

## Assessment Feedback Policy

### 1. Introduction & Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to assessment undertaken as part of Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate courses only. Assessment feedback policy in relation to Further Education courses is defined by the awarding bodies.
- 1.2 The University believes that constructive feedback is essential for successful learning. It considers that feedback motivates and supports reflection, especially when valid criticism is accompanied by appropriate positive commentary.
- 1.3 Good assessment feedback has the following qualities:
- 1.3.1 It enables students to reflect on their learning, to benefit from both their mistakes and their achievements, and to take action in order to improve.
- 1.3.2 It is qualitative. A mark alone indicates only a level of performance; it does not illustrate to students why they performed at that level or what they might do to improve. The value of feedback is therefore principally in the commentary.
- 1.3.3 It addresses the assessment criteria that have been defined for that assessment task. This helps to ensure:
- that it is the evidence of learning, rather than the student or the artefact, that is assessed;
  - that the assessor considers what was learnt through producing the work; and
  - that the comments correlate with the mark awarded.
- 1.3.4 It must be timely. It only has value if it gives the student sufficient opportunity to reflect and to take action in order to improve.
- 1.4 Feedback should be provided to all students on all assessed work, whether formative or summative. The University does not prescribe the mechanism for feedback on formative assessment, which can take several forms (refer to Appendix 1: *Feedback Guidance for UCA students, staff & visitors*), and can come from other students (in the form of peer review), external visitors from industry, as well as from academic staff. The mechanism for feedback on summative assessment is described below.

### 2. Formative or Summative?

- 2.1 All assessment feedback is formative. That is, it informs the students of their progress in a manner which will allow them to reflect, and to take action to improve. It allows “*teachers and students to recognise and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning*” (Cowie & Bell).
- 2.2 Although all feedback is formative, it can be applied to both formative and summative assessments.
- 2.3 Formative assessments are those designed purely to inform both staff and students of the students’ progress, allowing the students to reflect on and improve their work in time for the summative assessment point. Their primary purpose therefore is to enable feedback to be provided. Formative assessments do not contribute to the students’ marks or award.
- 2.4 Summative assessments are those which contribute to the unit mark. However they also have a formative purpose, as the feedback on these assessments allows the student to reflect and improve.

### 3. Principles

- 3.1 Feedback must be provided to students on all assessed work, both formative and summative;
- 3.2 Feedback should address the relevant<sup>1</sup> assessment criteria for that unit as stated in the unit descriptor;
- 3.3 Feedback on formative assessments may be provided in a variety of ways described in the Appendix 1: *Feedback Guidance for UCA students, staff and visitors*;
- 3.4 In the case of summative assessments, feedback must be provided on each assessment component. It must comprise both a mark indicating the level of performance, and a written commentary (qualitative feedback), in accordance with the policy described below;
- 3.5 All qualitative feedback must be comprehensive, clear and constructive;
- 3.6 All qualitative feedback should, where possible and appropriate, use language consistent with relevant mark descriptors (see Appendix 1 of the Common Credit Framework);
- 3.7 All qualitative feedback should provide clear guidance on what could have been done better and how;
- 3.8 Feedback must be provided to students as soon as possible after the assessment has been completed.

### 4. Feedback on Summative Assessments

- 4.1 In accordance with the Common Credit Framework regulations:
  - 4.1.1 each summative assessment component is awarded a mark on the scale 0 – 100. This is the lowest level of granularity that has an outcome in the form of a mark. There is no provision for marks to be awarded to individual assessment criteria or learning outcomes;
- 4.2 It is a requirement of the University that these principles are observed:
  - 4.2.1 feedback shall be provided to a student in relation to each summative assessment component;
  - 4.2.2 the feedback on each assessment component shall normally be provided on a standard form for this purpose, but may, at the discretion of the Head of School, be provided by other means as long as these principles are observed;
  - 4.2.3 the feedback on each assessment component shall comprise a percentage mark (quantitative feedback) together with narrative comments (qualitative feedback);
  - 4.2.4 the narrative comments shall address each of the relevant assessment criteria as stated in the unit descriptor. The feedback may, where appropriate, also include general narrative comments which do not refer to specific assessment criteria;
  - 4.2.5 the narrative comments must be honest, comprehensive, clear and constructive;

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that not all assessment criteria that have been defined for a unit are relevant to each assessment component – only those that are relevant need to be addressed in the feedback.

- 4.2.6 the narrative comments should, where possible and appropriate, use language consistent with relevant mark descriptors (see Appendix 1 of the Common Credit Framework);
- 4.2.7 the narrative comments should provide clear guidance on what could have been done better and how;
- 4.2.8 the feedback must be provided to the student (normally by way of the completed feedback form), within four working weeks<sup>2</sup> of the assessment due date, with the exception of feedback on dissertations (or equivalent) which must be provided within eight working weeks<sup>2</sup>. In exceptional circumstances (i.e. staff illness), where it is not possible to return feedback within this timeframe, students will be briefed accordingly, with a clear indication of when feedback will be available.
- 4.3 The feedback form shall be completed following agreement between those members of academic staff involved in the assessment of that component (the assessors) of the mark to be awarded for that component. The form shall be completed by one of those assessors, as determined by the unit leader.
- The form shall clearly state the names of the assessors, and shall clearly indicate which of those assessors completed the form.
- 4.4 Following return of the feedback form to the students, the person completing the form shall endeavour to be available to discuss the feedback with the student at an appropriate timetabled session.
- 4.5 Note that once the mark sheet for each assessment component has been submitted to the Campus Registry the mark for each student will be entered onto the student record system (SITS). As soon as the mark has been entered it will be displayed to the student via the myRecords function of the student portal (myUCA).

