Feedback Guidelines on Student Assessments

Parent Policy/Procedures
Assessment in Coursework Units Policy
Assessment in Coursework Units: Feedback Procedures

Purpose
The purpose of these guidelines is to provide unit coordinators and chief examiners with guidance for providing effective feedback on formative and summative assessments. Please note, faculties or departments may provide further guidance that extend or vary these guidelines, tailored to the particular discipline or learning context.

For guiding the feedback process, these guidelines refer to the Monash Assessment Vision and should be read in conjunction with Assessment in Coursework Units: Feedback Procedures.

1. Responsibilities
For responsibilities of unit coordinators and chief examiners in the provision of feedback refer to Assessment in Coursework Units: Development and Implementation of an Assessment Regime Procedures.

As indicated in the Assessment in Coursework Units: Development and Implementation of an Assessment Regime Procedures, chief examiners must ensure that unit coordinators are aware of how to give feedback on student performance in exams and other end-of-semester assessments.

2. Timing of feedback
Feedback occasions and purpose
It is important to clarify the assessment criteria to students at the beginning of, and during the semester. Assessment instructions need to be explicit about the criteria and standards required to achieve each level of performance. Combined with clear task descriptions, this will provide the student with feedback on what is expected of them in terms of the criteria and standards against which their work or performance will be assessed. Model exemplars across a range of assessment items provides the student feedback on what each level of performance looks like and clarifies assessment expectations for students.

Feedback for grading and marking
Rubrics for criteria-based assignments provide for more detailed feedback on specific elements of an assignment and should always be used in conjunction with grading and marking.

It is important to make the marking scheme clear to the students, clearly establishing the criteria and standards on which the assignment is graded. A rubric that sets out the criteria and standards will make this transparent and will feedforward by providing a clear description of attributes that would have elicited a higher mark. Targeted comments should then provide advice on how the student can improve their work.

The grade and mark given to students for a piece of assessment should not be used as the only form of feedback.

Marking guides provide for advanced grading, where the marker can mark up to a maximum value for a given range provided for that criterion. Whilst marking guides give the marker greater flexibility when assessing criteria across a cohort, rubrics provide the student with a gauge of what is expected in meeting the criterion.
Feedback throughout the course
Students can expect feedback that gives them a sense of their performance and the quality of their work or learning relative to their cohort.

Feedback should be made available to provide students with practical guidance on how to improve their academic performance, either via one-on-one communication, meetings or feedback to the entire cohort.

Pre-class feedback
It is recommended that educators develop a mix of formative and summative feedback opportunities that will keep the student engaged whilst constructively building their understanding and knowledge.

When engaging students in pre-class directed learning, an assessment at the end of the preparation allows the student to check their understanding. In the majority of cases pre-class feedback should be directed to an individual student.

If multiple choice questions or other selected response questions are employed, feedback must provide an explanation as to the correctness or accuracy of the student’s selected response. It is not sufficient to provide feedback in the form of “correct answer” or “incorrect, please try again”.

Alternative formative feedback may be in the form of engaging the whole or part cohort in discussion forums. Moderation of such discussion forums is important to keep students on track and within the context of the content learned.

Online learning objects (e.g. drag and drop, fill in blanks, hotspots, etc.) allows for interaction with the online environment whilst checking understanding with feedback prompts (sounds/signage/highlights). Such items should be designed to provide feedback as to the accuracy or correctness of the student’s actions or responses.

In-class feedback
The in-class session is an opportunity to provide timely and appropriate formative feedback to the whole class for developing a deeper understanding of knowledge and application of skills. Using individual or team-based summative quizzes at the beginning of a class helps to contextualise the importance of engaging with pre-class content, and serves as a quick check of understanding prior to engaging in active learning strategies using higher order cognitive skills.

In-class sessions using flexible learning spaces provide for teamwork formative feedback opportunities and opportunities for peer formative feedback. Team-based activities that produce an output give the team an opportunity to explain their workings and conclusions to the rest of the class and to solicit feedback. An appropriate time should be made available as part of the in-class session to allow for students to demonstrate their learning and application of skills to their peers.

