Part 1: Background

Title: Efficient and Effective Feedback: A Lesson Study Investigating Students' Responses and Follow-up to Feedback on Their Writing

Authors:

Taggert Brooks, Economics, tbrooks@uwlax.edu

Elizabeth Knowles, Economics, eknowles@uwlax.edu

Bryan Kopp, English and Writing Programs Coordinator, CATL, bkopp@uwlax.edu

James Murray, Economics, jmurray@uwlax.edu (Contact Author)

Laurie Strangman, Economics, lstrangman@uwlax.edu

Field: Business communication and research methods

Submission date: Aug 1, 2013

Course name: Business and Economics Research and Communication

Course Description: This lesson study takes place in BUS 230: Business and Economics Research and Communication, a sophomore-level business research methods course that is required for all students with a major in the College of Business Administration, and it serves this population exclusively. The course involves a semester-long research project in which the students work in groups of 3 to 5 people. The project involves developing a research question, finding background information and literature on the problem, developing and administering a survey, analyzing data using elementary statistical methods, and writing a final paper which summarizes the work. The final report has multiple sections, including an introduction / literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion / discussion.

Abstract: We developed and implemented a systematic and efficient approach to give feedback on student writing in a business research methods course. In this lesson study, we investigate how students respond to this feedback. The lesson takes place at mid-semester, after students have spent some time developing their research question and reviewing the literature. At the time of our classroom observation, the students receive the first feedback of their first draft of the introduction section of their final paper. We observed their conversations upon receiving the feedback and noted how it influenced their revision plans. We conducted our lesson study over two semesters, Fall 2012 and Spring 2013.

To make the process of giving feedback efficient, we developed a database of comments on student writing which were specific to the objectives of the assignment. There are seven goals of the introduction assignment, some of which are specific to an introduction section of a research project, such as "State the purpose of your research project", and some of which are very general, such as "Communicate in a clear and meaningful way." Using these goals as the traits for a rubric, we developed a set of feedback comments that align to each goal suggesting improvements or noting when the objective was met. While the comments are specific enough to address specific goals of the assignment and common writing problems, they were general enough so that they could be used for any student's writing for the given assignment. We use text-expanding software (Breevy for Windows, Text-Expander for Mac) that allows the instructor to quickly populate a letter to each student with a set of comments appropriate for their submission.

Our classroom investigation revealed some challenges in giving feedback that effectively guides students on how to revise their work. One significant example concerns how students communicate purpose. While students may have attempted to communicate a specific purpose in one part of their introduction, often the introduction as a whole lacked focus. Even after receiving feedback, students were largely unable to recognize this problem or understand what kind of revision was appropriate.

Part 2: The Lesson

Introduction

  The purpose of this project is to improve how we provide feedback on students' writing. We wanted to develop a process that: (1) is efficient, in the sense that feedback could be provided quickly by the instructor, (2) results in feedback that informs students' revision plans, (3) is conducive to pedagogical growth, and (4) links the content of the feedback directly to the goals and expectations for the writing assignment.

  An efficient process for feedback is important so that students can get feedback quickly after submitting their writing assignment. Students are more likely to make use of feedback while their work is still fresh in their minds. We made the process efficient by developing a list of short comments that we can draw from to share with students as feedback on their writing. We entered these comments into text-expanding software (Breevy is a popular option for Windows, Text Expander is a popular option for Mac) which allows an instructor to quickly copy-and-paste a comment with a short keystroke. The comments were made general enough to fit any student's submission for the writing assignment, but specific enough to be useful for the students by clearly addressing the specific goals of the writing assignment.

  Our second goal recognizes that feedback is only effective if students use it. An important purpose of our lesson study was to observe how students received their feedback and how it influenced their revision plans. To this end, we read and evaluated our students first draft of the introduction of their research paper, and selected comments for feedback on each piece of writing. When we distributed our evaluation scores and feedback comments to our students, a team of instructors observed the project groups to listen to students' conversations about the feedback and made note of how this influenced their revision plans.

  Our third goal of pedagogical growth is probably familiar to the reader. Most instructors continually try to improve his or her craft by developing new content, new assignments, classroom activities, or teaching techniques to improve student cognitive reasoning skills, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking skills, or their communication skills. However, the content, quality, and delivery technique of feedback for students is something that may go overlooked. While the authors of the present study have all taken the responsibility to provide feedback to students seriously, most of us had not previously reflected on the substance and effectiveness of these interactions. We wanted to construct a process and a set of content that could be saved from one semester to the next, and from which we could gather evidence to improve the process from one semester to the next.