*Approved by QEC  
7 May 2013*

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<sup>2</sup> A 'working week' is defined as a period of seven days during term time.

## Appendix 1

### Feedback Guidance for UCA students, staff and visitors

Although aimed primarily at students, this guidance is designed to help anyone at UCA involved in receiving and giving feedback: students, staff and visitors. It seeks to give the whole community at UCA a better understanding of what feedback is for and how best to use it.

Individual Schools and their respective disciplines will have their own specific approaches and methods of reviewing and providing feedback which typically reflect the practices of their particular industries and communities. This generic guidance reflects the shared practices experienced across the subject areas represented at UCA.

#### What is feedback?

1. Feedback is advice and information, provided to inform current work or help you reflect on work already done.

#### What are the benefits of feedback?

2. Feedback can help inform the development of current work by:
  - a. Highlighting areas to develop, prioritise or change
  - b. Providing new ideas, insights, contexts or perspectives to consider
3. Feedback can help you improve your work for future summative assessment events or for the development of your portfolio.
4. Feedback can provide ideas by way of potential references, offering inspiration, suggesting different approaches and methodologies and technical information to help with the realisation of your ideas.
5. Feedback can encourage you to recognise the merit and potential in your own work.
6. Feedback should stimulate independence by encouraging you to reflect upon your work continuously.

#### In what forms might feedback appear?

7. Feedback as advice – “If I were you I would take this approach because....”
8. Feedback as guidance – “What you did worked well in this way... Have you thought about trying this next time?”
9. Feedback as direction – “Do this....”

#### WHO provides feedback? WHEN does it happen? WHAT forms might it take?

10. **WHO:** UCA Tutors
11. **WHEN:** During tutorials; in lectures and workshops; at assessment points including portfolio reviews
12. **WHAT:** Written feedback as comments and narrative especially after formal assessment events; verbal comments in conversation, during tutorials and after presentations; drawings and sketches

13. **WHO:** External reviewers and visitors including professional practitioners and artists
14. **WHEN:** During workshops; at reviews of your work; at external and public events; at exhibitions
15. **WHAT:** Typically verbal feedback about your work, often relating it to the professional and artistic contexts with which they are most familiar
  
16. **WHO:** Your Peers
17. **WHEN:** In the studio, workshops and library; online – via myUCA and other social media
18. **WHAT:** Feedback from your peers who are exploring and developing the same skills, concepts and approaches at the same time as you are is invaluable
  
19. **WHO:** Friends and Family
20. **WHEN:** Outside of the University context, feedback from lay-persons and family can be incredibly useful in understanding how clearly and effectively your work communicates and how it might be received by non-expert audiences
21. **WHAT:** Often in the form of questions and praise
  
22. **WHO:** Your personal self-reflection
23. **WHEN:** This can be prompted by your tutors, but should become a key part of your own personal development and day-to-day practice
24. **WHAT:** Sketchbooks and journals, portfolio revisions, discussions with peers and tutors

#### **How should I use feedback?**

25. Feedback which comes from a wide range of sources and in such different forms, will inevitably offer you different options as to how you might take your work forward and will at times be contradictory. Learning to appraise, manage and utilise feedback is a key skill for any creative practitioner.
  
26. You should consider whether feedback is informed or uninformed – for example feedback from a technician about a technical process has a different status and usefulness from opinions offered by family and friends. At times your tutor will direct you clearly to pursue a specific path and this guidance is intended to steer you deliberately towards the best outcomes. In contrast, a review of or discussion of your work with a range of visitors and tutors might throw up various suggestions for inspiration that you will need to appraise more carefully and reflect upon to ensure that you progress your work coherently.
  
27. All feedback is an active dialogue which crucially relies upon you to respond with questions and actions, follow up on suggested references and feed forward into your future work.

#### **How can I prepare for feedback?**

28. It is important that you understand the criteria that are being used to assess your work. Knowing what skills, knowledge and understanding are being looked for will help you to anticipate the kind of feedback that is likely to be offered.
  
29. Presenting your work and ideas clearly to tutors, visitors and fellow students will make it easier for them to offer effective feedback. Look back at previous feedback you have received and make sure that you don't repeat the same mistakes again. Listen carefully, take notes or ask a colleague to take notes on your behalf. In some situations it might be possible to record a session and this can be helpful in reviewing your performance and the feedback you receive.

### **How can I give effective feedback?**

30. Always try to provide a balanced assessment of the outcomes of the learning process – strengths and weaknesses.
31. Make criticism constructive – suggest ways to progress and improve.
32. Make your feedback legible and clear.
33. Provide feedback as quickly as possible and be prepared to follow up with clarifications and elaborations.