ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON ASSESSMENT 2023/24

UNIVERSITY of York

GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT, STANDARDS, MARKING & FEEDBACK

Contents

1. Guidance on recalibration and rescaling of marks

1.1 Recalibration of marks

Where a Board of Examiners (BoE) has reason to believe that the raw marks arising from a particular module do not provide an adequate reflection of student performance on the appropriate University scale, the marks should be recalibrated to the University scale, either by remarking or by a rescaling procedure. If rescaling is undertaken it must be performed in the following way.

A number of points of correspondence between the original marking scale and the University scale should be identified. In particular, the minimum and maximum marks on the original scale should be placed in correspondence with 0 and 100 respectively on the University scale. Points of correspondence should be located using academic judgement, bearing in mind any relevant descriptors. A sample calculation is presented in 1.2. The same principle is to be followed, pro rata, if only part of a module assessment is affected.

It is important that the marks of all students taking the module are rescaled in the same way. If the module is shared between programmes the school/department taking formal responsibility for the module should take the lead in the process. The External Examiners should be informed of any rescaling, the process and its outcome(s) must be formally documented.

Any rescaling must be completed before the reports are produced for the final Board of Examiners Meeting. The External Examiners should be informed of any rescaling and the process and its outcome(s) must be formally documented.

1.2 How to rescale marks

For the purposes of illustration we suppose that a taught postgraduate module, initially marked out of 100, has resulted in a set of marks that do not appear to be correctly calibrated to the taught postgraduate mark scale. The first step in the recalibration process is to identify a number of points of correspondence (at least three) between the original mark scale and the University mark scale. This is done by reference to descriptors and using academic judgement. The lowest and highest marks on the two scales must be identified. For example, the following points of correspondence might be identified:

Original mark scale	0	44.5	60.5	100
University postgraduate mark scale	0	49.5	69.5	100

Effectively, this sets the borderline pass mark as 44.5 for this paper, and the borderline distinction mark at 60.5. More points might be needed if the distribution of original marks is particularly irregular.

Next, the points of correspondence are used to divide the two mark scales into intervals:

	0 to 44.5	44.5 to 60.5	60.5 to 100
Original mark scale	0 to 44.5	44.5 to 60.5	60.5 to 100
University postgraduate mark scale	0 to 49.5	49.5 to 69.5	69.5 to 100

The rule for rescaling an original mark M depends on the interval in which it lies. If the lowest and highest values in the interval on the original mark scale are L_O and H_O, and the lowest and highest values on the corresponding interval on the University scale are L_U and H_U then the rescaled mark (R) is given by

$$R = L_u + (M - L_o) \times \frac{H_u - L_u}{H_o - L_o}$$

which divides the interval between L_U and H_U in the same ratio as M divides the interval between L_O and H_O. In our example, an original mark of 52 lies in the interval between 44.5 and 60.5, which corresponds to the interval between 49.5 and 69.5 on the University scale. Thus M = 52 is rescaled to
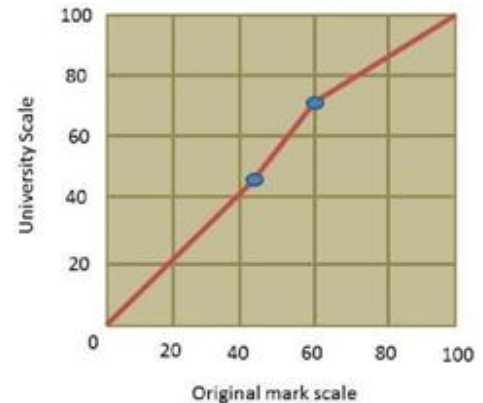
$$R = 49.5 + (52 - 44.5) \times \frac{69.5 - 49.5}{60.5 - 44.5} = 58.89$$

Similarly, an original mark of M = 75 is rescaled to

$$R = 69.5 + (75 - 60.5) \times \frac{100 - 69.5}{100 - 60.5} = 80.70$$

The mapping between the original mark scale and the University mark scale in the example may be represented by the following graph:

Important features of this procedure are that the rank ordering of original marks is maintained, that it preserves minimum and maximum marks, and that it maps the points mark of correspondence on the original University scale to their partners on the University mark scale. The procedure can also be automated, e.g., using spreadsheets.

