

NYWF – IMPLEMENTING PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AND FEEDBACK

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Interpreting and implementing *Professional Advice and Feedback*

**Fact sheet prepared for National Young Writers Festival, Sydney, September 2016*

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Reading is highly subjective and so finding the right set of eyes to give feedback on a new piece of writing can be both instructive and detrimental, making the process of interpreting and implementing feedback daunting for any writer.

Listed below are sources of feedback a writer might expect to receive:

Writing mentor:

One of the most valuable and accurate sources of feedback can come from a writing mentor (see blog post '[Professional Mentorships](#)' for more information on sourcing a mentorship). This process guarantees personalised and targeted feedback from a professional in the field who may be working in a similar style and genre for a target audience. Forms of feedback can include industry, structural, copy or proof as well as general personal support (as outlined in next section).

In-house editor / publisher / agent:

If you're at the stage where you have gained the attention of an in-house editor or publisher, some agents and publishers will request a 'revise and submit' from an author before signing them. This is as much to identify how well an author receives feedback as it is to determine how successfully they can integrate that feedback into their manuscript.

Critique partner / critique group / beta-readers:

This is a great way to 'cast the net wide' and collect the opinions of a sample of readers. Sometimes the collective opinions of a group can help a writer better identify any weaknesses / trends in their work. Formal critique partners can be sourced through most writing institutions such as state writing centres, Australian Society of Authors and through writing memberships such as Romance Writers of Australia.

Freelance Editor:

Freelance feedback services are available from most writing institutions (State Writers Centres, Australian Society of Authors) and come at a cost. Rates vary depending on the editor and the type of service (structural or other). The South Australian 'Society of Editors' has a list of *registered* editors on their website and the kinds of services they offer. *Registered* means that each editor has undergone and passed state standards to receive qualification.

<http://www.editors-sa.org.au/>

Downloadable PDF – www.lianaskrzypczak.com

Created by Liana Skrzypczak for the National Young Writers Festival – September 2016

Manuscript assessment services:

Manuscript assessment is usually a combination of industry, structural, copy advice on a manuscript, with a focus on the big-picture—content, voice, tone, style, plot pace, characterisation, setting, dialogue, market, audience, theme. More on these categories outlined below.

Types of advice that may be contracted or received:

Industry advice:

- Will the story idea appeal to the market in which it's intended?
- Does the story idea identify a target audience in tone, theme, voice, plot, character?
- Does the story idea hold its own in the current marketplace? (Has it been overdone? Does it offer something new? Is it following a trend?)

Structural advice:

- How does the work read as a whole?
- Are events logical and consistent?
- Are there any obvious plot holes?
- Does the world/setting/characters work? Do the characters and relationships work?
- Does the book begin/end in a satisfactory manner?
- Does the author's choice of tense and voice work?

Copy advice:

- Is spelling, grammar consistent and accurate?

Personal advice:

- Personal advice, usually given in an informal fashion (through mentorships, discussion panels). May include advice on how to handle rejection, stress, career pressures. This can be just as important as craft, industry and career advice to some writers.

Some thoughts on interpreting and implementing feedback

It is important to be open to feedback in order to learn and improve. However, being too influenced by feedback, or making uninformed changes based on mixed feedback can confuse and water down the intended effect of a particular work. It is important to develop a strong sense of intention before approaching feedback so that subjective opinion may be strategically and implemented or considered and, sometimes, disregarded.

Remember, as Neil Gaiman stated:

"...when people tell you something's wrong or doesn't work for them, they are almost always right. When they tell you exactly what they think is wrong and how to fix it, they are almost always wrong."

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/477087-remember-when-people-tell-you-something-s-wrong-or-doesn-t-work>