

SECTION 12: PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS ON THEIR WORK

1. Expectations for Providing Feedback

Students will receive feedback on every assessment task

- 1.1. Schools will provide feedback on each assessment task set during a course of study. This feedback should adhere to the principles of effective feedback (see sections 1.9 and 2 below). The expectation is that individual feedback is provided, however, there may be exceptions where group feedback is equally effective and appropriate. Any such exemptions will need approval of the School Director of Teaching and Learning.
- 1.2. All Schools must ensure that every student receives a minimum of one piece of formative or summative feedback on an assignment during the first term of their programme of study.
 - 1.2.1. This will mean that for every Part 1 module (or Part 0 for students on programmes with a Foundation Year) taught in the Autumn Term, a minimum of one piece of formative or summative feedback on an assignment is provided before the winter vacation, preferably on an individual basis.
 - 1.2.2. For students registered on taught postgraduate programmes this shall mean they 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.
- 1.3. Schools should undertake to ensure that their students are adequately equipped to receive and engage with their feedback. Students should be made aware of the nature of feedback in their School and expectations around their engagement with feedback.
- 1.4. Where modules span two (or more) terms students should be given some feedback on their learning as early as practicable.
- 1.5. Schools may provide feedback on 'work in progress', according to local practice.

Feedback will be returned within accordance with the 15 Working Day Turnaround requirement

- 1.6. All feedback should be returned to students within 15 working days of the submission deadline. This should help students engage with the feedback and allow them to implement any recommendations ahead of their next piece of work.
- 1.7. Where it is not possible to deliver feedback within this timeframe (e.g. owing to staff illness) staff should communicate this to students promptly and with a clear indication of when feedback should be expected.
- 1.8. Full details of the 15 Day Turnaround Time requirements can be found in section 3 below.

Feedback will adhere to the principles of effective feedback

1.9. The University has identified seven key characteristics of effective feedback. These are detailed in section 2 below. When delivering feedback staff should be mindful of these characteristics and aim to meet them in the feedback they provide.

Feedback will be provided via the most appropriate channels

- 1.10. Feedback should be meaningful, meet the University's requirements for inclusive practices, and persistent. Providing feedback via online tools helps ensure that feedback meets these criteria.
- 1.11. The majority of the University's assessment is conducted via online platforms and staff are expected to provide feedback via these online platforms. Online is the University's default mode for the provision of feedback.
- 1.12. However, the University recognises that the nature and format of feedback will, in part, be determined by the format of the assessment (for instance, online feedback may not be appropriate for a performance or presentation). On occasion disciplinary authenticity will dictate that feedback is provided by some means other than the online tools available to staff.
- 1.13. Whilst online feedback is the primary mode for the delivery of feedback the University accepts that feedback can also usefully be provided orally, in seminars, via annotated papers and other means. Where feedback is provided by alternative modes the University encourages staff to also provide feedback via online tools (e.g. group feedback via Blackboard).
- 1.14. The University encourages staff to supplement online feedback with other modes of delivery and vice versa.

Students will have the opportunity to discuss their feedback

- 1.15. Feedback at the University reflects our ethos of working in partnership with students. As such, when students receive feedback, they should be encouraged to explore the feedback with others.
- 1.16. In most cases it will be sensible to discuss feedback with the most appropriate staff (e.g. Module Convenor) and staff should make themselves available for such discussions (e.g. through feedback discussions in seminars, one-to-one meetings, or office hours). Students should be encouraged to engage in discussions with staff about the feedback they have received.
- 1.17. Students may also wish to explore the feedback received with other relevant people, including Academic Tutors, ASK Advisers, Study Advice and their peers.

2. Characteristics of Effective Feedback

Feedback takes a variety of forms. The University has identified seven key characteristics of effective feedback ("the 7 Cs of effective feedback"). Feedback should be:

- 2.1. **Constructive**: The purpose of feedback is to promote student learning. It should be positive and encouraging, identifying where students need to improve, but also where they have done well.
- 2.2. Clear: For feedback to be effective, it must be accessible, understandable and actionable.
- 2.3. **Commensurate**: Providing effective feedback can be time-consuming. It is important that resources are directed to where they will have the most impact on student learning.

