

## **Policy on the return of marked student work and feedback**

### **Return of marked student work and feedback**

All assessed work (other than formal examinations) should be returned with feedback within 20 working days\* of the submission deadline, except in cases where it is not appropriate to do so for exceptional and/ or pedagogic reasons. These may include the assessment of dissertations, final year projects, taped case studies, audio visual submissions, where the marking has been delayed due to staff illness and/ or where an extension to the submission deadline has been granted.

The deadline for the return of the marked work with feedback should be made clear to students when they receive their assignments. In the event that the intended deadline cannot be met for reasons such as those listed above, the revised deadline must be communicated to students as soon as possible.

\*Working days are Mondays to Fridays inclusive when the College is open for normal business. This includes periods outside of College term dates (vacation periods). Weekends, Bank holidays and College closure days around Easter and Christmas/ New Year are not regarded as working days (even if the Library is open on some of these days for study purposes).

Please note that even if annual leave is being taken the requirement to return assessed work with feedback within 20 working days of the submission deadline applies. This will mean that when taking annual leave, colleagues may have to manage return of assessments with feedback within a shorter period than 20 days.

### **Feedback**

#### **Forms of feedback<sup>1</sup>**

Feedback should be available for all assessments/assignments, including dissertations, projects and examinations (see guidance below).

Feedback can be provided in a variety of formats. In addition to written/typed/on-line feedback on assignments, feedback can be audio/video recorded, provided verbally in classes/tutorials, etc. Feedback is typically provided by teachers on individual assignments, but can be an overview of the attainment of a group of students, for dissemination to students and possibly to Personal Tutors. Feedback can take the form of both comments relating to specific issues (e.g. marginal comments on written work), and general comments bringing the main points together.

Peer feedback can be a valuable activity for both provider and recipient in developing reflection and understanding.

Opportunities to compare feedback across a number of assessments should be provided to students periodically, e.g. through the Personal Tutor system.

#### **Feedback should be clear about academic performance**

The language used in feedback should explicitly match the assessment/marking criteria and attainment level descriptors, which should be provided to the students in advance of completing the

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<sup>1</sup> **Reference:** David J. Nicol & Debra Macfarlane-Dick (2006) Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice, *Studies in Higher Education*, 31:2, 199-218, DOI: 10.1080/03075070600572090

assignment. Marking 'rubrics' can be helpful in many circumstances, while also recognising that it will not always be appropriate to deduce a mark mathematically from performance in each of the criteria.

Activities that help students to understand the assessment criteria in advance of being assessed can be extremely helpful. This might include self-assessment, peer-assessment, or assessing 'model' work.

Activities that help students to understand the feedback, for example group discussions, can also be extremely valuable.

### **Feedback should be constructive**

Feedback should carry a respectful tone, and contain a balance of both affirmative and developmental comments. Affirmative comments foster confidence and identify good practices that should be continued. Developmental (feed-forward) comments should always be provided, and clearly identify attainable goals to improve performance in future assignments.

Feedback proformas etc. should be designed to ensure that 'feed-forward' comments, and other good practices, are included. The structure of the feedback might constitute a 'feedback sandwich'. Potentially negative feedback can be framed in a constructive way, for example by commenting on the merits of features that nonetheless warrant further development.

There should be careful consideration of the number of developmental comments in a piece of feedback, avoiding over-long lists, and identifying an attainable number of targeted actions to raise attainment from the current level in a structured feedback section. Comments on less central issues could be made elsewhere (e.g. marginal comments on written work).

Where an assignment has multiple markers, there should be explicit mechanisms to promote consistency in academic expectations, and in feedback approaches/volume.

### **Feedback timing**

Assessment/feedback timings should be planned such that students receive feedback soon enough after the task for it to retain its relevance, and sufficiently in advance of upcoming related assignments to allow students to act upon the feedback.

Feedback should be returned within the College's stipulated maximum feedback deadline (with the exception of specifically exempted assignments), see first section above.

### **Students' use of feedback**

Students should engage with the feedback provided on their assignments at the earliest possible opportunity, to ensure that they understand its relevance to their work, and that they can apply it to their subsequent assignments.

Students should take all of the opportunities provided to obtain and benefit from feedback on their work, and be aware that it may take many forms (e.g. written, verbal, recorded, on line, from peers).

## Examination feedback

### Exams as summative and formative assessments

Written exams are an important assessment tool in most departments. For many of us they are the main way in which we measure the extent to which an individual, unaided student has met the learning outcomes of a course. The summative character of examinations is also crucial. Students are expected to integrate the content and concepts that they learned in the course and to demonstrate their understanding in answering questions, writing essays and solving problems.

Exams may serve an educational purpose beyond the purely diagnostic. All of the assessments students undergo during their programme of study, including the exams that they take before their final exams at the end of their programme, have the potential to form students' minds and prepare them for future assessments in their programme. This formative use of examinations is made particularly valuable by the relative rarity of examinations – students have fewer chances to learn from their mistakes – and the heavy weighting of exam marks in many of our courses. The formative character of exams is only brought out, however, if students have the opportunity to revisit their work and receive feedback on it.

### Exam feedback

There is an expectation that students are provided with feedback on mid-programme written exams, which may be given in the following ways. The whole cohort may be sent generic feedback which identifies common mistakes, gives examples of excellent work and encourages students to develop particular skills for future assessments. Alternatively, each student may be given the opportunity to see their own exam papers and to obtain personalized feedback from academic staff.

There will be times when generic feedback is appropriate, for instance when multiple-choice exams are used, when feedback must be provided quickly to prepare students for their next assessment, or when the administrative cost of individual feedback is unavoidably and prohibitively high. In most cases, though, efficiently-conducted individual feedback sessions provide most benefit to students at a reasonable cost of administrative and academic staff time. <sup>2</sup>

Policy Schedule	
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<sup>2</sup> Gibbs, G.; Simpson, C. Conditions Under Which Assessment Supports Students' Learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* 2004, 1, 3-31.