1.3 Auto-rescaling tool guidance

The auto rescaling tool It is available at: https://shiny.york.ac.uk/autorescale[1]

   a. **Purpose of rescaling**: The university allows for the possibility of rescaling marks for an individual assessment. Rescaling may be necessary where the raw marks, in the academic

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[1] *Hosted by IT services. University of York account needed - developed by Daniel Baker of the Department of Psychology.*

judgement of the BoE, do not adequately reflect performance on the university mark scale. This may arise as a result of unforeseen issues with an assessment design resulting in marks that do not appear correctly calibrated. Rescaling is one way to achieve this recalibration. Rescaling in this way has to be agreed by the BoE and the rescaling procedure for an assessment (i.e. choice of points of correspondence - see below) should be based on academic judgement by reference to the descriptors for this assessment. Rescaling should only be used for individual assessments and should not be used for scaling calculated module marks comprising more than one assessment.

b. **Rescaling method**: Scaling is achieved by "points of correspondence", each of which defines a point on the original mark scale (raw marks) and a corresponding point on the university mark scale. A number of points of correspondence may be used. The rescaling algorithm then scales the marks such that, for each point of correspondence, the original mark is moved to the corresponding point you have defined on the university scale. For all points in between the points of correspondence, the marks are scaled proportionally.

c. **Number of points of correspondence:** The procedure requires a minimum of three points of correspondence to work. However, it would be standard procedure for two of these points of correspondence to be (0,0) and (100,100) (i.e. students who get zero should still get zero, and students that get 100, should still get 100). So these points have been programmed in already. Hence, if you choose one point of correspondence in the tool (say 49.5,59.5) then you are really choosing three points (0,0), (49.5,59.5) and (100,100).

d. **Using the tool:** The tool defaults to some randomly generated example data to demonstrate how it works. Simply choose the number of points of correspondence and try changing the numbers to achieve some rescaling of the test data. You can see the change of distribution of the marks in the "histogram" tab, and you can see the influence of the points of correspondence on the data by examining the "scatterplot" tab.

Importing and downloading marks: To upload marks from an assessment, the data needs to be stored in a .csv file as a single column of numbers with no header, and no other data in the file (e.g. no exam numbers or other component marks). The data should be percentages, and not raw marks (e.g. not 14/22) and should not have been already rounded if the raw marks are non-integer. Once you have rescaled the data, the download tab creates a new .csv file that has the original data and the rescaled data in two columns. This site is hosted by IT services, it is only accessible to university staff and requires you to log in with your University of York username and password. Please also note that these calculations are done completely in processor memory and the data are not stored on disk, so there are no data security issues. If you reload the rescaling tool, or close the browser, the data you have imported will be wiped and the test data will be reloaded.

Example: (an example using the test data). The BoE determines that the calibration is off, and decides that the raw data is miscalibrated at the first-class performance boundary by 5 marks,

having considered the descriptors and any issues with the assessment. They also decide that the assessment at the threshold end (i.e. at the pass mark) was adequate and properly calibrated. They therefore choose two points of correspondence of (39.5,39.5) and (64.5,69.5). The result is as follows:
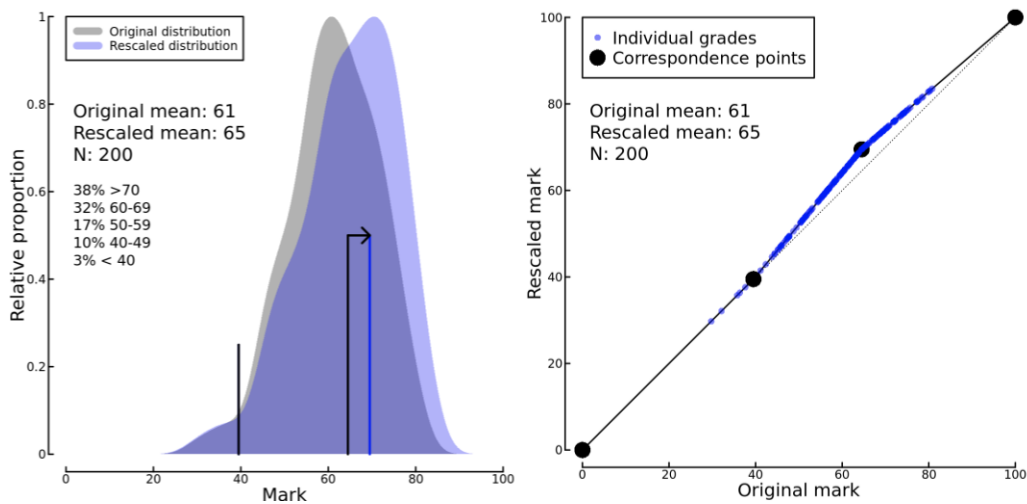
2. Guidance for considering marking procedures

2.1 Different approaches to marking

There are a number of different marking approaches that can be adopted, which can also vary depending on the assessment type. It's important to balance the importance/stakes of the assessment and the risk of bias or error in grading.