  Our final goal is to make sure that the feedback we provide to students is consistent with the

expectations we set forth for our students. We want to be careful not to criticize some aspect of students' writing along a dimension that we had never communicated. We want to make sure that we have a clear set of expectations for our writing assignment that we share with our students, and that the feedback we give students keeps them focused on these objectives.

Learning Goals

The learning goals for the lesson are the learning goals for the introduction assignment. Our hope is that students use their feedback to identify and work on the learning goals in which they most need improvement.

On the class syllabus, we identify the broad learning goals for the entire course. The introduction assignment maps to two of these:

- Develop the ability to define a research problem. Formulate research questions and hypotheses that are measurable, well-defined, address the overall problem, are directly related, and reflect the scope of the problem.
- Develop the ability to effectively communicate research results both written and orally.

We give our students an assignment description for the introduction section of the research report that lays out our expectations for our students, and also communicates some essential characteristics that are specific to the introduction. To do this, our assignment description includes the following, assignment-specific, learning goals:

1. *Clearly state the purpose of the research*: What do you hope to accomplish? Who is your audience; i.e. who would use or be interested in your results? What decisions can be better informed by learning the outcome of your research project?
2. *Ask the relevant questions:* Have all of the relevant questions been asked? Are the questions focused on the essential issues?
3. *Communicate your message in a clear and meaningful way.* Convince your reader that your work is something important that they want to read. Organize your discussion to build an argument or tell a story.
4. *Provide relevant background information:* Provide enough background information so that your readers understand the context and motivation for your paper and form their own informed opinion on the subject.
5. *Introduce your reader to how you answer your research question - and justify it*: Most of these details should be put in your methodology section, but still, by the end of the introduction your

reader should have a basic idea for how you plan to answer your research question. Consider including the population, the use of a survey, and a general description of the types of questions in the survey.

6. *Use existing evidence to motivate your research:* One of the goals of your introduction is to convince your reader that your research is important. Why it is important to know the answer to your research question? Do existing studies pose new questions or leave questions unanswered? Do existing studies need to be replicated for your particular population?

7. *Communicate effectively* by not distracting the reader with grammar and spelling errors. Writing is professional and follows common rules for reporting research, i.e. sources are cited correctly, quotes used appropriately.

In sum total, these goals reflect that we want our students to be able to put their research problem into proper context and communicate that effectively. Still, after the first semester of the lesson study project, we found ourselves overwhelmed with a lesson study that attempted to investigate such a broad range of issues. In the second semester, we focused our investigation on communicating purpose in writing, while still providing feedback on all of the above learning goals as needed for our students. We investigated the other learning goals as they related to purpose.

Lesson Plan / Classroom Observation Approach

Preparing Student Feedback

The lesson study focuses on the first draft of an introduction section for a final research project. In the weeks prior to the classroom observation, students devised a research question, wrote an informal research proposal, and conducted a search of relevant literature and background information for their projects. The classroom observation takes place one week after students turned in the first draft.

We developed a database of comments to select from to give our students feedback. Each comment is between 1 and 3 sentences and may commend students for doing well, make suggestions for improvements, or pose questions to our students to help them think about how they should make revisions. The comments are aligned with the seven learning outcomes given above. In this way, we insure that we address all of our learning goals, and any feedback we give is consistent with the expectations that we set forth for our students. See Appendix A for the database of comments.

We created a form letter for our students that we populated with comments. These letters served as our feedback for our students writing (see Appendix B for an example letter). We did not complement the letter with margin notes, corrections, or any other type of feedback. We handed out the letters on the day of our classroom observation, and witnessed the conversations that they had in response to the letters.

Classroom Observation Activity - Fall 2012

In Fall 2012, the students completed a self assessment of their work before receiving the feedback letters from the instructor (see Appendix C). The self assessment asked students to reflect on the seven learning outcomes and give themselves a score from 1 to 5 on each. The students were then asked to comment on what they felt were priorities for revision.

After students reflected on their work, we handed out the feedback letters. We asked the students to read through the letters, consider the feedback and their own reflections, determine what aspects of their paper need revision, and develop a plan for how that could be done. We gave the students a short exercise to facilitate that discussion (see Appendix D).

