

Feedback to Taught Students at the RVC – Policy & Guidance

The Royal Veterinary College is committed to providing timely, appropriate and useful feedback to students on their academic progress and achievement.

The college believes that good feedback is designed to guide student progress and can involve many different elements such as helping to clarify what is expected, responding to students' needs or providing guidance toward a deeper level of learning and understanding. It is a two-way process, an on-going dialogue between students and lecturers. In order for feedback to work for students, they need to engage with it and course-level processes should support them in this.

Aims

1. Feedback must be unbiased, objective and provided in a timely manner; helping students understand:
 - a. the marks or grades they have received for the work submitted, and
 - b. how their performance might be improved in the future
2. Feedback must be individualised to enable reflection on skills and performance; supporting students in closing the gap between current and desired performance
3. Students have a responsibility to consider feedback given on their work, to seek to understand it, and to act on it.

Policy

All formative assessments and assessed coursework, as well feedback will normally be provided within 15 working days after the final submission deadline; extensions to turn-around times beyond 15 working days will be approved by the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning in exceptional circumstances and must be clearly communicated to students in advance.

For single pieces of assessed work constituting >30% of the overall module/strand mark, the maximum time for feedback to be given is normally 30 working days after the final submission deadline.

For late submissions, a revised feedback schedule will be agreed by the Course Director and should be clearly communicated to the academic staff and students involved in these exceptional circumstances.

Guidance for Staff and Students

For all formative and summative assessment activities, staff and students must be made aware of the following regarding feedback:

1. **The exact nature of the feedback students can expect to receive**
 - a. Module/strand leaders are responsible for providing Course Directors and students with details of how feedback will be provided on their module/strand. The feedback mechanisms adopted should be capable of review by external examiners and via internal audit of feedback undertaken as part of annual quality monitoring processes (e.g. module/strand review) and periodic review.
 - b. Feedback must be provided in relation to the assessment criteria and marking descriptors and should be clearly linked to the programme, module/strand learning outcomes.
 - c. The assessment criteria and marking descriptors (e.g. Common Grading Scheme) used in each assessment must be clearly communicated to students by the Course Director at the beginning of the year and from then on by module/strand leaders and must be readily accessible in module and programme handbooks or pages within the VLE (RVC Learn).
 - d. An opportunity for formative (developmental) feedback should exist in all module and strand visits, where appropriate, and the students should be made fully aware of their existence and

how to make the most of these opportunities in terms of improving current and/or future work. The current RVC target for formative assessment and feedback within modules and strand visits, is 20% of total contact time.

2. The exact timings of assessment activities and feedback opportunities

- a. Module/strand leaders are responsible for making students aware of the timetable for assessments and submission deadlines as well as the dates on which feedback will be returned for each module/strand. For exact timing please refer to section on feedback policy above.

3. The academic staff member responsible for the assessment and feedback activity

- a. The member of staff responsible for each assessment should be clearly identified in course handbooks, module outlines and pages within RVC Learn and should give students clear information on the assessment process and the grading criteria applied.
- b. Quality control of feedback is the module/strand leader’s responsibility and will take place during the module review.

4. The academic tutor’s role in feedback

- a. Academic tutors should reinforce the feedback mechanisms that exist on a course and guide students in understanding and making use of any feedback given. Specific training will be provided for tutors as part of the academic staff development programme. A dedicated tutorial should be scheduled in term one of all taught courses to guide students in how to engage with and act upon feedback.
- b. Any student persistently struggling in this area should be referred to the Learning Development Service (learningcm@rvc.ac.uk) or Academic Progress Committee (APC) for additional support.

5. The feedback process

- a. At the start of each academic year students should be informed of all the feedback opportunities available in that year and main goals of feedback at that stage in their studies.
- b. Up to date information should be provided in programme specifications, course handbooks, module outlines and pages within RVC Learn to inform students of the mechanisms by which they will receive feedback and the form in which the feedback will be delivered for both formative and, where appropriate, summative work.
- c. At the start of each module/strand, the teacher(s) should explain how and when feedback will be provided. The handbook and/or pages within RVC Learn for each module/strand should have a clear section explaining the feedback mechanism that it will follow.

