Getting Started with Feedback

The purpose of this document is to provide a short, temporary, one-stop shop to support staff providing feedback to students while a more comprehensive repository of resources is being developed for hosting on the Curriculum Framework webpages. Additional resources to read/consider are listed after the Top ten things to do when marking summative work.

Introduction

Marking and feedback at the University of Reading seeks to support students in their learner journey, highlighting what they did well, where there is room for improvement and suggestions for further study, development of key skills and/or suggestions for their next piece of coursework. The majority of work is submitted online; moderated marks and feedback must be returned to students online, within 15 working days of submission.

It is expected that all assessment tasks have been internally verified and approved by the External Examiner. Assessment criteria and/or marking rubrics should exemplify how judgements on students' work will be made. The marking of students' work should adhere to these criteria, carefully explaining why the mark was awarded, how the student did or did not meet the criteria and not draw on any additional criteria which were not disclosed at the time the assessment was set.

University of Reading Principles of Effective Feedback

The core of our approach to feedback is based in the "7 C's of effective feedback" developed by the Academic Development and Enhancement Team in the Centre for Quality, Support and Development (CQSD). These are:

- **Constructive**
- **Clear**
- **Commensurate**
- **Current**
- **Contextualised**
- **Criterion-based**
- **Conversational**

15 working day turnaround time

With very few exceptions, all formative and summative assessments are subject to the 15 working day turnaround time for providing feedback to students. The expectation is that work is moderated before return to students; however, work may be returned unmoderated provided students are also told when their work will be moderated by (similar to our approach for returning work late when students must also be told when to expect this by).

Top ten things to do when marking summative work

1. **Let the students know** what feedback they will get e.g. written comments on their script, a summary paragraph at the end, audio or video feedback etc, when they will get their feedback (remind them that timely feedback arrives in 15 working days), how to access it e.g. guide them to support for students to access their feedback in Turnitin or Blackboard and how to use their feedback.

2. **If marking in a team**, allocate 3 to 4 pieces of work to each member of the team to mark, then have a group discussion on the marks awarded and why, this will save a lot of time later on. This is known as calibration and is recommended to ensure consistency of marking and avoid moderation processes finding a lack of consistency. Following marking, moderation must take place, whereby all of the marking team, or, if only person works on the module, someone with subject matter knowledge, must check a sample of the marked work for consistency in the awarding of marks and the feedback. Students should be told that moderation has taken place to ensure marking is consistent, reliable and fair.

3. **Start your written feedback** with something **positive,** which provides an overview of the piece of work (remember feedback feels very personal to students, they spend a lot of time on their work and can become demotivated by feedback that only focuses on negative aspects). Students report that positive comments encourage them to keep reading the feedback and act on it.

4. **Explain why the mark was awarded.** After your initial positively slanted overview comment, offer an overview comment which makes reference to the marking criteria. A short paragraph is good practice for this aspect of your feedback, sufficient to help the student and External Examiner understand the application of the assessment criteria. If using a rubric, ensure the relevant boxes on the rubric are highlighted.

5. **Consider using headings in your feedback** which either relate to the assessment criteria and/or the sections of their work to help students understand how their work was marked. Students have reported that bullet points and headings are useful to add clarity to feedback; especially for students whose first language is not English.

Top ten things to do when marking summative work (continued)

6. **Explain what was good about the piece of work** (approximately 3 key points here, ideally presented as bullet points which make it easy for students to use as a checklist for future work). Give examples e.g. "page 2 paragraph 1 you demonstrate an excellent ability to critically analyse an idea/author". Remember that positive comments are as helpful as critical comments because they allow students to see how they have progressed, what they are doing right and what to keep doing for next time.

7. **Identify 2 to 4 aspects (again use bullet points or headings) that the student could improve on** for their next piece of work e.g. "throughout your document there are referencing errors when using author names; instead of using Tim Jones (2022) argued that......use than Jones (2022) argues". Think about the knowledge, skills and behaviours students need to tackle the next bit of their programme, this will help students close the gap between what they did and what was expected for a top grade. This is known as feed forward and it can be helpful to the students if you use this term within your feedback.