2.2 Risk of bias or error

Areas that could contribute to increasing risk include:

a. **markers:** the number of markers/ensuring consistency between markers/expertise or experience of markers;

b. **clarity of standards:** availability of detailed criteria/agreed standard across markers/use of the answer key or criteria before;

c. **objectivity:** the degree of anonymity of the student/the risk of possible bias/the degree of personal judgement involved;

d. **checking procedures:** record kept of the assessment/checks in place.

2.3 Stakes of the assessment

Consideration must be given to the implications of the mark for the student. This can range from the mark not affecting their module mark or degree award (e.g. formative assessment), to the mark having a significant effect on whether they pass their degree (i.e. due to the size of the module or the weighting given to a particular assessment task).

a. Case A = a VLE, multiple choice, formative language test for second year students. Very low degree of possible error + very low implication = machine marking acceptable.

b. Case B = a summative, first year Maths exam (run for the 10th time with 4 experienced markers). Low degree of possible error + low implication = single marking acceptable.

c. Case C = a summative second year Politics exam (50% of a 20 credit module – well established module with very clear criteria and several experienced markers). Medium degree of possible error + medium implication = moderated marking will generally be most appropriate.

d. Case D = summative third year Management project presentation (50% of a 20 credit module – no anonymity – no record kept of presentation) Due to the higher degree of possibility of error and the medium implication a form of joint marking or robust moderation would be advisable in most circumstances.

e. Case E = summative third year History dissertation (80% of a 40 credit module – questionable anonymity – high degree of judgement needed). Due to a relatively high possibility of error and the significant implications, a robust form of oversight such as blind, double marking, second marking or moderated marking involving close scrutiny of individual marker profiles and checking of a robust sample of scripts.

3. Marking to full range

3.1 Ensuring a greater range of marks

In assessments where there is a clear right or wrong answer, marking to the full range is more evident where the assessment is designed to allow for performance across a range of ability, i.e. parts of the exam include some very high level, challenging items (to allow student to perform at their best) and some more basic, straightforward items (to test core knowledge any standard student should have grasped). Such a mixture of items ensures an examination differentiates student performance more clearly and allows for a greater range of marks.

3.2 Range of marks in open assessment

In open assessments (module essays, projects, presentations, posters, dissertations) using the full range of marks is more likely to occur where colleagues have a shared understanding of what candidates must produce to merit particular levels of achievement across the full range of performance. This agreed range of performance should also be clarified in published criteria and/or clear information regarding performance that is available to students.

3.3 Ensuring consistency of marking

To achieve a consistent level of shared understanding, programme or module teams could:

a. make regular time to discuss expectations of students at different levels in a programme, review organisation of criteria/descriptors and share experience of areas that may cause problems with marking high level and low level students;

b. compile a 'band book' for reference by new staff (this is a compilation of several 1sts/ 2:1s/ 2:2s/ 3rds/Fail assignments including the mark allocated and the reasoning for the mark). The process of putting such a guide together and maintaining it can promote valuable discussions within the School/Department;

c. divide broad marking bands (1st/2:1/2:2/ 3rd/Fail) into sub-bands with clear descriptors (see 4);

d. engage in table marking (all markers marking the scripts for one assessment together in the same room- usually in one or two days);

e. agree to the moderation of all 3rd/fail assessments and all borderline 1st and 1st assignments and confirm the marks allocated;

4. Stepped marking guidance

4.1 Principles of stepped marking at the University of York

Stepped marking is an optional approach to marking used by a number of schools/departments at the University of York and across the sector. The following guidance should be considered by schools/departments using the approach in line with principles of assessment: equity, openness, clarity and consistency.

4.2 Stepped Marking - definition, reasoning and principles of use

Stepped marking (also known as fixed point marking, platform marking, notch marking, categorical marking) is a clear and transparent marking process that restricts the number of marks available in each class band to an agreed scale (e.g. low/medium/high). This is a process best suited to essay-based assessments and is not generally applied to closed item marking such as multiple-choice tests. The process works by ascribing agreed marks or 'steps' within each grade band, most commonly -2/-5/-8 (i.e. 52/55/58) . At the higher and lower end of the marking scale, the 'steps' may be more steep, for example 5/15/30, or 80/85/90/95, where marks are less commonly awarded (see below for an example).

