



# Feedback on Assessment Policy

**Doc No. To be completed by Quality**

To be completed by Quality:

Issue	Date of 1 <sup>st</sup> Issue	Last Reviewed	Date of Next Review	Responsibility of
01		28.08.19	28.08.21	HE Co-ordinator

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## 1. Purpose

This policy has been aligned to and meets the requirements of the revised UK Quality Code under Expectations for Standards and Quality. For further information click on the link:  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

This Policy offers guidance on:

- a) The principles of providing feedback to students.
- b) A listing of practical feedback methods for both coursework and exams.
- c) The main points of The South West College Quality Assurance expectations regarding assessment feedback to students.
- d) Ulster University principles of assessment and feedback as cited in the College Teaching and Learning Strategy.

## 2. Feedback

2.1. The role of feedback in the learning process is to inform the student of where and how their learning and performance can be improved. Feedback on learning can come from fellow students, lecturers, staff supporting the learning process such as demonstrators or the student themselves.

2.2. The provision of feedback on assessment is clearly a matter of importance to students, and is consistently rated as one of the most important issues of concern in the National Student Survey.

2.3. In addition, the QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education states, in its chapter on Assessment of Students and the recognition of Prior Learning In meeting the needs of students for feedback on their progression and attainment, it can be helpful to consider:

- the desirability of providing feedback at an appropriate time in the learning process and as soon as possible after the student has completed the assessment task. It is college policy that students should receive feedback on all assessment within 10 working days.
- specifying the nature and extent of feedback that students can expect and whether this is to be accompanied by the return of assessed work. It is important to consider the particular needs of students studying part-time and/or remotely.
- the effective use of comments on returned work, including relating feedback to intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, in order to help students identify areas for improvement as well as commending them for achievement.
- the role of oral feedback, either on a group or individual basis, as a means of supplementing or replacing written feedback.
- Providing guidance about the point in the module or programme where it is no longer appropriate for a member of staff to continue providing feedback to a student on his/her work. This is normally when a student is approaching a summative assessment, such as submission of a dissertation, or handing in a coursework assignment.

2.4. It is recognised however that feedback comes in a variety of forms dependent on discipline, and applying a strict College policy may actually inhibit the process of informing the student of where and how their learning and performance can be improved, where this process is better undertaken by

other means. Feedback may encompass: formal feedback; informal feedback; written; oral; individual; group; lecturer-student; student-student.

## 3. Feedback Statements

3.1. This policy therefore seeks to specify how feedback on assessment should be provided at module, programme, department and school level.

3.2. There are many innovative ways of incorporating feedback into the teaching process. This policy attempts to provide a framework within which such innovative methods can be operated.

3.3. For feedback on coursework a statement on practice within the programme, including timescales where appropriate, should be published in the programme handbook or other appropriate forum. This may, where appropriate, refer to module specifications for full details.

3.4. A statement on the form that feedback will take within each module should also be published. This could include, for example, whether feedback will be oral or written, whether template reports will be used, and whether feedback will be provided on an individual basis or in the form of a report to all students giving a general report on an individual assessment exercise. This may be published in module specifications or in programme handbooks.

3.5. Feedback on coursework may include a provisional mark for the piece of work in question. It should however be noted that all marks are subject to ratification by the relevant Progress-Board and Board of Examiners, normally at their meetings in July of each year; Progress-Boards and Boards reserve the right to assign a mark other than the provisional mark where, in the academic judgment of the Progress-Board / Board, it is appropriate to do so, or where mark is amended as a result of College/University regulation or policy (for instance in the event of a subsequent finding that an assessment offence has been committed).

3.6. Feedback on coursework should normally be provided, in the format specified in the appropriate feedback statement, within 10 working days of the deadline for submission of the piece of work in question. It should be noted that, where a piece of work is submitted after the normal deadline then it may not be possible to provide feedback within 10 working days.

3.7. Verbal feedback on examination performance, beyond the confirmed mark may be provided to students and this has been agreed with the college's higher awarding bodies.

## 4. The Principles of Providing Assessment Feedback to Students

4.1. The role of feedback in the learning process is to inform the student of where and how their learning and performance can be improved. Feedback on learning can come from fellow students, lecturers, and staff supporting the learning process such as demonstrators or the student themselves.

4.2. Although feedback to students is often thought of as being given in response to assessment, there are many forms of feedback on learning, which do not relate to assessment at all, ranging from

feedback on work in progress (e.g. during lab work) to more generic feedback on effective a student is performing their studies overall (end of year study advice). This paper, however, concentrates on providing feedback on assessment, both coursework and exams.

4.3. Feedback on assessment can be given to sum up the final judgement of the quality of the students work (**summative** feedback), or to help the student improve their work in future (**formative** feedback). A further, but in Higher Education less common form of feedback helps the student identify their aptitude and ability for a particular kind of learning (**diagnostic** feedback). A highly individualised form of feedback sometimes used in (performing) arts, sports, design and professional disciplines takes into account the students' previous developments, and uses this as the starting point for assessing progress or improvement of skills, knowledge and competence.

4.4. Considering best practice of providing feedback to students, the following values apply:

- Feedback is best provided as soon as possible after the assessment took place, so that the learning from feedback can still be connected to the assessment content.
- Feedback should be critical, but supportive to learning, so as to encourage a student's confident scrutiny of their future work.
- Feedback should -where possible- be directly related to learning outcomes and given assessment criteria, so that students are very clear on what was and will be expected of them.
- Feedback on work should go beyond editing (grammar, spelling, mathematical notation, presentation) and link to the broader learning outcomes, unless of course, these are included in the learning outcomes. Common editing type feedback can be given through usage of a feedback tick list (see below).
- Feedback should be given with care and attention to standards of respect for diversity and individuality, and should rarely be directed at the student but rather at their work.
- Feedback is most likely to have an effect if students are fully aware that what they encounter is meant as feedback, and that they should take note of it in order to improve their learning.

