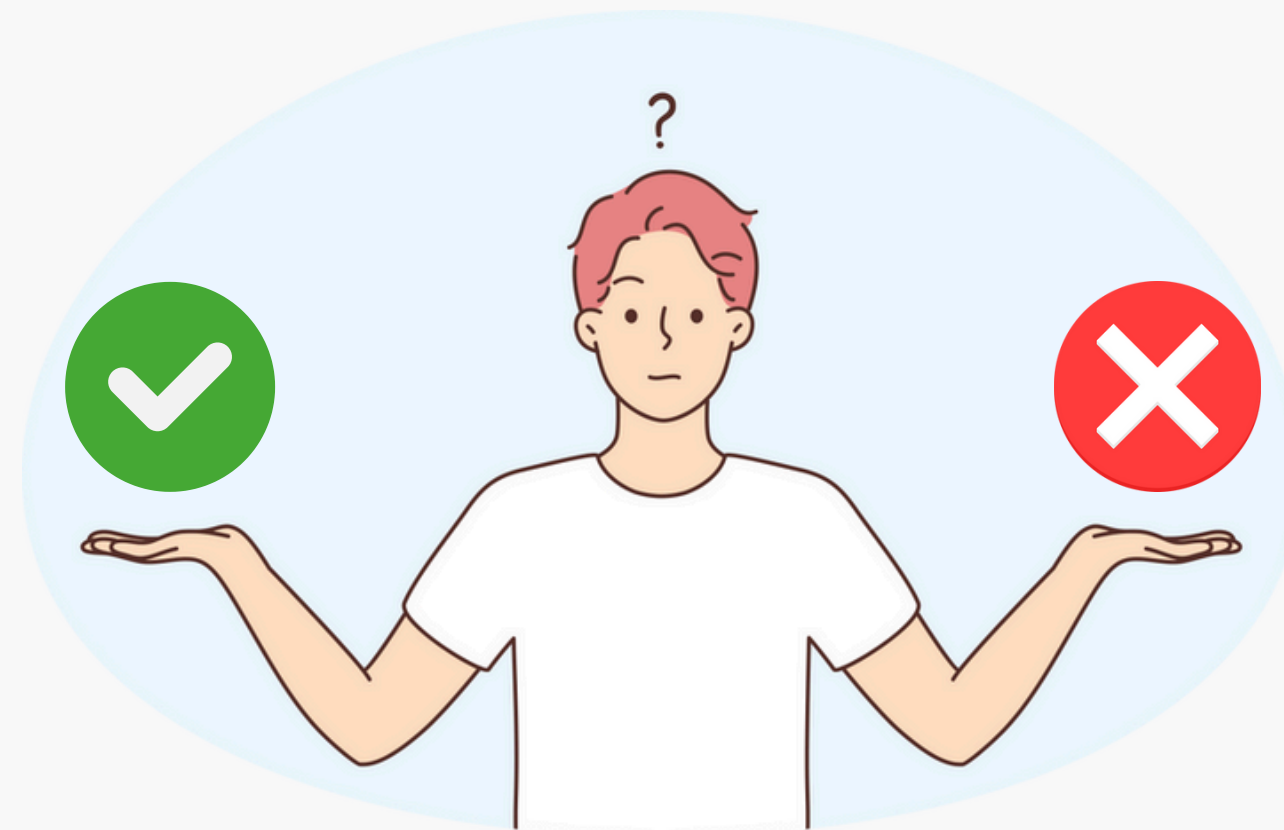# Giving good feedback: SPARK guidelines

What makes good feedback 'good'?

In small groups, determine some of the properties of good feedback. (Equivalently, you can consider the properties of bad feedback.)

For example: why are the following comments good or bad?

"You should delete parts of this section from your Executive Summary, you don't need them."

"This sentence is very long, which makes it hard to read; you could split it into 3 sentences if you put periods in these places. If you need extra help with writing, your college probably has a writing centre you can use."

