

# Marking: Faster, Better, Funner

- Devise a clear criterion-referenced marking scheme and give it out with the assignment
- Use the marking scheme to choose, rather than calculate, the final mark based on how the writing measures up to the criteria.
- Ask for typed submissions
- Stagger the due dates
- Edit, rather than mark. Spend time on a first draft and focus on improving its form and content. Then, strike a deal that frees you from extensive comment on the final submission.
- Warm up to it: Read a few in advance to get a feel for what's to come
- Do close marking on a single page to demonstrate levels and types of error. Leave "mechanics" in the rest of the assignment alone.
- Limit what you are looking for in some assignments. No need to mark everything, all the time.
- Assign more than you mark. Ask for a package of paragraph assignments. Strike a deal that only the top two (out of 5?) will be marked closely. The rest will form part of a general impression mark. Use portfolio assessment.
- Ask for a skeleton outline only: not the full paper. Ask for the introductory paragraph only, for comment and return.
- Use a strong rubric so that students might assess their own, or someone else's work.
- In "creative" writing (e.g. poetry), mark a body of work, not one piece. This gives you more latitude to find and comment on strength.
- Ask writers to give you specific direction as to what they want comment on - and confine yourself to that area.
- Take as many electronic submissions as you can get. Use word processing to select samples of writing error or style to be discussed in a follow-up session.
- Try assigning a collaborative essay: two writers, one work. They take the same mark and talk about the writer/editor responsibility.
- Process work will often thwart the potential plagiarist. My first line of defense if I think something is plagiarized is to just ask the writer to share sources used, as though this were a matter of course and not an investigation. "I need this before I can really mark." I am usually surprised by a willingness to comply, which also indicates a level of innocence in the act.