

☰ White paper

# The powerful direction of “Where to next?” feedback

## A Turnitin Feedback Studio white paper

The landscape of research on defining effective feedback for students has grown over the past few decades. Much of this research is credited to educational researchers, such as Dr. John Hattie, who has helped shape practitioners’ understanding of how feedback can improve student work. Hattie and Timperely (2007) categorized effective feedback into three types: How am I going? Where am I going? and Where to next?

In this paper, we share research focused on testing the hypothesis that “Where to next?” feedback enhances student performance. We also discuss the literature around “Where to next?” feedback and share practical applications for the classroom, including how Turnitin Feedback Studio can support this research.

# Contents

---

<b>Investigating feedback that leads to improvement in student essays: A research brief overview</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Where does “Where to next?” feedback fit in the feedback types?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>How can we craft “Where to next?” feedback well?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>How can Turnitin Feedback Studio support “Where to next?” feedback’?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Works cited</b>	<b>13</b>

# Investigating feedback that leads to improvement in student essays: A research brief overview

---

In a 2021 study titled, "[Feedback That Leads to Improvement in Student Essays: Testing the Hypothesis that 'Where to Next' Feedback is Most Powerful](#)," four veteran educators at Turnitin and Dr. John Hattie partnered to explore which forms of feedback are more predictive of improvement in students' essays. The study harnessed data from Turnitin Feedback Studio with a sample size of 3,204 high school and university students who submitted essays, received feedback, and resubmitted for final scores. Below is a brief summary of the research:

## Research brief overview

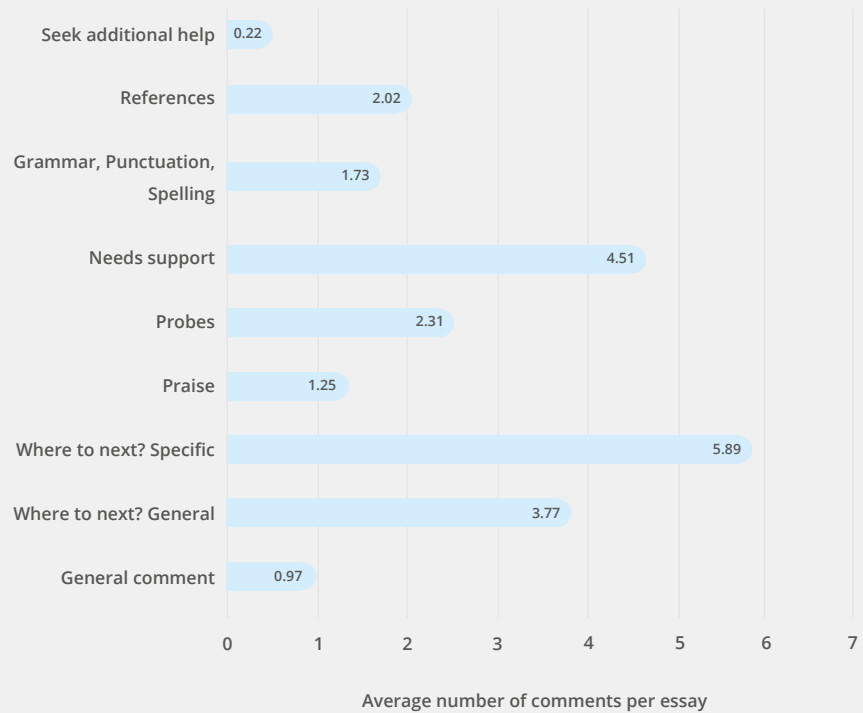
**Title:** Feedback That Leads to Improvement in Student Essays: Testing the Hypothesis that "Where to Next" Feedback is Most Powerful

**Introduction:** This study investigates a range of feedback forms, and in particular investigates the hypothesized claim that feedback that leads to "Where to next?" decisions and actions by students is most likely to enhance their performance. It uses Turnitin Feedback Studio to ask about the relation of various agents of feedback (teacher, machine program), and codes the feedback responses to identify which kinds of feedback are related to the growth and achievement from first to final submission of essays.