8. Add in some **conversational elements** to your feedback e.g. "did you consider how X might have an impact on your suggestion of applying this strategy?" "Can you think of why the author presented this argument?" "How might this argument be countered?" Write about your experience as a reader e.g. "I was unclear on page 3……" or, "I found the critical analysis on page 4 to be thoughtful and detailed".

9. Throughout**, ensure the language used is student friendly and unambiguous**. Ask yourself, will my students really know what I am getting at here? Can they act on it? Ensure that its clear why you are making the comments you offer to them.

10. **Provide advice on what to do next**, what should they do with this feedback? Should they read something specific, is there a suitable resource they could consult which will help them do a better lab report, be better at problem solving in the discipline, construct a better argument etc. Are there Study Advice guides they could go to?

Resources for Staff

University of Reading Resources

1. University Quality Support Policy:

    a. **Feedback Policy** document: <u>Providing feedback to students on their work</u> section 12 in the assessment handbook

    b. **Marking Policy** including generic grade descriptors: <u>section 10 marking</u> in the assessment handbook

    c. **Moderation policy** specifies the requirements for moderation: <u>section 13 of the assessment handbook</u>

2. The **7Cs** summary document <u>7 C's of Effective feedback</u> and its **accompanying guidance** document: <u>Guide to providing quality feedback</u> from the Focus on Feedback project

3. Toolkit of resources on **engaging in feedback** from the Curriculum Framework: <u>Engaging with Feedback</u>

4. Support for setting up **online assessment** and providing feedback online: <u>Assessment and feedback online</u>

5. **Focus on Feedback – top tips for staff from staff** <u>https://sites.reading.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2020/01/Focus-on-feedback-Top-Tips.pdf</u>

6. <u>Electronic Management of Marking</u> guidance from the TEL Team

7. TEL Guidance on <u>Marking and Giving Feedback</u> online, comprehensive advice on checking for plagiarism, creating and using rubrics, inline marking, using quick marks and managing marking where there isn't an online submission. Additional information specifically on Turnitin can be found <u>here</u>.

8. Suggested further reading can be found on a <u>TALIS reading list</u> provided by CQSD.

External Resources

Advance HE host the 2013 <u>HEA feedback toolkit</u>
"This resource has been created as a reference guide for lectures wishing to improve their feedback strategies. It contains good-practice examples staff and student views on effective feedback and a range of reflective activities for practitioners."

Advance HE (2016) <u>The Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT)</u>

"*Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on students' learning. There is a strong evidence base on effective* delivery *of feedback: what it should contain and how it should be framed. However we know far less about students'* reception *of feedback information. If we want students to engage with and utilise the feedback we provide then what skills do they need and how do we nurture these skills? In this resource we first outline some of the key contemporary issues facing Higher Education practitioners in the domains of assessment and feedback and we consider the role and responsibility of the student in the feedback process. We then present a case study which outlines the development and implementation of the* Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT). *Finally we present each component of the toolkit in turn: a feedback guide a feedback portfolio and a feedback workshop*"

Advance HE (2020) [On Your Marks: Learner-focused Feedback Practices and Feedback Literacy](#) "*The publication contains a diverse range of expertise in assessment and feedback, bringing together experts in a number of disciplines to present ideas on learner-centred feedback. The main goal of the collection is to showcase learner-focused feedback practices that make an impact on student learning*"

Advance HE (2020) [Assessment and Feedback in a Post-Pandemic Era: A Time for Learning and Inclusion](#)
"*The publication includes research papers, case studies and disciplinary examples all focusing on the underlying themes of assessment and feedback 'post-pandemic', and equality, diversity and inclusion as central components of assessment and feedback.*"

Carless, D. and Boud, D. (2018) 'The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback', A*ssessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 43(8), pp.1315-1325. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354

Berry M. O'Donovan, Birgit den Outer, Margaret Price & Andy Lloyd (2021) What makes good feedback good?, Studies in Higher Education, 46:2, 318-329, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1630812