

# RVC Feedback Policy & Guidance for Staff and Students

## KEY POINTS

- Academic staff should provide feedback that is timely, constructive and developmental.
- Students have a responsibility to engage with the feedback provided, to reflect on academic performance and to act on the guidance and advice received.
- Academic tutors play an important role in helping students to understand how to make effective use of the feedback they receive.
- Feedback must be timely and should normally be provided on submitted work/assessments within 15 working days, but no later than 20 working days.
- Where provision of marks and individualised feedback is likely to exceed 15 days, group feedback should be provided shortly after the assessment has taken place.
- A consistent approach to feedback within a course, adhered to and delivered by all the academic staff involved will help to ensure a fair and consistent feedback experience for all students. Use of marking rubrics or a standardised proforma helps to encourage consistency of style and quality of feedback.
- Students may be provided with individualised developmental feedback on a draft version of an extended piece of written work (e.g. essay, research report), so that they have an opportunity to reflect and revise their work prior to submission for summative assessment. Under normal circumstances, feedback will be provided on one draft version.

## FEEDBACK AIMS

The RVC is committed to providing feedback that allows students to understand the strengths and limitations of their academic performance and to recognise how future performance can be improved. Feedback is an ongoing dialogue between staff and students, which will purposefully evolve during a course, in order to develop vital self-regulation skills, so that students ultimately develop confidence and competence as self-reflective practitioners. This is a two-way process and the expectations incumbent on academic staff and students should be made explicit. Academic staff should provide feedback that is timely, constructive and developmental, as well as helping students to understand how to make effective use of the feedback they receive. Students have a responsibility to engage with the feedback provided, to reflect on academic performance and to act on the guidance and advice received.

According to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Assessment)<sup>1</sup>

### **Guiding Principle 6: Assessment and feedback is purposeful and supports the learning process**

Assessment relates directly to course aims and learning outcomes, reflecting the nature of the discipline or subject and ensuring that students have opportunities to develop a range of knowledge, skills and attributes. Assessment is fit for purpose and methods are valid in measuring achievement

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<sup>1</sup> [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(Assessment\): Page 8, Feedback to Students](#)

against learning outcomes. Assessment enables students to benchmark their current level of knowledge or skills, identify areas for improvement and make judgements about the overall progress made. Feedback (including 'feed-forward') reflects attainment relevant to learning outcomes and marking criteria for the assessment task. Feedback on assessment builds on dialogue and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. The teaching and assessment strategy progressively enhances students' assessment literacy to enable them to increasingly regulate their own learning and performance.

### **Guiding Principle 7: Assessment is timely**

Assessment tasks and feedback are timed appropriately to promote student learning and facilitate improvement. Students are given sufficient time and opportunity to engage in learning and teaching activities that build their capacity for assessment. A holistic view of assessment deadlines can help to ensure that they are timed appropriately, to avoid over-burdening students. Expectations in relation to feedback and feedback turnaround time for each assessment are consistent and clearly articulated. Feedback comments are provided in sufficient time to enable students to enhance their performance in subsequent assessment tasks.

The principles of good feedback practice are: (modified from<sup>2</sup>)

1. Helps to clarify what defines RVC standards (e.g. pass/fail, merit, distinction, degree classification).
2. Delivers information to students on their learning and level of academic achievement.
3. Encourages students to reflect on their learning and to identify gaps between current and desired performance.
4. Encourages academic staff to reflect on their teaching and to identify gaps between current and desired performance of their students.
5. Initiates a dialogue around learning between staff and students and between student peers.
6. Provides motivation to succeed and enhances self-esteem by rewarding good performance.

### **RVC FEEDBACK POLICY**

The RVC feedback policy is designed to encourage feedback that is timely, constructive and developmental. Students should receive feedback to enable reflection on their performance and to facilitate improvement in their academic standard in time for summative assessment or other subsequent assessments of a similar nature.