The instructors observed student groups as they responded to the feedback, and made notes using the Classroom Observation Guide in Appendix E. The classroom observation guide prompted observers to make note of the depth of the students' discussion, the level of the students understanding of the feedback, and whether or not the students' conversations revealed that they were thinking about each of the seven learning goals of the assignment.

Overall, we were disappointed in our classroom observations in the Fall 2012 semester. Many groups did not treat the in-class exercise as a useful means to an end goal of a successful revision, but as an end itself that had little importance - a task that stood between them and the end of class. Many students' revision plans were brief, general, redescriptions of what was in their letters. Some students did not even look through their papers to consider specific revisions. One group even left the class early, even as an instructor was sitting with the group to observe their conversations. They expressed plans to meet together outside of class at a later date to work more seriously on the revision.

Classroom Observation Activity - Spring 2013

In Spring 2013 we took an alternative approach. We gave students their feedback letters and asked them to reflect on how well they communicated purpose in their introduction. We asked students to pay special attention whether their introduction has a clear focus on its purpose and maintains a consistent message throughout. We gave students the following four prompts to help guide their discussion:

1. Is there a clear communication of the purpose of your research project early in the introduction?
2. Does your background information contribute directly to your purpose? Do marginally related topics detract from your purpose?
3. Do your citations contribute directly to your purpose? Do marginally related topics detract from your purpose?

4. Do you have a brief description of your methodology that convinces your audience you are going to take steps to accomplish precisely what you communicated as your purpose for the research?

We did not ask students to write down answers to these questions to be turned in, but rather use these to guide their conversations, since we did not want our students treating these four questions as a todo checklist for the class period, mentally separating this task from their actual plans to revise their paper. We simply asked students to consider their feedback and these prompts, and use the time in class to start working as a group to make their revisions. We had this class meeting in a computer lab so that our classroom observation could include witnessing students actually starting their revisions.

Part 3: The Study

Findings / Discussion

Fall 2012 Results

In Fall 2012, the in-class activity that meant to guide students' discussions on how to revise their paper in response to the feedback was largely ineffective. Many groups of students simply reiterated the comments given in their letters on the Revision Plan worksheet, in the same level of generality, and sometimes without consulting their own papers to consider what specific changes could be made in their writing.

In one instructor's class, the revision exercise was handed out late in the class period. In this class, some of the students' conversations were very good, prior to receiving the exercise. Without specific prompts, these students read over together the feedback letter, and at each point where the instructor suggested improvements could be made, they stopped and discussed what specific changes they could make in their paper. When the students received the revision plan exercise and were told it would be collected, this valuable conversation ended, and the students proceeded to treat the exercise as an end of itself, and their conversation ceased to include specifics about the revision work ahead of them. It is for these reasons that we did not repeat this exercise In Spring 2013.

Despite this significant drawback, we still gained some interesting insights from the students' conversations. One instructor noticed that the students were largely aware of a problem in their writing. In this case, the students knew their writing was wandering and lacked a clear focus on purpose. While they identified a revision priority, even with their own reflection and instructor's feedback, they still had few ideas about what to do to improve it. So while it is useful that feedback identifies priorities for students, we realize that some students may have already identified shortcomings in their writing and they need guidance on what to do to overcome these problems. One instructor reported that individual consultations outside of class were very helpful for the students. Perhaps this is a strategy that can follow the feedback letters. Additionally, we may be able to add or revise comments that do more than just identify revision priorities. Instead, a comment could pose a question to the students that asks them to reflect on their purpose and the content of their message. The hope is that the student's answer helps guide their revision plan. We started making some revisions to the comments between Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 in this direction.

One instructor's class discussions revealed a shortcoming of the content of the feedback. Many students' papers lacked a clear focus on purpose, even if a clear thesis statement was made early in the introduction. The problem was that although the students made a summative statement to communicate a clear, specific purpose early in the introduction, the introduction taken as a whole spoke

to multiple purposes or a purpose that was less focused and less clear. In response to this, we added additional comments on communicated purpose, on organization, and questions that asked students to reflect on whether their discussion fits together and speaks to one purpose.

