



### Introduction

*Feedback enables learning by providing students with information to help them reflect on their work and to improve their future performance. It is an integral feature of effective teaching and learning and one of the most powerful ways to enhance and strengthen student learning (Black and Wiliam 1998; Sadler 2010).*

This briefing is part of a Feedback Toolkit which provides guidance for academic and learning support staff on how to produce effective feedback. Its purpose is to help staff find ways to support student learning and to address concerns evident in the National Student Survey and elsewhere that highlight the need to consistently provide our students with clear, timely, integrated and supportive feedback. There are pockets of excellent, nationally recognised practice at Sheffield Hallam and the protocols in this briefing draw upon this good practice and upon widely recognised design principles for effective feedback.

### Feedback Protocols

Four high level principles have been identified for good feedback design from which the protocol statements have been derived. Together these set out expectations for designing and delivering feedback on assignments (see right hand column).

### Expectations of students

Feedback is only effective when its value is understood by students. Students should,

- Collect, retain and refer back to their feedback to inform subsequent work;
- Critically reflect on their feedback and seek to improve their performance;
- Engage with feedback opportunities during their course;
- Seek clarification of feedback when necessary.

Principles Good feedback is	Protocols How? feedback on assessment is
Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ explicitly integrated into curriculum design and review (module and course processes), both formatively and summatively;</li> <li>▪ constructively aligned with learning outcomes and assessment criteria;</li> <li>▪ given for all assessed work, including examinations and coursework;</li> <li>▪ consistent in terms of the student's experience of their course.</li> </ul>
Timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ normally given within three working weeks (excluding student vacation periods) of the submission deadline for the assessment;</li> <li>▪ given in time to inform subsequent and related assessments and exams.</li> </ul>
Clear and Focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ communicated through assessment criteria which is made available at the start of teaching and discussed with students;</li> <li>▪ discussed with students at the start of teaching so that they are aware of the range of feedback opportunities available to them and how they can access this feedback;</li> <li>▪ scheduled so that feedback on assessment is returned according to agreed expectations;</li> <li>▪ given using plain English so that it is comprehensible and useful;</li> <li>▪ given in ways that indicate the level of the student's achievement in assessments in relation to required standards;</li> <li>▪ given in ways that identify goals for further development and provide advice about the steps needed to reach these;</li> <li>▪ presented in the context of the student's original work so that the link between the feedback and the work is clear (e.g. the return of annotated scripts);</li> <li>▪ discussed by students and tutors for clarification as necessary.</li> </ul>
Supportive and Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ appropriate to the assessment;</li> <li>▪ appropriate to the level and needs of the student;</li> <li>▪ given in ways that recognise student diversity;</li> <li>▪ used to identify achievements as well as areas for improvement;</li> <li>▪ enabling and encouraging in order to foster confidence and motivation;</li> <li>▪ useful to each student even when generic feedback is given;</li> <li>▪ given so that it makes effective use of technology as appropriate.</li> </ul>

## Design your feedback

- A student should be able to act upon the feedback they receive. Are you clear about what you expect the student to do with the feedback you are giving? How will this be communicated?
- Feedback reinforces and is integral to the teaching. It relates to assessment criteria and intended outcomes. Feedback should respond directly to a piece of work, but it should also be part of an ongoing dialogue that occurs in diverse formal and informal situations.
- Good feedback on assessment keeps the learning live. Inadequate feedback also sends a strong message.
- Feedback provides you with a way to demonstrate your interest in the work of each student.
- Feedback needs to be accessible for when the student is ready to engage with it, now and in the future too. Can technology help?#
- Think about the student's course experience - how can you give feedback so that it can be applied by them at other points in their course?
- Is it a general or specific point you are making? How are you helping the student to link the feedback you are giving to their work, or part of it?
- How much detail is useful? How broad should the scope be? What is the best way of giving feedback this time?

*Feedback is at the heart of learning - giving effective feedback may require you to make changes to other aspects of your teaching.*

## Formative or Summative?

Formative feedback refers to all activities which give students explicit information and advice about their progress and, in particular, about how they can improve their work before assessment tasks are attempted and before modules are completed.

Summative feedback refers to the formal comments made by the academic with responsibility for assessing a student's work so that the student is clear about their level of achievement, the way their work has been assessed, and guidance for improvement. As a formal component of assessment design, summative feedback aligns closely and consistently with the course learning outcomes and the assessment criteria.

Good summative feedback should feed forward so that learning can be applied later.

### Feedback aligned to assessment criteria

- Alignment;
- Brings clarity;
- Creates consistency;
- Encourages and supports self and peer assessment;
- Explains what is expected;
- Leads to self-regulated improvement.

### How can technology help?

Technology offers,

- Convenience in its production and the access it provides students;
- Timeliness: easy management, effective distribution; just-in-time use;
- Variety of electronic tools;
- Legibility and comprehension, making feedback more usable.

### Three Week Turnaround?

Students,

- Are still engaged with or are close to the assignment and can relate the feedback they receive to the work they produced;
- Are still engaged with you;
- Are more likely to have the time and inclination to act on the feedback;
- Have time to apply what they learn to their next task.

### Further Information

The Feedback Toolkit is intended to inform good practice in the design of feedback on assessment. It brings together a collection of practical tools, case studies, links to good sources of information hosted externally and annotated bibliographies on assessment and feedback.

The toolkit will be refreshed with new useful content as it becomes available.

Please share your experience on feedback. Visit and contribute to the Feedback Toolkit at: <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/feedbacktoolkit/>