**Feedback must be timely** and should normally be provided on submitted work/assessments within 15 working days, but no later than 20 working days. The date students can expect to receive their feedback (and marks where appropriate) must be indicated in advance by the course director, year or module leader and confirmed by the Exams Office. Where provision of individualised feedback is likely to exceed 15 days, a group feedback approach should be adopted to provide generic feedback (e.g. model answer/marking scheme, common misconceptions, faults and flaws), shortly after the assessment. Under certain circumstances, there may be justification for this deadline to be

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<sup>2</sup> [REAP Assessment and Feedback Principles](#)

extended, e.g. where summative assessments require approval by Examination Board prior to release of marks or where there are large numbers of extended pieces of writing (e.g. reflective essays), requiring individualised feedback. An extension up to a maximum of 30 working days must be approved by the Chair of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and the deadline for receipt of feedback, as well as justification for the extension, must be clearly communicated to students in advance. A 'team marking' approach may be necessary to achieve turnaround times and curriculum managers are encouraged to discuss their requirements with Departmental Teaching Coordinators, to ensure adequate staffing for formative and summative assessment activities. Curriculum managers (and/or Exams Office staff) should provide academic staff with sufficient advanced warning and allocate sufficient work time to undertake feedback activities. If short turnaround times are deemed to be essential (i.e. less than 15 working days) this must be agreed with the relevant Head of Department in advance and communicated effectively to the academic staff involved.

**Feedback must be constructive**, i.e. in a format that allows students to understand their level of academic achievement for the work submitted. Where possible, feedback should be aligned with the marking scheme and descriptors used for summative assessment of the work, in terms of structure and style. Marking templates/rubrics may be helpful in providing 'categorical' feedback in a consistent manner, based on different aspects of academic ability and levels of academic achievement (e.g. Appendix 1).

**Feedback must be developmental**, i.e. enabling reflection on skills and academic performance, supporting students in identifying and closing gaps between current and desired performance. Feedback should encourage students to enhance their academic skills and typically, advice and guidance should be explicit, e.g. use of "What went well / Even better if..." or "To improve your mark you need to..."

The security of questions used in summative examinations and exam scripts must be considered, in accordance with Guiding Principle 10 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education<sup>3</sup>. Release of questions used in summative examinations for feedback purposes may need to be undertaken in a controlled setting, i.e. such that students are not permitted to acquire physical or digital (including photographic) copies for use or distribution outside the feedback environment. Students can view marked scripts/assignments alongside examination papers under supervision of their academic tutor or other appropriate RVC staff (e.g. Advice centre) and these must all be returned to Exams Office after the meeting. Students are reminded that this type of feedback opportunity is for developmental purposes and is not a forum for challenging the marks awarded.

## **GUIDANCE FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS ON FEEDBACK**

### **Students must be made aware of the following regarding feedback:**

1. The nature of the feedback they can expect to receive on submitted and/or assessed work. This information must be clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the course, year and module and include:
  - Learning outcomes to be assessed, details of the assessment format(s) and marking schemes/descriptors to be used.

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<sup>3</sup> [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(Assessment\): Page 9, Security](#)

- Clearly signposted opportunities for formative (developmental) feedback. Each module/strand should have a section on Learn indicating and explaining the feedback opportunities that will be available.
  - Clear communication of the RVC feedback strategy and expectations/responsibilities of students regarding engagement with feedback.
2. The exact timings of assessment activities and feedback opportunities. Curriculum managers (year/module/strand leaders) are responsible for informing students of the schedule for assessments, submission deadlines and dates by which feedback will be returned. This information should be provided at the start of the programme of study.
  3. The academic staff member responsible for the assessment and feedback activity. The member of staff directly responsible for each assessment should be clearly identified. Students should be made aware of where to seek help with all other aspects of assessment and feedback (e.g. Registry, Exams Office, Tutor, Study Skills Support Team, Advice Centre).

### **The academic tutor's role in feedback**

Academic tutors are a valuable source of individualised (one-to-one) feedback to students and reinforce the feedback mechanisms that are available to enhance student learning. Although not necessarily content experts, tutors should have a global view of the student feedback experience and can facilitate student engagement with feedback received from other academic members of staff. Thus, tutors can provide guidance for students in understanding and making use of the feedback provided. It is particularly important to establish a dialogue between tutors and tutees, with respect to performance in summative examinations, to reflect on and review current academic standing, in developing learning strategies for enhancing academic performance and in recognising when to seek advice from others (such as Advice Centre, Study Skills Support Team, Student Progress and Development System).

