Examples of Effective and Ineffective Feedback

Ineffective feedback

1. Good job
2. Your work is sloppy and careless.
3. I'm not sure why you're having so much trouble with this. It's not that difficult.
4. You are not working hard enough.
5. Your writing is disorganized and not good enough.
6. You're not working up to my expectations.
7. You need to be punctual.
8. You're just not making the grade.
9. You're just not performing at the level I need you to.
10. You're not as good as the other students in the lab. Maybe you're not cut out for research.

Effective Feedback

1. **Instead of criticizing the student personally, focus on specific behaviors or outcomes**: "I noticed that your experiment didn't produce the expected results. Let's take a closer look at your experimental design and see if there's anything we can do to improve it."
2. **Avoid being vague or unhelpful by offering concrete guidance**: "I think you could benefit from setting more specific goals and timelines for your project. Let's work together to break down your work into smaller, more manageable tasks, and set some clear deadlines to help you stay on track."
3. **Avoid being condescending or dismissive of the student's concerns or struggles**: "I understand that you're feeling frustrated with your progress. Let's discuss what might be causing those feelings and brainstorm strategies for overcoming those challenges."
4. **Provide positive and negative feedback and offer suggestions for improvement**: "I appreciate the thoroughness of your lab notebook. Let's work together to develop strategies for better time management."
5. **Provide clear expectations and goals for the student to work towards**: "I think it's important for you to develop your skills in scientific writing. Let's set a goal of working on your writing skills for 30 minutes each day, and let's schedule a check-in next week to see how you're progressing."
6. **Avoid comparing the student negatively to others**: "I understand that you're struggling with this technique, and that's okay. Everyone learns at their own pace. Let's work together to find some resources or strategies that can help you master this skill."
7. **Listen to the student's perspective and concerns, and take them seriously**: "I hear that you're feeling overwhelmed by the workload. Let's talk about what tasks are causing you the most stress, and see if there's anything we can do to alleviate some of that pressure."
8. **Provide consistent and clear feedback that helps the student understand what to do to improve**: "I noticed that you've been struggling with keeping your lab space organized. Let's make a checklist of things to do at the end of each day to help you stay on top of things."
9. **Avoid making assumptions about the student's abilities or motivations**: "I'd like to better understand how you approach problem-solving. Can you walk me through your process, and maybe we can come up with some ways to make that process more effective?"
10. **Provide feedback in a timely manner, and in a way that is accessible and actionable for the student**: "I wanted to check in on your progress with that experiment. Can you share your lab notebook with me, so that we can go over your notes and see if there's anything that needs to be tweaked?"

Resources:

1. Chapter 6 "*Setting Goals, Giving Feedback and Doing Performance Reviews*" Lab Dynamics: Management and Leadership Skills for Scientists, Third Edition by Carl M. Cohen and Suzanne L. Cohen.
2. Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life: Life-Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships (Nonviolent Communication Guides) Paperback – September 1, 2015.