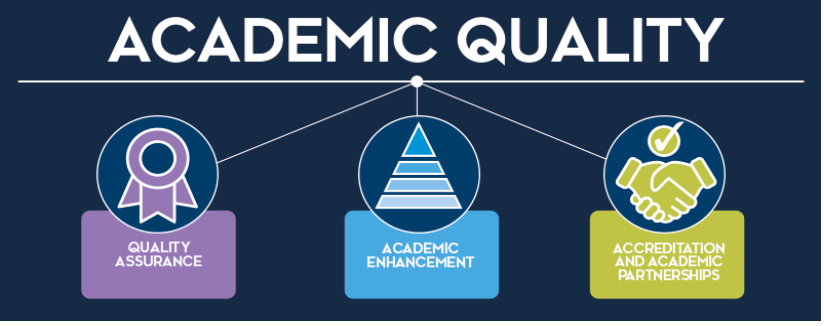

Learning and Teaching Policy

Policy on Feedback on Coursework

Purpose and Summary of Policy

The University's Feedback on Coursework Policy has been in place since 2015/16; a revised version was implemented from 2022/23.

This policy should be used by Schools in the provision of feedback on assessed coursework. The policy recognises the benefits of timely return of feedback to support students in their further learning and so stipulates **a maximum of three working weeks for return of feedback on assessed coursework** (*see below for exemptions from this stipulated duration for three methods of coursework*) and that feedback should align with the University's Feedback Principles.

This policy is intended to ensure equity and fairness for all students on taught programmes across all modes and locations.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's Scheduling and Submission (incl. Late Submission) of Coursework Policy.

Scope of Policy

The policy applies to the provision of feedback on assessed coursework undertaken by all Heriot-Watt University taught students (undergraduate and postgraduate) across all modes and locations.

The policy applies equally to feedback on both formative (non-credit-bearing) and summative (credit-bearing) coursework, and so does not differentiate between whether or not coursework contributes to the overall grade.

Coursework is defined *as work carried out by students which either constitutes, or contributes towards, their overall grade/credit for a course (summative) or is provided and marked for learning purposes, but does not contribute to the overall grade/credit (formative). Coursework is assessed separately from examinations. Coursework includes undergraduate and postgraduate taught dissertations and projects and also includes Final Online Assessments.*

Examples of coursework are provided in Types of Assessment: Policy and Administrative Definitions.

This policy does not apply to in-person, invigilated examinations for which there is a separate Feedback on Examination Performance (and Access to Scripts) Policy.

Policy

The University is committed to ensuring identical academic standards across its provision and fostering a learning environment in which students receive timely feedback in order to support their learning and development.

Consequently, there is a maximum time period of three-working weeks turnaround for the return of feedback on assessed coursework (see below on exemptions). The University encourages School-specific approaches on feedback turnaround times which meet the institutional policy of a maximum of three-working weeks turnaround.

This 3-working week policy applies equally to feedback on both formative (non-credit-bearing) and summative (credit-bearing) assessment.

For the purposes of clarity, 3-weeks refers to three working weeks, so that students are not misled into assuming that this duration could include breaks.

Feedback should be provided on all coursework submitted up to five working days late. Any coursework submitted after five working days of the set submission date shall be automatically awarded a *0 F*, with no feedback provided

(unless there are approved mitigating circumstances). See Scheduling and Submission (incl. Late Submission) of Coursework Policy for further information.

Procedures

The following procedures support the implementation of the above policy statement.

Communication to Students on Feedback

1) Schools should ensure clarity of communication to students on feedback on all types of coursework and should not focus on the narrow 3 working weeks, but rather the breadth of feedback, how it will be provided, how it can be used etc.

2) Students should be made aware of the different forms of feedback they are likely to receive across their courses, including verbal feedback on, for example, practical activities, and on how they can use feedback for development and improving future learning.