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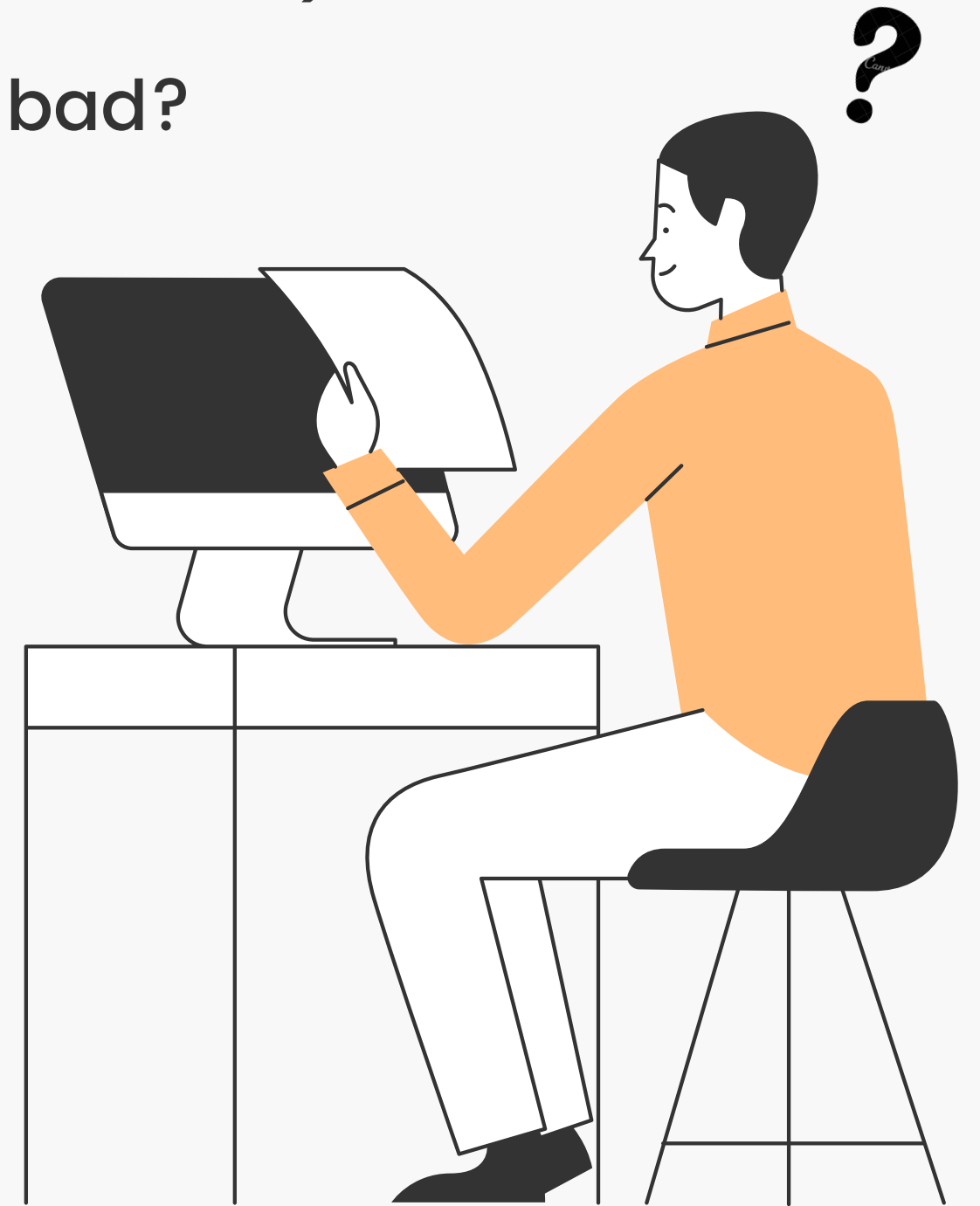
SPECIFIC — Comments are linked to a discrete word, phrase, or sentence.

PRESCRIPTIVE — Prescriptive feedback offers a solution or strategy to improve the work, including possible revisions or links to helpful resources or examples.

ACTIONABLE — When the feedback is read, it leaves the peer knowing what steps to take for improvement.

REFERENCED — The feedback directly references the task criteria, requirements, or target skills.

