be effective.
Must be about the learning in hand	Feedback is only effective if it is clearly related to what the learner is setting out to do, and not to a different or surprising agenda. ARK Staff are aware of the various and individual needs of learners. Delivery of all advice and feedback must be offered with an awareness of these needs. For example, if a learner is talking or writing for a specific purpose or audience, then that should be the initial focus of the feedback; if the learner had particular success criteria in mind, then these should be foregrounded in comments; and corrections of ‘literacy’ errors should be supporting (not instead of) <i>subject</i> teaching.
Must be about the communication, as well as the content, of learning	All tutors should be using feedback to support learners’ literacy in their subjects. This will include selective feedback on expression, organisation of ideas, sentence construction, style and voice, sense of purpose and audience, presentation and handwriting, as well as technical features of writing such as spelling and punctuation. It will also include feedback on the effectiveness of students’ spoken contributions, listening and discussion.
Needs to be attentive and regular	If feedback is too spaced out, then learners cannot act on it to make rapid progress. If learners sense that their written, practical or spoken contributions are not properly engaged with (or are even unacknowledged) then they will be less motivated to make progress. ARK learners may visit in short periods (one, two, three or four sessions per week). ARK staff are mindful that regular feedback is essential to engage and motivate ARK learners.
Needs to be effective, rather than extensive	The quality of any feedback is more important than the quantity. Selective and well-focused comments are more valuable than less careful saturation-marking. Directing students to edit or correct their <i>own</i> work may be more effective than doing it for them.
Will vary in practice & appearance across subjects and contexts	The monitoring and evaluating of tutors’ feedback should be moderated against subject criteria, and through regular discussion of rationales and strategies, which may not be apparent to an observer.

Specific expectations include:

Written feedback

- Feedback in exercise books and on 'everyday' work should be given regularly, and never less than once every week. Process work or note-making may not always be 'marked' but should always be acknowledged; there should be occasional 'overview' feedback on this sort of work.
- Where permitted by exam regulations, feedback on all formal assignments, controlled assessments, courseworks and mock exams should be given to students within on the same day or the next session they attend. Any levels must be supported with comments, as below. Students should then set targets for further improvement, which should be recorded in the ARK assessment tracker
- Comments and annotations must
 - be formative, indicating specific strengths and setting clear, meaningful next steps
 - be positive, personal and framed in such a way as to motivate the learner to improve
 - focus initially on the learning in hand, addressing what the student has set out to do
- The work itself should be annotated, to indicate where and how students are achieving and can improve.
- Rather than saturating the work, feedback should be selective and carefully focused, supporting students in reflecting on and improving their own work and supporting the ARK ethos of supporting individual learners.
- Learners should be encouraged to be visibly acting on feedback. Responses to comments, corrections, improvements and edits should always be made by the learner.
- Tutors should give feedback on learner communication within the subject, including selective correction of spelling, punctuation, organisational and presentational features, especially where these are subject-specific.

Oral feedback

- In the classroom, staff should ensure that all students are receiving positive, formative feedback on their work, within whole-class discussion and questioning as well as one-to-one dialogue.
- As with written feedback, learners must be consciously acting on oral comments, but this does not necessarily mean recording that oral feedback has been given.
- Staff are to give oral feedback at every session and this is embedded in the culture of the ARK setting. Formal sessions are to be carried out monthly where learners scrutinise their own tracker and analyse areas that are working well and areas to improve. This formal session to be recorded on Week 4 of every register.

Peer and self-assessment

- Students should be encouraged to assess their own and each other's work, as part of a culture of open and safe critique within the ARK setting.

- Like any other work, learners' feedback to each other (written or oral) first needs to be carefully modelled, and to be based on a shared understanding of success

Economy for impact

ARK Tutors believe that the quality of feedback is more important than its quantity.

- Some 'process' work (such as notes, rough work, practice writing and so on) will be acknowledged rather than 'marked.'
- The tutor might only provide detailed feedback on one section, page or paragraph of a piece of work. (The student might then add their own annotations.)
- Final drafts may be marked sparingly, with more detailed, formative feedback having been given on earlier drafts.
- Comments at the end of a piece of work might be minimal, with the focus on targeted annotation instead.
- Much feedback will be oral rather than written, especially if work has been drafted in class, when it will have been the subject of individual & general discussion.
- Written annotations might be made by the learner, rather than the tutor, following tutor direction..
- Some feedback will be from peers or by self-assessment; this must carefully modelled, and to be based on a shared understanding of success.