Royal Holloway Assessment and Feedback Strategy

Context

In 2012 Academic Board approved a set of Assessment Principles. These were loose underpinnings for assessment and feedback and while the basis of those has not changed, the recent focus on student outcomes and employability, parity of assessment, efficacy of feedback, timing and load of assessment mean that it is timely to reconsider our Assessment and Feedback Strategy. Feedback is defined as 'any information, process or activity which affords or accelerates student learning based on comments related to either formative or summative assessment activities'. This Strategy links with the 'Policy on the Return of Marked Student Work and Feedback'.

Principles

Assessment is the process by which students are evaluated for their demonstration of attainment of a skill or understanding of a concept or body of knowledge. With this in mind:

i) Assessments should be fair and appropriate:

a) offering an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding;
b) being specifically linked to the learning outcomes of the programme and modules;
c) offering the opportunity for formative and summative evaluation (please note that formative assessments can carry academic credit);
d) comprising tasks commensurate with the academic credits allocated;
e) having clear criteria and marking schemes;
f) satisfying regulatory and professional body frameworks;
g) being designed to ensure the highest levels of academic integrity;

ii) Programmes should:

h) balance the timing of assessments so that students can perform optimally;
i) ensure that some assessments offer the opportunity to demonstrate transferrable employability skills through setting assessments which relate to professional contexts and in relation to the College's *Careers Aspirations Strategy: E3*;
j) offer a complexity of assessment which progresses through each level of the programme, and is appropriate to the degree type;

iii) Students should:

k) be made aware of the expectation of an assessment and know how, where appropriate, to receive help in preparing it;
l) participate in self-assessment and peer-assessment when appropriate;
m) receive timely feedback (no more than 20 working days) so that they can apply learning to their next assessment;
n) receive appropriate feedback and engage with the feedback.

Katie Normington
3 March 2019

The Assessment Strategy grid shows how the principles can be embodied within assessment and contains self-evaluation questions to aid staff in ensuring that their assessments are optimal.

Assessment Strategy Grid

Assessment principle	Evidence of principle	Self-evaluation questions for assessors
a) Assessments offer an opportunity for all students to perform to the best of their ability;	Assessment is varied, commensurate with the academic credits and enables a diverse range of learners to excel through ensuring that different learning styles/preferences are accommodated.	i) Does assessment provide a variety of ways to test different types of learning, to encourage all students to perform optimally? ii) Is this diversity of assessments embedded within individual Course-Units, and balanced across Programmes?
b) Assessments are specifically linked to the learning outcomes of the programme and modules;	Learning outcomes are clearly tested through assessments.	i) Do the assessments give clear opportunities for students to demonstrate all learning outcomes? ii) Have programme learning outcomes matrices been employed to ensure that all students evidence the key programme outcomes irrespective of their elective choices?
c) Assessments offer the opportunity for developmental feedback	. Students are able to benefit from developmental feedback on assessments which may (not) contribute to the final course unit mark before completing assessments which contribute significantly to the final mark.	i) Is there an opportunity for formative learning/ feedback? ii) Do students receive feedback on assessments completed in the earlier part of a course in good time before completing later, summative assessments?
d) Assessments comprise tasks commensurate with the academic credits allocated;	Each assessment has an appropriate credit allocation in relation to the task and other departmental/School assessments.	i) Does the assessment credit allocation fit with the task? ii) Is credit allocation comparable with other modules in the department/School?
e) Assessments have clear criteria and marking schemes;	There are criteria for assessment tasks which are clearly communicated to students prior to the completion of the assessment.	i) Is there a clear mark scheme? ii) Are stepped marking schemes used (some assessment types do not require this)? iii) How have marking criteria been communicated to students, and discussed in order that they are fully understood?
f) Assessments satisfy regulatory and professional body frameworks;	Assessments fulfil any professional body requirements and benchmark against regulatory frameworks.	i) Do the assessments fulfil professional body requirements, if appropriate? ii) Do assessments fulfil regulatory expectations? iii) Do assessments fulfil the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and any QAA Subject Benchmark Statements?
g) Assessments are designed to ensure the highest levels of academic integrity;	Assessment design precludes opportunities for submitting work from third parties, plagiarism, or inappropriate collusion.	i) Are strategies such as invigilated examination, the use of similarity detection software (e.g. Turnitin), the use of personalised assignments, tracking assignment development, etc., used where appropriate? Please

		note, this is not an exhaustive list of suggestions.
h) Programmes balance the timing of assessments so that students can perform optimally;	Assessments are balanced across a programme so that students have time to complete tasks to the best of their abilities.	Is there a programmatic timetable for module assessments which ensures spread of timing?
i) Students are not overburdened with submission requirements.	Assessments are submitted electronically (except in exceptional circumstances, such as dissertations and physical artefacts). Students are never asked for both physical and electronic copies of assessments.	i) Is there unnecessary submission of physical materials? ii) Is TurnitIn being used appropriately? III) Where academic staff must mark physical copies, is the Department printing assessments (not the students)?
j) Programmes ensure that some assessments offer the opportunity to demonstrate transferrable employability skills through setting assessments which relate to professional contexts;	Programmes include activities and assessments which are based on transferable employability skills, and modelled on business/professional tasks.	i) Does the programme have assessments that test transferrable/employability skills through the use of work-related/based tasks? ii) Have careers specialists/employer representatives been involved in assessment design?
k) Programmes offer a complexity of assessment which progresses through each level of the programme, and is appropriate to the degree type;	UG Programmes have a progression of assessment from Year 1 to Final Year. UG- and M-level learning outcomes are differentiated.	i) Does the UG programme encourage a progression through assessment tasks from Year 1 to Final Year? ii) Are M-level activities and learning outcomes appropriately advanced?
l) Students should be made aware of the expectation of an assessment and know how to receive help in preparing it;	Assessment specifications and marking criteria are clearly communicated to students, and they know where to receive help.	i) How are assessment tasks and marking criteria communicated to students? ii) Do students know how to get advice on completing assessments? iii) Are the required key skills developed within the curriculum, with Personal Tutors, or with services such as CeDAS?
m) Students should participate in self-assessment and peer-assessment when appropriate;	Assessment includes self-assessment and peer-assessment to ensure maximum engagement, and understanding of assessment principles.	i) Does the module include peer or self-assessment? ii) How do you ensure students are engaged with assessment, and understand the assessment principles? iii) Have activities been designed to ensure equity in summative mark allocation by self/peers?
n) Students receive timely feedback (no more than 20 working days) so that they can apply learning to their next assessment;	Assessments with feedback are returned to students in 20 working days or less.	i) How do you ensure that the students receive feedback within the deadline? ii) Is a date published by when students should expect to receive feedback?

o) Students receive appropriate feedback and engage with the feedback.	Feedback engages students in understanding the mark received and what they need to do to improve.	i) How do you ensure that students engage with feedback? ii) What opportunities are there for students to follow-up with assessors, to better understand their feedback? iii) Does feedback comprise both affirmative and developmental guidance? The College has a 'Policy on the Return of Marked Student Work and Feedback', available [here]().