

Feedback following Summative Examinations

Rationale

The University is introducing this policy to promote the adoption of minimum standards of practice in the provision of feedback to students following summative examinations. In doing so it is supported by the SRC, which has been fully involved in the development of the policy.

The educational rationale for feedback following assessment is well understood and the principles of good feedback are recognised across the institution. The application of these principles to summative examinations has been uneven and there may be a number of reasons for this: summative examinations typically occur at the end of a course, at which point feedback may be seen as having little potential benefit in terms of improving future performance; and pressures on staff at examination times may mean that feedback is delayed, limiting its usefulness. However, there are reasons to believe that feedback following summative examinations may be beneficial and should not be neglected:

- In many degree programmes, courses build on those previously taught and assessed, so that feedback derived from summative examinations may promote content-specific learning that will lead to future improved performance.
- Feedback may address generic examination skills and, indeed, graduate attributes¹.
- Subject-specific feedback is obviously of considerable importance for students required to re-sit examinations.
- Feedback may help to promote student engagement with the assessment process, deepening the understanding of assessment criteria and their use, particularly if combined with feed-forward approaches for subsequent assessment.
- In preparing feedback, academics will reflect on cohort examination outcomes and may derive important insights that have implications for future teaching.

Feedback following summative examinations should be provided for the reasons set out above and is not intended to facilitate appeals or the challenging of academic judgement.

Policy

All those responsible for summative examinations are strongly encouraged to engage students with expectations and marking criteria in advance of the examination.

Schools will devise and publish a set of **minimum standards** for feedback following summative examinations, to be applied by all courses for which they are responsible. The outline standards in this policy are not intended to restrain Schools or Courses from making more detailed or extensive provision. The policy is intended to apply to continuing undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, but Schools may wish to consider whether aspects of the policy could be relevant to graduating students.

¹ E.g. Independent and Critical Thinkers, Effective Communicators, Adaptable, etc.

Decisions on the approach to examination feedback will be governed by the principles of good feedback, pedagogical considerations relevant to the particular course, staff workload, the need to maintain closed question banks, etc.

The *standards* will include, but are not restricted to, the following:

1. **All students should receive a mark/grade for each summative examination.** If this mark/grade requires to be confirmed by an external examiner at a later date students should be made aware of its provisional nature. Where it is possible and practical to do so, schools are encouraged to provide students with a breakdown of how the examination mark/grade has been derived by indicating levels of performance in relation to individual questions or in relation to the domains assessed in the examination.
2. **Feedback should be linked to intended learning outcomes and marking criteria**, so as to allow students to better understand how their performance has led to the mark/grade awarded.
3. The provision of **individual feedback** to all students is *not* expected as the norm. School *standards* will indicate the degree to which individual feedback will be available. Where a course proposes more extensive feedback provision than that indicated in a School's minimum standards, details shall be published in the Course Information Document. (In some courses, automation may make the provision of individual feedback straightforward and efficient; where this is the case it is encouraged.)
4. **Individual feedback should be made available on request** to those students who, in order to progress or graduate, are required to re-sit examinations. The mechanism for requesting feedback in these circumstances should be published. Individual feedback should, where possible, be delivered face to face but may be delivered by other means.²
5. **Generic feedback** must be provided following all summative examinations. The form which this should take is not prescribed and Schools may allow those with overall responsibility for examinations within courses to determine the mechanisms to be employed. The content of generic feedback will normally include reference to the typical features of performance at a range of standards. Courses may consider it appropriate to draw comparisons between the overall performance of the cohort and that of previous cohorts, and/or to provide information about the range of performance within the cohort. Schools must publish their minimum standards with respect to generic feedback and courses must publish the particular procedures to be adopted, so that, in advance of the examination, students are fully aware of what they can expect.
6. **Timelines** should be specified. The adoption of the following is regarded as a minimum:
 - i. Generic feedback should be provided as soon as possible, but no later than 15 working days following the publication of results (including working days outwith semesters).
 - ii. Where provision is made for individual feedback, the student must submit as soon as possible, but no later than 15 working days following the publication of results, a request for such feedback.

² Where there are frequently large numbers of re-sit candidates, courses may wish to consider holding feedback workshops. These may be an effective means of delivering feedback as well as having the additional benefit of reducing the number of students seeking individual feedback.

- iii. Those with responsibility for arranging individual feedback should respond to requests, and make arrangements for feedback to take place, as soon as is reasonably possible. Such arrangements should particularly bear in mind the needs of students preparing for re-sit examinations.
- iv. Students must be made aware of revised timelines in situations where it becomes apparent that, for good reason, published deadlines will not be met.

This policy does not affect the right of students to view examination scripts.

Roles and responsibilities

1. School Learning and Teaching Committees shall devise, publish and publicise the minimum standards outlined in this policy.
2. School Learning and Teaching Committees shall scrutinise and approve the particular feedback approaches to be employed by courses for which they are responsible, and ensure that these are transparent.
3. College Learning and Teaching Committees shall scrutinise and approve the minimum standards of Schools, to ensure a general degree of consistency.
4. College Learning and Teaching Committees, and Boards of Studies, shall monitor, through the usual quality assurance processes, the implementation of this policy.
5. Students shall be actively involved in the development of standards and the monitoring of their implementation.

*Examination Feedback Working Group
March 2014*