KIND — It's mandatory that all comments be framed in a kind, supportive way.

Gardner, M. (2019, October 8). Teaching students to give peer feedback. Edutopia. https://www.edutopia.org/article/teaching-students-give-peer-feedback/
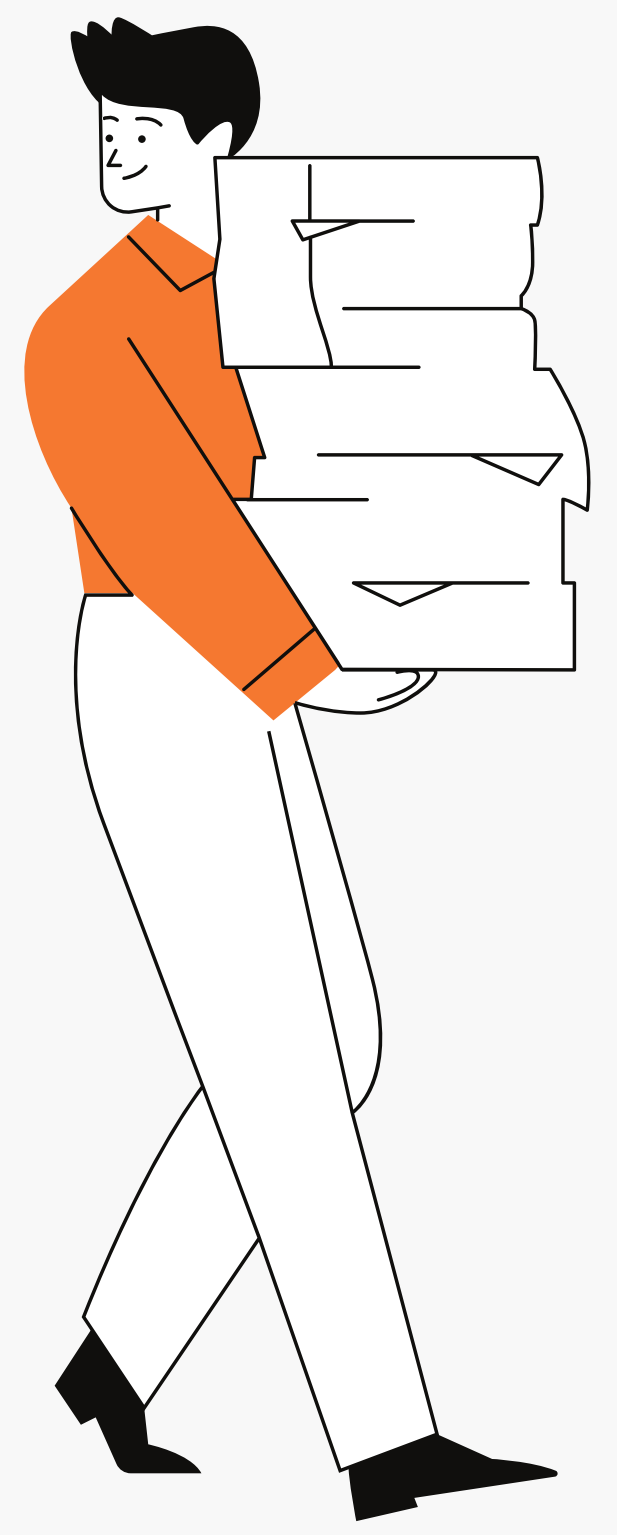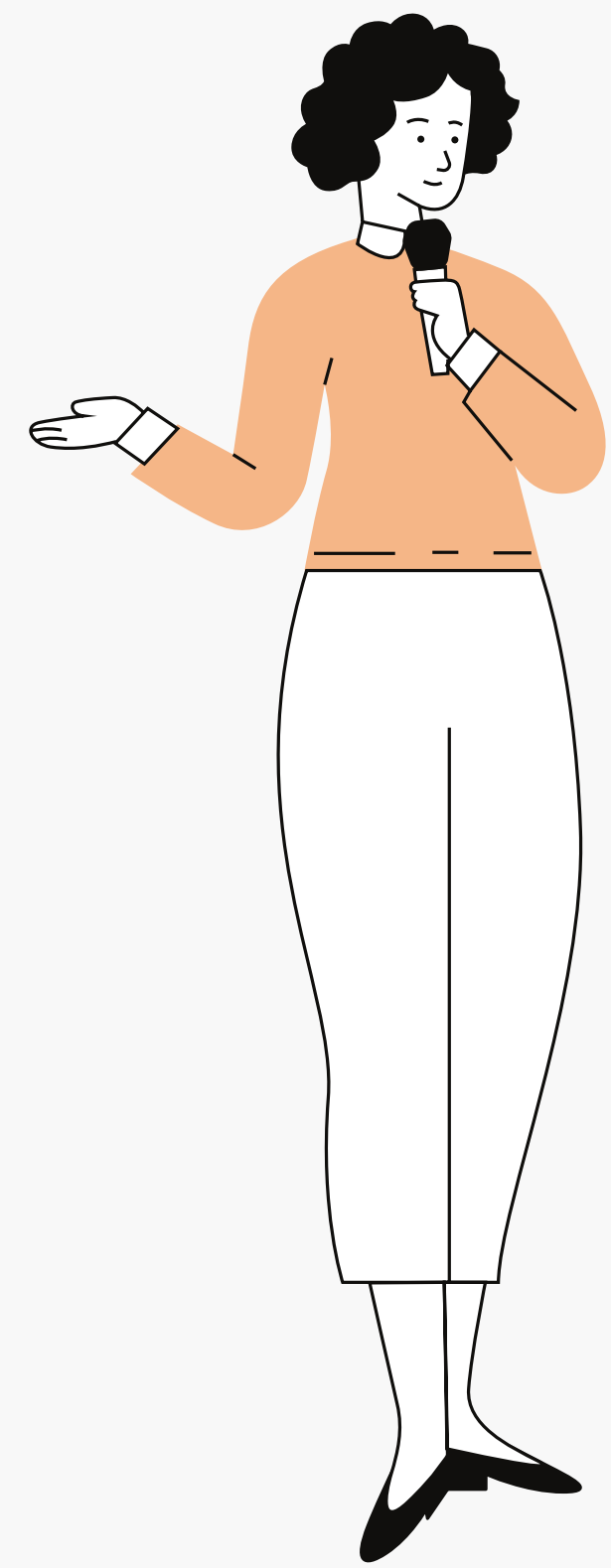
Feedback about grammar

