



ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK GUIDELINES

Policy Document Owner	<i>Director of Risk and Compliance, Paul Yeates</i>
Contact	(02) 9262 7890; pyeates@actheology.edu.au
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Related documents	<i>Assessment Policy Assessment Guidelines Learning Outcomes Principles and Rules Moderation Policy Moderation Procedure</i>
Related HE standards	1.3.2, 1.3.3
Student Lifecycle Stage/s	Learning Stage

1. PURPOSE

To achieve a high standard of feedback to students on their performance in assessment tasks in order to enhance the learning experience and optimise educational outcomes for students.

2. PRINCIPLES

General principles

- 2.1. Feedback on assessment should focus on and direct students to the learning outcomes assessed by the task and any other marking criteria communicated about the task. Matters of form, style and structure may also be addressed in the content of the feedback.
- 2.2. Feedback to students should be clear, constructive, specific, and avoid unnecessary academic jargon. The feedback should be supportive in tone, providing the student with an accurate sense of their learning and performance while directing them to specific action they can take to improve.
- 2.3. Feedback to students may identify helpful relevant resources for students to utilise. Such resources may include learning resources and student support services.
- 2.4. Feedback to students should help students to understand the mark or grade they received for the task (where applicable). The feedback should identify both strengths and weaknesses of the student's work.



- 2.5. Regarding the timing of feedback, the crucial principle is that feedback needs to be received by students in time for them to develop their learning in response to the feedback and implement suggested improvements before they undertake their next assessment in the unit (where applicable). The *Assessment Guidelines* indicate that assessments should be returned to students with feedback within four (4) weeks of submission. The response time may be much less than this in the case of minor assessment tasks, or can be immediate in the case of informal verbal feedback in class.
- 2.6. The volume of written feedback is influenced by a number of factors:
- The function of the assessment task. Most assessment tasks have a formative and summative aspect in function. A greater volume of feedback may be warranted for tasks designed as formative assessments.
 - The length and weighting of the assessment task. Tasks with greater weighting and which involve a greater amount of work from the students should have a greater volume of feedback.
 - The learning needs of individual students based on their performance in the assessment task. A greater volume of feedback may be provided where a student has performed poorly or has a large number of areas in which they need to develop. In such cases, in person verbal feedback may supplement the written feedback. It is not the case that high-performing students require no or little feedback. It remains helpful for such students to identify what they did well and to suggest ways to develop further, even if they extend beyond the normal outcomes achieved in the unit or course.
 - The use of rubrics can reduce the volume of written feedback provided to students, but not remove the need for it entirely.
- 2.7. Affiliated Colleges should set standards on assessment feedback for its faculty and communicate these to students. The standards should address purpose, timing, volume, and what to do if a student would like additional feedback. The college's standards and approach to feedback on assessment may be communicated in orientation as well as in unit outlines.

Written feedback

- 2.8. Written assessments should be marked with brief comments in the body of script. Cryptic feedback should be avoided, for example, "More", "What's this?", "Link?", or simply ticks and crosses. While the in-text feedback will be brief, it should be of substance and be specific. Markers may use codes to highlight aspects of the students' work, especially where the student is capable of identifying the correction necessary, such as with spelling and



grammar. If codes are used they should be explained, for example, Pn = punctuation, Gr = grammar, Syn = syntax, Sp = spelling.

2.9. Feedback in the body of the script should be supplemented by extended feedback on the student's performance and should be guided by the general principles stated above. The feedback may include the following:

- An explanation of the mark/grade awarded for the assessment, with reference to the learning outcomes and other marking criteria.
- Identification of the merits and deficiencies of the assessment.
- Feedback related to the type of assessment, including structure, argumentation, use of conventions, language and style.
- A statement of how the present assessment task could have been improved.
- Suggestions for areas in which the student can develop to enhance their learning and improve their performance in future, in relation to the unit and/or their course.
- The identification of learning resources that the student could utilise to enhance their learning and performance in assessment tasks.
- The identification of student support services the student could access to enhance their learning and maintain their wellbeing while they study.

2.10. Feedback on end of unit exams is not mandatory, but where it is made available to students it may assist them in their development for future learning. It may also serve as a point of reference if a student raises a grievance about a mark or grade.

2.11. Feedback on students' draft assessment submissions will generally be restricted due to the limitations of staff time. Affiliated Colleges should set a rule or principle to guide staff and set expectations for students. Such feedback may be offered:

- only in a certain stage of study, e.g. during the first semester,
- only to students from certain entry pathways, e.g. entry without a prior Higher Education award, or
- only to students identified as being at risk academically.

2.12. In some cases, written feedback might lead to verbal feedback to dialogue with the student about their learning, especially where students' performance



in an assessment suggests they are at risk of not making adequate progress in their study.

Verbal feedback

- 2.13. Where the cohort-size permits, individual feedback to students on an assessment task may be provided. In such cases, students may be invited to offer their own evaluation of their performance in the task. Written feedback may be provided in advance, in which case it would be the focus of the discussion.
- 2.14. Students may be provided with generic feedback to the class/cohort on an assessment task. This will provide a context for students in engaging with the individual feedback they receive. The feedback may focus on what was generally done well and poorly in the task, and highlight examples of student work that illustrate strong performance.
- 2.15. Recorded verbal feedback may be provided instead of extended written feedback. To ensure quality and consistency with this technique, a standard structure to the feedback may be used.