When marking assessments to the full-scale, a piece of work could be marked on any number between 0-100 in line with the marking criteria. Evidence suggests that this approach leads to better achievement of learning outcomes by enabling clear differentiation for markers and students concerning the standard of written work; improved consistency and equity in marking processes and better use of the full scale of marks (0-100). It also helps to ensure that colleagues who teach and/or mark on the same programme have a shared understanding of the standards expected of students. These all lead to easier, quicker and more consensual marking and moderation, and greater transparency in marks and marking for students.

Degrees at UK universities are traditionally awarded in classes which are determined by the marks given to students for their work. For example, for undergraduate programmes:

- First-class Honours 70-100
- Upper second-class Honours 60-69
- Lower second-class Honours 50-59
- Third-class Honours 40-49
- Fail 0-39*

Stepped marking therefore restricts the scale to a number of steps within each classification and provides more distinct criteria for each step. For example, for a postgraduate programme:

Pass			Merit			Distinction								
50-59			60-69			70-79			80-89			90-100		
Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
52	55	58	62	65	68	72	75	78	82	85	88	92	95	100

Outright Fail												Marginal Fail		
0-9			10-19			20-29			30-39			40-49		
Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
0	5	8	12	15	18	22	25	28	32	35	38	42	45	48

High: Assignment meets and, in some respects, exceeds the required standards but does not meet the standards of a higher band.
Mid: Assignment meets most of the standards in the band well.
Low: Assignment meets the minimum standards for the given band.

4.3 Considerations:

- **Size of steps**: One key consideration is the number of steps that may be included in each band. For example, the school/department could opt for two (high; low) or three steps (high; medium; low). A feature of stepped marking is that a school/department can 'customise' the scale according to its particular requirements or identified need. For example, schools/departments may elect to incorporate -3 rather -2 (i.e. 53/63/73) into its marking scale in order to place work clearly up into the particular band and encourage range and difference in its marking.

- **Name of steps at upper end of the marking scheme:** Due to the large range of marks between 70-100, it must be divided into several bands. While some schools/departments choose to differentiate these by naming each band (for example Outstanding - 70/75/80 & Extraordinary - 88/95/100), however this can be negatively perceived by students as creating a new higher degree/award classification. This should be carefully considered.

- **Borderline marks:** Stepped marking may lead to more students falling in the borderline of classifications. Schools/Departments should explain the calculation of borderline marks for degree classification clearly to avoid unnecessary complaints from students, monitor the impact of stepped marking on borderline module marks and by adjusting the steps at the division of certain bands (i.e. opting for 60/63/65/68) if necessary.

- **Marking Criteria:** In addition to the stepped marking scale, schools/departments should always make accompanying criteria available to students.

- **Grade inflation:** While the intention is that stepped marking encourages the full use of the marking criteria, staff must be aware that grade inflation may result if the scale is not used appropriately. Ideally, the use of stepped marking should result in a better spread of marks across a cohort rather than a higher overall mean.

4.4 Introduction and implementation of Stepped Marking

- Stepped marking **must** be carefully considered by the BoE and discussed with External Examiners before implementation.

- Schools/Departments are **advised** to consult with schools/departments who have already implemented Stepped Marking and/or SCA for guidance.

- Schools/departments **must** inform students of the Stepped Marking Scale and reasoning for its usage in the schools/departmental Handbook.

- Schools/Departments are **advised** to also explain this approach to students in a face-to-face session which details assessment practices on their programme.

- Schools/Departments are **advised** to closely monitor the impact of stepped marking to identify any associated issues (such as grade inflation).

5. Guidance for Improving student engagement

5.1. Balancing formative work and summative assessment

a. Limit the number of summative assessments in a programme to allow space for staff and students to focus on learning through formative work with more immediate feedback.

b. Consider the range of summative assessment formats. Too few formats (ie only exams or only essays) can restrict students' development of a range of skills whereas too many formats can prevent students from developing expertise in relevant skills.

c. Increase opportunities for students to engage in:

  1. formative work designed to consolidate learning through practice e.g. regular, progressively challenging online tests;

  2. formative work designed to clarify standards e.g. peer-marked shorter written assignments;

  3. formative work designed to exemplify concepts and challenge thinking.

d. Necessary engagement - if the majority of students on a module know they can achieve high marks on assessments without attending or engaging in formative work, they will probably not engage. In such situations, the programme team needs to reconsider:

  1. the standards expected and whether they are high enough for the level;

  2. the complexity or degree of challenge of the assessments being assigned and the formative work being assigned;

  3. whether marking is consistent with the expected standard.

e. The timetable of module work and assessment can cause bottlenecks that force students to choose where to focus their attention. Programme leaders and teams should consider the balance of workload carefully and adjust the timing of work or assessments accordingly.