Finally, in a meeting with the instructors and classroom observers that followed the class observation day, some instructors reported difficulty in applying many of the longer comments. Parts of the comment applied, but other parts did not. Instructors addressed this issue by making small edits to the comments on the students' letters. The group also expanded the database of comments to include shorter, more focused comments. In some cases, we created a "long" version and a "short" version of the same idea.

Spring 2013

In Spring 2013, we gave students their feedback letters while in the computer lab and asked them to start making revisions to their papers. We also emphasized that they should focus their discussion on purpose and overall message, using the four prompts listed in the previous section.

We continued to observe a reluctance to revise introductions based on the feedback. With the class activity less structured than the previous semester, and with the task being simply to start making revisions, we found that some students resisted considering the feedback or the prompts at all and instead divided tasks for revisions based on their previous plans.   In some cases students even began work on other aspects of their project (the first draft of their survey was due soon).

When students did focus on the planned classroom activity, the largest pitfall we saw was a resistance to make *substantial* revisions to their paper. In many cases, the students viewed the paper as complete, with a need to fix clerical errors, or make small additions, subtractions, or reorganizations. The students' conversations revealed they understood that there was some significant shortcoming to their work, but they focused on changing single sentences or adding a paragraph. In one instance, a group suggested that they do not make a change suggested by their instructor, and "see if she notices," saying this right in front of another instructor that was observing their conversation.

The content of the feedback was occasionally an issue, as there was some confusion regarding the feedback letters. Specifically, some students perceived comments as contradictory. For example, one paper was commended for being nicely organized around large ideas, but the instructor suggested it was hard to follow. The problem was that the paper was nicely organized around topics, but within any particular topic, the trail of thought was difficult to follow.

In Spring 2013, many of the students research projects involved an external client, such as a nearby business or a university administrative office. In some of these cases, the students' discussion of purpose failed to focus on the client, and what message they wished to communicate to that audience. The students still perceived the audience as their instructor, which simply reflects the reality

of most coursework at the undergraduate level.

When group conversations did focus on the task at hand, often times the conversation was dominated by one or two students, and the other one or two were not involved in the conversation at all. Surprisingly, this occurred even when there was an instructor sitting with the students to observe their conversations. This demonstrates one of the challenges with writing in a group.

We also observed that the four discussion prompts were sometimes as effective as the feedback comments for fostering revision. In particular, one group of students reflected on the last question which asks if there is a brief description of their methodology that convinces your audience you are going to take steps to accomplish the stated purpose. They recognized that they did not do this well, and in planning their revision, they discussed how to connect it to the project's purpose. As we move forward in revising our feedback, we will use these prompts to inform the wording for some new comments. We will include feedback that poses questions to students, and challenge them to think about their paper as being connected.

Conclusion

This lesson study is an ongoing, work-in-progress. We set forth to develop a process for giving feedback on student writing that is efficient, effective, conducive for pedagogical growth, and that is consistent with the expectations that we communicate for our students. To that end, we have documented a process here that achieves three of these four. Using the database of comments along with text-expanding software does make it very easy to read students papers and give comments. A typical 5 page paper takes about 5 to 15 minutes to read and generate comments. The expectations for the assignment and feedback design are mapped together, so that students can reflect on feedback and the goals of the assignment together. Finally, the process we developed is conducive to pedagogical growth. We have a set of comments that we can improve upon, and we set up a classroom activity that allows us to witness students understanding of the feedback. And even though we have identified weaknesses in these activities, we have already made informed changes in the way we provide feedback to our students.

It may take many more iterations of this process to achieve our last goal: develop a feedback mechanism that is measurably effective. In future semesters we may consider:

1. After students have submitted their first drafts, but before receiving feedback, have them reflect upon their first draft, ask them to evaluate how well they addressed the learning goals, and have them identify priorities for revision.

2. Prepare students for the idea that revisions will be more substantial than making small improvements.
3. Give students feedback letters.
4. Follow up with students with one-on-one meetings to help them with their revisions. Have them come prepared with a plan for revision based on their reflection and the feedback. In the one-on-one meeting, this can form the basis for giving students guidance on how to proceed..

This project is not to a point that it is suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. It has that potential if iterations over future semesters generates data that can demonstrate that the feedback process is effective. Moreover, we have not yet conducted a review of the literature that explores ideas that help motivate the current work, that improves our understanding of the difficulties students face in their writing, especially for business research projects, or that speaks to effective means of feedback for students. On both of these points, the authors of this lesson are open to suggestions.