Use of marking rubrics

- 2.16. Generic marking rubrics related to a type or types of assessment may be used to give students standard feedback on assessment. In such cases, supplementary feedback needs to be provided that focuses on the particular learning outcomes of the task.
- 2.17. Rubrics developed for particular assessment tasks are a highly effective form of feedback and are preferred over generic rubrics. Such rubrics should:
 - set out marking criteria that incorporate the learning outcomes, possibly alongside other criteria,
 - align with the AQF level of the unit,
 - indicate weighting where some criteria are more significant in determining the overall mark or grade,
 - preferably describe performance for each criterion at each grade level. This is more helpful to students than using a scale ranging from, for example, "Not at all" to "Very much",
 - ensure the descriptors at the "Pass" level are compatible with demonstration of the learning outcomes, at least at a basic level.



2.18. Written or recorded verbal comments on students' assessments should supplement the feedback provided through the grid of a marking rubric.

Peer feedback

2.19. Peer feedback can be an effective strategy in teaching students to evaluate performance against learning outcomes. Where it is used, students should be provided with guidance on how to provide feedback, including both content and manner.

2.20. Students may be provided with marking rubrics, templates, or checklists in providing feedback on peers.

2.21. Students should be given time to offer considered feedback on the assessments of their peers. In the case of oral presentations, this may involve asking students to write down their feedback rather than providing it verbally immediately after a presentation.

2.22. A class/cohort may be asked to provide general feedback on the performance of the group, rather than on particular peers.

2.23. Students may be asked to provide feedback on the contribution and performance of peers. The feedback may focus on the positive contribution of members. The feedback may be used to support the marker's assessment of student performance in the groupwork task and/or be given to students to enhance their learning.

Self-assessment

2.24. The ability for students to accurately evaluate their own learning and performance in assessment is a vital skill. To do this, the following strategy may be used:

- Shortly after the submission of an assessment, set a learning activity where students write a self-evaluation of their submission. Provide a template for the students to use for the self-evaluation or have them use the marking rubric or marking criteria for the assessment task. The self-evaluation may be collected and returned with the marker's feedback with the assessment task.
- After the assessments have been marked, generic feedback could be provided to the group and students asked to perform a self-evaluation in relation to the broader issues identified for the cohort. For example, if critical engagement with scholarship was a broad concern, students could be asked to evaluate their submission with regards to that aspect of the task in particular.



- Where an assessment task provides scope for students to determine its content, aim, and/or objectives, early in the task students formulate statements defining what success would entail in the task and after completing the task produce a self-evaluation of their achievement against their statements.

Promoting student engagement with feedback

2.25. Even when students are provided with timely, high-quality feedback, there may be some that do not engage with it. To promote student engagement with feedback some of the following strategies may be used:

- Staged/scaffolded tasks in which the initial feedback will inform students' progress in the task.
- Create a learning activity involving the feedback, for example:
 - Students perform a self-evaluation of their assessment task before receiving the mark and feedback from the marker, and then compare their self-review to the feedback from the marker,
 - Ask students to write down how they will approach their next assessment, or one like it in another context, in response to the feedback they have received. This could be done by submitting an online quiz/form.
- Where the cohort size permits, engage with students informally about the feedback.
- Provide time in class/tutorial for the students to read the feedback before giving general feedback on the assessment to the group.
- Provide the feedback separate and earlier than the mark awarded for the assessment.
- Invite students to include with their assessment task on submission, a request for an area in which they would like feedback in particular.

Use of technology

2.26. The originality check provided by Turnitin (or similar products) may be used by students before submission to identify any sections not properly referenced.

2.27. Online quizzes may be set up to provide students with immediate feedback. These may be set up with a summative function, and provide the feedback once after submission, or they may perform a purely formative function,



allowing or requiring students to repeat the task until they reach a satisfactory outcome.

3. RELATED DOCUMENTS

The Higher Education Academy Feedback Toolkit (March 2013)

[ACT Types of Assessment – Best Practice](#)

University of NSW: Giving Assessment Feedback

[\(https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/assessment-feedback\)](https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/assessment-feedback)

4. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	Coursework Committee	19 February 2021	19 February 2021	New document

Any hard copy of this electronic document may not be current as the ACT regularly reviews its guidelines. The latest version can be found online at <https://www.actheology.edu.au/documents/>

APPENDIX 1: GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The ACT collects examples of good practice in assessment, including feedback, from within the consortium and on occasions from outside it. These examples can be found on the ACT website portal section. Note that all faculty and staff of Affiliated Colleges are provided with log in details for the ACT website portal by an administrator at their college. Examples of good practice are identified by moderators and reported to the Academic Quality Committee. Other examples may also be suggested to the Director of Risk and Compliance or the Director of Teaching and Learning. The 'Good Practice Repository' is located at: Documents / Staff resources / Learning & Teaching / Good Practice Repository.

Current example of good practice in assessment feedback include:

- [Generic Rubric – Interpretive Essay \(B&L Department\)](#)

Provided by David Cohen, Vose Seminary, December 2020