

Timely Feedback Leading to Better Assessment

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Aims and objectives

- Identify the importance of feedback towards assessment
- Define ‘timely feedback’
- Distinguish between bad and good practice
- Draw conclusions from benchmarking guidelines and UCL guidelines
- Ask questions what to do next



- What is assessment ?
- What is feedback?
- What do we mean by ‘timely feedback’?



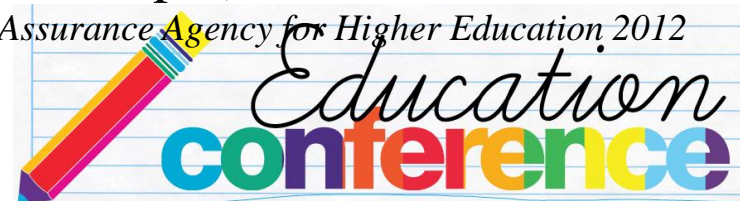
Definitions: Assessment

- Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning.
- It involves
 - making our expectations explicit and public;
 - setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering,
 - analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards;
 - and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance.

When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems,

- assessment can help us focus our collective attention,
- examine our assumptions, and
- create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education. (Angelo, 1995, p 7)

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012



Formative and Summative

- **Formative assessment**

has a developmental purpose and is designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.

- **Summative assessment**

is used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme



Why assess?



Function of Assessment

For the student, individual pieces of assessment provide a source of motivation for study; they promote learning by providing **feedback** on performance and help students to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

For the lecturer, assessment provides an opportunity to evaluate the knowledge, understanding, ability and skills attained by different students. The overall profile of student performance offers useful information for assessing the effectiveness of course content and teaching methods, thereby facilitating improvement.

For the institution, assessment provides information upon which decisions as to students' progression and the receipt of awards may be based. Information generated by assessment, such as mark or grade distributions, forms a valuable tool for quality assurance and enhancement.

Other stakeholders also have an interest in the assessment process. Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) may use assessment outcomes to award professional accreditation and/or 'fitness to practise' status. Employers use an individual's assessment record as a means of assessing their educational achievements and suitability for employ



Feedback

- Feedback... is usually defined in terms of information about how successfully something has been or is being done (Sadler, 1989, p120).
- Good feedback practice is... anything that might strengthen the student's capacity to self-regulate their own performance (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p205).

<https://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/support/teaching/resources/assess/#d.en.75303>



The Role of Feedback

The role of feedback:

- a fundamental part of promoting student learning and to indicate some of the issues that can arise in relation to it.
- It is not intended to tell you how to design your assessment tasks nor how to give feedback
- but seeks to identify some of the issues that can inform your thinking

(QAA Understanding assessment, p. 13)



Modes and Types

- HEA Feedback toolkit

1 Specific, targeted, tutor feedback

Tutor written summative comments on a piece of work

Tutor on-script comments on individual work

Indication of achievement against various criteria on a marking grid

Individual feedback using a departmental feedback form

Oral feedback - of overall comments or in-line for specific points

Comments with Gradebooks or their equivalent in a VLE

2 Generic tutor feedback

Whole group feedback

Printed responses to exercises

Coverage of topics within class sessions

3 Automated feedback

Tests within a VLE

Self-assessment tasks

4 Feedback from people other than the tutor

Fellow students commenting on each other's work

Self-feedback - students' own evaluation of their work

Feedback from PDP Tutors



NUS benchmarking

1. Diverse forms of assessment designed to assess a range of skills and knowledge
2. Assessment criteria
3. Submission processes
4. Workload distribution
5. Marking consistency and distribution
6. Feedback timeliness
7. Feedback Quality
8. Self-reflection and peer learning



	Bad Practice	Good Practice
Feedback timeliness	Students receive feedback too late to use it for improvement. Some students do not receive any feedback at all.	Feedback timeliness above an institutional minimum standard. Students receive continuous verbal, written or email feedback understand more than just comments on assignments.
Feedback Quality	Often, only grades are provided, or comments such as “Good” with no explanation of why the mark has been awarded.	Detailed, constructive feedback; Clarity on when/how opportunities feedback is given at the start of the course, and students can choose the format; There are opportunities to discuss the feedback individually.
Formative assessment and feedback	No formative assessment, and little opportunity for informal formative feedback.	Formative feedback is as part of students’ personal development. Opportunities for students to design their own formative exercises; criteria are linked to learning outcomes.
Self-reflection and peer learning	No opportunities for peer learning and no formal self-reflection.	Peer learning and self-reflection are embedded in the curriculum.