3) It is the responsibility of the School to document, prior to the start of teaching, the following on the Canvas Course page, and elsewhere as appropriate, for both formative (not credit-rated) and summative (contributes to the final mark/grade) coursework:

Date issued	Assessment submission deadline	Format of Submission	When and how feedback will be returned	Format of feedback

4) Students should be made aware that, as part of a professional approach, it is their responsibility to make use of feedback to improve their learning and that feedback is only useful if it is read, reflected upon and acted on.

5) Schools should make clear to students, in communicating the late submission policy, that no feedback will be given for coursework submitted after seven calendar days of the submission date (unless there are approved mitigating circumstances).

Formative Assessment and Formative Feedback on al HWU Courses – Regulatory Requirements

6) As per paragraph 10.7 of Regulation A4: Course, Programmes and Assessment, "each course shall feature formative assessment to enable students to evaluate the extent of their learning". This requirement for formative assessment applies to courses across all modes and locations.

7) Consequently, where a course is assessed for credit-purposes by a single summative assignment (be that coursework or exam), there is a formal requirement for formative assessment (non-credit-bearing) and associated feedback, and the 3-working week turnaround applies equally to formative (non-credit-bearing) assessment as it does to credit-bearing assessment.

Exemptions

8) For the following methods of coursework, the 3-working weeks turnaround does not apply:

- Final Online Assessments (these are scheduled in the Exams and Assessment Diet);
- Final summative coursework (usually scheduled for submission in the Exams and Assessment Diet), including credit-bearing assessment consisting of a single piece of summative coursework;
- Large-scale projects and dissertations.

9) These exemptions are made in recognition of the need to ensure that there is sufficient time for due processes of marking, moderation, consideration of results by Course Assessment Boards and ratification by Progression Boards, and then release of results.

10) In the case of all such exclusions, the following must, however, be applied across all modes and locations:

- students should be made aware of the timing (ie return dates), format and use of feedback on all coursework to which the three working weeks policy does not apply;
- generic, timely whole cohort feedback (ie without marks/grades) should be provided in advance of release of results and associated feedback (see paragraph 12) below); this is particularly important if there is likely to be

a significant period of time between submission of the coursework and results being ratified by a Course Assessment Board and Progression Board and then released to students;

- formative assessment and formative feedback should be provided in advance of all forms of final, summative coursework, including those specified in paragraph 13) above; the three-working week turnaround applies to feedback on all formative assessment, irrespective of the form of final, summative assessment

11) Each School can determine the most appropriate method of providing generic, timely whole cohort feedback for the exempted methods of coursework listed in paragraph 8), depending on the discipline, cohort size, level and mode of study. Each School should inform students (eg statement on Course VLE site) of the timeframe and methods used to provide feedback on coursework to which the three-working-week turnaround does not apply.

12) Examples include the following:

- Workshops timetabled in the next semester to go through overall cohort performance and overall learning points; this is particularly relevant for core courses;
- Provision of feedback through generic commentary for all students, highlighting learning points, posted on the University's VLE or other University-approved means of communicating with students, or where relevant members of academic staff have an opportunity to provide group feedback.

Release of Results

This section is repeated in the Feedback on Exams (and Access to Exam Scripts) Policy.

Release of Marks and Grades

1) In consideration of student wellbeing, coursework results:

- should be released only during "normal business hours", ie 0900-1700 in each timezone;
- should not be released during Exams and Assessment Diets in order not to impact on students who might have exams during the Exams and Assessment Diet.

2) The finalised, approved results are those released by Registry and Academic Support (RAS) and available to view on Student/Faculty Self-Service.

3) The following arrangements should be followed for particular types of assessments:

- 100% coursework – academic staff can release results in Canvas before the Course Assessment Board (CAB), highlighting to students that these are provisional. The final course mark, ratified at the Course Assessment Board, is released by RAS and available to view in Student/Faculty Self-Service (S/FSS).

- 100% exam – feedback (and the mark for the exam) will not be released by academic staff on Canvas until after the CAB has taken place. The final course mark, ratified at the Course Assessment Board, is released by RAS in S/FSS.