Post-class feedback
Post-class feedback is important to allow students to consolidate their understanding and identify any gaps in knowledge and understanding.

Post-class quizzes or questions that require longer answers are ideal and may be structured around a case study or vignette. In the majority of cases these should be directed at the individual student to check and reflect on their understanding. It is important to provide model answers along with a rationale for the answer. It is recommended that reference be made to respective sections in unit materials, textbooks or resources.

Post-class feedback in the form of summaries of the key points or concepts can be helpful for the entire cohort. These can be provided via a forum or summary announcement. Consider using a range of technologies that are available such as screencasts, audio or short videos.
In both pre-class feedback and post-class activities, moderated discussion forums can enhance understanding and application of skills, in particular problem solving.

3. Feedback modes

Annotations of individual assessment items
Providing comments, constructive feedback or guidance to students on their assignment performance can be done by audio, video, pen or electronically via annotations within files.

As workload increases considerably when providing feedback for large cohorts, alternative feedback forms may be considered. The validity and reliability in marking standards needs to be considered where marking teams are used (refer to Guidelines on Moderation, Validity and Reliability of Assessment [link to be provided]). A set of quality marking criteria and rubrics are essential to facilitate this process (refer to Assessment in Coursework Units: Grading and Marking Procedures).

Feedback through annotation should be constructive, that is, noting the mistake but also providing an explanation of how to improve.

Feedback in the form of “Keep, Start, Stop” should be encouraged, as this provides a standard approach to giving individual or group feedback to students or student peer feedback (DeLong TJ (2011). Harvard Business Review (https://hbr.org/2011/08/three-questions-for-effective-feedback)

Staff may consider setting smaller, low-stakes assessments early in the semester so that students can use and build on that feedback for a subsequent main assessment piece.

Effective use of sample answers
Providing students with sample answers or sharing and critiquing student responses, rather than extensive annotation on individual assignment submissions, may have advantages and may better meet the criteria for effective feedback.

Sample answers can be created by the assignment generator, an expert or from previous work.

Care must be taken to frame sample answers within the context of the criteria and standards of the assessment piece. It is best to avoid providing sample answers in isolation.

Using sample answers at different levels of performance, from inadequate through to outstanding provides both positive and negative examples of the manifestation of the criteria and standards being sought.

Engaging in class discussions facilitated by the teacher around samples of work representing different levels of performance can help students develop their self-evaluative capabilities. Such discussions can occur in face to face classes or via online means.

Sample answers can be the subject of an evaluation exercise undertaken by students in light of the criteria and expected standards. This may entail first asking for the student’s judgement without the criteria and then a second time with the criteria. This type of activity further builds an appreciation of how assessment criteria can assist in judgement and in honing student’s understanding of differing levels of performance.

Sample answers with accompanying commentary can be provided to the student prior to grading and releasing the marks on their submitted work. In this way, sample answers will provide the student with timely, intrinsic feedback.

Sample answers can also support the student in reflecting on their work and taking action to close their learning gap if used as part of a reflective activity.
Technology enhanced feedback

Technology can personalise and enhance feedback and provide for richer feedback information. There are various modalities that can be used to provide assessment feedback, each serving a purpose:

- **audio recordings** – a fast and easy medium to provide a more personalised experience for students through tone and warmth of the voice. Audio recordings can be easily done on smartphones or tablets using relevant Apps as well as using Audacity. Audio recording lacks the richness that a face and gesture can provide, and may not be the most suitable format for delivering personal feedback in high-stakes assessments;

- **video recordings** – a medium which enriches verbal communication as outlined for audio recording with gesture and facial expression. Video is a powerful feedback medium that can enrich individual feedback on high stakes assessments, but can be equally powerful for providing general feedback to the class on an assessment task. Video recordings should be kept short (< 5 minutes) so that the file size does not become a prohibitive factor in accessing the feedback. Videos can be created using iMovie, Camtasia or smartphone / tablet apps. The recording should be done with a good microphone and in a quiet location;

- **screencasts** – screencasting allows for providing verbal feedback (with or without video) while visually showing a student’s work on the screen. Adobe Presenter Video Express is available from the Monash software catalogue. Jing is a free screencast software and Snagit is available alone or in conjunction with Camtasia;

- **digital annotation** – digitally annotating student work is available for tablets or touchscreen devices with digital pens. Digitally annotating with pens might have a drawback in that handwritten comments may not be as easily decipherable as typed comments, so practice using this is recommended.