5.2. *Improving engagement with formative work*

a. Discuss and agree a school/department approach to non-engagement and ensure the approach is contributed to and followed by all teaching staff and supervisors.

b. Provide consistent messages about how formative work is used throughout the programme and ensure this message is consistent across the programme team.

c. Provide swift, direct feedback from staff or peers on formative work and align this to progression and improved performance on summative assessment.

d. Support less experienced staff and GTAs responsible for managing formative work in seminars and labs. Ensure they understand their role, the purpose of the session and the work, and how feedback on the work contributes to progression.

e. Use "real-world" examples and tasks linked to research or professional practice to encourage student engagement.

f. Self-directed learners - to learn to monitor and adjust their approaches to learning themselves, students need to understand the standard or goal they are trying to achieve, the gap between their performance and that goal and how to engage with the support or framework that is around them to bridge the gap. If a programme can provide this information clearly to students in the form of criteria, exemplars, peer support, cross and

self-marking exercises, and focussed feedback on formative work prior to assessment then students may be more likely to engage in formative work.

g. Peer marking should be actively encouraged for formative work across all assessment types. Peer marking is the practice of students, from the same module or level, marking and providing feedback on each other's work. Involvement in making judgements regarding the work of other students can have significant pedagogical benefits, enhancing:

1. engagement with course content, teaching-staff and peers;

2. understanding of standards, marking criteria and feedback;

3. development of skill through regular critical assessment and comparison to peers;

4. awareness of the discourse of the discipline and features of quality work.

6. Procedures concerning feedback

6.1 School/Department Policy and Practices on Feedback

a. Schools/Departments are responsible for providing feedback to students for all assessments.

b. Each school/department should develop an approach to learning, assessment and feedback that effectively integrates and achieves the four principles outlined above.

c. Once an agreement on an approach has been reached, schools/departments should produce a clear "Statement on Feedback" which makes clear what students can expect. For a model framework, see section 8.

d. Development of feedback policies and practices should involve consultation with students. Schools/Departments should be aware that feedback practices will be subject to a variety of legal rules or policies. For guidance relating to these policies, please see section 10.

e. The school/departmental "Statement on Feedback" should be published in relevant handbooks (e.g staff, GTAs and students). Students should also be actively alerted to opportunities for feedback throughout their programme of study.

f. It is the responsibility of individual schools/departments to arrange support for staff and students regarding feedback where necessary and undertake their own review of practice as part of their regular evaluation of programmes. .
The school/departmental "Statement on Feedback" should be updated in response to any changes in policy set out in future editions of the University Guide to Assessment.

6.2 Module Design and Feedback

During the design of new or adaptation of existing modules, consideration should be given to planning for effective feedback for learning. Consideration should be given to such factors as the:

- likely number of students taking the module;

- level of the module;

- timing of assessment, marking and feedback periods;

- relationship of the module to other modules (i.e. learning connections);

- availability of teaching/learning support;

- possible use of technology (VLE);

The published information for each module should include clear indication of:
- the student's responsibilities in the feedback system;
- in what format students will receive feedback;
- exactly when students will receive feedback following assessments;
- on what basis (ie criteria/mark descriptors) they will be assessed and given feedback.

6.3 Feedback on Formative Assessment

a. Formative assessment and feedback can often dealt with by multiple staff members therefore, it is important that there is clarity and coordination between those working on the same module regarding, for example, task objectives, how tasks relate to the module as a whole, how formative tasks relate to summative tasks, task criteria and agreed feedback approaches. This coordination is the responsibility of the module leader.

b. Schools/departments should use formative assessment to provide students with reasonable opportunities to experience/practice any given assessment method prior to its use towards summative assessment which contributes to the degree award, and to provide formative feedback on the exercise.

c. Where seminar or tutorial performance constitutes a substantial part of assessment, schools/departments should have mechanisms in place to give qualitative feedback on performance (although this need not involve an indicative mark)

d. Where drafts of essays or stages in a process are used as formative assessment, clear information needs to be given about the extent and type of feedback available, especially relating to the responsibility of the student for their own work.

e. Where problem sheets are used, schools/departments should either provide students with a worked solution or clarify to students on an individual or small group basis where they have made mistakes.

f. Where practical work is being assessed, schools/departments should provide students with sufficient feedback to enable them to reflect on and improve their performance.