**Methodology:** Paired student assignments were presented for analysis, which included a student's original "first draft" submission (formative) and their "revision" submission (summative). For each pair of assignments, details were reported such as (but not limited to) information regarding the scoring of the assignment and the feedback that was provided on the assignment. The comments were coded and outcomes related to growth and achievement were measured.

**Results & Conclusion:** Previous literature suggests that out of the three types of feedback (Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next?), "Where to next?" feedback is the most powerful. The major finding from this study endorses the importance of "Where to next?" feedback and demonstrates that it leads to the greatest impact on student improvement between drafts.

### Mean frequency of key feedback forms



In addition to being very powerful, “Where to next?” feedback is also the most frequently provided type of feedback in Turnitin Feedback Studio papers.

No matter whether more general or quite specific, “Where to next?” feedback appeared to be heard and actioned by students. Additionally, the quantity of feedback (regardless of form) demonstrated an improvement in student essays over time.

**Discussion:** “Where to next?” feedback may need to be scaffolded with feedback related to “Where am I going?” and “How am I going?” Also notable, while students demonstrated appreciation and acted upon “Where to next?” feedback, the form of delivery--from a teacher via a computer-based feedback tool--did not impact the ability to decode and apply the feedback statements.

Note: Content adapted from *Feedback That Leads to Improvement in Student Essays: Testing the Hypothesis that “Where to Next” Feedback is Most Powerful*. Hattie et al. (2021, May) In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 6, p. 182). Frontiers.

# Where does “Where to next?” feedback fit within the feedback types?

---

## A glimpse into the research on feedback

While feedback can make a significant impact on student learning, studies investigating the meaning of feedback in education were lacking until the last few decades. The word *feedback* in education is often discussed with evaluative methods related to grading, commenting, and marking. Research conducted by educational researchers, such as Dr. John Hattie, has differentiated feedback and helped practitioners understand how it can be used to enhance classroom learning. This section defines feedback, summarizes some of Dr. Hattie’s work on effective feedback, and places “Where to next?” feedback into context.

## Defining feedback in the classroom

In a 134 meta-analysis, an analysis of multiple scientific studies, Hattie (1992) found that feedback is one of the most positive influences on student achievement. Hattie and Clarke (2019) define feedback as the information about a learning task that helps students understand what is aimed to be understood versus what is being understood. In a seminal paper related to feedback, Sadler (1989) describes feedback as the information that closes the gap between where students are and where they aim to be. Feedback is more than just commenting or marking on students’ work. Feedback can lead to increased engagement and motivation towards completing the task.

### *Feedback and instruction*

As feedback and instruction are intertwined (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), it is crucial for feedback to provide information related to the learning that is necessary to help students reach the instructional goals (Sadler, 1989). Feedback should be task-oriented or goal-specific (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) and focused on helping students achieve the goals. Without clear learning goals and success criteria, feedback can tend to be too general and less helpful for improvement (Hattie & Clarke, 2019).

### *Feedback and formative assessment*

As it lives in the formative assessment framework, feedback is a critical component of formative assessment (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). When employed formatively, students have an opportunity to ‘close the gap’ (Sadler, 1989) by responding to the feedback related to the learning task.

Students become active participants in their own learning and are more motivated to tackle challenging tasks. Promoting a feedback culture can lead to a healthy discussion of errors necessary for learning (Hattie & Clarke, 2019).

### **Framing feedback around three questions**

Hattie and Timperley (2007) place “Where to next?” feedback in a series of three feedback questions: Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next? This has also been referred to as “feed-up,” “feed-back,” and “feed-forward.” While it is important for students to understand the learning task (Where am I going?), and their progress towards reaching the goal (How am I going?), they must also have guidance on what to do next (Where to next?). Effective feedback must answer these three questions and the feedback must be targeted at an appropriate level for the student (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

#### ***Where am I going?***

This type of feedback focuses on the purpose or goal of the learning task. Goals should explain specific attainments and involve two dimensions: challenge and commitment. The levels of attainment are often referred to as success criteria, which are goals that clearly describe when and how a learner would know they are successful (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback is more powerful when students understand their goals and what successfully reaching those goals looks like.