- Coursework/Exam Split – academic staff will release coursework results in Canvas in accordance with the standard 3-week turnaround policy. Feedback (and the mark for the exam) will not be released on Canvas until after the CAB has taken place. The final course mark, ratified at the Course Assessment Board, is released by RAS in S/FSS.

- Final Online Assessments (FOA) – Feedback (and the mark for the FOA) will not be released by academic staff on Canvas until after the CAB has taken place. The final course mark, ratified at the Course Assessment Board, is released by RAS in S/FSS.

Communication to Students on Release of Results

4) A communication is sent to all students at the end of each diet to inform them of when to expect final results for their course; the provisional status of marks and grades is referred to in this institutional communication. A follow-up communication is sent prior to the final results release, confirming the process, resources and support available. The communications are contextualised according to location and mode of study.

Days of the Week for Release of Results

5) The LTAOC will consider the specification of designated days of the week for results release and the support available as part of the University's engagement with the Scottish sector initiative on Compassionate Communications (to conclude October 2026). Until a decision is made in relation to designated days for release of results, RAS and Schools should ensure that students do not receive results when there would likely to be limited or no support for students (eg weekends, Buildings Closed Days).

6) Following the release of results, a member of the Course Team should be available to respond to student queries.

7) **Use of AI for Feedback and Marking**
Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies should not be used as the sole means to mark or provide feedback on student coursework. There must always be a human evaluation of the work before the feedback or grade is provided to the student. Any use of AI must be via Heriot-Watt approved/supported technologies and in compliance with the IT and communications facilities acceptable use policy and the Data Protection Policy.

Marking: Legibility of Handwriting in Coursework

This section is replicated across a number of related policies:

8) Students are responsible for ensuring that the handwritten assessments which they submit are legible (including handwritten exams), and, where appropriate, they should seek the appropriate support and guidance from Disability Services or their Student Advisor/Academic Advisor/Personal Tutor.

9) Where a new student has previously received assessment-related support prior to joining Heriot-Watt University, they must arrange to meet Disability Services as soon as possible to seek guidance and determine what level of support or adjustment is appropriate.

10) If the main marker finds any part of the completed handwritten assessment to be illegible, a second marker (the moderator of the marking) will attempt to mark the work (or part thereof). If there are issues with the legibility of the work, irrespective of whether it was possible to mark the work in whole or part, the Global Course Leader will, after the release of marks, inform the student and recommend they discuss with their Student Advisor/Personal Tutor possible actions to avoid recurrence in the future.

Feedback Principles

Heriot-Watt University aims to support students in becoming confident, independent learners; feedback is a key part of the student learning experience, as it is designed to help students to learn and improve. The University also aims to support the introduction of a more consistent approach to feedback on assessment across all modes and locations.

The University's **Feedback Principles** were developed in partnership with HWU Student Representative Bodies and apply to feedback on coursework (including practical designs) provided to HWU students across all locations and modes of study. All HWU students can expect their feedback to be:

- **Constructive** – feedback should review your academic performance, making clear what you have done well and what you need to do to improve
- **Supportive of Your Learning** – feedback should be a learning experience, helping you to develop
- **Timely** – assessed coursework (except some final, summative assignments, large-scale projects and dissertations and timed, online coursework) should be returned within 3 teaching weeks
- **Inclusive** – feedback, in a variety of forms, should be available to all HWU students, whether studying on campus, with a partner or by independent distance learning.
- **Accessible** – feedback should be clear, understandable and easy to access
- **Relevant** – feedback should be related to the assessment criteria and expectations provided in advance of your assignment

Resources and Support

The Learning and Teaching Academy has produced a series of Feedback Resources, including a Guide for Students on Feedback. The Action Feedback Protocol has been developed in collaboration with Student Representative Bodies.

The Learning and Teaching Academy's SharePoint Hub provides support and resources available for planning and designing assessment, including review and redesign of assessment. Contact: LTAcademy@hw.ac.uk

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2024/25 version approved by LTAOC, 17 July 2024. Addition on Legibility of Handwriting in Coursework, 11 November 2024; addition on release of results, 11 December 2024. 2025/26 version: factual accuracy updates, 2 July 2025