

Assessment Feedback Policy

Purpose

This document sets out the principles the University operates and the arrangements that must be followed to ensure that learners receive constructive and timely assessment feedback that will enable them to reach their academic potential, encourages reflective learning and helps to develop a culture of receiving, engaging with, and reflecting on feedback that will support life-long learning.

This Policy will apply to courses delivered through approved educational partnerships unless equivalent alternative arrangements have been specifically agreed and included in the relevant Partnership Agreement.

This policy has been developed with reference to the QAA Quality Code 2018 Advice and Guidance theme: [Assessment](#).

1. Definition

Assessment feedback is

Information and guidance provided to learners as a commentary on their performance and (where applicable) a rationale for the mark/grade awarded, that learners use to help them learn and improve their performance.

2. Key responsibilities

- 2.1 Responsibility for the management of this policy lies with Heads of Schools.
- 2.2 Responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with Course and Unit Leads.
- 2.3 Unit Leads are specifically responsible for explaining to learners at the beginning of a unit the assessment requirements and marking criteria and the principles guiding the processes and forms of feedback and what to expect with respect to feedback, and the different ways in which feedback may be received.
- 2.4 All teaching staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy, and for acting in accordance with it to ensure they provide learners with appropriate and effective feedback on their assessments within the defined time frame, and that learners are aware of the different types of feedback they are receiving (see section 10 of this policy).
- 2.5 Course Leaders are responsible for ensuring that, if in exceptional circumstances published dates for the release of marks/feedback cannot be adhered to, this is discussed with the Head of School to agree a revised date and that learners are kept informed and given a firm alternative date as to when the results/feedback will be available.
- 2.6 Learners are encouraged to develop an understanding of how feedback is provided, for recognising when they are receiving feedback and then making use of this feedback to inform their learning and progress.
- 2.7 In addition to meeting the standards set out in this Policy, Course Teams must ensure that they meet any standards for feedback required by relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

- 2.8 Feedback to learners on apprenticeship courses must reference the Knowledge Skills and Behaviors (KSB) and End Point Assessment plan as outlined in the definitive apprenticeship course specification. Feedback must enable apprentices to know:
- 2.8.1 where further work is required in order to meet gaps against specific elements in the apprenticeship (for example suggested additional work-based activities, additional review and reading appropriate to the unit or previous units);
 - 2.8.2 where the learner has demonstrated that they have met the required standard indicated in the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, or within the agreed duties statements;
 - 2.8.3 how the learning demonstrated by the assessment contributes to preparation for, and successful achievement of, the end point assessment.

3. Principles of effective assessment feedback

3.1 **Feedback must be integral:** Feedback is an essential part of the assessment process and should not be thought of as simply an 'add on', therefore assessment and arrangements for giving and receiving feedback should be designed as a coherent whole. This should include opportunities for formative assessments as a source of feedback for learners. Formative assessment can include engagements such as quizzes, polling software questions, and so on, as well as more formal engagements such as practical skills checks. It may be helpful for staff to remind learners that they are receiving feedback when these mechanisms are used.

3.1.1 **Feedback on formative assessment** is an essential part of the learning process as it:

- provides learners with a means to improve their work before they take a summative assessment, thus giving them tools potentially to increase their final mark;
- helps learners understand their knowledge-gaps and formulate their own learning strategy, to help them improve;
- supports learners to become self-directed learners, providing them with tools they can apply to future learning and assessments;
- enables tutors to identify areas where multiple learners are having difficulties, and where more support to the group might therefore be helpful before the final assessment.

3.2 For feedback to form an effective, integral part of the learning process from which learners can benefit, the following principles need to be met:

Feedback must be:

- 3.2.1 **Constructive** - motivating, encouraging and supporting learners to improve, but also realistic, identifying what is going well and what can be improved.
- 3.2.2 **Relevant and informative** - explicitly related to the intended learning outcomes and assessment/marking criteria. For apprenticeship courses, assessment feedback must also provide the learner with information as set out in Para 2.8. Feedback comments should be specific and meaningful, and sufficient to enable learning and improvement in performance (i.e., more than just a mark/grade or general comment e.g., 'good work'). However, excessively long feedback can be counter-productive as well as unnecessarily time-consuming for staff as learners may not then be able to identify the key points and use these for their learning. The focus of relevant and informative feedback should be on quality and relevance rather than quantity.
- 3.2.3 **Consistent** - in relation to the marking criteria and with the final mark given, so that a clear and detailed rationale for the mark/grade awarded is evident. There should also be broad consistency in the quantity and quality of formal feedback provided by different markers of the same or similar assessments (while recognising that marking is a matter of academic judgement).
- 3.2.4 **Timely** - so that learners have time to consider and act upon assessment feedback in

preparing for future assessments.

