

Systematic review of evidence on feedback: call for proposals

February 2020



The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is commissioning a systematic review of the best available evidence on feedback. We are seeking proposals from research teams with expertise in undertaking systematic reviews. The review will be used to inform a guidance report on feedback due to be published in 2021. The deadline for proposals is 15 April 2020.

Background

EEF guidance reports summarise the best available research evidence on a particular aspect of teaching and learning, and present actionable recommendations for practice. Based on rigorous reviews of research evidence, and informed by a panel of academic and practitioner experts, guidance reports published so far include:

- [Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants](#)
- [Improving Secondary Science](#)
- [Metacognition and self-regulated learning](#)

In 2021, the EEF intend to publish a Guidance Report on **feedback**. Feedback is an area of teaching and learning that is a central priority for teachers and may have the potential to substantially improve outcomes for pupils. The EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that it may have very high impact (equivalent to 8 months additional progress), for relatively low cost. However, while the average impact of feedback may be high, the range of impacts may also be very wide. Some studies (such as Kluger and DeNisi's seminal meta-analysis¹) suggest that a large proportion of feedback interventions may, in fact, negatively impact pupils. It may also be the case that the impact of feedback depends on a variety of different factors, including the ability of the learner, how motivated the learner is, the type of task being undertaken, and the learning goals set. A feedback guidance report will aim to make recommendations to teachers on how to best deploy feedback, considering the evidence available.

Review focus

In order to inform this guidance report, the EEF is commissioning a systematic review on feedback. The review will comprise of two parts:

1. **A review of the theoretical evidence.** Making use of a wide range of evidence, this part of the review will aim to answer the following questions:
 - a. What is feedback and how can it be conceptualised?
 - b. Where might feedback fit in an evidence informed teaching sequence, and, in theory, what may need to accompany feedback for it to be effective?²
2. **A review of the intervention evidence.** Making use of the intervention evidence, this part of the review will aim to answer the following questions:³
 - a. Which source of feedback is the most effective? (e.g Teacher, TA, peer, digital)
 - b. What direction of feedback is the most effective? (e.g individual, whole class)
 - c. Which form of feedback is the most effective? (e.g spoken verbal, non-verbal, written verbal, written non-verbal, concise, lengthy).
 - d. When should feedback happen for it to be most effective? (e.g during, immediate, delayed, and how frequent should it be)
 - e. What tone should feedback have? (e.g positive, negative, neutral)
 - f. What kind of feedback should be provided? (e.g about outcome, process, the person, their strategies, correct or incorrect).
 - g. What impact does praise and/or rewards have on outcomes?
 - h. What impact does marking and/or grading have on outcomes?
 - i. Does feedback impact disadvantaged learners differently and, if so, which type of feedback best suits disadvantaged learners?

¹ Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254–284

² As with all questions, the wording is provisional, and we are very happy to discuss with the successful review team. This question was challenging to articulate, and we are very open to discussion and amendments.

³ We would expect that the answer to questions in the review of intervention evidence are likely to require a consideration of context. The answer may differ depending on a variety of factors.

For each of the above review of intervention evidence questions (part 2), it would be important for the review to highlight any differences that emerge in the effectiveness of types of feedback between different subjects or age ranges, if possible. In addition, we would also expect the review to highlight any examples of successful implementation of effective feedback, and instances where feedback has impacted on teacher workload.

Please note that these research questions are provisional, and subject to discussion with the successful review team.

The scope of the evidence review will include feedback across primary, secondary and post-16 education (age 5-18), across subject areas, while the main outcome of interest is educational attainment. If the studies identify other outcomes, including cognitive outcomes (such as reasoning, or memory), behaviour or motivation, we would expect the review to highlight these. Given that the review is being used to produce recommendations for an EEF guidance report, we also expect that the review will present results in a way that is suitable for producing practical recommendations for schools and teachers. Examples of the kind of recommendations made by the EEF may be found in our [Guidance Reports](#). More on the specific elements that we would expect to see featured in the final report may be found in the EEF's systematic [review template](#).

Review process

In terms of the review of intervention evidence, we expect review teams to use, and update, the systematic review conducted by Professor Steve Higgins and the EEF Toolkit Team based at Durham University. As part of their [efforts to update the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#), they have recently re-analysed the individual studies that make-up several key meta-analyses on feedback and extracted data – including information on outcomes, methodology and context from these individual studies into a new database, using the EPPI-reviewer systematic review software tool. There are currently 118 studies relating to feedback, all of which have now been coded using both this [general coding frame](#), [a coding frame focusing on quantitative outcomes](#) and a feedback specific coding frame (which may be found on page 41 [here](#), alongside the full protocol). We would hope that most of the research questions identified as part of the review of intervention evidence could be answered as a result of the data points that are already being extracted as part of this project, which could speed up the review (this may be with the exception of g. and h. on rewards, praise, marking and grading- we are open to suggestion on whether to also code additional items for these, or, if this is too time intensive, to cover these areas in the theoretical review).

The team will be given full access to the data already extracted in EPPI-reviewer but the review of intervention evidence will need to conduct a new search to update the number of studies. The 118 studies found have been drawn from 14 meta-analyses, the most recent of which was published in 2015. There may be intervention evidence that has been published since, or intervention evidence missed by the original meta-analyses, that we would expect a new search to find. We would also then expect the review team to code any new studies using the coding frames (data extraction tools) used by the EEF Toolkit Team (in addition to any further coding that they intend to undertake for the review).

The deadline for proposals is **15 April 2020**. We are looking to appoint a team in early April, at which point we will undertake further discussions regarding the research questions and process. We would then expect the review team to produce a protocol. This should outline the research questions, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as other criteria including date and language, and the approach to study identification, screening, data extraction, study appraisal and synthesis. The template for EEF protocols can be found [here](#). The protocol will be reviewed by the EEF, two independent academic peer reviewers, and the feedback guidance report panel, before being published on the EEF website. When reporting, we will also expect teams to use the EEF's systematic review reporting template, which may also be found [here](#). The final report will also undergo peer review, and will be reviewed by the feedback guidance report panel (the review team will be invited to attend a panel meeting to discuss the review, which will aid the panel in forming recommendations).

Given the complexity of the area, and the request for a systematic review, we are open to discussing the time required to complete the project. Ideally, presuming a late-April start, we would hope for a final draft of a report in January 2021. However, there is room for flexibility, and we welcome proposals that can justify a longer or shorter timeframe. If possible, it would be preferable if a review team could complete each element of the review sequentially (so that we could have a draft of the theoretical review earlier). We would hope that the aforementioned work already undertaken by the EEF Toolkit team will save the successful review team time.

Appointment process

If you would like to be considered to undertake the review, please send a brief outline describing your proposed approach. Please also include an overview of your relevant skills and experience, and an estimated budget. **Please note, we will only consider teams with systematic review experience.** Commissioning systematic reviews is a new line of work for the EEF and so we are not indicating a suggested budget here. As part of this proposal, we ask that teams suggest the outline of a budget, which we will then discuss further with the preferred bidder. Your budget does not need to be included in the word limit. Budgets should reflect the expectation that this will be a systematic review and the timeline for the work.

Proposals should be no more than 2,500 words, excluding references and budget. If you have any questions, please contact Joe Collin (see email), and please send your proposal to: joe.collin@eefoundation.org.uk by **17:00 on 15 April 2020.**