### **Quality and consistency of feedback**

It is important to manage expectations in terms of what staff are expected to provide and what students can expect to receive. A consistent approach to feedback within a course, adhered to and delivered by all the academic staff involved will help to ensure a fair and consistent feedback experience for all students. Feedback may fall into 'single source' or 'multiple source' formats. For 'single source' feedback (where one member of academic staff is responsible), it is important that the feedback provided matches the information provided to students at the start of the course in terms of expectations. 'Multiple source' feedback can be problematic in terms of individual members of academic staff providing variable quality of feedback, such that students within the same cohort may experience variability in the feedback experience. This can lead to dissatisfaction in terms of perceived differences in the help provided for improving academic standards. It is important that academic staff are clearly informed of the expectations in terms of the quality and consistency of feedback that is required. Use of standardised (categorical or key-phrase) marking rubrics or a proforma may help to encourage a consistent approach to providing feedback. The quality of feedback provided will likely differ depending on the nature of the task and the individual member of staff providing the feedback. However, for developmental purposes, students should receive (as a minimum) information that allows them to gauge the academic standard of the piece of

work (typically aligned with descriptors from the marking scheme) and what steps would need to be taken in order to improve the work to gain a higher mark.

Quality control of feedback should be evaluated as part of the formal assessment process (e.g. during sample marking and external examiner scrutiny of scripts) and during module/strand and annual review of each course. Any deficiencies or breaches of feedback policy should be flagged to the individual(s) concerned and communicated to their line manager and Head of Department. Academic staff are expected to engage in continuing professional development (e.g. RVC INSET days) to support their provision of feedback, based on sound educational practice.

## **FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITIES**

There are many opportunities for verbal and written feedback during a taught course, both formal and informal. Students and staff should be aware that feedback opportunities exist on a day-to-day basis, as part of the learning process. In addition to formal/scheduled feedback events, feedback during and after lectures, during directed learning and practical classes, while on rotation etc. are a valuable part of the global feedback experience and should be recognised as such. While undertaking research projects, verbal feedback from supervisors (and other researchers) is a potentially rich source of constructive and developmental feedback, in addition to the formal feedback provided on the written report.

### **Feedback on draft documents**

Students may be provided with individualised (developmental) feedback on a draft version of an extended piece of written work (e.g. essay, research report), so that they have an opportunity to reflect and revise their work prior to submission for summative assessment. Under normal circumstances, feedback will only be provided on one draft version. Feedback should be structured, such that the student is provided with guidance as to the academic standard of the work (e.g. strengths and limitations), aligned with the marking scheme to be used for summative assessment. For example, when providing feedback on research projects, the following sections are recommended:

- Selection of content and depth of coverage of material
- Evidence of understanding, analysis and critical thinking
- Structure, presentation and writing style/clarity of expression
- Quality of referencing

In addition, this type of developmental feedback should include, for example

- To improve your mark you need to: or;
- What went well / Even better if

Students should be informed of the deadline for submission of the draft document and timeframe for receipt of the feedback, such that sufficient time remains for reflection and revision prior to the deadline for submission of the final piece of work.

When this type of extended written work is submitted for summative assessment (having already received formative feedback), internal examiners will be expected to provide written comments to justify the mark awarded, but extensive feedback will not be expected, UNLESS a mark is awarded (typically in the 'fail' category) which will likely require the student to re-submit the work for further assessment. In this case, developmental feedback should be provided as stipulated previously, which will allow the student to reflect on their performance and remediate any deficiencies.

### **Feedback on formative assessment**

Formative assessments should provide students with an authentic experience, in preparation for the summative examination in terms of their style, structure and marking scheme. Students must be provided with at least one formative opportunity for each format of summative assessment used. Mock examinations may be provided, whereby a limited number of representative questions are undertaken under exam conditions. It is unlikely that students will receive individualised feedback on their performance in mock examinations and instead this will usually take the form of whole class feedback, whereby an academic member of staff will discuss expectations with respect to a model answer or marking scheme and students are expected to reflect on and self-evaluate their response(s) to questioning.

It is not expected that numerous past papers will be made available to students for exam practice (and in fact this is discouraged). Instead, for each written examination, a representative sample paper should be made available online, which has a similar structure and style to that used in the summative assessment. Feedback on formative MCQs should be provided, detailing the reason why each option is correct/incorrect. Feedback on written exam questions should be provided in the form of a model answer, marking scheme or exemplar scripts (representing pass/merit/distinction responses) to allow students to attempt exam questions and reflect on/benchmark their performance.

### **Feedback on summative assessment (in-course assessment)**

Summative in-course assessment (ICA) often contributes to the overall assessment of student performance and is also an important formative experience. Therefore, effective (developmental) feedback should be provided in a timely manner. Where written work is submitted as part of an ICA, it may be possible to provide students with marks and individualised feedback, once these have been processed, provided that the students are informed that the marks are provisional and subject to ratification by the Examination Board. In some instances, there can be a delay in releasing marks (owing to Examination Board processes), in which case, a group feedback approach may be more suitable, which can be delivered in a timely manner shortly after the examination has taken place.

