

# Policy on feedback to students on their performance in assessment

## Scope

1. This Policy applies to all taught programmes of study that lead to awards of St George's, University of London. It applies to all assessments that students are asked to undertake including:
  - Formative assessments;
  - Summative assessments;
  - Activities in which clinical, practical and communication skills and competencies are assessed.
2. Each programme will have a teaching, learning and assessment strategy. Arrangements for providing feedback to students should be compatible with these strategies.
3. The Policy was approved by Senate on 10th June 2013. Modifications to the Policy were approved by QAEC in September 2015.

## Purpose of the Policy

4. The purpose of the Policy is to enhance the student experience and to promote best practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
5. Feedback is defined by McGaghie as 'information that gives learners knowledge of the results of their study (and clinical work)' (McGaghie and Frey, 1986). It has been shown that health professional learners need to know how well they are performing with regard to both acquisition of knowledge and essential skills (Wood, 2000). With this definition in mind, for feedback to be effective students must be placed at the heart of the feedback process (Nicol and Mcfarlane, 2004). However, in the past it was not unusual for faculty to feel that they provided effective feedback post examinations more often than students perceived they receive such feedback (Gil, Heins and Jones 1984).
6. When feedback is effective it can assist students in identifying areas of deficiency in their knowledge (Parikh et al, 2001), thus enabling students to act on specific areas of their work and to improve for the future (Glover and Brown, 2006). However, Glover and Brown also state that, feedback loses this function if it produced too slowly or lacks quality.
7. The policy is a general SGUL policy. In many instances it may be appropriate to develop programme based policies to provide students with more detailed information about the way in which feedback will be provided and the applicable timescales. Local policies, which may cover the information referred to in paragraphs 9 and 15 to 19, should be consistent with the general SGUL policy.

## Principles of feedback

8. All feedback will be:

- timely
  - related to learning outcomes/objectives and assessment criteria
  - provided on both coursework and examinations
  - clear, relevant, motivating, and constructive
  - developmental, enabling students to consolidate learning and achievement and develop strategies to improve their performance in future assessments
  - word-processed if practicable
  - offered in a range of formats appropriate to the assessment task.
9. Programme teams are responsible for identifying and implementing the most appropriate methods for providing effective feedback to students. Pro-formas and other feedback tools may be used to ensure consistency between markers.

### Provisional marks, grades and moderation.

10. When feedback (including marks and grades) is provided before a Board of Examiners meeting, it will be identified as:
- provisional
  - subject to further moderation (if appropriate)
  - available for External Examiner scrutiny
  - subject to possible change and approval by the Board.

### Modes of Feedback

11. Feedback may be:
- Individual written (or audio)– identifying specific issues relating to the student’s work
  - Generic written (or audio)– referring to general points about the assessment as a whole, arising from an overview of the work produced by the student group
  - Oral – provided immediately or periodically to the student during an attachment/placement or in the performance of a specific task
  - Supported by model answers and/or example solutions.
12. Students may request a meeting with an appropriate member of staff to discuss their feedback if they wish. Students will be advised which member of staff to contact for a discussion. In many cases, it may be appropriate for feedback to be discussed via email; there is no expectation that a formal meeting should take place in all circumstances.

### Timeliness of feedback

13. Timescales for providing feedback will vary in accordance with a number of factors. These include that nature and format of the assessment task, its size and complexity, the requirements for internal and external moderation, the timing of the next meeting of the Board of Examiners, and proximity to holidays and religious festivals. Taking these factors into account, the following are indicative timescales for providing feedback:
- feedback on formative assessment will be given in time for students to make use of it prior to summative assessment

- for electronically scored examinations (SBA and EMQs): within 10 working days.
- For clinical and practical assessments, which are hand scored by examiners and scanned into an electronic database system: within 10 working days
- For other written examination papers: within 20 working days
- For in-course discursive work (essays, projects, etc.): for undergraduate programmes, a maximum of 20 working days (but a shorter time scale would be desirable)
- For in course discursive work (essays, projects, etc.): for postgraduate programmes, a maximum of 25 working days (but a shorter time scale would be desirable)
- Work-based attachments and placements: oral and written feedback will be provided at the end of the attachment/placement if the practitioner assessor clinician is available. If not, feedback will be provided as soon as it is practically possible to do so.

14. For written examinations, the date of the examination will be used to determine the date on which feedback will be provided. For example, for a written examination paper, feedback will be provided within 20 working days of the date of the examination. For in-course discursive work, feedback will be provided within 20 working days of the published submission deadline.

15. Where the same assessment is run over several days for operational reasons – for example in some instances the same clinical or practical assessment will run over several days – the date of the final scheduling of the assessment will be used to determine the date on which feedback will be provided.

16. In some cases, assessment decisions take into account student performance in more than one type of assessment, for example students may progress from one year to the next based on their performance in a written examination and a clinical or practical assessment. In this case, the detailed review of student performance in these assessments takes place after all assessments have been completed by the student cohort. In some cases therefore, the end of the assessment period will be used to determine the date on which feedback will be provided.

17. Clear guidance will be given regarding the date beyond which it is no longer appropriate for staff to provide formative feedback e.g. when a student is undertaking final dissertation drafts. This will be communicated to students at the time the assessment task is set.

### Academic Misconduct

18. Timescales for providing feedback may be delayed if an assessment irregularity is suspected. When a decision is reached regarding the allegation, feedback will be provided to the student, if it is appropriate to do.

19. In most cases, feedback to the student or students referred to in the allegation will be delayed. It may however be the case that feedback to a cohort may be delayed if a wide-ranging investigation needs to be conducted. If this is the case, the course director or chief or responsible examiner will explain the reason for the delay to the affected students:

## Assessment timetable and feedback timescales.

20. Students will be provided with an assessment timetable at the beginning of the academic year. This will include the submission dates for in-course assessment and the date and time of examinations. The timetable should be widely published and accessible to students. Assessment criteria will also be made available to students; assessment criteria need not be incorporated in the assessment timetable.
21. The timetable for providing feedback to students should be embedded in the assessment timetable. As with the assessment timetable, the feedback timetable should be available at the start of the academic year and widely published.
22. Unforeseen changes to the assessment timetable or feedback timescales and the reasons for the changes will be communicated to students at the earliest opportunity. Feedback will then be given within a reasonable time period given the circumstances for the delay.

## Responsibilities of students

23. Students are expected to receive and reflect on the feedback available to them. If students are unclear about any aspect of the feedback given to them, they should seek clarification from staff. Students should act upon feedback and be able to demonstrate how they have done so.

## Appeals and remarking

24. Students wanting to ask for an examination mark, grade, result or classification to be reviewed (i.e. appeal) should refer to the Procedure for representations from examination candidates concerning provisional examination results or decisions of Boards of Examiners (academic appeal). This Procedure is published on the Student Centre's policies and procedures page on the Portal. The procedure also sets out the limited circumstances in which students can ask for marks to be checked.

## Complaints

25. Students can, if they wish, invoke the Student Complaints Procedure to raise concerns about delays in providing feedback.

## Other documents

26. Documents relevant to the feedback policy include:

- The General Regulations for Students and Programmes of Study
- Quality Manual
- Programme Regulations
- Schemes of Assessment
- The Script Viewing Policy
- Policies on internal moderation
- Late Submissions Policy

## Monitoring and evaluation

27. Programme teams will evaluate the effectiveness and timeliness of the provision of feedback and modify local strategies for providing feedback in the light of that evaluation.
28. The effectiveness of the SGUL Feedback Policy will be evaluated by QAEC.