

Thinking about Response Systems

Responding to student drafts can be both time-consuming and laborious. It might help to think about individual response being situated in a larger system of classroom feedback. This will encourage you to make ample use of whole-class response tactics, which will minimize the time you spend with each individual draft. Below are some ideas that might improve student writing and save you time when responding to each individual paper.

- 1) **Consider addressing past issues on the assignment sheet.** Some assignments create consistent problems for students. If you have experience with the assignment, you can address these issues when assigning the paper. For example, compare and contrast essays often induce problems with organization. Providing organizational tips on the assignment sheet will help them avoid this problem, and it will save you from having to address it in individual drafts.
- 2) **If a paper requires a specific kind of thought process, think about providing students the opportunity to practice that process in class.** If you are asking them to synthesize secondary sources, or to analyze primary data, you might provide class exercises for them to practice the kinds of procedures you expect them to complete while working on the paper.
- 3) **Provide students with successful models and discuss them in class.** This exercise provides a concrete example of a past student success, but it also gives you a touchstone to refer to when you respond to their papers individually. If you do not have the time to discuss a model you can post one on Moodle.
- 4) **As they are working on the assignment, provide time during the beginning of class for them to ask questions.** Many students will have similar questions that can be addressed in class. The trick is getting students to ask them in front of their peers.
- 5) **Try to build opportunities into class time for students to talk about their work in progress.** If you plan the assignment carefully, you may be able to yoke class discussion to their work in progress.
- 6) **Consider holding conferences to discuss drafts.** If you are spending ~25 minutes reading and responding to a student's paper, you can think about holding conferences instead of providing written feedback. Students can read a five-page paper aloud during the conference in ten minutes. If they read their draft in ten minutes, it leaves fifteen minutes to discuss the paper with them and to help them create a revision plan. You can accomplish quite a lot in fifteen minutes, and you can also ask questions to be certain they understand what revisions need to be made.
- 7) **If you don't conference, consider asking them to create a revision plan based on your written feedback.** If you are commenting on drafts instead of conferencing, consider returning them during class time and asking them to create a revision plan based on your feedback.
- 8) **Address recurring draft problems in class.** If students make similar errors, you need not comment on each paper individually. Instead you can address the class as a whole when you return the drafts.
- 9) **Consider having students write a cover letter with the final draft.** If you have provided feedback on a draft or through a conference, ask students to submit a cover letter with the final draft. In the cover letter, ask them to articulate how and why they addressed the feedback through their revisions. Cover letters will also help indicate whether students understood your comments.