

# Policy on providing feedback to students on their performance

## Quality of feedback

- 1 The University expects that feedback adheres to the following principles. Feedback should:
  - a. **Be constructive:** Feedback should use positive language to provide guidance on how the work/approach could be further developed and improved upon;
  - b. **Be clear:** Staff should use language and references that the students can be expected to understand;
  - c. **Identify strengths as well as areas for improvement:** Identifying key aspects of the work that are the most important for the student to develop in future assignments; **this is feed-forward.** Feedback should encourage students to become reflective and self-managing learners and develop the Graduate Attribute of ‘Personal effectiveness and self-awareness’;
  - d. **Be relevant to both:**
    - i. **Specific aspects of the work** (e.g. identify specific errors or comment on specific statements);
    - ii. **The overall approach taken** (e.g. the structure of the work, or generic aspects such as style of writing or use of sources etc.), and therefore serve as feedback and ‘feed forward’.
  - e. **Feedback must explicitly reference the assessment criteria;** Staff should ensure they make use of mark ranges and classification descriptions when assessing work;
  - f. **For paper-based written feedback:** Handwritten feedback on scripts must be legible and **feedback proformas** (if used; see 2 below) **should preferably be typed.** Handwritten narrative on an assessment and/or feedback proforma is acceptable **provided it is legible.**

When providing generic feedback on written examinations (see 27 to 37 below), criteria c. and d.ii. should be interpreted in such a way that individual students cannot be identified via the resulting feedback. Criterion d.i. does not apply in this context, again to preserve students’ anonymity.

## Minimum expectations of feedback

- 2 **When feedback is delivered in paper-based format:** Feedback proformas are required for all assignments except where feedback is an integrated part of the assessment (e.g. multiple choice tests) or where space is provided for feedback on the assignment itself (e.g. on worksheets or lab reports). Forms should be adapted by staff in accordance with the nature of the assignment, however the following content should normally be included:

- a. module name and code;
- b. name of module convenor;
- c. title of assignment and percentage weighting of module mark;
- d. deadline for submission, as well as the date the assignment was submitted;
- e. the assessment criteria;
- f. prompts for generic and specific feedback and areas to signpost for future improvement (feed forward); explicit comments should be provided on what next steps are required to enhance future performance;
- g. initial mark, date, name of marker and comment on whether subject to internal moderation.

A notable instance to which recommendations d, e, f (as it applies to specific feedback) and g do not apply is that of generic feedback on written examinations (see 27 to 37 below). This is due to the nature and timing of such feedback, which render the related information inappropriate. Forms for this purpose have been designed accordingly (see 29).

Examples of feedback forms can be found in section 6c of the University's 'Guide to Policies and Procedures for Teaching and Learning':

[www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/QualityAssurance/PoliciesandProcedures/cqsd-PoliciesandProcedures.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/QualityAssurance/PoliciesandProcedures/cqsd-PoliciesandProcedures.aspx).

**When feedback is delivered using Blackboard and Turnitin:** The information above can either be provided by attaching the electronic copy of a proforma, or using the in-built e-feedback tools.

### **Communication of Assessment Criteria**

- 3 All assessment briefs should include clear assessment criteria, hand-in and hand-back dates and should be provided to students **at the start of each module** and communicated via Blackboard as appropriate. This enables students to be aware of how their work will be assessed and to manage their workload for the term accordingly. If there are reasons not to provide students with an assessment brief (with assessment criteria) at the start of a module, the brief (including the assessment criteria) should be provided at the time an assignment is set. When assessments are submitted electronically via Blackboard or Turnitin, the brief and criteria should be attached in the set-up of e-submission points.

Generic assessment criteria relating to mark ranges and classifications for first degrees and taught postgraduate programmes across the University are provided in Section 10 of the Assessment Handbook.

- 4 Schools (Programme Areas in Henley Business School) should seek to enhance students' awareness of, and engagement with, the generic assessment criteria which underpin their degree, and to promote their understanding of how to interpret and apply the criteria to their work. Appropriate assessment criteria must be tailored and agreed for each type of assessment (*recognising that for many assignments, generic School/subject-based*

*assessment criteria will apply*) and Schools must adopt a transparent approach to deciding when their generic criteria will apply and when module convenors should devise their own.