- 2.4. **Current**: The University is committed to returning marks and feedback to students within 15 working days of submission. This facilitates the use of feedback to improve future work.¹
- 2.5. **Contextualised**: An integrated and coherent assessment strategy enables feedback to 'feed-forward' to promote students' development throughout the programme.
- 2.6. **Criterion-based**: Feedback should reference assessment criteria to promote assessment literacy and build confidence in the fairness and consistency of academic judgement.
 - 2.6.1. All assessment briefs must include measurable assessment criteria, which are linked to module learning outcomes, and qualitative grade descriptors that articulate the standards against which student work is assessed. Assessment criteria will be provided at the start of the module unless there are sound pedagogical reasons not to do so. University wide generic assessment criteria relating to mark ranges and classification for first degrees and taught postgraduate programmes across the University are provided in Section 10 of the Assessment Handbook.² It is recommended that schools contextualise these criteria for their students to provide local context, at discipline, module or assignment level. 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 contextualised criteria will apply and when module convenors should devise their own.
- 2.7. **Conversational**: Feedback should be a dialogic process rather than a product. Appropriately worded feedback can encourage dialogue (student-staff and peer-peer) and promotes useful reflection as part of students' learning. Schools (programme areas in the Henley Business School) should seek to enhance students' awareness of, and engagement with, the assessment criteria which underpin their degree, and to promote their understanding of how to interpret and apply the criteria to their work.

3. Feedback Turnaround Times

- 3.1. Across all undergraduate (including those with a Foundation Year) and postgraduate programmes, the standard turnaround time for feedback and marks on coursework (formative and summative) is a maximum of 15 working days from the deadline for submission (or date of the in-class test). This ensures that feedback is 'current' (see 2.4 above). Whilst noting the need for feedback to be 'current' staff should be mindful that it also be 'commensurate' meaning that it may be necessary, when teaching large cohorts, to provide reduced individualised feedback which is buttressed by more general feedback to the cohort.
- 3.2. Feedback turnaround times are calculated by working days. As such, feedback delivered to students at overseas campuses may be impacted by local holidays (as they affect markers). The working days are counted according to the locality of delivery. If marking and moderation is occurring on different campuses differences should be considered in order to ensure that feedback is returned within the 15 working days of submission at the location of submission.
- 3.3. Some assessments may be exempt from the requirement that feedback be returned within 15 working days. However, feedback should be returned in a timely fashion in order to ensure

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¹ Staff should note that the timing of feedback can have an impact on how it is received. Staff are asked to be particularly mindful about the potential impact of feedback delivered around the time of examinations. Some anecdotal evidence indicates that such feedback can be poorly received, and staff should endeavour to ensure that it such feedback is delivered constructively.

²www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/-/media/project/functions/cqsd/documents/qap/10-marking-withannexes.pdf

- its currency and usefulness. Where there is an exemption staff should communicate to students an expected timeframe for delivery of feedback.
- 3.4. 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, eg data collection, dissertation proposals are not exempted from the 15 working 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; and
 - iv. Assessments where, for logistical reasons, there are staggered submission dates (eg practicals)
- 3.5. The following would **not** normally be considered as valid reasons for exemptions:
 - i. Large cohorts (marking loads);
 - ii. Working being marked by sessional staff; and
 - iii. Laboratory work.
 - 3.5.1. In respect of large pieces of work falling under the automatic exemption from the 15 working day policy (ie under 3.4(ii) 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 be agreed before the commencement of the module, and the alternative deadline conveyed to students before the hand-in date (it may be useful to also communicate the alternative deadline at the date marking what would have been the 15 working day turnaround deadline).
 - 3.5.2. If an exemption under 3.4(iii) above applies the SDTL and Module Convenor should consult with the professional external body concerned to determine a reasonable timeframe for the delivery of feedback. This alternative deadline should be confirmed with the TLD. The alternative should be conveyed to students on the module, ideally before the hand-in date (it may be useful to also communicate the alternative deadline at the date marking what would have been the 15 working day turnaround deadline).
 - 3.5.3. In all cases where an exemption applies students should be informed of the date by which they will receive feedback (the alternative date for the return of feedback should ideally be communicated before the hand-in date and it may be useful to remind students of the revised date at the date marking what would have been the 15 working day turnaround deadline). Staff are reminded that feedback should be 'current' and that lengthy delays in returning feedback should be avoided.
 - 3.5.4. In the case of exemptions occurring under 3.4 alternative dates for the return of feedback (or timeframe for delivery of feedback) should be noted in the Module Description.
- 3.6. 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 be made prior to the commencement of the academic year (and prior to the commencement of the module). Unless notified otherwise, such granted exemptions are for one academic year only.

- 3.7. Teaching and Learning Deans will monitor the requests they receive, and a record of agreed exemptions will be maintained in order to ensure institutional oversight, consistency of approach and equality for students as well reviewing practice in order to promote enhancement and mitigate any negative effects the turnaround time might inadvertently cause.
- 3.8. There may be instances where the requirement for the 15 working day turnaround time for feedback does not apply on an individual level. For instance, where a student's submission is being investigated for academic misconduct the requirement to provide feedback within 15 working days will not apply for that student. However, the return of marks and feedback for a cohort should not be delated by the withholding of an individual's marks and feedback (where their work is pending an academic misconduct investigations). See also 3.19 below.
- 3.9. The 15 working day turnaround time requirement does not apply to generic feedback on written examinations (see section 5 below). Such feedback is subject to its own deadlines, as noted in 5.6. since students cannot view this feedback until examinations marks are released, the principle of 'currency' in feedback is upheld.