6.4 Feedback on Summative Assessment – Non-exam based

In relation to extended essays, dissertations, performances and projects:

a. Schools/Departments should specify a minimum number of opportunities for formative feedback to be given in support of coursework assessments and consider equity between students taking different modules at the same time. For example, an extended essay for a module can be submitted once for feedback during the preparation period.

b. Feedback on drafts of assessments should be concise, constructive and not misleading as to the overall quality of the work produced.

c. Although staff commenting on drafts may well refer to mark descriptors in the course of providing feedback, they should not comment directly on the likely mark of a specific piece of work. Staff should clarify to students that they only offer feedback and advice and cannot guarantee that following the advice will ensure success.

d. Following marking, sufficient feedback should be made available to students in either oral or written form to fully communicate the rationale for the mark which has been awarded.

6.5 Feedback on Summative Assessment – Examinations

a. Schools/Departments need to clearly specify how feedback (over and above a mark) will be provided on their examinations. For suggestions of approaches to providing feedback on examinations, please see section 9.

b. Where closed examinations are made up of several distinct sections, as a minimum, marks for each section should be provided, in addition to overall feedback.

c. Feedback to a cohort on general performance in an exam can be provided before marks are finalised by the BoE. This can be done online or in specific exam feedback sessions.

d. Student access to marked examination scripts: All students should be permitted access to marked progressional examination scripts, where schools/departments can facilitate the process, particularly on programmes which rely heavily on examination as an assessment format and are therefore do not provide a significant amount of feedback by other means.

Schools/Departments should administer such access in a fair, efficient, economical and professional manner.

6.6 Marking procedures and feedback

a. The marking procedures engaged in by schools/departments should be arranged to balance the need for fairness with the need to support learning ie providing timely feedback.

b. Where single marking is used, it is important that marks and feedback are linked to explicit marking schemes or criteria.

c. Where multiple markers are involved in marking assignments, it is important that feedback is fair and consistent across the cohort. Discussing feedback during marking meetings, using agreed criteria and using standard feedback sheets can be helpful.

d. Where second or double marking is used and feedback is provided, students should only be supplied with the mark and feedback as agreed by both markers.

e. Provisional marks: Schools/Departments should, wherever possible and reasonable, provide students with feedback and provisional marks with a clear and appropriate provision as to their marks being provisional only, prior to confirmation by the BoE.

7. Types of feedback and good practice

7.1 Types of feedback

The form feedback takes can be very varied. For example:

a. Discussion which includes responses to student input/queries;

b. Provision of answers to formative exercises or discussion of formative exercises in class;

c. Comments on areas that could be improved or that were particularly successful following a formative or summative assessment;

d. Comments on presentations or on student participation;

e. Outline or Model answers to exercises or examinations.

7.2 Individual – spoken

a. Individual, face-to-face guidance (comments on work, discussion of exercises, comments on individual performance);

b. Discussion in office hours.

7.3 Individual – written

a. Written comments on individual formative work;

b. Written corrections on exercises;

c. Summative Assessment Feedback sheets (for examinations , essays, presentations);

d. Supervised access to written comments on examinations.

7.4 Peer

a. Feedback provided by students on each other's individual work;

b. Feedback provided by seminar groups to an individual or other groups;

c. Feedback provided by a whole class to each other via the VLE.

7.5 Electronic

a. Comments of assessment script;

b. Answers provided or commentary given on completed online formative exercises;

c. Email answers to individual queries;

d. Comments in response to discussion in an electronic forum.

7.6 Audio

a. Comments on work spoken onto a recording device/computer and provided to students as a digital file.

7.7 Examples of practices that support a better understanding of feedback

a. **Clarity of Information:** Students and staff should be very clear about how feedback is approached in the School/Department. Information should be made available and discussed with students specifically.

b. **Working with criteria:** Raising awareness of the assessment criteria being used in a module can help students to understand what is required and to identify where they can improve their performance. For example, allowing students to use the criteria to critique past student work/answers in lectures or seminars can be useful.

c. **Increasing student engagement with feedback:** Students can be asked to fill in cover sheets for assignments on which they assess their own work according to criteria or on which they make specific requests for feedback on certain areas. Students can also be involved in peer feedback. For example, asking students to do small, frequent tasks that are shared and discussed in pairs or groups can help to increase student engagement and increase student understanding of expectations and standards.

d. **Turn feedback into feedforward:** Students may pay less attention to feedback that only refers to an assignment or module that is considered finished. A student's major interest and need often relates more to what they can do next time to get better results. Feedback that points toward improvements and learning for the future may demand more of the students' attention.

