

FACULTY OF NATURAL SCIENCES  
GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE- FEEDBACK

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Feedback is central to learning and is provided to students to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills and to help promote learning and facilitate self-improvement. However, it is clear that at times, current procedures for providing effective feedback fall short of students' expectations, as evidenced by the fact that students frequently raise feedback as an issue through surveys such as the NSS and via other forums such as the Faculty Student Staff Committees.

Some quotes from students are shown below:

"Feedback has often been given much later than the required 2 weeks, usually without a good reason or without keeping students informed of the delay (has been as late as 2 months)!" Chemistry student, NSS 2015

"Lack of useful feedback. There was an emphasis on providing feedback but often it was really poorly delivered (as in 1 line review of a 20-minute presentation)." Maths student, NSS 2015

"Feedback was terrible. Very limited to absent in most cases. I don't mind having to wait a long time to get my coursework back, but I do mind the lack of comments." Biochemistry Student, NSS 2014

### Types of Feedback

Feedback can take many forms and may be:

- Individual – identifying specific issues relating to one student's work
- Generic – referring to general points about the assessment as a whole, arising from an overview of the work produced by a cohort
- Given following both formative assessment (i.e. that which does not contribute to the module mark, such as activities prepared for discussion in seminars, practice essays etc) and summative assessment (i.e. that which does contribute to the module mark, for example following Coursework and Examinations).

Whether delivered in written, oral or other format, it is important that when you are providing feedback, you highlight this clearly to students.

### General Good Practice

All feedback should be:

- Timely
- Relevant
- Relate directly to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the assignment
- Provided for all types of formal assessment
- Clear, motivating, and constructive
- Developmental- ie: enabling students to consolidate learning and achievement
- Offered in a format appropriate to the module/course and the assessment

The nature and extent of feedback the student may expect should be clearly indicated for each assessment task at the time it is set. At this time, students should also be told when to expect feedback.

When grades/ marks are provided to a student before an Exam Board, they should be clearly identified as:

- Provisional
- Subject approval by the Exam Board, and potentially subject to moderation

Students should be actively encouraged to review their feedback, reflect on its implications, implement recommended changes, and seek further advice and guidance when required.

Some helpful additional guidance:

The EDU offer an introductory course on Assessment and Giving Feedback:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/educational-development/workshops/introduction-to/assessing-and-giving-feedback/>

The Student Success Guide provides advice to students on what to expect from feedback:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/success-guide/ug/assessments-and-feedback/>



## Feedback on Coursework

Feedback should be provided as soon as possible after the student has completed the assessment task:

- Feedback on formative assessment should be given in time for students to make use of it prior to summative assessment
- Feedback on summative assessment should be given within 10 working days of the submission date of the work.

Clear guidance should be given regarding the point in the module/course/ unit of study where it is no longer appropriate for staff to provide formative feedback. In order to manage expectations, this should be communicated to students at the time the assessment task is set.

### Timeliness of Coursework Feedback

The time between submission and return of coursework depends on the nature of the assessment. Where feedback is essential to further aspects of the course, including future coursework, a rapid return of feedback is important.

The College requires coursework to be returned within a maximum of 10 working days. Intensive courses with associated weekly small-group tutorials will require a much faster turnaround time. It is up to individual departments to set their own deadlines to meet the needs of their own courses, but within the two week period.

Where the coursework is final, i.e. where future activities do not build on, or depend on, feedback from the piece of work, a fast turnaround is less vital. For these assessments, marked work should be returned before the end of the term in which they were set, unless the submission deadline falls within the last two weeks of term, in which case it should be returned by the end of the first week of the following term. For substantial summative coursework, exceptions to the 10 working day turnaround rule may need to be applied, but these should be negotiated in advance with the DUGS, or equivalent and clearly communicated to students.

In all cases it is important to set a date for the return of coursework in advance and to ensure that this is published as part of the exercise.

## Feedback on Examinations

Feedback on examinations should normally be provided/published within 10 working days of the conclusion of the exam sub-board meeting at which the marks are reviewed and agreed.

Procedures for exam feedback must be clearly communicated to students at a programme level at the start of the year and at a module level by lecturers at the start of lecture modules so as to manage student expectations. The following should be clearly outlined:

- The type of feedback that will be given following the exam, i.e. generic and/ or individual, and the reasons for this
- Whether feedback will include the opportunity to view examination scripts\*, or not, in accordance with agreed procedures within each Department

\*It should be noted that under the the Data Protection Act 98, students (data subjects) have no right of access to their exam scripts, once submitted to their examiners, at any time. The College is therefore under no *obligation* to make available either the actual scripts or copies of them. *However*, it is good practice to allow students to view their scripts for feedback purposes.

Faculty guidance on this matter is that, as a minimum, individual feedback should be provided for January exams/tests in year 1. An opportunity should be provided for students to discuss their exam scripts on a 1-to-1 basis with at least one staff member - personal tutor(s), or subject tutor(s), or 1st marker(s), or course/year convenor(s). The exam/test script(s) should be made available for the student to view at this meeting, but the student cannot take the script from the meeting or make a copy.

## Higher Education Academy

The HEA has produced some useful 'Toolkits' related to feedback:

[HEA Feedback Toolkit: 10 feedback responses for your students](#)

[HEA Feedback Toolkit: 10 strategies to engage your students with feedback](#)

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/>