APPENDIX A - Comments for Student Feedback

Learning Goal 1: Clearly state the purpose of the research

Positive reinforcement:

DECISIONS: Good work describing the types of decisions that could be better informed using the knowledge gained from your research project. This helps your audience understand the purpose of your paper and helps motivate it.

PURPOSE: Good work clearly stating the purpose of your paper early in your introduction. It is important to communicate this early so that the reader is drawn in and understands the context for the discussion of the literature and the background information in your paper.

Suggestions for improvement:

AUDIENCE / DECISIONS: As you think about who your audience is (who would be interested in your paper), imagine that they are reading this paper voluntarily. In the introduction, make it clear what kind of person / decision maker / researcher would be most interested in your work. What could they do with the knowledge they gain from answering your research question?

CONTRIBUTION: Are you trying to confirm or refute other contributions in the literature? Are you trying to determine whether other findings in the literature hold for your population of interest?

CONTRIBUTION: Are you trying to confirm or refute other contributions in the literature? Are you trying to determine whether other findings in the literature hold for your population of interest?

DECISION PROCESS: What kind of decisions would benefit from your research findings? Think about adding this kind of discussion in your introduction.

PURPOSE: Make sure the purpose of your paper comes out early in the introduction. It need not be in the first paragraph, but soon after that may be appropriate.

PURPOSE: More clearly state in the introduction exactly what the purpose of your paper is. In one or two sentences, describe compactly, yet precisely what your paper will accomplish – what question will you answer.

PURPOSE: Your readers may not fully understand your purpose for doing this research project. I suggest you write something early in the introduction to help your reader understand specifically what you will accomplish with this project.

PURPOSE: Think about if what you describe as your purpose is really what you want to do. Reflect on the issues that you discussed in your introduction. The purpose of your paper should be to address the significance of those issues.

PURPOSE: Be sure that the purpose of your paper is focused and communicated effectively early in the paper. Are you making statements that are too broad or suggesting multiple purposes?

Learning Goal 2: Ask the Right Questions

Positive reinforcement:

QUESTIONS / ISSUES: Good job describing all the relevant questions or issues that you will investigate which are related to the overall purpose of your paper.

Suggestions for improvement:

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS: Have all the right questions been asked in your introduction? Think about the potential problems at the root of your issues, possible symptoms, and possible solutions to investigate. Focus on the issues that the subsequent sections of your paper are likely to address.

QUESTIONS / ISSUES ESSENTIAL? Are all the issues and questions you pose in the introduction essential? Are there issues that the subsequent sections of your paper will not address? If so, consider a more narrow focus for your introduction.

Learning Goal 3: Communicate your message in a clear and meaningful way.

Positive reinforcement:

CONCISENESS: Good work writing your paper in a concise way. You do a good job of quickly getting to the point without failing to discuss essential issues or details.

OPENING: You have a good opening. It draws the reader in and it is relevant to the rest of your paper. A good opening not only draws the reader in, but what is covered in the opening should be addressed satisfactorily by the end of the paper.

ORGANIZATION: You do a good job meaningfully organizing your writing along important themes. For the most part, each subsequent paragraph speaks to a specific purpose that clearly contributes to an overall purpose of the paper, and the movement from one purpose to another is logical and meaningful.

TRANSITIONS: Good work on your transitions from one paragraph to the next and from one idea/topic to the next. Good transitions connect paragraphs to each other, allows the reader to understand how the paragraphs are related to one another and how they jointly build to a larger point.

Suggestions for improvement:

CONCISENESS: Are there one or two places where your writing can be made more concise? Carefully read over your work and consider one or two ways to make it more concise.

CONCISENESS: Think about how you can make this writing more concise. Think about if there any sentences or paragraphs that can be removed without losing quality or important evidence or details and still keep to the purpose of your paper. Think about whether there are sentences that can be combined more concisely, or if individual sentences can be rewritten more concisely without removing their meaning.

OPENING: The opening of your paper is too general, or it is not immediately applicable to your particular paper. Consider writing an opening more closely related to the purpose of your paper. Use an opening that draws the reader in and that raises an issue that you know your paper will satisfactorily address.

ORGANIZATION: Think about how you want to organize your introduction. I suggest writing an outline for the main points of your story, and be sure that each paragraph stays focused on a particular point. While there may be some overlap, your introduction could be well organized by focusing first on your research question, then provide background and motivation, and then briefly describe your methodology.