## **15 working day standard turnaround time**

- 5 Across all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, the **standard turnaround time** for individual feedback and marks on coursework (formative and summative) and in-class tests (for summative assessment) is **a maximum of fifteen working days<sup>1</sup>** from the deadline for submission/date of the in-class test. Feedback should be regular and timely. The policy applies equally to work from full-time and part-time students, and to full-time, part-time and sessional staff.

Feedback on assessment, both summative and formative, is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning. The focus of this policy is to set a standard relating to turnaround time. However, it is important to understand that high quality, effective feedback has many characteristics. Characteristics of high quality feedback include being well considered, varied in nature, consistent in standard, integrated into the wider module, constructive, personal and user-friendly. This policy is not intended to drive all assessment methods towards a limited number of very efficient feedback mechanisms but emphasises that it is important that across the student learning experience consistently high quality, timely feedback is provided.

All Schools must ensure that for every Part 1 module taught in the Autumn Term, a minimum of one piece of formative or summative feedback on an assignment is provided to students before the winter vacation, preferably on an individual basis.

All students registered on taught postgraduate programmes should receive a minimum of one piece of formative or summative feedback on an assessment for each module taken in their first term, preferably on an individual basis. Flexibility may be required in the application of this principle since taught postgraduate programmes vary more in their patterns of delivery.

In addition, it is the normal expectation that all undergraduate and postgraduate students receive substantive feedback on the marked copy of their final year research project/dissertation. Such feedback can be provided in paper-based written form (typed) or electronically via Blackboard and Turnitin, either by using the in-built e-assessment tools or by attaching the feedback in the form of documents, video or audio. As with all feedback it would be expected that students be made aware of the strengths of their work as well receiving constructive comments on how the piece of work could have been improved.

This policy came into effect from the 2014/15 academic year.

## **Exemptions**

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this policy, a working day is defined as excluding Saturday and Sunday. This definition applies to all students, regardless of location. Public/national holidays in the country where the relevant module is being delivered and University closure days are not normally considered to be working days. When setting deadlines for submission of coursework, module convenors should take into consideration public/national holidays in the country or countries where staff who will be responsible for marking and provision of feedback are located. For UK campuses, the University is normally closed on the 8 Public Holidays for England and Wales (New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Bank Holiday, Spring Bank Holiday, Summer Bank Holiday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day). It is also normally closed for a small number of additional days during the year, referred to as 'closure days', usually around the Christmas and Easter public holidays. Further details can be found at: [www.reading.ac.uk/16/study/study-termdates.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/16/study/study-termdates.aspx).

- 6 Some assessments may be exempt from the fifteen working day turnaround time feedback policy. The following assessments are exempt, subject to the proviso that work submitted in the Summer Term of the Final Part should be returned prior to graduation:
- i) Dissertations (please note that work ancillary to dissertations e.g. data collection, proposals is not exempt from the 15 day requirement);
  - ii) Final year projects (normally 40 credits in weight);
  - iii) Assessments where there is input from a professional external body that might unavoidably delay the marking process;
  - iv) Assessments where for logistical reasons there are staggered submission dates (e.g. practicals).

The following **would not** normally be considered as valid reasons for exemptions:

- i) Large cohorts (marking loads);
- ii) Work being marked by sessional staff;
- iii) Laboratory work.

- 7 In respect of other module assessment types, School Directors of Teaching and Learning (SDTLs) may submit a formal request (in writing) for an exemption to the relevant Teaching and Learning Dean (TLD). Exemptions will be granted for sound pedagogic reasons only. Requests for an exemption should normally be made prior to commencement of the module. Unless notified otherwise, such granted exemptions are for one academic year only.

- 8 In respect of large pieces of work, falling under the automatic exemption from the 15 working day policy (i.e. under (2) above), the University does not prescribe an alternative deadline. Deadlines for such pieces of work should be agreed between the module convenor and the SDTL, and confirmed with the TLD. In all cases these should normally be agreed before the commencement of the module, and in any event conveyed to the student as soon as reasonably possible.

- 9 If an exemption under (3) applies, the relevant TLD will normally advise an alternative deadline to apply.

