Quality Code for Higher Education

Fundamental Principles of Feedback

Although the use of a variety of feedback sheets and mechanisms should be considered a strength, there are some fundamental principles which should be followed. These are:

- The principles on which work is being marked should be made clear to students, whether this is via learning outcomes or grading criteria.
- Where relevant, learning outcomes should be stated on the feedback form, rather than students being referred to their module handbooks or to other separate documents.
- Strengths as well as weaknesses should be pointed out in feedback.
- Feedback should include some targets for future development (relevant at both mid- and end-module). These targets could include:
    - General academic features / study skills
    - Presentation, style, structure
    - Range and use of reading
    - Criticality
    - Focus on the question / establishment of a key and relevant question
- Feedback should include not only areas needing improvement, but also practical ways to improve these areas (i.e. how to go about improving them).

Feedback mechanisms relating to examinations

- At Level 4, comments can be written directly onto examination scripts. These can be returned to the students early in the following semester via personal supervisors, and students can be encouraged to discuss the feedback with personal supervisors and with module tutors.

- At Levels 5 and 6, comments can still be written directly onto examination scripts, but the scripts would be retained by the department for the external examiners. In this case, students can ask to see the comments written onto their scripts by the examiners.

- Written feedback from two examiners can be provided via a pro-forma, which students can collect (for example, from the departmental office).

Feedback mechanisms relating to coursework

- Standard feedback sheets can be completed for all coursework. These should be returned to the student within a realistic timescale (for example, 3 weeks). As outlined above, the sheets should include learning outcomes, strengths and weaknesses, targets for future development, and suggestions for practical ways to meet these targets.

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- Feedback sheets can be returned to students via a collection box situated, for example, near the departmental office. At Level 4, they would be returned with the coursework. At Levels 5 and 6, the coursework would be retained by the department for presentation to the external examiners.

- In addition to completing a standard feedback sheet, markers can add comments onto the actual script.

- The "add comment" and "track changes" functions in Word can be used to give comments on coursework submitted electronically, as comments are written by hand on coursework submitted in hard-copy.

- Depending on the nature of the piece of work, oral feedback can be provided via the module tutor or the project supervisor.

General feedback mechanisms

- Gradebooks or their equivalent within a VLE can be used to provide students with marks and/or an indication of their position within the class (which may be a motivator for some students).

- Tests within a VLE can be used as a means of providing students with immediate feedback.

- Indicative answers to questions can be provided, so that students can generate their own feedback by comparing their previously assessed work against the answers.

- Key issues common across assignments from a particular group can be collated and fed back collectively to the class, either within class time or via a VLE.

- Learning Contracts and Electronic Portfolios can be used to involve students in immediate, self-generated, reflective feedback, supported by rapid tutor-generated feedback.

- Peer assessment of both examination scripts and coursework can be used.

- Students can work in pairs to give a critical friend review to each other on papers written, to form part of a collectively-owned e-portfolio.

- In small groups, students can peer/self-assess the contribution they made to the work of the group.