- 3.2.5 **Feeding forward** - rather than simply identifying what is right or wrong in the current piece of work, advice should be provided on how to repeat good performance / practice and avoid or improve weaker aspects in future assessments. Feedback should also encourage learners to think about transferable skills they are developing through the assessment. For apprenticeship courses this should include confirmation of whether there is a clear link to the requirements of the apprenticeship; advice on how to improve their skills in the workplace should be included as applicable. Where possible and applicable, academic staff are encouraged to think beyond a single year and use formative feedback that will enable learners to improve their performance moving forward to the next year of study.
- 3.2.6 **Participative** - learners should be invited to seek further explanation, dialogue and support as required relating to their assessment feedback, and should be encouraged to reflect on their learning, individually and with their peers.
- 3.2.7 **Explicit** - it should be clear to learners when and how they are receiving feedback (see section 10 below).
- 3.2.8 **Inclusive** - feedback should be structured with the needs of all learners in mind, including those with declared disabilities, or other protected characteristics. If a learner's disability means that further adjustments or alternative feedback arrangements are required, as identified through an ALS assessment, this will be notified by Registry.
- 3.2.9 **Recorded** - formal feedback should be reliably recorded and retained – for example using a feedback template or form based on the assessment rubric.
- 3.2.10 **Efficient** - Consideration should be given to utilising a range of forms of feedback, for example group summary feedback, audio, video or online via the VLE, which may help streamline the process of delivering effective and timely feedback to large numbers of learners.
- 3.3 **Arrangements for feedback must be evaluated:** the appropriateness of feedback mechanisms (including arrangements for formative feedback) should be evaluated regularly. As part of these processes Unit and Course Leads should assure themselves that assessment feedback is relevant, timely, constructive and developmental.

4. Consistency

- 4.1 Unit Leads are expected to ensure consistency across multiple markers on the same or similar forms of assessment within their unit by the use of effective marking proformas/rubrics, and by conducting calibration exercises. See the **Generic Assessment Criteria Policy** and the **Marking and Moderating Policy**.
- 4.2 Course Leads are encouraged to increase consistency across units using similar forms of assessment (for example reflective essays) by the use of effective marking proformas/rubrics, and by conducting calibration exercises.

5. Mechanisms for feedback on written coursework

- 5.1 When learner work is submitted electronically within Turnitin through the VLE, marks and feedback must be provided to learners electronically in the same way.
- Turnitin Feedback Studio should be used for feedback. As a minimum a mark and summary of feedback must be returned to learners but staff have freedom to use in-line comments, quick marks, rubrics, forms, and audio feedback in addition.
 - Information on how to provide and return feedback and marks using Feedback Studio is available in the technical guidance associated with the **Online assessment handling and use of Turnitin policy and procedures**.

- 5.2 Not all work can be submitted through Turnitin – for example when innovative assessment tools are used; where this applies specific arrangements for generating and issuing feedback to learners should be agreed with Registry and the information provided to learners, normally in the assessment brief.
- 5.3 Innovative feedback practices are actively encouraged, as appropriate to the requirements of a unit or the specific needs of individual learners. Thus, feedback may be provided in audio format, video format, or orally, either face-to-face or online. Feedback provided on an individual learner's work may be supplemented by generic feedback to a group of learners. Whatever format is adopted, it is essential that a formal record of the feedback is maintained, in line with the principles above.
- 5.4 Learners wishing to discuss the feedback they have received on coursework should do so within the academic year in which the piece of work has been undertaken.