Monitoring and compliance with the 15 working day turnaround time

- 3.10. Schools, in conjunction with Support Centres, 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 15 working days after the submission date), and whether feedback was returned early or later than the 15 working days (and by how many days). In most instances this process will be automated via RISIS.
- 3.11. On a termly basis the data relating 15 working day turnaround times will be reviewed by the Sub-Committee for the Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. Schools are encouraged to undertake their own monitoring of 15 working day turnaround times in order to identify areas where staff are facing particular challenges and may require additional support.
- 3.12. Where the 15 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

- 3.13. Where possible, internal moderation (as opposed to second marking) of coursework and inclass tests should take place within the 15 working day period.
- 3.14. However, the University recognises that there may be instances where this may not be practicable. If the School identifies circumstances where it is unable to complete moderation within the 15 working day period it may return work to students unmoderated. However, in such cases students should be informed that marks given are subject to moderation and are provisional until work has been moderated. Additionally, students should be informed of the date by which they will receive the moderated mark.
- 3.15. Schools should use moderation as an opportunity to perform additional Quality Assurance checks on feedback provided in order to ensure that it meets the 7 Cs and expectations detailed above (see section 2). Where moderators have any concerns about the potential effectiveness of feedback provided they should highlight this to their Director for Teaching and Learning. Conversely, where moderators identify good practice this should also be highlighted to the Director for Teaching and Learning. As such, comments and marks are both subject to moderation.

3.16. Schools must ensure that working practices, particularly in relation to administration of assessment and the return of feedback, will enable adherence to the 15 working day turnaround for feedback. Processes for recording the hand-in, distribution and marking of coursework must be factored into calculations for the delivery of feedback within 15 working days.

Work submitted late

- 3.17. Any coursework which is granted an extended deadline through the Exceptional Circumstances process, or an amended deadline as a result of a verified systems outage which impacts the ability of students to submit summative work, 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. When determining a revised date for the return of feedback staff should be mindful of the requirement for feedback to be 'current' (see 2.4above).
 - 3.17.1. If the granting of an extension would impact the release of feedback to the entire cohort, then either no extension should be granted (eg an alternative assessment should be set), or feedback to the cohort should be issued with the instruction that it is not to be shared with peers. Discussions on what mitigating actions should be taken should be agreed with the relevant School or Department Director of Academic Tutoring.
- 3.18. 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. When determining a revised date for the return of feedback staff should be mindful of the requirement for feedback to be 'current' (see 2.4above).

Academic Misconduct

3.19. In cases where a student's submission is being investigated under the Academic Misconduct guidelines³, the 15 working 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.

4. Feedback on, and access to scripts for, written examinations and in-class tests

4.1. Whilst generic feedback on the examination performance of a whole cohort should be made available (see section 5 below) to students, Schools must also 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 circumstance. However, Schools should note that students who are resitting a module are entitled to guidance on their performance in the written examination for the relevant module.

³ www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-misconduct.aspx

- Such feedback should identify the strengths and weaknesses of their performance and indicate how they might improve their performance.
- 4.2. A student would not normally have an entitlement to have access to their examination scripts. A module convenor or appropriate member of academic staff may permit a student sight of their script in order to discuss examination performance. Access to scripts should be limited and supervised, and under no circumstances should a student be permitted to remove the script from the School. The script can be used as a catalyst for a more nuanced and developed conversation (see 2.7 above) about performance, noting that the comments on scripts are not feedback per se but guides for markers and moderators.
- 4.3. A student may request, in line with their Data Access Rights under the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018, 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 Office (IMPS). 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.
- 4.4. All in-class tests are subject to the 15 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.
 - 4.4.1. Schools must ensure that students receive individual feedback and marks for primarily summative in-class tests within 15 working days from the date of the in-class test. However, a student would not normally have an entitlement to have access to their scripts for primarily summative in-class tests. In such cases access to scripts should be governed by the same principles outlined in 4.2 above.
 - 4.4.2. In the case of primarily formative in-class tests, marked scripts and accompanying feedback should be returned to students.
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. Schools should note that the above provisions also apply to examinations administered online and that the level of feedback provided on examinations conducted online should be no different to that provided on a 'traditional' examinations script.

