Guidance for the Assessment and Feedback Policy

Scope
All taught students studying for an award at City, University of London.

This policy will apply to partnership provision unless equivalent alternative arrangements have been specifically agreed between City and the partner institution. Details will be included in the Memorandum of Agreement for the partnership.

To be read in conjunction with
Senate Regulation 19 Assessment
Assessment Feedback Turnaround Times Guidance and Monitoring Requirements in Section 6 of the Quality Manual
Academic Misconduct Policy and Guidance

Updated
Minor updates to terminology October 2016

Guidance - Assessment and Feedback

1. Marking and grading summative assessments

Markers should follow agreed procedures when marking and grading summative assessments, usually:

- The assessment is marked by the internal examiner.

- The assessment is second/double marked or moderated by another marker at module level.

- The marks are entered into the designated student records system.

- A sample of scripts is sent to the External Examiner for consideration. If the External Examiner raises concerns or suggests a change to marks, a review of cohort marks may be undertaken.

- Reports are generated from the designated student records system for consideration by the Assessment Board.

Where marking processes identify a difference of opinion between markers the markers must discuss and try to agree a mark. Where this is not successful the Chair of the Assessment Board or their nominee must consider and resolve the matter; they may request a further marker to consider the work or consult with the External Examiner(s). Ultimately, the decision of the Assessment Board is final.

2. Types of feedback on assessed work

The Assessment and Feedback Policy lists different types of feedback on assessed work.

Some examples of how such feedback can be used include:

Individual or group verbal feedback

This could be delivered instantly (e.g. immediately after a presentation or a performance) or at a subsequent meeting. It could be delivered in various contexts, including one-to-one meetings or during lectures or seminars. It could be provided only on demand.

Individual or group written and/or audio feedback

This is usually delivered after a period of time has elapsed. The length of time will depend on the type of assessment and the extent of the feedback. The strategic learning environment could be utilised to provide this feedback.

Audio feedback would usually be similar in content to written feedback but provided in an audio format, for example delivered as an mp3 file to enable students to listen to it in mobile contexts. Where written feedback is individualised this could be done in a free text format or using some form of pro forma, for example providing a matrix of assessment and grade-related criteria within which ticks and/or brief comments are then inputted. Written feedback could also include providing students with access to their examination scripts and the comments on them under supervised conditions.

Model answers and/or example solutions

These may be appropriate depending on the subject area. Both can be provided at one level (e.g. bare pass or distinction/1st) or at various levels, e.g. to provide information on the type of answer that might generate a 1st class mark or a distinction as opposed to a third class mark

or a pass. The strategic learning environment could be utilised to provide this feedback. It might also be possible to provide them for a limited period of time only.

Thought should be given to whether the provision of model answers and/or example solutions might cause difficulties, for example in disciplines in which assessment questions tend to be similar from year to year or in or where an answer tends to be simply right or wrong.

Previous assessment questions/papers/performances

These could be provided by themselves or could be accompanied by supporting information, e.g. outline solutions and/or model answers and/or commentaries on strengths and weaknesses. The strategic learning environment could be utilised to provide this feedback. It might also be possible to provide them for a limited period of time only.

Thought should be given to whether the provision of model answers and/or example solutions might cause difficulties, for example in disciplines in which assessment questions tend to be similar from year to year or in or where an answer tends to be simply right or wrong.

Generic feedback

This could encompass a variety of feedback. Some examples include providing information on the key outputs arising from the assessment, e.g. the most common errors made by students; or providing a breakdown of student marks and/or trends on questions to enable students to compare relative student performance.

3. Provision of feedback on examinations

Feedback on examinations is governed by the Assessment Regulations and Assessment and Feedback Policy.

Some feedback should be given on all examinations. Programme Teams should decide on the type of feedback that is appropriate for their examinations. The following guidance notes have been developed to support teams in identifying what is appropriate.

This guidance provides information on the minimum requirements around the provision of feedback on examinations. Good practice should be encouraged and shared where appropriate. Programme Teams should also ensure that thought is given to the level and style of feedback given to students required to resit an examination so that their learning is supported appropriately.

Definitions

Examinations encompass all timetabled and time-constrained assessment activities, be they written, oral, performance-related or practical.

Feedback encompasses a marker's comments on a student's performance in an assessment component, including comments on their mark. Feedback may be given on summative or formative work.

Feedback on examinations should

1. Promote learning, enabling students to learn from the assessment and improve their performance in subsequent assessments.
2. Be linked to assessment criteria.
3. Be appropriate to the nature of the assessment activity.