4. Quality of Feedback

**Individual feedback**

When providing individual feedback, a dialogic feedback approach using either screencasting and/or video recording is particularly useful in units that are delivered in fully online mode. Students are also able to provide responses to the feedback using this modality. Henderson and Phillips (2016) provide a description and examples of seven structural elements that should be included in technology enhanced assessment feedback:

1. Salutation - greeting
2. Relational work – recognising and valuing student work
3. Goal of recording – purpose of feedback, e.g. focus on key points to help student to strengthen
4. Evaluative summary – general evaluation; keep mark or grade to written form
5. Textual issues – commentary on e.g. referencing or other textual issues with assignment

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6. Substantive feedback – bring assignment into context of the bigger picture

7. Valediction & invitation – invite student to take feedback on board for learning and preparation for next assessment task

**General feedback**

Video feedback or audio feedback may be a good modality to provide general feedback to a cohort. There are different points in time of the assessment task where the teacher may consider providing technology mediated feedback. In considering assessment feedback, a guidance system (known as the Dialogic Feedback Cycle, DFC\(^3,4\)) by Beaumont and co-workers may guide how general feedback provided at appropriate stages may assist the student cohort:

- preparatory guidance – a useful approach is to present students with exemplars against which given criteria are assessed. Screencasting is an appropriate modality to scale this approach to enhance students’ understanding of the assessment requirements;

- in-task guidance – at this stage students are supported to develop their ideas and identify and rectify any misconceptions. Draft reports, outlines or stages within a larger assessment task may be used to provide formative feedback that is practical and gives students guidance to stay on track with their assessment task. Peer feedback at this stage may be beneficial as providing individual feedback may increase the workload of the assessor substantially. Using peer feedback needs to be constructed carefully to ensure requisite knowledge is present to reliably provide valuable feedback. A further example of an ‘online learning coach’ mode has been suggested where a quick consultation and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) could be employed to provide in-task guidance based on questions that are primarily derived from previous years;

- performance feedback – the feedback on the assessment task usually provided in written form, but increasingly supplemented with audio or video modalities.

5. **Feedback on end-of-semester assessment**

Refer to Assessment in Coursework Units: Feedback Procedures.

**Timing of feedback on end-of-semester assessment**

End-of-semester assessment feedback should be provided when the results are released.

Examination feedback can be provided through the unit’s Moodle site.

Reference sites:

[https://www.monash.edu/bytes](https://www.monash.edu/bytes)
[http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/education/2015/02/05/individual-exam-feedback-in-action-at-lse-departments/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/education/2015/02/05/individual-exam-feedback-in-action-at-lse-departments/)

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Collective feedback on exams
A simple collective feedback proforma can be used for providing a summary of what the examiner was looking for in respect to short answer and essay-type questions.

For short answers, focus on the predominant misunderstandings

For essay-type questions, give students a brief dot-point summary of what the key points were that should have been included in the response to the question and what students should revise going forward

An example of a simple collective feedback proforma is provided attached to the end of these guidelines. It is recommended to include a general comments section and a question specific comments section.

General comments
Include comments on overall performance and a breakdown of marks achieved across the cohort.

Provide general observations on conceptual strengths and weaknesses and what they should revise going forward.

Provide feedback on how students can improve and enhance their results in the future.

Question/project specific comments
These comments can be kept brief, but may follow an order under captions of:

- what the question/project was looking for;
- how the question/project was answered well;
- how the question/project was answered poorly.

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Document history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version number</th>
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COLLECTIVE FEEDBACK PROFORMA

Faculty / School: 

Unit Code: 

Unit Title: 

Unit Coordinator / Chief Examiner: 

General Comments on Exam Performance

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**Question Specific Comments**

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

Question 6