**In all cases, students must be informed of the date by which they will receive feedback. In addition, wherever possible, exemptions to the policy (i.e. under (2) or (3) above) must be noted in the Module Description.**

- 10 TLDs will monitor the requests they receive and maintain a record of agreed exemptions to ensure institutional oversight, consistency of approach and equality for students as well as reviewing practice in order to promote enhancement and mitigate any negative effects the turnaround time might inadvertently cause.

- 11 The requirement for the fifteen working day turnaround time for feedback does not apply where a student's submission is being investigated for academic misconduct. However, the return of marks and feedback for a cohort should not be delayed by the withholding of an individual's marks and feedback (where their work is pending an academic misconduct investigation). See also (30) below.

- 12 The fifteen working day turnaround time requirement does not apply to generic feedback on written examinations (see 27 to 37 below). Such feedback is subject to its own deadlines, as noted in 31. Since students cannot view this feedback until examination marks are released, the principle behind the turnaround requirement is upheld.

### **Monitoring and compliance with the 15 day turnaround time**

- 13 Schools are required to record the details of each coursework assessment set. The record should note the date work is set, its submission date, the date on which feedback is due to be returned (ie fifteen working days after the submission date), and whether the feedback was returned early or later than the 15 working days (and by how many days). The report should be submitted on a term-by-term basis to the relevant Teaching and Learning Dean, using the pro-forma supplied by the Centre for Quality Support and Development.
- 14 Where the fifteen working day turnaround time for feedback cannot be met due to unforeseen circumstances beyond a School's control, clear, timely and open communication with students must be guaranteed; students should be informed of the issues and advised as to when to expect their work to be returned.

### **Moderation and administration time**

- 15 **Internal moderation (as opposed to second marking) of coursework and in-class tests can take place outside the fifteen working day period.** However, students must be appropriately informed when feedback is provided if the mark is still subject to internal moderation or external moderation (by the external examiners) only. In addition, students should be informed of the date by which they will receive the moderated mark.
- 16 Schools and programmes areas must ensure that working practices, particularly in relation to administration of assessments and the return of feedback, will enable adherence to the fifteen working day turnaround for feedback policy. **Processes for recording the hand-in, distribution and marking of coursework must be factored into calculations for the delivery of feedback within fifteen working days.**

### **Work submitted late with an extension**

- 17 Any coursework which is granted an extended deadline through the Extenuating Circumstance process will normally be given feedback and marks within a 15-working day period to run from the amended deadline for submission. Any variation from this will require a case for an exemption to be made by the module convenor to the SDTL.

The student(s) should be advised of the amended date for feedback as soon as reasonably possible.

### **Work submitted late without an extension**

- 18 Any coursework which is submitted late and without an authorised extension, or is submitted later than any granted extension, shall not fall within the requirements for feedback and marks to be provided within 15 working days. The deadline which will apply in such cases shall be agreed by the module convenor and the SDTL.

The student(s) should be advised of the amended date for feedback as soon as reasonably possible.

### **Academic Misconduct**

- 19 In cases where a student's submission is being investigated under the Academic Misconduct guidelines ([www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-misconduct.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-misconduct.aspx)), the 15 day turnaround for feedback period is deferred whilst an investigation is conducted. Wherever possible this should not delay the timely return of feedback and marks to the

remainder of the cohort. For the individual student whose work is under investigation feedback and marks should be provided (as appropriate in light of the findings of the investigation) as soon as practicably possible.