4. Provide a student with an understanding of the way in which their mark was derived and the level of their success in meeting the assessed learning outcomes; it should also provide them with an indication of areas for improvement in the future.

5. Be returned within a time period that takes into account the turnaround time required to ensure fair and rigorous marking and moderation if relevant (moderation may, but is not required to, precede the giving of feedback).

The key message is that any feedback given on examinations should be given to support student learning. This should govern the type and extent of feedback given.

Types of feedback

Feedback on examinations can encompass varying methods. The following is a list of examples, but cannot be considered exhaustive:

- Individual oral feedback, e.g. immediately after a performance, in a tutorial session or following the release of results.

- Group oral feedback, for example in a lecture or a specially-organised group feedback session.

- Individualised written and/or audio and/or verbal comments.

- Model answers and/or example solutions (either generally or for different levels of achievement) provided after an assessment.

- Previous assessment questions/papers with outline solutions and/or model answers provided after an assessment.

- Recordings of performances (current or previous) with commentaries on strengths and weaknesses provided after an assessment.

- Matrix of assessment and grade-related criteria within which ticks and/or brief comments could be inputted.

- Generic feedback, for example providing summaries of common features/ strengths/mistakes.

- Breakdown of student marks and/or trends on questions to enable comparison of relative student performance.

- Providing students with access to their examination scripts and the comments on them under supervised conditions.

- Resit revision sessions.

- List of tips for improving assessment techniques provided after an assessment.

Schools and programmes are asked to consider which type(s) of feedback are most appropriate. Different types of feedback may be used for different types of examination and/or students, although where appropriate Schools and programmes are asked to facilitate consistent approaches to feedback within programmes and across similar examination types.

Factors that Schools and programme teams might wish to consider when deciding on the type(s) of feedback to use are:

- The type of examination.

- The size of the examination and its weighting in the final degree classification.

- Whether the examination is in Programme Stage 1, 2 or 3 (undergraduate students only).

- Whether the examination is in January or April/May.

- Whether the student is required to resit.

Schools are asked to note that they will need to provide guidance to staff on the types of comments that should be made on examination scripts in order to protect staff from the risk of challenges by students as a result of, for example, inappropriate, incomplete or vague comments. This is important because students have access to any comments made on their scripts through the Freedom of Information Act.

Schools and programme teams might wish to make use of the Strategic Learning Environment to support the delivery of feedback on assessments, including on examinations. Support for the use of learning technologies for assessment and feedback is available from the LEaD.

The provision of feedback on examinations is not an opportunity for students to negotiate marks or question academic judgement. As such, information provided on this area should be kept separate from any information provided on the appeals and extenuating circumstances procedures.

Feed-forward

The provision of feed-forward is considered to be a strong learning tool and, as such, should be encouraged. However, providing feed-forward on examinations does not negate the need for the provision of feedback.

Examples of feed-forward include, but are not limited to:

- Detailed assessment guidance provided in advance of the assessment, including information on assessment criteria, possibly with commentaries.
- Past or practice exam papers provided in advance of an assessment.
- Recordings of previous performances with commentaries on strengths and weaknesses provided in advance of an assessment.
- Revision guidance.
- Revision sessions.
- Enabling students to mark and discuss previous students' work during the course of the term.
- List of tips for improving assessment techniques provided in advance of an assessment.

Timing the provision of feedback

Feedback on examinations should be provided within the timescales set out in the Assessment and Feedback Policy.

Communicating with students and recording feedback provision

Students are very interested in the receipt of feedback on assessments, including on examinations. In order to optimise student use and appreciation of this type of feedback, it is important to manage student expectations around feedback on examinations. It is also important to engage students actively in the receipt and use of feedback. The following principles are provided to support Schools and programmes in this:

- Programme teams should communicate to students the meaning of feedback on examinations and why it is important to their learning development, as well as the mechanisms and timescales by which it will be provided and what they should do with the feedback in order to improve their performance.
- Information on feedback, including feedback on examinations, should be provided to students in programme handbooks and programme and module specifications.
- Programme teams should stress the importance of reflection and independent learning as an integral part of the feedback process.

- Programme teams should encourage students to use the feedback they receive to inform their Personal Development Planning and to support students' self-reflection of their achievements.

The provision of feedback on examinations, as with other forms of feedback, should be reflected upon during programme evaluation and review processes, including Annual Programme Evaluations and during Programme Committee meetings.

4.   Academic Misconduct

Cases of suspected academic misconduct should be managed in accordance with the Assessment Regulations, the Academic Misconduct Policy and Guidance, and the Disciplinary Regulations and Policy.