8. Model for School/Departmental Statements on Feedback

A School/Department's Statement on Feedback should be an explicit expression of the School/Department's attitude toward learning and its students and should serve as a useful document for students. As such, the Statement should not be too long, should be easily readable, accessible to students and discussed by supervisors so that the ethos of the School/Department can be understood.

Information that could be included in a 'Statement on Feedback' includes:

1. The University's principles underlying the provision of feedback and/or a statement of the school/department's commitment to those principles.

2. A brief statement outlining the school/department's approach to teaching, learning and assessment and how feedback relates to these. This statement could include a definition of feedback and an explanation of its role in effective academic learning. The statement could also include a description of the roles of academics and students in the learning process, their responsibilities relating to feedback and how their roles change as the degree progresses.

3. A timetable of assessments, results and feedback deadlines. A rationale should be included for feedback deadlines, especially ones longer than four weeks, in order to clarify procedures.

4. A statement clarifying the formative/summative assessment balance in the school/department and how this relates to student learning and the purposes of feedback.

5. An explanation of formative feedback methods – specifying the nature and extent of feedback that students can expect in class, in seminars, and in relation to particular types and units of formative assessment. Any specific pro-formas or criteria to be used should be attached as appendices.

6. An explanation of summative feedback methods – specifying the nature and extent of feedback that students can expect following submissions of essays/projects/dissertations; following examinations; following presentations. Any specific pro-formas or criteria to be used should be attached as appendices.

7. A statement clearly specifying who is responsible for feedback and from whom the students will receive feedback for particular types and units of assessment e.g. GTAs, peers, module leaders, supervisors. The statement should clarify how students can find out when these people are available and clarify how students can find further guidance or support if necessary ie websites/ library/resources.

8. Statement clarifying constraints/requirements which relate to feedback – eg feedback and release of provisional marks; the future availability of work to External Examiners; degree of support available from tutors on coursework.

9. Appendices with additional information.

9. Improving feedback on assessments

Providing useful feedback on assessments is particularly important in modules where the majority of the student mark is reliant on an exam or final assessment and/or where formative assessments and summative assessments assess different skills.

Here are some suggestions about how feedback can be provided on closed examinations, final essays, dissertations or projects.

9.1 Cohort exam feedback

General feedback to a group or cohort providing correct or model answers, highlighting common misconceptions, errors and technical deficiencies and offering advice on how these may be remedied.

a. make markers'/examiners' reports available on the school/department website;
b. introduce a policy that all examinations submitted by the designer have a completed answer sheet/model answer sheet that can be published immediately after the exam;
c. provision of answer sheets to students;
d. provision of model answers to students;
e. arranging cohort feedback meetings immediately after examinations, whilst marking is continuing, to give immediate impression of performance;
f. feedback on exam performance to a cohort via a module VLE site following final examinations.

9.2 Individual feedback

Personal feedback to an individual highlighting positive elements and areas for improvement.

a. arranging feedback meetings for specific students i.e. developing a system whereby borderline and fail students are offered an individual consultation;

b. arranging "surgeries" after marking for students to ask questions;

c. provision of feedback cover sheets with two good points and two areas for improvement;

d. provision of feedback cover sheets with grading according to criteria + comments;

e. provision of opportunity for students to view their exam scripts under supervision.

9.3 Timely feedback

a. investigate ways to shorten turnaround times for feedback on assessments to within four weeks;

b. provide cohort feedback before marks are finalised.

10. Legal issues related to feedback

1. In relation to giving feedback on examinations, school/departments are reminded of the University's policy on the annotation of examination scripts and disclosure of examiners' comments under the Data Protection Act.

2. Where feedback is provided electronically, school/departments should ensure that feedback that falls under the definition of personal data is secure. School/Departments should only use the student's university email account.

3. The University has adopted a policy of disclosure of assessment marks and marks, whether or not they are held in a 'relevant filing system' within the Data Protection Act. This information is the minimum feedback to students that should be provided by school/departments and it should not therefore be necessary for students to make formal access enquiries under the Act.

4. BoE are encouraged to keep records of the reasons for their grading decisions and are required to do so in cases where special considerations have been applied.

5. Schools/Departments are responsible for ensuring that all written or recorded work contributing to the final award is available for external examination or comment. Where such work has been returned to students, students are responsible for retaining it in a portfolio for possible future external scrutiny and schools/departments are responsible for alerting students to this requirement.