### **Feedback on summative assessment (end of module/end of year examinations)**

A final summative examination is usually delivered at the end of a course, which will often determine progression. The RVC policy on annotation of scripts (part of the 'How Examinations are

Marked' procedure<sup>4</sup>) provides a potentially rich source of formative feedback. When students fail to progress, feedback opportunities will be provided shortly after the examination, whereby students are encouraged to view their scripts and discuss performance/strengths and weaknesses with academic staff. These opportunities must be scheduled to allow students sufficient time to reflect and review their performance and take steps to remediate, prior to being required to re-sit/re-submit. For students that are successful in summative examinations and who progress to the next stage of the course, feedback opportunities should also be provided. The timing for these should be considered carefully. For modular courses, where students progress rapidly to the next phase of their learning, feedback opportunities should be considered shortly after the examination. Individualised feedback may not be available before students are required to undertake preparation for the next assessment, in which case group feedback should be considered. For courses with end-of-year synoptic examinations, feedback should be considered at the start of the following academic year, to allow students to reflect on their previous performance and to identify strategies for improving their learning/exam technique for the next set of assessments.

### **Feedback on clinical rotations**

During intra-mural rotations, informal feedback will be provided in the three areas of knowledge & problem solving, professional activities and practical skills. At the end of each rotation, summative feedback is provided in 14 competencies that fall within the areas outlined above. Formal feedback will be normally delivered verbally, with the feedback on the 14 competencies provided with the overall grade in written format towards the end of the week and the grades and feedback entered into Gradebook. For extra-mural studies, veterinary clinical staff will be required to complete a feedback proforma, which will be submitted to the RVC and distributed through the academic tutor.

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<sup>4</sup> [How Examinations are Marked](#)

## Appendix 1

### Feedback rubric

<b>Selection and coverage of material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incomplete or inaccurate account of task</li> <li>Inadequate description of aims/methods/practical work</li> <li>Significant and/or large numbers of errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Superficial coverage of task</li> <li>Incomplete record of aims/methods/practical work</li> <li>Flawed by errors and/or omissions</li> <li>Little comment on most observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematic account of task</li> <li>Adequate record of aims/methods/practical work</li> <li>No significant errors, omissions or inaccuracies</li> <li>Appropriate speculation is unlikely or, if present, is likely to be unsubstantiated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematic, accurate account of task</li> <li>Full record of aims/methods/practical work</li> <li>No significant errors/omissions</li> <li>Some speculation, where appropriate, but may not be fully supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full and accurate account of task, aims/ methods/practical work</li> <li>Few errors and/or omissions and none of significance</li> <li>Where appropriate, sensible speculation, supported by evidence</li> </ul>
<b>Subject-specific knowledge</b>	Inadequate/incomplete knowledge of the topic	Basic knowledge of main aspects of the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sound knowledge of main aspects of the topic</li> <li>An awareness of a variety of ideas and contexts within the topic</li> </ul>	Comprehensive knowledge of the topic and of limitations or controversies in the current state of knowledge	Complete and detailed knowledge of the topic, including prevailing controversies and paradigms, with areas of in-depth specialisation and reference to cutting-edge research
<b>Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited/no evidence of understanding</li> <li>Many unexplained observations or assertions</li> <li>Little/ no evidence of original/innovative thinking</li> <li>Very limited reference to published work from authoritative sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inaccuracies in data analysis and/or interpretation</li> <li>Unexplained observations or assertions</li> <li>Little/no evidence of original/innovative thought</li> <li>Very limited reference to published work from authoritative sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data are largely accurate but there may be some unexplained observations or assertions</li> <li>Limited evidence of original/innovative thought</li> <li>Sufficient reference to published work from authoritative sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough grasp of concepts, reasonable comment on all observations, few unexplained findings or assertions</li> <li>Data analysed correctly</li> <li>Some evidence of original/innovative thinking</li> <li>Appropriate reference to published work from authoritative sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough grasp of concepts with some critical and/or comparative comment on all observations</li> <li>Data analysed correctly</li> <li>Clear evidence of original/innovative thinking</li> <li>Published work from authoritative sources used extensively and appropriately</li> </ul>
<b>Structure, clarity and expression</b>	No/poor structure/clarity of expression	Adequate, although may not be entirely systematic	Reasonably well organised and logically presented with adequate clarity of expression	Logical and well-organised account with clarity of expression	Logical and very well-organised account with excellent clarity of expression

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