ORGANIZATION: What is the argument or story you are trying to tell? Outline or list the major points in order and make sure all your paragraphs are organized this way.

ORGANIZATION: Work to improve how this writing is organized. Each paragraph should speak to only one point, and the purpose of each paragraph should build on the previous one and all should contribute to the overall purpose of the writing. Make sure the movement from one purpose is logical and meaningful. Also, think about whether you have two or three larger purposes in this piece, and organize your writing around these.

ORGANIZATION / OUTLINE: If you have not already done so, consider making an outline of your paper, with each paragraph an element in your outline.   Can you see ways to improve the organization?

TRANSITIONS: Reread your work and think about if there are any paragraphs that have weak or choppy transitions from the previous paragraph. Consider ways to improve these transitions.

TRANSITIONS: Work on your transitions from one paragraph to the next or one idea/topic to the next. Good transitions connect paragraphs to each other, allow the reader to understand how the paragraphs are related to one another and how they jointly build to a larger point. Good transitions also allow the narration to flow more smoothly, and sound less like a list of related ideas.

Learning Goal 4: Provide relevant background information

Positive reinforcement:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Good work laying down the right amount of background information to allow your reader to understand and appreciate the issues your paper will address.

Suggestions for improvement:

BACKGROUND: What other kind of background information would help your reader understand the context for and motivation of your research?

Learning Goal 5: Introduce your reader to how you answer your research question
Positive reinforcement:
METHODOLOGY: You do a good job briefly introducing your readers to how you will be answering your research question. Your description has the right amount of detail, not so much as to repeat your methodology section.

Suggestions for improvement:
METHODOLOGY: Do more to describe your methodology, but only briefly (a couple sentences to a paragraph, perhaps). What will you do in this paper to answer your research question? Most of these details should be put in your methodology section, but still, by the end of the introduction your reader should have a basic idea for how you plan to answer your research question.   Consider including the population, the use of a survey, and a general description of the types of questions in the survey.
METHODOLOGY: Do more to describe your methodology, but only briefly (a couple sentences to a paragraph, perhaps). What will you do in this paper to answer your research question?
METHODOLOGY: Summarize for your reader the essential parts of the methodology you will use to answer your research question (for example, who will you study and how).
METHODOLOGY: It is a good practice to introduce your readers to your methodology, but try to be more brief. Briefly state who you will study and how.
METHODOLOGY: It is a good practice to briefly introduce your readers to how you will be answering your research question. This could be done with only two or three sentences, and not include much detail. Your sentences could speak generally about the categories of variables you will collect and how it relates to your broader research question. In your current draft, though, you include too much detail for an introduction. Keep most of this discussion in the methodology section of your paper.
METHODOLOGY: Think about if what you describe in your methodology is really what you want to do. Reflect on the issues that you discussed in your introduction. Your paper should address attempt to measure the significance of those issues.

Learning Goal 6: Use existing evidence to motivate your research

Positive reinforcement:
CITING LITERATURE: You do a good job citing literature in your paper. Your citations helped the reader understand the background and the importance of the issues your paper addresses. Your use of

citations support your narrative, as it should.

CITING LITERATURE: You have clearly used your literature review to provide background information and motivation for your research.

CITING LITERATURE: You have clearly used your literature review to justify your hypotheses.

Suggestions for improvement:

LITERATURE: Enhance the number and quality of citations to support the background information you do give, to provide more background information related to your research question and your methodology, and to help motivate the importance of your research project.

LITERATURE: How do your references and background information work together to make a particular point? Organize your literature review around the points that you are trying to make.

LITERATURE: Does your literature review provide relevant background, or motivate your research or justify particular hypotheses?

LITERATURE: Don't just summarize the results of previous studies. Use your literature review to illustrate the gaps in our knowledge and how your study will attempt to fill those gaps.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: Make sure that you support your claims and/or background information by finding and citing appropriate evidence or literature. Do not make the reader have to trust you at your word for background information you use which is not common knowledge.

Learning Goal 7: Communicate effectively

Positive reinforcement:

CITATION STYLE: You have been consistent in the citation style you have used. If additional questions come up, the following website has an APA and MLA formatting and style guide which is easy to use http://owl.english.purdue.edu/ Use this resource to ensure consistency.

