Glossary of feedback terms

Sometimes, markers give you feedback and you have no idea what they mean. Here are some common terms which can often be confusing when used in feedback.


Abstract

Being too vague about a point by not explaining it in specific language, or by failing to ground it in theory or to use examples (see also ‘Concrete’).

Address the question

Make sure you’re answering the question that is being asked – students sometimes write about topics that miss the point. Make sure your arguments and material are relevant and clearly linked to the question, and you are not simply writing everything you know about the topic.

Assess the limitations of the study

Weigh up aspects of the study and consider weaknesses that might undermine the validity of the study, and/or suggest ways the research could be improved. The weaknesses could be methodological, but may also be with how the authors interpret and present their own findings.

Balanced argument

While it is often valuable to take a stance, be sure to present evidence for the other sides of the argument.

Clarity

Make sure the reader can easily understand what points you have made by writing clearly, and explaining why you have made these points. Sometimes it’s just a case of writing straightforwardly, and not assuming the reader will automatically know what you were thinking.

Concise

In your work you need to explain ideas clearly but with fewer words – if you have a word limit, make effective use of it! The marker may think you are waffling. Be succinct and avoid needlessly complicated words and phrases.
Concrete

Make sure you’re using clear and specific language to talk about a defined situation or a certain finding, not just vague ideas (see also ‘Abstract’).

Critically Evaluate/ Critically Analyse

Show that you have actively thought about and questioned the claims you are describing or making. Even if the claims are completely valid, show that you haven’t just accepted them at face value.

Depth/Elaborate

Make sure you explain your arguments in detail, using examples where appropriate and working through your ideas rather than simply glossing over them.

Flair

Showing a sophisticated or elegant writing style, or presenting evidence in an original and insightful way.

Flow

Creating a coherent argument by connecting points in a logical order to ensure that the work is easy to follow.

Illustrate

Give examples to back up the points you make, ideally using evidence.

Originality

Demonstrating your own thinking, perhaps by drawing upon research beyond the ones you learned about in class, to make an argument that not every student would have thought of.

Proof-read

Reading work back carefully, or getting another person to read it, to check for spelling and grammar mistakes. You should also check that your arguments make sense, and that everything is phrased clearly.

Range of material

Try and use more than just the material provided by the lecturers, and avoid basing too much of your work on just one or two references.
Specific

Give a more precise and detailed account of what is being described, drawing on particular examples.

Structure

A way of presenting your work so the reader can follow the argument. Make sure your paragraphs are in a logical order, that you show the connections between different paragraphs, and that each section has good beginning and ending sentences.

Synthesis/Integration

Show how different sources and theories go together to make a good argument. A lack of synthesis could mean your essay reads more like a list of research than an argument.

Transparent

Making sure that the thought-process which underlies your argument is clearly expressed. Even if you have a good idea, it’s not always easy for the marker to see your train of thought.

Unsubstantiated Claims

An unsubstantiated claim lacks evidence. Make sure you justify your argument by supporting each point with empirical evidence and references. This will create a more persuasive argument.