## 5. Practical Feedback Methods

5.1. The most common forms we tend to use in Higher Education for giving feedback is written feedback on students' individual work, or verbal feedback either to individuals or groups of students. But work load pressure, innovative means of assessment, direct student demands and a range of other pressures, can lead to a need to use less traditional modes of feedback.

- Providing **generic feedback** in lectures or workshops: feedback is given on what the majority of students seem to be struggling with, without reference to individual assessments.
- **Self-assessment**: allow students to provide an initial self-assessment at the end of their assessed work, according to a set grid or checklist of assessment criteria. This helps students in the fastest possible manner, to have an indication of the quality of their achievement.
- **Student steered feedback**: the student is asked at the end of their assessment to put forward a request for feedback on a particular part of their learning. This is one of the strongest means to make a student evaluate their own progress, and allows the assessor to target a student's concerns most precisely.
- **Feedback statement banks**: collate a structured listing of carefully phrased feedback remarks you most often use for a particular assessment. You can then use it alongside your marking for each piece of assessed work. When marking, simply cross reference to the relevant feedback comment, or use

a fixed coding system and give the student the marked up feedback statement list along with the marked work. Ideally, your feedback statement listing also leaves space for individual feedback.

- Introducing feedback statement banks are a prime opportunity to improve the quality of feedback, by commenting on how improvements can be made regarding the issue for which the student is being marked down.
- **Electronic feedback** can combine the benefit of speedy feedback returns, with the advantages using feedback statement banks, which list standard feedback given to common mistakes (tackling repeated feedback on, say, grammar problems or notational mistakes).
- **Class marking:** collate parts of actual student work, to let students themselves mark and provide feedback on an assessment they have in fact, all handed in. Question by question, the collated work could for instance consist of an example of a great answer, and an example of problematic answer to the same question.
- **Peer marking and feedback:** provide clear assessment criteria and possibly model answers to students, and ask students to mark each other's (anonymous) work and provide full written feedback. This not only helps the person receiving the feedback, but also moves the learning from the assessing student, to a higher level. Be prepared to find that students mark each other much 'tougher' than you might ever consider, so do remind them of the need to mark the work, not the student and to be respectful and careful of each other.
- **Individual verbal feedback:** most suitable for the project type assessed work, such as work based learning progress feedback, or feedback on project work.

## 6. Principles of Assessment and Feedback

6.1. In addition, the college as part of its teaching and learning strategy for Higher Education is be adopting and promoting the REAP principles of assessment and feedback. It is expected that all higher education teams consider and implement these principle as part of their assessment planning and when designing and validating new curriculum which are as follows:

- i. **Clarify good performance** - Help to clarify, from the early stages of a programme, what good performance means (goals, criteria, standards);
- ii. **Encourage time and effort on task** - Encourage 'time and effort' on challenging learning tasks, which recognise the importance of learning from the tasks, not just demonstrating learning through tasks;
- iii. **Deliver timely high quality feedback-** Deliver timely learner-related feedback information that helps students to self-correct and communicates clear, high, expectations and professionalism;
- iv. **Provide opportunities to act on feedback** - Provide opportunities for students to act on feedback and close any gap between current and desired performance through complementary and integrated curriculum design and pedagogic practice;
- v. **Encourage positive motivational beliefs** - Ensure that all assessment has a beneficial, constructive, impact on student learning, encouraging positive motivational beliefs, confidence and self-esteem;
- vi. **Develop self-assessment and reflection** - Facilitate the development of self- and peer-assessment skills and reflection on learning, to enable students to progressively take more responsibility for their own learning, and to inspire a lifelong capacity to learn;
- vii. **Encourage interaction and dialogue** - Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning and professional practice (student-student, lecturer-student and lecturer-lecturer) including supporting the development of student learning groups and peer learning communities.

## 7. Monitoring and Review

7.1. The College will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this Policy.

7.2. The College will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote this Policy effectively and is committed to reviewing this Policy on a regular basis, in consultation with the recognised trade unions, statutory organisations such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and in line with models of good practice.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chief Executive)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairman of Governing Body)

## Document Development

Please complete with details regarding the development of this Policy.

### D1. Working Group

Details of staff who were involved in the development of this policy:

Name	Position

### D2. Consultation

Details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this policy:

Please refer to Equality Screening Consultation Guidance.

Name	Organisation	Date

### D3. Approval Dates:

Details	Date Approved
Equality Screening <i>(please refer to Equality Screening Guidance)</i>	
Quality Checked <i>(please refer to Quality Checklist)</i>	
SLT	
Governing Body <i>(SLT to decide if PPS needs to go to Governing Body)</i>	

### D4. Communication Plan:

Please provide details and dates as to how this policy will be communicated, implemented and disseminated:

Action:	Action by:	Date:

**D5. Document History**

Issue no. under review  (Please see the front page)	Date of review:  (Date)	Who was involved in reviewing the document?  (Name/s)	Were changes made to the document after reviewing?  (Yes or No)	If changes have been made, please provide brief details:	New Issue No.	If Yes, did the document need to go through consultation again?  (Yes*/No)	If Yes, did the document need to be Equality Screened again?  (Yes*/No)	If Yes, date those affected by document will be alerted of updated document:  (Date)

\* If you answered 'Yes' in columns E or F, you must forward details of additional consultation and/or screening to the Equality Officer.