Suggestions for improvement:

CITATION STYLE: It is important to be consistent in the citation style.   Refer to http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/ for APA citation style.

CITATION STYLE: Make sure you cite papers correctly using only the author(s) last name(s) and year (eg: Smith (1990) finds that…). You likely should not include author's first names, the journal title, the paper title, etc. All this information will be in the bibliography of the paper. The following website describes APA format for citing in the text of your paper:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/. Use this resource to ensure consistency.

CITATION: In addition to providing an in-text citation when you quote an author, it is also necessary to

paraphrase the persons' idea. Refer to http://owl.english.purdue.edu/ and consult the APA or MLA formatting and style guide.

;mpcoll

DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW: In some instances your writing is difficult to follow. Re-read your own work and make sure you can follow through the sentences and your train of thought. It would be a good idea to also have another member of your group who did not write the piece read over your work. Ask them to point out sentences or sections of the paper where it is difficult to follow.

GRAMMAR / SPELLING / PUNCTUATION: I found some errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Reread your work and see if you can find and fix these (or even better, ask a friend to do it!).

GRAMMAR / SPELLING / PUNCTUATION: I found several errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation (note, spell checkers do not always pick up incorrect uses of a word (for example "their," "there," and "they're" or "affect" versus "effect"). After rewriting your introduction, please look out more carefully for these. I strongly suggest asking a classmate to double check your work (and perhaps you could return the favor). It is common to read in your mind what you intended to write, making it difficult to catch your own grammar mistakes, but easier for others to catch them.

HYPERBOLE: Be careful with your use of hyperbole. It can be acceptable to use language that argues a particular viewpoint or side, but using it is much harder to provide evidence, much less proof, for statements that include hyperbole. Using this language can also turn off readers who may not agree with the extremity of your statements.

QUOTES: When you directly quote someone, it is necessary to provide an in-text citation to identify the source. Refer to http://owl.english.purdue.edu/ and consult the APA or MLA formatting and style guide.

QUOTES: Only directly quote another author if you find paraphrasing it yourself is not adequate. This should only happen when the original author used words that were particularly clever or eloquent. Another reason a quote may be if it is important to point out that the particular phrase you quote was actually stated by the particular person, for example if the person is an important public figure, and the phrase is evidence for some point of view. Finally, if you do use direct quotations, you still have to paraphrase anyway. Your writing should still sound complete and coherent even if the reader glances over the precise quotation.

VERB TENSE: Make sure verb tense agrees throughout the paper, and stick with present tense when possible. Do not switch from one tense to another in a sentence, in a paragraph, or even in the whole document, unless the timing of an action you are describing demands you do. Be sure to also cite literature in present tense, as in "Smith (1990) finds that…" instead of "Smith (1990) found that…"

ACTIVE / PASSIVE VOICE: Try to always write in active voice. Active voice means writing sentences as "subject does verb to object," as in, "Jenny throws the ball." Passive voice sounds like "object has verb acted upon by subject," as in, "The ball is thrown by Jenny." Look through your writing and rewrite

passive voice sentences to active voice.

APPENDIX B: Sample Feedback Letter

Dear Members of Group 1,

I have reviewed the first draft of your introduction. I think the following aspects represent the <u>strongest qualities in your writing</u>, and I encourage you keep these qualities in mind so that you retain them as you re-write for your final draft:

ORGANIZATION: You do a good job meaningfully organizing your writing along important themes. For the most part, each subsequent paragraph speaks to a specific purpose that clearly contributes to an overall purpose of the paper, and the movement from one purpose to another is logical and meaningful.

CITING LITERATURE: You do a good job citing literature in your paper. Your citations helped the reader understand the background and the importance of the issues your paper addresses. Your use of citations support your narrative, as it should.

I think the following <u>aspects of your paper could be improved</u>. Please consider these carefully and try to identify what in your paper you should rewrite to improve these aspects:

PURPOSE: More clearly state in the introduction exactly what the purpose of your paper is. In one or two sentences, describe compactly, yet precisely what your paper will accomplish – what question will you answer.

ORGANIZATION: What is the argument or story you are trying to tell? Outline or list the major points in order and make sure all your paragraphs are organized this way.