### **Feedback on, and access to scripts for, written examinations and in-class tests**

- 20 Schools must ensure that, if sought, feedback on individual performance in written examinations is available to students. The School is responsible for determining the nature and extent of feedback which is appropriate to the circumstances, subject to the proviso that students who are resitting a module are entitled to guidance on their performance in the written examination for the relevant module which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of their performance and indicates how they might improve their performance. In the case of students who are not resitting, more generic feedback, which does not address the individual case, may be appropriate.
- 21 A student would not normally have an entitlement to have access to his or her examination scripts. A module convenor or appropriate member of academic staff may permit a student sight of his or her script in order to discuss examination performance. It is not expected that students would routinely be permitted access to their scripts. The student is not permitted to remove the script from the School.
- 22 A student may apply under the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) for access to an Examiner's comments on their examination answers, whether those comments are held on the script or elsewhere. In such a case, a student should submit a written application to the Data Protection Officer and pay the relevant fee. Markers must ensure that any comments about examination answers are appropriate, fair and relate to the answer and not to the candidate. It is recognised that, where markers provide comments on examination answers, the purpose of the comments is to indicate for the Internal and External Examiners the rationale for the marking and not to provide feedback to students.
- 23 All in-class tests are subject to the fifteen working day turnaround time feedback policy. However, a distinction is made in respect of access to scripts (or the alternative for online tests) between in-class tests which serve a primarily summative purpose, similar to a centrally-administered examination, and in-class tests which serve a primarily formative purpose, supporting students' learning and providing supportive, structured, individualised feedback.
- 24 Schools must ensure that students receive individual feedback and marks for primarily summative in-class tests within fifteen working days from the date of the in-class test. However, a student would not normally have an entitlement to have access to his or her scripts for primarily summative in-class tests. A module convenor or appropriate member of academic staff may permit a student sight of his or her script in order to discuss performance. It is not expected that students would routinely be permitted access to their scripts. The student is not permitted to remove the script from the School.
- 25 In the case of primarily formative in-class tests, marked scripts and accompanying feedback should be returned to students.
- 26 Schools will be responsible for making reasonable provision to enable Examiners or the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results to have access to marked scripts for in-class tests which contribute to classification.

### **Generic feedback on written examinations**

- 27 In addition to the individual feedback described above (20 to 26), students will have access to generic feedback on the examination performance of an entire module cohort (except in the case of multiple-choice assessments and resits). This feedback will not make reference to any individual student or any individual student's performance. This feedback will meet the criteria given in 1 above, regarding the quality of feedback.
- 28 Generic feedback may be provided at the level of the individual question (for example: an essay question, a mathematical problem, or a suite of shorter questions on one topic) or at the level of the whole examination. SDTLs and/or Exams Officers are responsible for choosing which level is most appropriate for each examination, although this responsibility may be delegated to module convenors.
- 29 Feedback will be reported according to a standard template, to ensure consistency across modules and Schools. To this end, institution-wide question-level and examination-level feedback proformas will be stored centrally and provided to Schools by Support Centres (see 31).
- 30 Responsibility for the implementation of this Policy across each School rests with the SDTL and the Exams Officer(s). Module convenors are responsible for ensuring that feedback for their modules is gathered (in the case of examinations with multiple markers) and submitted to Support Centres (see 31). Support Centres are not expected to 'chase' markers to submit feedback.
- 31 Responsibility for the operational aspects of feedback provision rests with the Support Centres. Support Centres will issue feedback proformas to Schools before the start of the examination period or, for examinations held outside the normal period, suitably in advance of the relevant sitting. Schools will return completed feedback forms to Support Centres by the date on which marks for the relevant examination must be uploaded to RISIS.
- 32 Support Centres will upload each feedback form to the relevant Module area on Blackboard. Where necessary, forms will be accompanied by the corresponding question papers. These documents will be visible immediately to relevant members of University staff, but hidden from students until examination marks are released.
- 33 Feedback on Blackboard will be made visible to students at the same time as, or shortly after, the corresponding examination marks are released.
- 34 For the benefit of students who enrol on a module in subsequent years, feedback forms will be 'rolled over' to the following year's iteration of the module on Blackboard, up to a maximum of five years.
- 35 Schools will not provide, and Support Centres will not upload to Blackboard, exam-level feedback on any examination sat by a cohort of five or fewer students. This is to ensure that, even when feedback is anonymised (as described in 27), students cannot be identified by implication.
- 36 Generic feedback on examinations may be used for general quality assurance purposes within Schools; for example, module convenors may comment on generic feedback in module reports submitted as part of the Annual Quality Assurance Review process.
- 37 Generic examination feedback will not normally be considered relevant to a challenge to marks awarded or to the grounds for an appeal. More information can be found here: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-appeal.aspx>.

