

Learning and Teaching Board

University Statement on Feedback on Assessment

Following an initial discussion at the Learning and Teaching Board Away Day on 7 March 2017, the Learning and Teaching Board considered, at its meeting on 5 April 2017, a proposal for a University-wide approach to/statement on Feedback on Assessment.

At the Away Day and at its April meeting, the Learning and Teaching Board endorsed the following recommendations:

1. There should be a single date for release of exam results, adopted across all Schools, campuses and modes of study.
2. The current, disparate information on feedback on assessment should be integrated, made more consistent across all modes and locations, and presented coherently.
3. The University's Feedback Principles should be made more prominent.
4. There was no consensus as to whether the above constituted a formal Policy on Assessment; however, there was a need to provide a single source of information on feedback on assessment

As a means of addressing the above, the Learning and Teaching Board endorsed the following University Statement on Feedback on Assessment.

University Statement on Feedback on Assessment

This University Statement on Feedback on Assessment takes account of existing sources of information (see Appendix) and aims to underpin the introduction of a more consistent approach to feedback across all modes and locations.

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's **Feedback Principles** were developed in partnership with HWU Student Union and apply to academic feedback 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 large scale projects and dissertations) 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

The following criteria will support the consistent implementation of the above Feedback Principles:

1. Awareness of and Engagement with the Feedback Principles

The Feedback Principles should be promoted and adopted across the institution; there is no prescriptive approach as to how this should be done within individual Schools. The Principles can be operationalised differently. Feedback-related discussions with staff and students should be centred on the University's Feedback Principles: these should be communicated during induction; by Personal Tutors; during the first class of each course; through Year Co-ordinators.

2. Feedback on Coursework (*current University policy*)

There is a maximum 3-teaching week turnaround, under normal circumstances, for the return of feedback on assessed coursework (introduced in 2015/16). This applies to assessed coursework on all Heriot-Watt University programmes, and applies across all locations and modes of study. For some pieces of coursework, such as large-scale projects or dissertations, this may not apply.

3. Feedback on Examinations (*current University policy*)

Students should be given the opportunity to receive feedback on examination performance. For students studying on campus, this includes having the opportunity to view their examination scripts after each examination diet.

- Students have a legal right to view any written comments made on their examination scripts;
- Scripts will continue to be owned by the University and must not be removed from the University. Scripts should be returned immediately after being viewed by students;
- It is for the relevant School to identify the most appropriate method of providing feedback and access to examination scripts. Examples are provided in the University's 'Guidance on Feedback to Students on Examination Performance' available from the [Learning and Teaching Policy Bank](#).

4. Release of Exam/Assessment Results

After each assessment diet, there will be a single release date for all Schools, all campuses, all modes for examination/assessment results and no results should be released prior to this. This approach will contribute to managing expectations (for noting: one School had introduced a policy of all staff members adhering to the agreed turnaround time so that feedback/results were not issued early even if marked; in this way, there would be consistency across all courses and student expectations could be better managed).

5. Different Forms and Sources of Feedback

Feedback has many different forms and sources. Students will learn more effectively through being provided with, and making use of, different types of feedback. Students should be informed that feedback comes in many different forms and that staff will want to try out different types of feedback. The L+T Quick Guides on Feedback (staff and student) outlines some useful tips for both staff and students, and should be used in discussions of not only different types of feedback, but also in helping students to use feedback as a tool for development and improving future learning.

One key message has been highlighted for students and staff:

- Students: feedback is only useful to you if you read, reflect and act on it;
- Staff: comments of a "feed forward" nature better help students to review, reflect and decide what to do and thereby improve in their learning.

6. Implementation and Monitoring (*current University policy*)

It is the responsibility of each School to implement the University's policies and approaches to Feedback on Assessment. Schools are required to put in place procedures which:

- ensure feedback procedures are communicated to students and colleagues through appropriate channels;
- monitor the effectiveness of the policy in terms of ensuring timely and informative feedback is provided to students;
- report annually on the effectiveness of the policy through the Annual Monitoring and Review process.

Feedback on Assessment: Further Sources of Heriot-Watt Information

1. Feedback on Coursework Policy

- <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/feedbackcourseworkpolicy.pdf>
- introduced in 2015/16; focus is on timescales for return of feedback: a 3-week turnaround time for feedback on coursework
- the policy is supported by a L+T Briefing Paper, which also includes feedback on exams <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/briefing-feedbackpolicy.pdf>

2. Guidance on Feedback to Students on Exam Performance

- <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/examperformancefeedback.pdf>
- designed to address disparity across campuses in the extent to which students have access to their exam scripts (some Schools arrange exam script consultation/feedback sessions on UK campuses; however, for some students in Dubai and Malaysia, they have to request formally and pay for access to their script under Subject Access Request);
- the guidance is supported by a L+T Briefing Paper, which also includes coursework turnaround times <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/briefing-feedbackpolicy.pdf>

3. Learning and Teaching Quick Guides on Feedback

- Two versions are available (one for staff, one for students), which contain the Feedback Principles developed in collaboration with the Student Union
- Staff Guide: *Giving Effective Feedback* <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/quickguide-staff-feedback.pdf>
- Student Guide: *Feedback: How to Make it Work for You* <https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/doc/StudentFeedbackLeaflet.pdf>

4. Student Learning Codes of Practice

- 3 versions are available on the L+T Policy Bank (see under "S"): on campus; partners; IDL
- contain expectations of staff related to prompt and timely feedback
- <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/learning-teaching/policy-bank.htm>