

Assessment Feedback Policy

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This policy was developed following discussions by the Academic Board and the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee. The views of students from previous National Student Survey data were an integral part of these discussions. The policy has been written in accordance with the QAA Code of Practice Section 6 which states that institutions should
“provide appropriate and timely feedback to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement but does not increase the burden of assessment”(p. 20)

2.0 Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to giving feedback to students throughout the University. This is an attempt to manage expectations so that students are aware of the processes which staff are required to follow in order to provide effective feedback to support continual learning.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all taught under-graduate and post-graduate University awards, irrespective of the length or mode of delivery.
- 2.3. The provision of post- examination feedback is promoted and supported by the University, as outlined in Appendix 1

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 Feedback refers to any comments (both written and verbal) on an assigned task. This can either be formative or summative.
- 3.2 Formative feedback does not contribute to a formalised, recorded mark and is normally used as an ongoing mechanism to enhance the development and progress of students. Examples of the way in which formative feedback might be given are
- Written feedback
 - Oral feedback in class
 - Online assessment exercises
 - Computer generated audio feedback
 - Peer feedback
 - Self-assessment
- 3.3. Summative feedback is given on an assessment which occurs at the end of a module or award and is normally formalised and recorded.

4.0 Key principles

- 4.1 Feedback is an important and integral part of the ongoing student learning process.

Although feedback is given in relation to an assessed task, it is a key mechanism which is used to inform future learning and to motivate students to continue learning. To be meaningful, feedback is

- Provided in a timescale which can inform subsequent assessments
- Closely linked to the specified learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Used to identify areas for improvement
- Provided in a format which is appropriate for the assessment and in line with discipline specific pedagogies

4.2 At the start of each award, and then periodically thereafter, students are reminded about the importance of feedback to their learning. Where appropriate, reflexive behaviour is encouraged by students in order that they can make the most of the feedback to inform their subsequent learning.

5.0 Content of feedback

Whilst accepting that each subject gives feedback in a way that is appropriate for their area, the following precepts are expected to be observed by all staff who provide feedback relating to assessment:

- 5.1 Feedback is sufficiently detailed to inform future learning and development. As a result, unsubstantiated one-word judgements (e.g. 'poor' 'weak', 'promising' or 'excellent') are to be avoided.
- 5.2 Formalised feedback is provided on agreed feedback proforma designed by each subject area or award.
- 5.3 In order to manage expectations, if staff within subject areas intend to annotate scripts *in addition* to completing feedback proforma, this is communicated to students prior to the start of the assessment.
- 5.4 Summative feedback must directly relate to the intended learning outcomes for a module so that the student can be given confirmation as to whether or not each one of these has been met.
- 5.5 Wherever possible, feedback includes information about the positive aspects of students' work, as well as the areas for development.
- 5.6 Although feedback to students does not have to be in an electronic format, it must, however, be legible.
- 5.7 In addition to individual feedback, wherever possible generic feedback is provided to students. This is in the format of a summarised commentary, highlighting the key strengths and weaknesses apparent from the marking of all students' work. In addition, suggested strategies for improvement are also given in order to support students' ongoing learning and development.

6.0 Timing of feedback

- 6.1 In the scheduling of assessments within all awards, appropriate timescales for the provision of feedback are incorporated. These timescales are planned cognisant of the nature of the assessment task, the volume anticipated and the moderation processes required.

- 6.2 All students are informed about the assessment and feedback schedule. This information is normally communicated to students through module and/or award handbooks.
- 6.3 As part of a University-wide agreed service standard, all feedback on summative assessments is given to students normally within four working weeks.
- 6.4 Generic feedback on all formative assessments is normally given within four working weeks

7.0 Communication to students

- 7.1 In order to manage expectations, information about the nature and extent of feedback and the timescale for this to occur must be made available to all students. This is normally done through module handbooks.
- 7.2 Prior to commencing an assessment, students are made aware of assessment criteria, marking schemes, the content and structure of agreed feedback templates.
- 7.3 The planned schedule of assessment and feedback is explicitly communicated to students. This is normally achieved via module/award handbooks issued to students at the beginning of the academic year, and tutors are required to signpost students to where this information is available (electronic and, where appropriate, in hard copy).
- 7.4 Any unforeseen changes to the method and timing of feedback are communicated to students at the earliest opportunity. In all cases, this must be before an assessment is taken.

8.0 Evaluation

- 8.1 Within each subject area, the adherence to agreed timescales for providing feedback is monitored. This information is used to evaluate the level of service and further improve this for both current and future cohorts of students.
- 8.2 As part of the annual monitoring process, the views of students on the methods, content and timing of feedback is gathered. These views are considered, and, wherever possible, used to further inform the feedback regime in each area.