### **Supporting staff**

- 38 It should be noted that the University has developed a suite of online resources to support staff in relation to assessment and feedback:
- a. Engage in Assessment ([www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment)) and Engage in Feedback ([www.reading.ac.uk/engageinfeedback](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinfeedback));
  - b. A new webpage on the CQSD website has been developed to support effective implementation of the new feedback turnaround time policy: [www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/GoodPracticeinTeachingandLearning/AssessmentandFeedback/cqsd-AssessmentAndFeedback.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/GoodPracticeinTeachingandLearning/AssessmentandFeedback/cqsd-AssessmentAndFeedback.aspx);
  - c. CQSD run staff development sessions and surgeries on electronic submission, assessment and feedback with Blackboard and Turnitin (<https://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/TandLEvents/cqsd-televents.aspx>);
  - d. Comprehensive guidance on electronic submission, marking and feedback including choice of tools within Blackboard and Turnitin, good practice and step-by-step guides can be found on the CQSD Technology Enhanced Learning web pages (<http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tel/support-blackboard/blackboard-support-staff-assessment/>) and (<http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tel/>) as well as on the “Support for Staff” tab within Blackboard.

#### Large groups

- 39 Large groups may pose particular challenges for staff due to the volume, consistency and fairness however there are a range of examples of good practice to overcome these difficulties ([www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/Quicktips/efb-QuickTipsAndResources.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/Quicktips/efb-QuickTipsAndResources.aspx) and [www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/assessing-large-groups/eia-assessing-large-groups.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/assessing-large-groups/eia-assessing-large-groups.aspx)).

#### Use of PhD students

- 40 PhD students may be employed to provide feedback to students with the proviso that they are appropriately trained and supported in this work.

#### Team marking

- 41 Where team marking is used, the module convenor is responsible for ensuring consistency of the marking within 15 working days of the deadline for submission/date of the in-class test and therefore feedback is returned in line with the 15 working day policy.

### Supporting students

- 42 If students believe that feedback is not conforming with the specifications of this policy, students should notify the School Director of Teaching and Learning for an immediate remedy. Non-compliance with the policy should also be reported by students to the School via the relevant Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC). SSLCs should have a standard agenda item on the timing and quality of feedback.
- 43 There is an online resource to support students with electronic submission, assessment and feedback via Blackboard and Turnitin, available on the “Support for Students” tab within Blackboard.



44 All of the above paragraphs apply equally to the provision of feedback to students attending University of Reading Malaysia, subject to any revisions necessary to accommodate organisational or operational differences.

**Useful information**

1	Engage in Feedback <a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/EFB-Home.aspx">www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/EFB-Home.aspx</a>
2	Engage in Assessment <a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/eia-home.aspx">www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/eia-home.aspx</a>
3	Quick tips and resources for providing quality feedback <a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/Quicktips/efb-QuickTipsAndResources.aspx">www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/Quicktips/efb-QuickTipsAndResources.aspx</a>
4	Feedback and the National Student Survey <a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/CommonStaffViews/efb-HowImportantIsTheNationalStudentSurvey.aspx">www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/CommonStaffViews/efb-HowImportantIsTheNationalStudentSurvey.aspx</a>
5	Getting students to engage: <a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/GettingStudentsToEngage/efb-GettingStudentsToEngage.aspx">www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engageinfeedback/GettingStudentsToEngage/efb-GettingStudentsToEngage.aspx</a>
6	Electronic submission, assessment and feedback  For staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tel/support-blackboard/blackboard-support-staff-assessment/">http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tel/support-blackboard/blackboard-support-staff-assessment/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tel/">http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tel/</a></li> <li>• Blackboard “Support for Staff” tab</li> <li>• Staff development: <a href="https://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/TandLEvents/cqsd-televents.aspx">https://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/TandLEvents/cqsd-televents.aspx</a></li> </ul> For students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blackboard “Support for Students” tab.</li> </ul>

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective From
1	AGS	Every year	UBTL	16/01/2013	
2			UBTL	02/11/2015	
3			UBTL	17/02/2016	
4			UBTL	14/06/2016	
5			UBTL	31/10/2016	
6			UBTL	11/07/2017	
7			UBTL	31/10/2017	immediately
8			UBTLSE	30/10/2018	immediately