"This sentence is very long, which makes it hard to read; you could split it into 3 sentences if you put periods in these places. If you need extra help with writing, your college probably has a writing centre you can use."

SPECIFIC

PRESCRIPTIVE

ACTIONABLE

REFERENCED

KIND

"Your grammar sucks. Did you even use spellcheck?!"

SPECIFIC

PRESCRIPTIVE

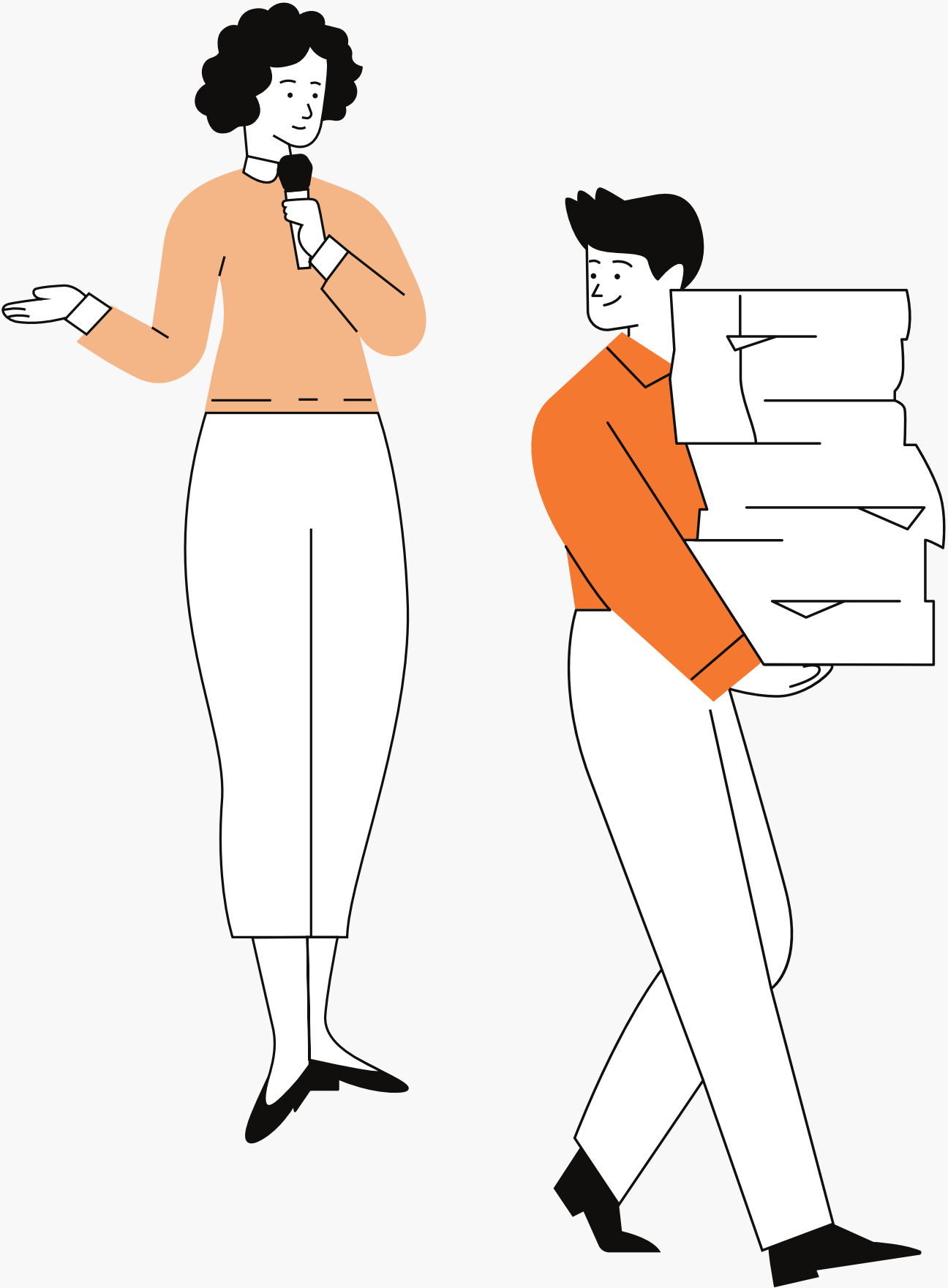**ACTIONABLE**

REFERENCED

KIND

Feedback about grammar

"This sentence is very long, which makes it hard to read; you could split it into 3 sentences if you put periods in these places. If you need extra help with writing, your college probably has a writing centre you can use."

"Your grammar sucks. Did you even use spellcheck?!"

SPECIFIC ☑

PRESCRIPTIVE ☑

ACTIONABLE ☑

REFERENCED ☑

KIND ☑

SPECIFIC

PRESCRIPTIVE

ACTIONABLE

REFERENCED

KIND ☹

Positive feedback

"Good work!"

SPECIFIC

PRESCRIPTIVE

ACTIONABLE

REFERENCED

KIND

"You should delete parts of this section from your Executive Summary, you don't need them."

SPECIFIC

PRESCRIPTIVE

ACTIONABLE

REFERENCED

KIND

"Everything is perfect!"

(Students love to use this one... 🙃)

Positive feedback

"Good work!"

