UNIVERSITY OF SURREY
Department of Higher Education

Developing Students' Evaluative Judgement

What is Evaluative Judgement?

According to Tai et al (2018, p. 471),

> *"Evaluative judgement is the capability to make decisions about the quality of work of self and others".*

Why is Evaluative Judgement important?

Supporting students to fully understand assessment criteria and notions of quality is sometimes framed as spoon-feeding; in reality, such practices can actually enable students to be more independent in their learning, not less (see Balloo et al., 2018). When students develop an understanding of quality, they are better able to understand and apply feedback, and can even become less reliant on external sources of feedback. Evaluative Judgment is also important from a perspective of inclusive education: activities that develop Evaluative Judgement have the potential to 'level the playing field' by ensuring that all students have a shared understanding of standards and criteria. The importance of Evaluative Judgement is clearly articulated by Tai et al. (2018, p. 470):

> *"students must gain an understanding of quality and how to make evaluative judgements, so that they may operate independently on future occasions, taking into account all forms of information and feedback comments, without explicit external direction from a teacher or teacher-like figure. This also aligns with much of the ongoing discussions in higher education focused on preparing students for professional practice...A focus on developing evaluative skills may lead to graduates who can identify what is needed for good work in any situation and what is needed for them to produce it".*

What practices support the development of students' Evaluative Judgement?

There are many ways of developing Evaluative Judgement, and it is important that this is considered in the context of the discipline. Here we outline four potential ways in which students can be supported to develop Evaluative Judgement.

Exemplars

- Students interact with and discuss exemplar assignments of varying quality.
- Students can be provided with exemplars alongside grading criteria, and grade the exemplars in groups.
- Educators can provide annotated exemplars for students to review, or can create 'live marking' screencasts to post on the VLE (see 'further resources' below).

Self-appraisal

- Students assess their own work-in-progress against grading criteria.
- When submitting work for assessment, students submit a cover sheet where they self-assess their own work against the criteria. Feedback is given in relation to students' own self-assessment, helping to hone their evaluative judgement.

Peer Review

- Students engage with the work of their peers, providing feedback on work-in-progress against grading criteria.
- Peer review is most effective when it focuses on elements of the criteria against which peers are best equipped to comment, such as clarity of communication or strength of argument.

Engaging with Criteria

- Students are more likely to fully understand assessment criteria if they have played a role in translating the generic grade descriptors into assignment-specific grading criteria.
- Students engage with criteria by discussing their meaning and articulating the distinguishing features of work at each level of the mark scheme.

Further Resources

Balloo, K., Evans, C., Hughes, A., Zhu, X., & Winstone, N. (2018). Transparency isn't spoon-feeding: how a transformative approach to the use of explicit assessment criteria can support student self-regulation. *Frontiers in Education, 3*, 69.

Bouwer, R., Lesterhuis, M., Bonne, P., & De Maeyer, S. (2018). Applying Criteria to Examples or Learning by Comparison: Effects on Students' Evaluative Judgment and Performance in Writing. *Frontiers in Education, 3*, 86.

Hawe, E., Lightfoot, U., & Dixon, H. (2019). First-year students working with exemplars: promoting self-efficacy, self-monitoring and self-regulation. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 43*(1), 30-44.

Sridharan, B., & Boud, D. (2019). The effects of peer judgements on teamwork and self-assessment ability in collaborative group work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 44*(6), 894-909.

Tai, J., Ajjawi, R., Boud, D., Dawson, P., & Panadero, E. (2018). Developing evaluative judgement: Enabling students to make decisions about the quality of work. *Higher Education, 76*(3), 467-481.

Example 'live marking' screencasts (Courtesy of Dr Nigel Francis, University of Swansea):
Poor Report: https://youtu.be/kNI14a0_Tic Average Report: https://youtu.be/OtJYgtGHgMw Good Report: https://youtu.be/zsgU2WmWLus