11. Providing feedback to large groups

Providing regular feedback to large groups of students can prove difficult, the following approaches can be helpful.

11.1 Peer feedback

Involving students in assessment and feedback matters such as:

      a. defining criteria for assessment;

      b. discussing course standards and expectations;

      c. assessing past papers and peer assessments;

      d. providing feedback to each other on regular, formative work is an ideal way to engage students more fully in the learning.[2]

11.2 Marking and providing feedback on samples of work

For a large cohort in which regular (e.g. weekly) work is seen to be necessary for effective learning, students can be asked to produce several pieces of work during the module, however only a sample need be marked eg:

      a. Students produce 5 lab reports and they can choose their two best to be marked;

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[2]

b. A module requires students to complete three case studies, one of which will be chosen, at random, to be marked;

c. Students keep a collection of work completed during the course and they choose what is to be included in a limited portfolio to be marked.

11.3 Group work

Group assessment may prove an effective means of ensuring that students learn from each other while at the same time reducing the amount of marking. Group work is no guarantee of a reduced assessment load, but it may save time if students work in groups and submit fewer pieces of work. The key considerations in planning group work assessment are:

a. Deciding what is to be assessed – the process, the product, or both;

b. Selecting criteria, particularly if the group process is to be assessed;

c. Deciding who is to 'do' the assessing – staff, students or both; and

d. Deciding how marks are to be assigned – collectively, individually, or a mixture.

There can be challenges with group work assessment due to the perception that some students are marked unfairly, due to "group" marks being given that do not reflect differences in individual student effort. See footnote below.[3]

12. Modules taken by students in different cohorts of study

There must be a clear statement of learning outcomes for each cohort of students where there are students from two (or more) different cohorts (i.e. different years or levels of study) in the same module. These learning outcomes may or may not be different for different years of study but, either way, the assessment and mark descriptors need to be appropriate for the learning outcomes.

a. If the learning outcomes are the same for the two cohorts then work should be marked to the same criteria and without reference to the cohort in which an individual student may lie.

b. If the learning outcomes differ for the cohorts then there will be different assessments and/or mark descriptors for each cohort.

c. Where the programme specification permits it, and a student elects to take a Languages for All (LFA) module as an elective, they may do so at a lower level than their stage would

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[3] For advice concerning addressing such tension and other matters related to group work and assessment, please see: Habeshaw S, Gibbs G & Habeshaw T (1992) '53 problems with large classes: making the best of a bad job', Bristol: Technical and Educational Services; Race P, Brown S & Smith B (2005) (2nd ed) *500 tips on assessment,* London: Routledge Falmer; Rust C (2001) *A briefing on the assessment of large groups* York: LTSN Generic Centre.

normally permit, so long as the total weight of the lower-level module does not exceed 20 credits. This would allow a student to begin language study without previous experience, or further develop language skills for use after university or during a period of study abroad. Any lower-level study of this nature will be reflected on the student's transcript as pass/fail only, and marks achieved will not impact on degree classifications.

A programme of study may require or allow students to take a module that has been designed for delivery to a different cohort (ie different year or level of study). Modules should not be shared between first-year undergraduate students and students from other years without the approval of University Teaching Committee, except where they have been chosen as electives. Which modules may be taken but any particular student must be specified in the relevant programme specification but the Chair of the Board of Studies is additionally responsible for approval of students' choices of elective modules. Explicit approval of the University Teaching Committee is required for taught postgraduate programmes to share modules with undergraduate programmes. Weightings for the individual student should be determined by the cohort to which they belong.

13. Assessment instructions and questions

The following principles should be adopted in writing assessment instructions and questions:

1. Instruction sentences should be short and to the point. Over-complicated or ambiguous instructions ie multiple clause or multiple part questions, should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

2. Questions should be expressed as precisely, clearly and simply as possible – extraneous material, unclear or overly-complicated phrasing of a question may confuse students, act as a distraction and possibly adversely affect student performance.

3. Questions should be written to avoid, so far as possible:

    a. colloquialisms;

    b. slang;

    c. negative or double negative questions;

    d. highly specialist language (unless necessary to the assessment);

    e. wording that has a national, regional or cultural bias.

4. Assessment instructions and questions should be checked by a member of staff other than the paper setter in order to highlight any punctuation errors, grammatical errors and any possible areas of confusion caused by language.

5. Following the assessment, departments should conduct basic item analysis to identify whether more than the average number of students got an item wrong, and in order to

review the design and wording of the item as well as to identify any possible problems with learning activities.