# Responding to Feedback

By Sarah Gibbons

Working with feedback on large writing projects can be challenging because you must address comments on multiple aspects of your project, from your overall ideas, to your paragraph organization, to your sentence structure. Creating a feedback chart can help you to organize and respond to the feedback that you’ve received, ensuring that you move beyond incorporating small suggestions and engage deeply with the big-picture issues that your advisor or peer reviewer has asked you to consider. Follow the four steps below to create a template for addressing feedback that you can modify for your own purposes.

## Step One: Compile Your Feedback

Transfer the comments that you’ve received on your draft to a separate document. Create a chart with four columns that have the following headings: Type of Feedback, Comments, Tasks, and Results. Record both the end comments and the marginal comments that you have received into this chart. Use the first column to categorize your comments by feedback type and the section column to record the specific comments that you have received. Categorize your feedback based on whether it relates to the content, structure, or style of your writing project. You may wish to use a colour scheme to highlight these different comment types.

## Feedback Chart: Step One

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Feedback | Comments | Tasks | Results |
| Content | “Provide more context here.” Page 3 |  |  |
| Structure | “This paragraph is too long.” Page 6 |  |  |
| Style | ‘This sentence is unclear.” Page 9 |  |  |
| Structure | “This paragraph is out of place.” Page 10 |  |  |
| Style | “Grammar.” Page 11 |  |  |
| Content | “Develop this section further.” Page 13 |  |  |

Feedback on Content

Feedback on Structure

Feedback on Style

## Step Two: Organize Your Feedback

Rearrange the comments in your chart so that you can start with feedback on content, move to feedback on structure, and conclude with feedback on style. Another way to think about this organization is starting with higher-order comments (big-picture issues) and moving to lower-order or later-order comments (sentence-level issues).

You should address feedback on content first because these changes will be most important to your advisor or to your reviewer. After you’ve completed your changes to content, you may find that you need to change your approach to addressing feedback on structure and style. By making content changes, you may have rearranged the order of your ideas, and you may have deleted sentences that previously contained grammatical errors.

## Feedback Chart: Step Two

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Feedback | Comments | Tasks | Results |
| Content | “Provide more context here.” Page 3 |  |  |
| Content | “Develop this section further.” Page 13 |  |  |
| Structure | “This paragraph is too long.” Page 6 |  |  |
| Structure | “This paragraph is out of place.” Page 10 |  |  |
| Style | ‘This sentence is unclear.” Page 9 |  |  |
| Style | “Grammar.” Page 11 |  |  |

Feedback on Content

Feedback on Structure

Feedback on Style

## Step Three: Identify Your Tasks

Identify the specific tasks that you must complete to address each comment that your reviewer has provided. In some cases, the specific tasks will be clear from the instructions that your reviewer has provided. In other cases, you will need to think about the specific steps that you should take to address the comments that your advisor or reviewer has given you.

## Feedback Chart: Step Three

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Feedback | Comments | Tasks | Results |
| Content | “Provide more context here.” Page 3 | -Revisit the three articles referenced in this section.  -Decide what information the reader needs to understand this critical debate. |  |
| Content | “Develop this section further.” Page 13 | -Reread this section and note the specific places where I should develop my idea.  -Make an appointment with Writing Services to talk through my idea for developing this section. |  |
| Structure | “This paragraph is too long.” Page 6 | -Divide paragraph into two paragraphs. |  |
| Structure | “This paragraph is out of place.” Page 10 | -Create a reverse outline to decide where this paragraph should go. |  |
| Style | ‘This sentence is unclear.” Page 9 | -Clarify the ideas in this sentence. |  |
| Style | “Grammar.” Page 11 | -Consult a grammar guide to figure out where the punctuation marks should go in this sentence. |  |

Feedback on Content

Feedback on Structure

Feedback on Style

## Step Four: Record Your Changes

As you complete your tasks, record the changes that you have made in your document. Keeping a record of what you have changed will help ensure that your revised draft reflects your engagement with the questions and suggestions that your advisor or reviewer provided.

You may receive some feedback on a draft that you decide not to incorporate into your revised version. In these cases, you should note the reason why you decided to take a different approach so that you are better able to respond to questions about these aspects of your work.

## Feedback Chart: Step Four

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Feedback | Comments | Tasks | Results |
| Content | “Provide more context here.” Page 3 | -Revisit the three articles referenced in this section.  -Decide what information the reader needs to understand this critical debate. | I added three sentences that will help the reader understand what is at stake in this critical debate and how it relates to my research question. |
| Content | “Develop this section further.” Page 13 | -Reread this section and note the specific places where I should develop my idea.  -Make an appointment with Writing Services to talk through my idea for developing this section. | I clarified my argument, and I provided new evidence to support my claims. |
| Structure | “This paragraph is too long.” Page 6 | -Divide paragraph into two paragraphs. | I divided this paragraph into two paragraphs. I created new topic sentences and concluding sentences for each paragraph. |
| Structure | “This paragraph is out of place.” Page 10 | -Create a reverse outline to decide where this paragraph should go. | I moved this paragraph to page 8. I revised the paragraph before it and the paragraph after it to strengthen the flow of ideas in this section. |
| Style | ‘This sentence is unclear.” Page 9 | -Clarify the ideas in this sentence. | I divided this sentence into two sentences and added a noun after “this” to clarify my point. |
| Style | “Grammar.” Page 11 | -Consult a grammar guide to figure out where the punctuation marks should go in this sentence. | With reference to a grammar guide, I revised my punctuation usage in this sentence and other sentences in this section. |

Feedback on Content

Feedback on Structure

Feedback on Style