

## Editor Meetings: A Pathway to Advancing Students' Media Writing Skills

### Introduction

Iterative feedback is instrumental to student success in a writing-intensive course. Such feedback can be delivered using a variety of modes and features, including oral or aural feedback in face-to-face settings, voice feedback through recordings, text feedback either written or typed, and audio-visual feedback (Alharbi, 2022). Furthermore, Dawson et al. (2019) found that “from the student perspective, feedback was made effective through high-quality comments which were usable, sufficiently detailed, attended to affect[,] and appeared to be about the student’s own work” (p. 33). Dawson et al. (2019) also found that feedback could be improved through student reflection on the “design elements that support their learning.” Though several studies have explored feedback in different capacities, studies have not explored how faculty create and deliver feedback in writing-intensive courses (Alharbi, 2022). When Alharbi (2022) studied the creation and delivery of feedback, he found that oral feedback is more helpful for students to follow as they integrate feedback into their writing assignments, which we have also found anecdotally in our more than 10 years of teaching a media writing course.

In an introductory to media writing course, students engage in four major writing assignments with a multi-source news story assignment being the culminating assignment that allows students to apply the writing skills they learned during the semester. The course is taught using scaffolding with each component of news writing taught in lecture and practiced in the subsequent lab and with each major assignment building on the previous major assignment. As part of the course, students receive both formal and informal feedback on their lab assignments and their major writing assignments. Formal feedback on major writing assignments is provided through instructive, written comments from their peers and through oral feedback from the instructor during editor meetings, which we describe below in the procedure.

### Procedure

To provide students with rigorous feedback that mirrors the demands of being a professional writer, we designed the formal feedback process for the multi-source news story. Students begin their multi-source news story just before they finish their single source news story, which is the third major assignment. They start with identifying the topic and then continue with each of the scaffolding steps they learned while writing their single-source story. Once they finish writing their stories, they begin the editing and revising stage of the writing process. Students must have a complete draft of the story before they can begin the editing and revising process. The process begins with peer reviews completed using Peerceptiv (Peerceptiv, 2022), an online peer-review system where students can provide actionable feedback. Peers evaluate the story using seven

prompts that align with the grading rubric (e.g., timeliness, news value, relevance, journalistic style, lead, accuracy, clear, tight, engaging, appropriate, voice, attribution, quotes), identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the story, and provide at least five clear suggestions for improvement. Students receive formal instruction to provide their peers with actionable feedback. Then, students evaluate their own stories for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and Associated Press style.

After making the suggested revisions from the peer- and self-evaluation through the student evaluation process, students attend a 20-minute editor meeting with the course instructor. The editor meetings are held for two or three consecutive days (number of days depends on the number of students in the course) in lieu of class (lecture and lab) during the 13th week of class in a 16-week semester. Students are provided with a sign-up sheet during the 10th week of class and draw numbers to establish order for sign up. At the beginning of the meeting and before providing any feedback to the student, the instructor reads the story and provides written comments for discussion. After reading the story, the instructor explains the written comments and provides additional oral feedback. Throughout the oral feedback portion of the meetings, the instructor and student discuss the story. Students are encouraged to ask questions related to their story, and students should come to the editor meeting with a list of questions. In the lab period immediately following the editor meetings, students complete their formal reflection on the multi-source news story.

### **Assessment**

The formal feedback process culminating in the editor meetings is the turning point for most students in the course because it is the point where many of them truly understand the art of media writing. Although we have not formally assessed the impact of editor meetings on students' ability to develop their writing skills, we have anecdotal evidence that indicates the editor meetings are critical to students' learning. Each semester, at least 60% of the students have noted in their final reflection that the editor meetings were the most beneficial component of the course, and anecdotally, since implementing the editor meetings, students' multi-source news story grades and their final grades have improved. Additionally, nearly 5% of the students who attend the editor meeting each year have a story that needs minimal revisions and are ready to submit their work without further revisions.

### **Discussion**

The editor meeting process gives students the opportunity to receive oral feedback and talk through issues with their assignments before the issues could become detriments to their grades. Because many of the surface-level issues have been addressed before the editor meetings, the instructor can focus on providing critical, targeted feedback that, if integrated into the story appropriately, will help the students turn an average story into a dynamic, publishable story. For more than a decade, most instructors in the program have taught introductory and advanced media writing courses using the formal editor meeting process to deepen students' mastery of the media writing process. Because the editor meetings effectively help students develop the multi-source news story, each year students suggest implementing something similar for the single-source news story. Though this teaching tip describes the application of editor meetings

in a media writing course (news and feature writing), editor meetings could also be used in many types of writing courses in agricultural and life sciences to advance students' writing skills.

### **References**

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