#### ***How am I going?***

This feedback relates to how students are progressing towards the goal. It involves an agent, such as a teacher, peer, or self, providing feedback on an expected standard or their success or developments towards a specific task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

#### ***Where to next?***

This feedback is focused on helping students reach the greater possibility for learning. Since instruction is most often sequential, there is a next step or expectation for learning. Feedback can be used to help students understand how to reach the next step, which may include more challenges, increased fluency or automaticity, or strategies and suggestions to help students work on the task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

### **Practicing the three feedback questions**

Across the literature, Dr. Hattie suggests “Where to next?” feedback to be the most powerful (Hattie & Gan, 2011; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie & Wollenschläger, 2014). Further research proves

this claim to be true. The latest study with Turnitin confirms “Where to next?” feedback to most effectively improve student essays, no matter if the feedback is written by a teacher then shared with a student using a machine program such as Turnitin Feedback Studio (Hattie et al., 2021).

While studies show “Where to next?” feedback to be highly effective, researchers advocate for the three feedback questions to work together. “How am I going?” feedback can encourage students to progress to “Where to next?”, which is based on a goal “Where am I going?” Thus, feedback is most effective when the three questions are integrated into instruction and evaluation rather than working in isolation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

# How can we craft “Where to next?” feedback well?

---

A common method for written feedback on student work is in the form of a comment, yet teacher-student feedback may be presented in various ways. Although “Where to next?” feedback focuses on further improvements, additional considerations should be made when situating it in a stand-alone comment on student work. As a comment, “Where to next?” feedback should include feedback related to “Where am I going?” (the goal) and “How am I going?” (progress towards the goal).

For Turnitin Feedback Studio, comments may be left in various ways such as bubble comments, inline comments, and QuickMark comments. This section discusses what “Where to next?” feedback may look like in the format of a comment, as well as provides suggestions around implementing this type of feedback.

## Components of “Where to next?” feedback

When writing “Where to next?” feedback as a comment, we suggest including three essential components: The specific issue related to the learner’s writing (**Issue**), its relevance to the writing task (**Relevance**), and what the student should do next to fix the issue (**Action**). It’s important to note that “Where to next?” feedback doesn’t always need to follow this format exactly. Components may show up in a different order than presented in the template and/or may be combined.

Issue: Highlight and clearly describe the specific issue related to the writing task.

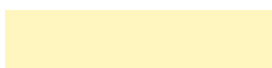
Relevance: Align feedback explicitly to the stated expectations of the assignment (i.e. rubric).

Action: Provide the learner with their “next steps,” appropriately guiding the work, but not giving away the answer.

## Template



Issue



Relevance



Action



## Example comments employing “Where to next?” components

### Example 1 - Follows template

This section appears to be off-topic. Your essay needs to address the writing task. Reread the prompt question and stay focused on what the prompt asks you to accomplish.

### Example 2 - Rearranged order; combined components

This sentence might be difficult for your readers to understand. Reword this sentence so your meaning is clear to your audience.

## Suggestions for implementing “Where to next?” feedback

### *Connect feedback to task expectations*

While it is a best practice to connect feedback to goal attainment (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), this is specifically helpful while providing “Where to next?” feedback. The “relevant” component of “Where to next?” feedback allows educators to directly align feedback to the stated expectations of the assignment. However, task expectations must also be communicated clearly using a tool such as a rubric. Rubrics should clearly map out the expectations for the task, at various levels and across the traits or aspects of the work that will be assessed. When feedback is mapped to a rubric, not only will students have a clearer understanding of the criteria for success, they will more easily be able to understand and apply “Where to next?” feedback.

### *Consider timing of feedback*

“Where to next?” feedback is most effective when offered formatively. Plan on leaving this type of feedback when students have an opportunity to submit at least one draft and a resubmission. If possible, try to provide multiple opportunities for students to review feedback and revise their writing. With the incorporation of actionable feedback and opportunities for revision, students are more likely to revise their writing based on the feedback.

Additionally, offer feedback as close to the submission as possible. At least 60% of students say they are “very” or “extremely” likely to use their feedback if they receive it in the midst of working on their task or immediately after they have completed their task. Their likelihood to use feedback drops precipitously if they receive it any later (Turnitin, 2015). If providing feedback close to submission seems challenging, consider educational technology tools that may help speed up the process for leaving feedback on student work.