5. Generic feedback on written examinations

- 5.1. In addition to the individual feedback described above (4.2 to 4.3), students will have access to generic feedback on the examination performance of an entire module cohort (except in the case of multiple-choice assessments, resits, and cohorts of five or fewer students). This feedback will not make reference to any individual student or individual student's performance, or provide feedback that would identify any individual. This feedback will meet the principles given in section 2 above, regarding effective feedback. Generic feedback on examinations may be used for general quality assurance purposes within Schools.
- 5.2. 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 (with a view to providing consistency in approach across a programme), although this responsibility may be delegated to module convenors.

- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. Responsibility for the implementation of Section 5 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 5.5 below). Support Centres are not expected to 'chase' markers to submit feedback.
- 5.5. 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 examinations must be uploaded to RISIS.
- 5.6. 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.
- 5.7. Feedback on Blackboard will be made visible to students at the same time as, or shortly after, the corresponding examination marks are released.
- 5.8. 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.
- 5.9. Generic examinations feedback will not normally be considered relevant to a challenge to marks awarded or to the grounds for an appeal⁴.

6. Supporting staff

- 6.1. Colleagues across the institution can provide support and insights to help develop feedback practices. Colleagues within your School can provide support and guidance and line managers should be consulted if there are any difficulties in adhering to this policy (especially with regards meeting the requirement to deliver feedback within 15 working days). Colleagues in the Technology Enhanced Learning Team can provide guidance on using Blackboard and Turnitin for providing feedback and colleagues in the Academic Development and Enhancement Team can help you review practice in your School.
- 6.2. Staff should note that the University has developed a suite of online resources to support them in relation to assessment and feedback:
 - a) 7Cs of Effective Feedback https://sites.reading.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2021/04/7Cs-of-Quality-Feedback.pdf
 - b) Curriculum Feedback Toolkit https://sites.reading.ac.uk/curriculum-framework/engage-in-feedback/

⁴ www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-appeal.aspx

- c) Guide to Providing Quality Feedback https://sites.reading.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2020/10/Guide-on-Giving-Quality-Feedback-May-2020.pdf
- d) Focus on Feedback Top Tips https://sites.reading.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2020/01/Focus-on-feedback-Top-Tips.pdf
- e) Assessment and Feedback Online website https://sites.reading.ac.uk/curriculum-framework/assessment-and-feedback-online/ (includes sections on Feedback Guidance, Peer to Peer Formative Feedback Activities, Video and Audio Feedback, Formative Online Quizzes, and Maximising Opportunities for Student and Staff Engagement with Feedback under the 'Feedback' tab)
- f) T&L Exchange https://sites.reading.ac.uk/t-and-l-exchange/ (Browse Case Studies or Funded Projects)
- g) Assessment and Feedback sessions on the T&L Workshop series <u>www.reading.ac.uk/events-and-training/cqsd-events.aspx</u>
- h) HEA Feedback Toolkit (20013) www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/feedback_toolkit_whole1.pdf
- i) 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 webpages -https://sites.reading.ac.uk/tel/

Large Groups

- 6.3. Large groups may pose particular challenges for staff due to issues around the volume of marking, and its impact on ensuring consistency and fairness. However, there are a range of examples of good practice illustrative how these challenges may be overcome, including:
 - a) Quick Tips and Resources https://sites.reading.ac.uk/curriculum-framework/resources-for-assessment-feedback/
 - b) Group work guidance https://sites.reading.ac.uk/curriculum-framework/group-work-2022/
- 6.4. Where large groups continue to pose challenges staff are encouraged to discuss the issues with peers, module convenors, SDTLs, TLDs and the Academic Development and Enhancement Team.
- 6.5. This policy (and especially the sections on the 15 working day turnaround time) 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 effective, timely feedback is provided.

Use of PhD students

- 6.6. PhD students may be employed to provide feedback to students with the proviso that they are appropriately trained and supported in this work.
- 6.7. Module Convenors remain responsible for overseeing marking and quality of feedback for their modules and should support PhD students in meeting the required standards.

Team Marking

6.8. 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 principles outlined above (see section 3).

7. Supporting Students

- 7.1. If students believe that feedback is not conforming with the specification of this policy, they 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 Student-Staff Partnership Group or the Board of Studies and Student Experience.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. Students can refer to the following resources/support to better understand the feedback that they receive:
 - a) Making the Most of Your Feedback www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/- /media/essentials/files/making-the-most-of-your-feedback-final-002.pdf
 - b) Online Assessment and Feedback Guide www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/Study/Online-Assessment-and-Feedback
 - c) Study Advice www.reading.ac.uk/library/study-advice/lib-study-advice.aspx
 - d) Study Advice Video Tutorials www.reading.ac.uk/library/study-advice/lib-sa-videos.aspx
 - e) Academic Staff, including your Academic Tutor, Module Convenor and marker

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