SPECIFIC

☑ PRESCRIPTIVE

ACTIONABLE

REFERENCED

KIND

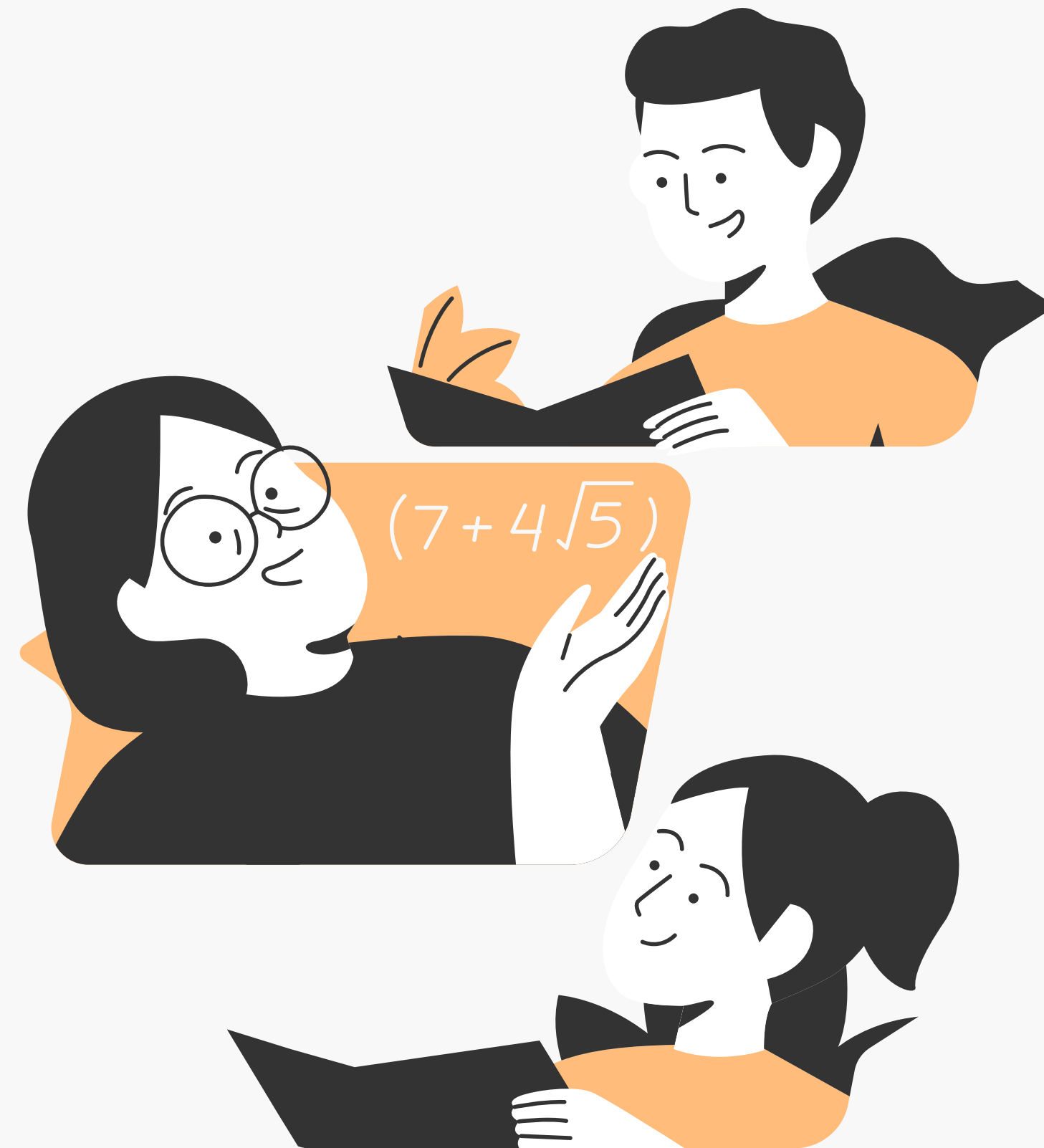"You should delete parts of this section from your Executive Summary, you don't need them."

SPECIFIC

PRESCRIPTIVE

ACTIONABLE

REFERENCED

☑ KIND

"Everything is perfect!"

(Students love to use this one... 🙃)

Why positive feedback?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, positive feedback is beneficial for students.

"However, students who were provided both performance-gap and positive feedback received an average of an entire letter grade higher than the students who received only performance-gap feedback. These findings support the idea that a combination of feedback has a direct positive impact on students in an online setting."

Faulconer, E., Griffith, J., & Gruss, A. (2021). The impact of positive feedback on student outcomes and perceptions. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47(2), 259-268. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1910140