# How can Turnitin Feedback Studio support “Where to next?” feedback?

---

One of the most defining characteristics of Turnitin Feedback Studio is the host of grading tools for educators. In addition to feedback on similarity, educators may leave feedback on student work in various ways, such as drag-and-drop QuickMark comments, text or voice comments, and automatic grammar. Leaving comments directly on assignments can help students understand: Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next?

## Using Turnitin Feedback Studio formatively

We know that “Where to next?” feedback is most effective when offered to students formatively. For educators using Turnitin Feedback Studio, consider how to use the product in a formative manner, offering several opportunities for students to review feedback and revise their writing. To increase student engagement in the writing process, be sure to let students know they will have an opportunity to revise their writing based on your targeted and actionable feedback.

For assistance on allowing for multiple drafts of an assignment, review our help guides section about creating a Revision assignment:

- [Replicating revision and reflection assignments](#)

If you’re interested in offering more formative opportunities for students to receive automated feedback on similarity, citations, and grammar, *before* submitting to Turnitin Feedback Studio for “Where to next?” feedback, be sure to check out [Turnitin Draft Coach](#).

## Writing “Where to next?” feedback as comments in Turnitin Feedback Studio

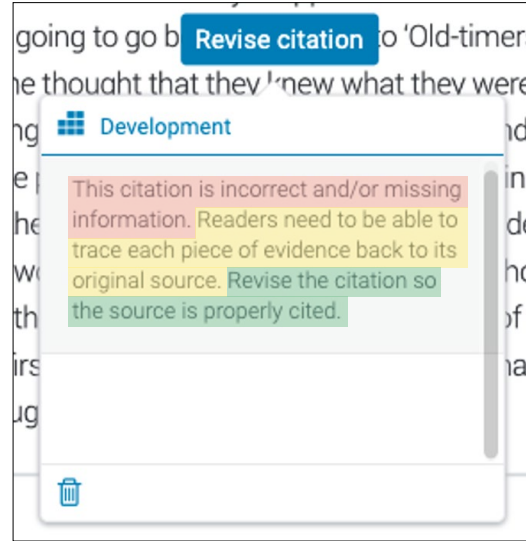
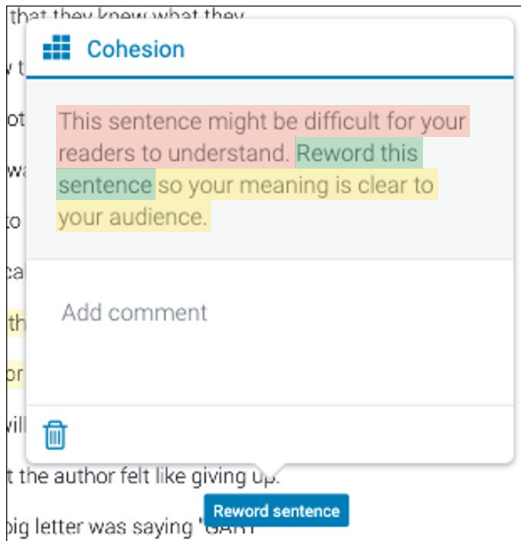
Writing comments is one way educators may leave feedback on student work using Turnitin Feedback Studio. Comments may be written as: [inline comments](#), [bubble comments](#), and [QuickMark comments](#).

Choosing one of the comment features, leave “Where to next?” feedback for your students in Turnitin Feedback Studio. Follow the guided “Where to next?” structure: **Issue**, **Relevance**, **Action**. Consider creating a set of QuickMark comments as an efficient way to consistently communicate feedback with students and also save you time in the process.

