

Assessment Feedback to Students Policy

1. Managing Students' Expectations

- 1.1 Feedback plays a significant part in the learning process and students should therefore be actively encouraged, from the outset, to understand the key issues relating to assessment and feedback at University. The learning, assessment and feedback processes at University can be very different from those which students have encountered previously.
- 1.2 In managing students' expectations on assessment feedback, Schools must ensure that all programmes, at an early stage, for example, at induction and at the start of modules:
 - 1.2.1 introduce students to the purposes and methods of assessment;
 - 1.2.2 indicate the range and types of feedback that will be made available to students, and explain how and why these may differ from their previous experiences;
 - 1.2.3 highlight the sources of additional support for learning that are available and how they may be accessed, if needed.

2. Principles of Effective Feedback

- 2.1 For feedback to form an effective, integral part of the learning process the following principles need to be met:
 - 2.1.1 Adequacy of Feedback

Students must be provided with feedback which is effective so that it enables them to learn and improve their performance. Feedback that is sufficient and adequate:

 - a) is more than a mark, grade or grade indication, or general phrases such as "Good effort";
 - b) is provided, in some form, on both formative and summative assessments;
 - c) is clearly linked to the assessment criteria and grade descriptors;
 - d) is sufficiently clear and detailed in highlighting specific strengths and weaknesses so that a rationale for the mark/grade awarded is evident;
 - e) is targeted on key actions that will lead to improved performance;
 - f) is constructive in indicating how any shortcomings might be addressed, thus minimising the risk of alienation or demotivation;
 - g) is delivered in a manner which is participative, offers further explanation if needed and encourages student reflection about their learning;
 - h) provides guidance on how further support for learning may be accessed if necessary.
 - 2.1.2 Timeliness of Feedback

The timing of assessments and the timing of feedback are important if feedback is to be understood in the context of recently experienced learning activities and received in sufficient time to contribute to improving future performance. Effective actions to be taken to ensure timeliness include:

- a) feedback on assessments within 4 working weeks after the submission date. Students must be informed of the reasons if feedback will not be provided within this timeframe and when, in such circumstances, feedback will be made available;
- b) feedback on examinations within 6 weeks;
- c) where possible, making feedback available before submission of subsequent assessments;
- d) assessment schedules, published at the beginning of each semester, that include dates when assessments are set, submitted and dates for results/feedback. Any deviations from published dates due to unforeseen circumstances must be communicated as soon as possible to students;
- e) making results and feedback on assignments available to all students (multiple groups, cohorts) simultaneously. Students must be informed in advance if there are reasons why this is not possible;
- f) substantial pieces of work such as research projects or dissertations should receive feedback, but the provision of such feedback is not required to adhere to the above time limits. This reflects the importance of such work within degree programmes and the need to devote appropriate time and attention to the assessment process.

3. Feedback based on assessment criteria

- 3.1 Given the direct relationship between feedback and assessment it is sensible to develop systems for providing feedback to students based on the assessment criteria used to judge their performance. Each module in a programme will have its own set of learning outcomes based on the knowledge, understanding, critical/thinking ability, and key skills that should be achieved.
- 3.2 Assessments and their criteria for success are based on the learning outcomes being assessed. Classification (marking) criteria set out the different levels of attainment within each assessment criterion that attracts a particular grade/range of marks. Feedback to students should therefore use the assessment criteria to explain to the student how well or otherwise they have performed and where they need to improve.

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