6. Feedback on written examinations

- 6.1 Feedback on written examinations must be provided to continuing and resitting learners.
- 6.2 General feedback should be provided to the cohort by the Unit Leader (this may be in written or verbal form) and individual feedback to each learner in a form appropriate for the assessment. This must be sufficient to justify the mark awarded and to provide feed-forward support for learners. For apprenticeship courses, this must meet the requirements set out in 2.8.
- 6.3 Learners may only access their examination scripts on request. The mechanisms for accessing scripts is covered in the separate **Access to examination scripts policy (taught students)**.

7. Timeliness and turnaround times

- 7.1 'Timeliness' is often interpreted as a matter of complying with specified turnaround times for the release of marks/feedback, with learner satisfaction often heavily dependent on whether these deadlines have been met. However, in terms of effectiveness for learning, feedback is 'timely' if learners have sufficient time to reflect, and act, on the feedback they receive, before undertaking the next similar assessment.
- 7.2 Course and Unit Leads must therefore ensure that, when assessment dates and deadlines are set, these take into account the need for feedback to be 'timely', as outlined above.
- 7.3 However, notwithstanding this, it is important that learners know well in advance when they will be receiving marks/feedback as this will assist them in structuring their learning. It also remains the case that learner satisfaction with assessment feedback is often heavily dependent on whether turnaround deadlines have been met. Therefore, the stipulations below must be followed for all courses:
- 7.3.1 Dates for return of coursework marks and feedback must be agreed well in advance between the Course Lead and the Deputy Academic Registrar, and the dates published at the beginning of the academic year (September and January).
- 7.3.2 The turnaround time for the release of coursework marks/feedback is a maximum of four full working weeks (excluding weekends and public holidays). Work can be returned at any point up to the four weeks, whenever it is available. If the assessment turnaround period runs into a learner vacation, the learners' work must be returned during the first week after the vacation. Coursework marks are not normally released during designated assessment periods.
- 7.3.3 Individual markers and moderators/double markers must ensure that published dates for the release of marks/feedback are adhered to. If in exceptional circumstances, such as illness, this is impossible, it is the Course Lead's responsibility to ensure that this is discussed with the Head of School or nominee and a revised date agreed, and that learners are kept informed and given a firm alternative date as to when the results/feedback will be available.

- 7.4 Where provisional marks are returned to learners it must be made clear that all such marks are provisional until confirmed by the relevant Assessment Board.

8. Compliance

- 8.1 Heads of School should put in place arrangements to monitor consistency in the quality, quantity, and form of feedback at unit and course level, bearing in mind the principles set out above. This should include ensuring provision of appropriate training.
- 8.2 The Deputy Academic Registrar will ensure that mechanisms are in place for monitoring compliance with set turnaround times and for conveying this information to Schools. Consistent failure to meet the specified deadlines, other than in cases of illness or other significant personal circumstances, will be escalated to the relevant Head of School.
- 8.3 Compliance with this policy, including specified turnaround times, will be monitored by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) through the annual unit and course monitoring reporting process, and Unit and Course Leads are expected to put in place actions to respond to any concerns identified.

9. Staff development in assessment feedback

- 9.1 Heads of School must ensure that there are processes in place to induct new staff and support existing staff in their understanding of assessment and feedback principles, through professional development and the sharing of good practice.
- 9.2 For apprenticeship courses, all markers must undertake mandatory induction training on apprenticeships and assessment before undertaking assessment. Completion of the training must be recorded by the relevant School and details provided to the Apprenticeship Manager as part of the standard reporting requirements.

10. Learner engagement with assessment feedback

- 10.1 For feedback to be effective, it is essential that learners recognise that they are receiving feedback, and that they actively reflect on it and use what they have learned to improve their future performance. It is also important for learners to understand that effective feedback does not equate with quantity of feedback (i.e., to correct an expectation that the more written feedback a learner receives, the better, and the more useful, it must be).
- 10.2 Unit Leads should therefore discuss with learners at the beginning of each unit the assessment requirements and marking criteria and also the principles guiding the processes and forms of feedback and what to expect with respect to feedback, to ensure they have realistic expectations. They should make clear to learners the different ways in which they may be receiving feedback, in addition to written comments on submitted work or practical assessments - for example through the use of polling software, quizzes on the VLE, on-line discussion boards, informal discussion with tutors (including e-mail or telephone conversations), through peer assessments, and through attending revision seminars, or practice sessions.
- 10.3 The use of peer feedback mechanisms should be considered as a way to assist learners in understanding and reflecting on the processes and principles underlying assessment and feedback. Learners will, however, require coaching so they are able to provide balanced and constructive comments to their peers.
- 10.4 Learners should have opportunities to contribute to the enhancement of assessment feedback mechanisms – for example through unit and course surveys, or by speaking directly to Unit Leads or Course Leads.