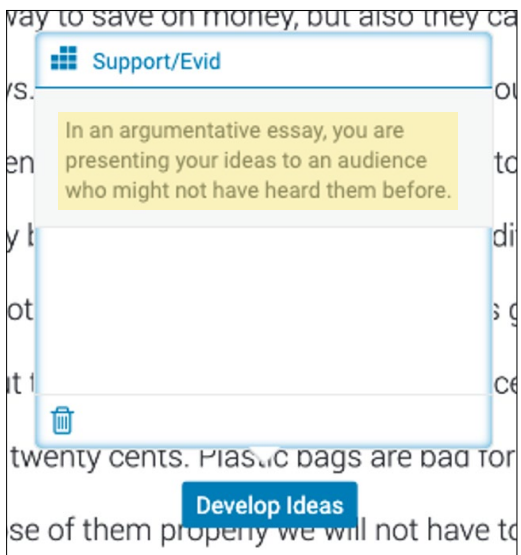
## QuickMark examples & non-examples

QuickMark comments are sets of comments for educators to easily leave feedback on student work. Educators may either use the numerous QuickMarks sets [readily available in Turnitin Feedback Studio](#), or they may create sets of commonly used [comments on their own](#). Regardless, as a method for leaving feedback, QuickMarks are ideal for leaving “Where to next?” feedback on student work. Here are some examples and non-examples of “Where to next?” feedback as QuickMarks:

### “Where to next?” QuickMark examples



### “Where to next?” QuickMark non-example



*Note: Issue and Action are missing in this QuickMark example.*

For further assistance on understanding options for leaving comments in Turnitin Feedback Studio, refer to our VidBITs:

- [How to use commenting tools](#)
- [How to use QuickMarks](#)

## Applying rubrics in Turnitin Feedback Studio to clearly communicate task expectations

Rubrics may be added to any assignment in Turnitin Feedback Studio. Connect an [existing rubric](#) to your assignment, [modify an existing rubric](#) in your account, or [create a rubric](#) on your own. Share the rubric with your students to clearly communicate task expectations. Be sure your “Where to next?” feedback relates to the success criteria stated in the rubric for the assignment so students know “Where am I going?”

For further assistance on understanding rubrics and effective feedback principles in Turnitin Feedback Studio, refer to our VidBITs:

- [How to use rubrics and grading forms](#)
- [Best practices for providing effective feedback](#)
- [Best practices for effective rubric design](#)

## Aligning feedback to criteria in rubrics

Help students further understand your “Where to next?” feedback by aligning the feedback to criteria in the rubric. Turnitin Feedback Studio allows educators to [assign criteria to bubble comments and QuickMark comments](#). When writing a comment, educators can choose the rubric criteria and tie it directly to the comment. This feature affords students with a more detailed view into where the feedback fits within the rubric.

For assistance on learning more about tying feedback to criteria, refer to our VidBIT:

- [Developing writers: feedback tied to criteria](#)

## Works cited

---

- Hattie, J., & Clarke, S. (2019). Visible learning: feedback. Routledge.
- Hattie, J., Crivelli, J., Van Gompel, K., West-Smith, P., & Wike, K. (2021, May). Feedback That Leads to Improvement in Student Essays: Testing the Hypothesis that “Where to Next” Feedback is Most Powerful. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 6, p. 182). Frontiers.
- Hattie, J., & Gan, M. (2011). Instruction based on feedback. In *Handbook of research on learning and instruction* (pp. 263-285). Routledge.
- Hattie, J., and Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Rev. Educ. Res.* 77 (1), 81–112. doi:10.3102/003465430298487
- Hattie, J., & Wollenschläger, M. (2014). A conceptualization of feedback. *Feedback und Rückmeldungen. Theoretische Grundlagen, empirische Befunde, praktische Anwendungsfelder*, 135-149.
- Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological bulletin*, 119(2), 254.
- Sadler, D. R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional science*, 18(2), 119-144.
- Turnitin (2015). From here to there: students’ perceptions on feedback, goals, barriers, and effectiveness. Turnitin, LLC. Retrieved from <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/student-feedback-goals-barriers>

## Turnitin

Turnitin is a global company dedicated to ensuring the integrity of education and meaningfully improving learning outcomes. For more than 20 years, Turnitin has partnered with educational institutions to promote honesty, consistency, and fairness across all subject areas and assessment types. Our products are used by educational institutions and certification and licensing programs to uphold integrity and increase learning performance, and by students and professionals to do their best, original work.

## Turnitin Feedback Studio

Turnitin Feedback Studio is the only comprehensive online learning solution proven to prevent plagiarism and foster a culture of academic integrity. It empowers instructors with time-saving grading and personalized feedback tools that engage students, develop critical thinkers, and drive career readiness. Feedback Studio comes with a collection of curriculum resources and is designed to complement how you teach by integrating seamlessly with your LMS.