Where?	What?	Who?	When?
Lecture/ Student handbook/ RVC Learn	A description of RVC feedback policy and how it will be implemented on this course	Course Director or Year Leader	At the start of each academic year
Module/Strand Outline	A comprehensive list of the points within the module where feedback will be provided, and the nature of the feedback	Module/Strand Leader	At the start of the module/strand
Assignment Outline	Detail of the nature and timing of feedback on the assignment	Staff member responsible for the assignment	At the start of the module/strand or at the time of assignment

6. Feedback on formative and summative assessments

- a. The assignment of a grade can be an important aspect of feedback for students and should be provided wherever appropriate. However, really useful feedback should (a) identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to specific assessment criteria, and should (b) offer guidance to the student on the state of their current achievement, (c) how to correct their mistakes as well as (d) indicating areas for improvement (feed-forward).
- b. Formative assessments should be used to provide students with the opportunity to experience/practice any given assessment prior to its use as summative assessment. Where possible, the marking scheme for the formative and summative assessment should be similar and there should be feedback to accompany this exercise.
- c. Academic staff and students should be aware of the exact processes and chain of events involved in the marking of assessments. This would include details of sample marking and the role of the module/strand leader and/or external examiner in quality assurance (including standard setting).
- d. Group assessment tasks, MCQ and EMQ papers, clinical rotations, work placements, EMS, OSCEs, spot tests, oral examinations and written submissions such as long answers, projects, theses and case reports are ALL valuable feedback opportunities that should be harnessed by staff. Some summative assessment tools complicate feedback by the need to keep the questions secure. Therefore, feedback can be considered on a number of levels, with the higher levels having a more rapid turnaround. Our target is to provide the first 3 levels of feedback on all our assessments, and to be able to provide level 4 when it is specifically needed.
 - i. Individual notification of overall mark and Pass/Fail or grade status
 - ii. Individual section or question marks – a grade breakdown
 1. This might be the top sheet of the spread sheet in which student can see their marks for the major sections of the assessment
 2. It might be a list of subject areas of all the questions in an MCQ
 - iii. Global feedback on assessment performance sent to all students such as
 1. A set of example student scripts annotated with comments related to the sample answer and the marking scheme
 2. Most common mistakes/most common successes for long or complex questions and for practical observations such as OSCEs
 3. A simple list of the important points (normally applied to questions on the 0-10 scheme such as short factual questions or problem solving questions)
 4. A feedback session in which the assessors hold a Q&A or discuss global feedback points
 - iv. Individual student feedback
 1. An individual line from an MCQ spreadsheet entitled with the learning objective for each question
 2. A one to one discussion about performance in any form of assessment with a tutor or assessor
 3. The availability of individual student responses marked or annotated so as to indicate the reason for their marks.

One to one feedback is often complex and time intensive and is therefore reserved for situations where other types of feedback are inappropriate or ineffectual or in areas of specific need. However in some situations, such as remedial advice to poor performers, it is essential. To facilitate this feedback there must be clear legible documentation of the rationale for the mark given for a piece of work. In particular this means that assessors must follow the guidelines on marking written scripts.

- e. Policy on viewing exam scripts should be clearly communicated to academic staff members and the student body.

7. Delivery of feedback

- a. Feedback can take many forms (for inspiration please see Appendix) but in addition to the formalised and advertised feedback opportunities students must, by prior arrangement, be able to discuss feedback in person with the module/strand teacher(s) either individually or in groups. Students must be aware that such opportunities exist and be informed by the module/strand leader, verbally and in module handbooks and pages within RVC Learn as to how they can access these opportunities.
- b. Feedback should be descriptive, constructive, specific and non-emotive, with the aim of improving performance.
- c. Opportunities for feedback should be comparable in scope and scale between students and between modules/strands that are similar in style or structure and therefore should form part of both vertical and horizontal curriculum and assessment planning. This will ensure that there is consistency of approach across the programme. These checks will be undertaken as part of the module review process. Quality of feedback will be maintained and improved through a comprehensive, targeted staff training programme.
- d. Feedback (formative and summative) may be given by different staff members and it is therefore essential that it is coherent and coordinated. In such cases, quality control of feedback is the module/strand leader's responsibility and will be undertaken as part of the module review process.

Author:	Dr Rachel C Davis
Date:	03/09/14