11. Assessment feedback for learners with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) or other disabilities

- 11.1 The advice below, while focused specifically on the needs of learners with SpLD or other

disabilities, will equally benefit all learners:

- Some learners will not be able to see their own errors in print and believe that what they have written is correct; therefore, the nature of feedback is important. Constructive feedback will be of greater benefit for reflection and future learning than negative feedback, which can be difficult to understand especially when couched in innuendo or used as part of complex sentence constructions.
- SpLD learners learn well from modelling, so giving a correct example is useful feedback.
- Verbal feedback should always be followed up with written feedback using simple sentence constructions. Positive verbal feedback will often be forgotten whereas negative verbal feedback has a tendency to be remembered. The learners will respond emotionally to negativity and this does not enable reflection or improvement. Help the learner to focus on what should be done rather than what should not be done.
- Constructive written feedback can help to develop academic writing; if the learner shares this with Student Services, strategies can be worked on to improve future performance.
- Avoid innuendo, double negatives or commenting on what should *not* be done. Plain English, using simple sentence constructions to say what *should* be done, is easier to process and understand. For example, rather than ‘*You should not leave out...*’ say ‘*You should include*’. Double negatives particularly can be hard to process. For example, rather than ‘*That concept is not unfamiliar to me...*’ say ‘*That concept is familiar to me...*’
- Highlight some examples of common errors when marking coursework so that the learner can seek specific advice from Student Services and work on strategies to improve future work. For example, “*sentences may be too long, language too informal or expression too convoluted*”.
- Highlight a specific problem with sentence structure and provide an example that models good practice. If possible, highlight instances where the learner has used correct syntax for comparison.
- Identify an example of organisation or structuring difficulty and specify how this could be improved. For example, “*your paragraphs are too short to develop points adequately*” or “*links between paragraphs are not clear*”. This can be worked on with Student Services to improve future work.
- Where relevant, highlight some examples where references have been omitted or used wrongly and give a correct example to model good practice.
- If the learner seems to misinterpret assignment briefs or questions, or goes off at a tangent writing about irrelevant ideas, then specific mention of this in the feedback will benefit future learning. Student Services can focus on this and help the learner to develop interpretation strategies.
- If feedback has to be hand written, ensure writing is legible.
- Consider the use of feedback in an alternative format, such as audio taped. Oral explanations can often be easier to comprehend than written.
- Ensure that there is a straightforward way to request that feedback is mailed to the learner if physical access is difficult for the learner.

12. Useful resources

- AdvanceHE Assessment and feedback resources (various) [Transforming assessment in higher education | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](#) (accessed 17.06.2024)
- AdvanceHE Feedback toolkit - a reference guide for lecturers wishing to improve their feedback strategies and practice. [HEA Feedback toolkit | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](#) (accessed 17.06.2024)
- JISC resources on using technology to improve the quality of assessment and feedback: [Principles of good assessment and feedback | Jisc](#) (accessed 17.06.2024)

- [QAA Focus of Assessment & Feedback 2014-2015](#) (accessed 17.06.2024)
- [QAA Focus on Feedback from Assessment 2017-2018](#) (access 17.06.2024)
- The University Course Design Framework

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Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Owner	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Reference source	UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) – including Advice and Guidance: Assessment, Enabling Student Achievement, Course Design and Development, and Learning and Teaching. Related policies at other institutions, particularly Goldsmiths University of London, Swansea University, University of Southampton, Plymouth University, Bournemouth University ALS marking guidelines .
Date approved	26 July 2024
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Target	All academic staff, all students, Registry, External Examiners
Policy location	Public Website, Internal
Equality analysis	No direct impact as provision made for inclusivity in the provision and issue of feedback