It is not uncommon for nurse educators to provide feedback on writing. In clinical settings, for instance, nurse educators may guide the development of scholarly articles, which can support Magnet® documentation on professional outcomes. In academic settings, nurse educators may comment on assignment drafts, helping nurses meet objectives specified on an instructor’s sheet or rubric and encouraging a feedback-rich environment.

Faced with an error-ridden paper, nurse educators in either setting may apply comprehensive feedback, which responds to every error. But, the result may be a heavily marked mess with few benefits for those involved. As current scholarship has indicated (Harris, 2017), a better strategy is often selective or “triaged” feedback, which responds to certain errors while provisionally overlooking others. Yet, how can such triage be done, especially in a way that encourages learning?

This article summarizes a novel framework for error triage (Table), adapting the five canons of classical rhetoric as described by the Roman rhetorician Quintilian: invention, arrangement, expression, memory, and delivery. In the framework, priority 1 (red) errors should be addressed first, priority 2 (yellow) errors second, and priority 3 (green) errors third. These priority levels apply to errors in the paper, as well as to errors in the intended feedback.

TRIAGING ERRORS IN THE PAPER
Priority 1 (Red): Invention
The first canon, invention, pertains to ideas. According to Quintilian (1856/2006), the ideas expressed should be possible, practical, well supported by argument, and appropriate for the context (person, place, and time) (4.2.89) while avoiding contradictions (4.2.60). Thus, when providing feedback on writing, nurse educators might first ask:

- How plausible are the ideas in the paper, given the clinical context?
- What implications or limitations might merit further explanation?
- At what points, if any, do the arguments start to break down or become less persuasive?
- How strong (or weak) is the paper’s base of evidence, and how might it be improved?

Although the paper may contain errors aside from ideas, they should be overlooked for now.

Priority 2 (Yellow): Arrangement
The second canon, arrangement, concerns organization, or “the disposition of things in the best possible order” (Quintilian, 1856/2006, 3.3.8). In arrangement, a key quality is coherence, such that the parts “form a body and not a mere collection of members” (Quintilian, 1856/2006, 7.10.16). When providing feedback on writing, nurse educators might ask next:

- How cogently are the paper’s sections and paragraphs arranged?
- Within the paragraphs, how well do the parts cohere, and what, if anything, seems out of order?
- That is, do any parts seem like “strangers” to each other (7.10.17), and if so, how might they be revised?

Errors in arrangement should be addressed after invention but before expression.

Priority 3 (Green): Expression
The third canon, expression, focuses on word choice. As possible, the words chosen should be accurate, clear,
elegant, and appropriate (Quintilian, 1856/2006, 1.5.1), but also spare, enabling them to “express our thoughts best” and “produce the impression which we desire” (8.0.32). Thus, at this point, nurse educators might ask:

- How clear and concise is the wording, and how might it be improved?
- How well do the words capture an appropriate tone for the paper’s envisioned audience?
- To what extent does the paper adhere to the standards of the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association, formal grammar, etc.?

### TRIAGING ERRORS IN THE INTENDED FEEDBACK

#### Priority 1 (Red): Memory

The fourth canon, memory, rests on a central principle: All knowledge depends on memory, and, therefore, teaching is without purpose “if whatever we hear escapes from us” (Quintilian, 1856/2006, 11.2.1). So too is feedback on writing without purpose if it escapes the writer. A recent survey of nursing students (Giles, Gilbert, & McNeill, 2014) affirmed that feedback on writing should be timely, adequately detailed, focused on both strengths and weaknesses, as well as understood and applied. To triage possible errors in their intended feedback, then, nurse educators might ask:

- Is my feedback sufficiently timely, plain, and detailed to be used?
- How effectively does the feedback highlight strengths in the paper, and how much should it focus on the errors?
- How can I help the nurse both understand and apply the feedback on the next draft (or the next paper)?

#### Priority 2 (Yellow): Delivery

The fifth canon, delivery, centers on intonation and gesture, or more generally, how language reaches the audience’s eyes and ears (Quintilian, 1856/2006, 11.3.14). Quintilian believed that delivery requires great care, and accordingly, nurse educators should consider how best to deliver feedback on writing, whether on paper or online. They might ask:

- How accessible is the feedback for the nurse?
- As appropriate, how might the feedback incorporate multimedia, such as screencasts or embedded audio, to help ensure understanding?
- Might the nurse benefit from an in-person conference or telephone conversation, if schedules permit?

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The five canons of classical rhetoric can provide a useful framework for triaging errors in writing. The framework can serve as a reminder that in a nurse’s paper, invention requires the greatest attention, followed by arrangement, and expression last of all. In the intended feedback, memory also requires careful consideration, followed by

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triaging Errors</th>
<th>Canon</th>
<th>Priority Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of a Written Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ideas in the paper should be possible, practical, well supported by argument, and appropriate for the context.</td>
<td>“I’m not quite convinced that the evidence indicates a change in practice. More explanation would be helpful here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement</td>
<td>2 (Yellow)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organization in the paper should be coherent, the parts put into “the best possible order.”</td>
<td>“Since this information is fairly general, consider moving it to the introduction section.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>3 (Green)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Word choice in the paper should be accurate, clear, elegant, and appropriate, but also spare.</td>
<td>“I’m not sure what you mean by ’they.’ Do you mean nurse practitioners, or do you mean other members of the clinical team?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the intended feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback should be memorable, timely, adequately detailed, focused on both strengths and weaknesses, as well as understood and applied.</td>
<td>“In other words, this is a fascinating topic, but the research question sounds too broad for a single study. Please send me a narrower research question within a week, perhaps focusing on just one of the interventions you proposed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>1 (Red)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback should reach students’ eyes and ears in an easily accessible way.</td>
<td>“In addition to my written comments, you can find a screencast attached to this e-mail.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>2 (Yellow)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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TABLE
THE FRAMEWORK FOR TRIAGING ERRORS IN WRITING

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delivery. Hence, nurse educators need not, and generally should not, address all the canons in one sitting. On a first draft, for instance, nurse educators might limit the focus to invention and memory. On subsequent drafts, they might turn their focus to other canons. No matter how the framework is applied, nurse educators should reflect critically on their feedback on writing, which can be a significant boost—or barrier—to learning.

REFERENCES