9.0 Ensuring the quality of feedback

- 9.1 Leaders of all subject areas are responsible for ensuring that the staff within their teams feel competent to provide feedback to students in the required way.
- 9.2 Wherever appropriate, updates on how to provide effective feedback are made available to staff.
- 9.3 If a student complaint about the nature, content or timing of feedback is upheld, appropriate staff development is provided to ensure that the standard of service resumes to the acceptable level.
- 9.4 Staff who are new to assessing and providing feedback are given appropriate support and development so that the quality of service can be maintained. Where appropriate, mentoring support is provided.

Appendix 1

Examination Feedback Policy

1.0 Introduction and rationale

- 1.1 In line with the a commitment to enhance the learning experience of students, the University is keen to ensure that from September 2009, feedback from examinations is provided. It is agreed that having access to post examination feedback makes a significant contribution to the on-going learning process of students rather than just be viewed as a fixed measure of their performance. This is in line with the Assessment Principles and Policy which emphasises that feedback is an essential part of the assessment process.

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/images/uni_assess_pol_tcm68-12696.pdf

- 1.2 Due to the variety of subject areas and the wide range in the size of student cohorts, post examination feedback takes a variety of formats. As a minimum, generic feedback is made available to all students who take written examinations.
- 1.3 Feedback is given in a timely way so as to inform the future performance of students in either referrals or subsequent examinations.
- 1.4 The way in which post examination feedback is given can be decided by the academic staff within subject teams. This is made explicit at the start of every academic year, and communicated to students to ensure transparency of the process.

2.0 Definition and context

- 2.1 Within the context of this policy, examinations are the formal, summative assessments which normally occur at the end of a module and/or an award. In the majority of cases these are time-limited written examinations. If class test scripts are not normally returned to the student then they too are covered by the provisions of this policy.
- 2.2 This policy covers on-campus and UK partner under-graduate and post-graduate courses. For final year students feedback should be provided on examinations and class tests that occur part-way through the year (normally at the end of teaching block 1). Where appropriate, feedback on examinations at the end of the last teaching block in the final year should be provided in the form of generic, group feedback through the University VLE.

3.0 Legal background

- 3.1 In accordance with Freedom of Information and the UK Data Protection Act, students do not have a legal right to see their examination scripts, although discretion can be exercised.

- 3.2 Examination scripts remain the property of the University, and, if seen by students after an examination for the purpose of feedback, these must be collected in immediately afterwards.
- 3.3 Students do, however, have a right to view any comments recorded about them by an examiner (either internal or external). This can be facilitated by making a Subject Access Request in the Data Protection Policy.

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/images/data_protection_staff_tcm68-15850.pdf

- 3.4 If it is intended that written feedback from an examination is to be communicated to, and retained by, a student then staff comments should be recorded on a separate cover sheet to allow the original script to be retained by the University.

4.0 Feedback methods available to subject areas

- 4.1 Although post-examination feedback is guaranteed in all areas that use this method of summative assessment, this takes a variety of formats and may be either generic or personalised, dependent on the strategies agreed by each subject area. This decision is dependent on a number of factors including the nature of the subject, the nature of the examination, student needs and the numbers of students in each cohort.
- 4.2 As part of the annual process of curriculum planning, subject areas select the method of post-examination feedback. Examples of how this feedback might be provided are:
- Post examination tutor-led workshops, allowing students to have access to their own individual scripts and relevant examiner/marker comments.
 - Post examination workshops whereby tutors provide generic commentary on common mistakes and key learning points relating to each question.
 - Individual feedback sheets for each student, providing detailed comments on the strengths and areas for development in relation to the specific questions.
 - Access to model answers for all questions, giving specific details of the marking scheme adopted,
 - Opportunity to request individualised one-to-one feedback from the marking tutors for each student.
 - Generic feedback provided through the VLE which may or may not be time-limited.

5.0 Timescales for feedback

- 5.1 Examination feedback should be provided as soon as possible after the relevant examination. However, feedback should be provided at least four weeks before the next examination period for the relevant cohort.

6.0 Evaluation and monitoring

- 6.1 The effectiveness of the method of post-examination feedback offered to students is evaluated annually by subject teams. The results of this are included in the annual monitoring process.
- 6.2 Any consequent changes to the method of post examination feedback are then communicated to future students in order to manage expectations.
- 6.3 Curriculum managers (e.g. PAMs and/or Directors of Learning and Teaching or equivalent) are required to annually monitor and evaluate the methods of post-examination feedback used in their Faculty/School and to report on this via the annual monitoring report.