TRANSITIONS: Work on your transitions from one paragraph to the next or one idea/topic to the next. Good transitions connect paragraphs to each other, allow the reader to understand how the paragraphs are related to one another and how they jointly build to a larger point. Good transitions also allow the narration to flow more smoothly, and sound less like a list of related ideas.

Thank you for the effort you put forth on this significant project. Please let me what questions I can answer or what I can do further to help you improve your paper.   I look forward to reading your final draft.

Sincerely,
James Murray

APPENDIX C: Self Assessment for Revisions

Rate your performance on each of the assignment outcomes on a scale of 1 to 5.

● *Clearly state the purpose of the research*: What do you hope to accomplish? Who is your audience; i.e. who would use or be interested in your results? What decisions can be better informed by learning the outcome of your research project?

OBJECTIVE NOT ADDRESSED	NEEDS MAJOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MODERATE REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MINOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	WRITING THOROUGHLY MEETS OBJECTIVE

● *Ask the relevant questions:* Have all of the relevant questions been asked? Are the questions focused on the essential issues?

OBJECTIVE NOT ADDRESSED	NEEDS MAJOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MODERATE REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MINOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	WRITING THOROUGHLY MEETS OBJECTIVE

● *Communicate your message in a clear and meaningful way.* Convince your reader that your work is something important that they want to read. Organize your discussion to build an argument or tell a story.

OBJECTIVE NOT ADDRESSED	NEEDS MAJOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MODERATE REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MINOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	WRITING THOROUGHLY MEETS OBJECTIVE

● *Provide relevant background information:* Provide enough background information so that your readers understand the context and motivation for your paper and form their own informed opinion on the subject.

OBJECTIVE NOT ADDRESSED	NEEDS MAJOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MODERATE REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MINOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	WRITING THOROUGHLY MEETS OBJECTIVE

- *Introduce your reader to how you answer your research question - and justify it*: Most of these details should be put in your methodology section, but still, by the end of the introduction your reader should have a basic idea for how you plan to answer your research question. Consider including the population, the use of a survey, and a general description of the types of questions in the survey.

OBJECTIVE NOT ADDRESSED	NEEDS MAJOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MODERATE REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MINOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	WRITING THOROUGHLY MEETS OBJECTIVE

- *Use existing evidence to motivate your research:* One of the goals of your introduction is to convince your reader that your research is important. Why it is important to know the answer to your research question? Do existing studies pose new questions or leave questions unanswered? Do existing studies need to be replicated for your particular population?

OBJECTIVE NOT ADDRESSED	NEEDS MAJOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MODERATE REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MINOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	WRITING THOROUGHLY MEETS OBJECTIVE

- *Communicate effectively* by not distracting the reader with grammar and spelling errors. Writing is professional and follows common rules for reporting research, i.e. sources are cited correctly, quotes used appropriately.

OBJECTIVE NOT ADDRESSED	NEEDS MAJOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MODERATE REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	NEEDS MINOR REVISION TO MEET OBJECTIVE	WRITING THOROUGHLY MEETS OBJECTIVE

What area(s) do you feel is/are most important for revisions? Please explain.

APPENDIX D: Reflections on Feedback and Revision Plan - FALL 2012

Read over the feedback you received on your writing and think about specific revisions you would like to make. In the first column describe some details about what you will write or what you will change that will give you a roadmap to follow as you start writing again. In the second column describe specifically *1) what you will do* and *2) who will complete these tasks*.

Needs Revision	Action Steps

APPENDIX E: Classroom Observation Guide

1. Depth of the discussion. Did students make concrete plans for how to revise the work?
   N/A: Not applicable, ND: No discussion, SD: "Shallow" discussion, DD: "Deep" discussion
   COMMENTS:

2. Did groups understand the meaning of the feedback or have an idea about what part of their paper it applied to?
   UF: Understood feedback, SF: Somewhat understood, NF: Little or no understanding
   COMMENTS:

3. Did students conversations reveal they were thinking about the goals of the writing assignment? Did they identify the "right" goals based on the individual comments? ***G: revealed goal, DG: different goal***

Student Learning Goal:	Did not discuss	Discuss - But not in Depth	Thoroughly Discussed
Clearly state the purpose of the research.			
Communicate your in a clear and meaningful way.			
Provide relevant background information.			
How to answer your research question - justify.			
Use existing evidence to motivate your research.			
Justify the choices you make in your project.			
Communicate effectively			