Benchmarking tool

Assessment and feedback benchmarking tool



Principle	First steps	Developing	Developed	Refining	Outstanding practice: Partnership
<p>1</p> <p>Diverse forms of assessment designed to assess a range of skills and knowledge</p>	<p>There is little variety in the forms of assessment used on each programme. Assessment is not clearly linked to learning objectives and little thought has been given to the skills and knowledge tested. Summative assessments may require different skills than those developed during the course.</p>	<p>Some thought has been given to how the mode of assessment is chosen to best demonstrate the learning outcomes of the course. Students are adequately prepared for summative assessments with the skills they learn on the course.</p>	<p>Assessment methods are chosen through a clear link to the learning outcomes of the course. Several different types of assessment are used throughout the course, e.g. exam, written essay, poster presentation, group presentation, reflective log.</p>	<p>Programmes are planned so that the diverse forms of assessment will cover skills that are desired in the wider world, e.g. by employers. Students have some choice in the assessment methods they are offered.</p>	<p>Students are empowered and given the tools and support to co-design their assessment methods in partnership with academic staff. Programmes are planned holistically to assess a broad range of skills and knowledge through a variety of forms of assessment. Students are able to articulate the skills they have developed through the various forms of assessment on their programme.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Assessment criteria</p>	<p>Assessment criteria are vague, confusing and often contradictory. They are hard to find and students are not directed to them.</p>	<p>Assessment criteria are mostly clear and detailed enough to be of use, but students may not know about them or use them.</p>	<p>Assessment criteria are clear and easy to understand, and students are aware of where to find them. They are clearly linked to the learning outcomes of the course.</p>	<p>Assessment criteria are linked to learning outcomes and referred to throughout the course. Students fully understand what is expected of them in order to achieve each grade.</p>	<p>Assessment criteria are clear, easily accessible and linked to learning outcomes. Students fully understand and are supported to use them. They are designed in partnership with students to ensure accessibility.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Submission procedures are inflexible, complex and inaccessible, usually involving a set date and time to return paper copies to the institution. There is</p>	<p>Submission procedures are relatively simple, although largely paper-based. Year abroad students may experience problems depending on which</p>	<p>Submission is largely electronic, although some departments may do things differently. Feedback may or may not be provided online. There is</p>	<p>Submission is electronic where possible, and feedback is provided online. Submission processes are the same across all departments.</p>	<p>Submission is simple and flexible, through an online system that confirms receipt and delivers online grades and feedback. Accessibility for students is</p>

Principles

Levels of Practice



Timely Feedback

‘To be effective feedback should be provided for students while it still matters to them and in time for them to use it as feed forward into their next assignment’.



Other attributes

- Helps students take action to improve their learning Feedback should be for learning, not just evaluation
- Is clear, detailed and specific
- Has a forward-facing focus
- Feedback should be constructive, not just backward
- Builds motivation and self- esteem
- Is realistic and focuses on students' performance
- Encourages dialogue with tutors and peers as a way to make sense of their learning
- Helps students develop their ability to make informed judgements on their own work

HEA Feedback Toolkit March 2013



Feedback at UCL

UCL has now revised its assessment strategy and as part of this strategic revision has identified the need for service standards to be adopted across UCL to ensure our students receive appropriate and timely feedback on their work in order to enhance the learning experience and maximise academic performance.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/part-3/feedback-to-students-on-assessed-work>



5. In all modes of assessment during a programme the student should expect feedback to occur **within 1 calendar** month of the deadline (including weekends and vacations) for submission of each piece of assessed work (but not including end of year unseen examinations or end of module summative unseen examinations). Departments are encouraged to provide this in a shorter timeframe if they wish.

6. Feedback to students on the assessed work can take the form of:

- a. **Individual discussions** of the strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for improvement
- b. **Group discussions** whereby thematic areas are developed to illustrate strengths and weaknesses within the group as a whole
- c. **A written feedback sheet** indicating the areas in (a) preferable within the context of specific headings which are likely to be developed in a subject specific fashion.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/part-3/feedback-to-students-on-assessed-work>



2014 NSS results On a scale 1 to 5

UCL results

Overall Assessment and feedback	5. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.	6. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.	7. Feedback on my work has been prompt.	8. I have received detailed comments on my work.	9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.
3.6	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.5

ENGLAND AVERAGE

3.9	4	4	3.8	3.9	3.8
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Students comments from NSS

‘Nearly no feedback received on coursework.’

‘possibility of one-on-one feedback from tutors on essays.’

‘Feedback from most departments is negligible, with the language departments being the best.’

‘Feedback is pretty poor and I didn't feel overly supported when going to the head of department with issues.’

‘Course feedback was poor in some cases, still waiting to get work back I did a year ago’



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Questions

- What/how needs to be improved?
- What hinders improvement?
- What can you do to improve feedback?



Resources

- *HEA Feedback toolkit* March 2013
- *Understanding Assessment: its role in safeguarding academic standards and Quality in Higher Education* QAA Agency 2012
- www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/open/higher-education/Feedback-and-Assessment-Benchmarking-Tool/

