



Code of practice for assessment and feedback

Academic year 2018/19

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Introduction

1. Viewed holistically, assessment includes evaluation and appraisal, making judgements, identifying strengths and weaknesses, what is good or bad, what is right or wrong, and it results in a mark. Ideally assessment is objective but it can also include subjective aspects, therefore it is important that detailed marking/grading schemes are available for all assessments. As part of this holistic view, the University of Surrey also regards assessment as an essential means of providing informative feedback to students on their progress and how this can feed forward into improved performances. Formative and summative feedback are both expected to support student learning and are monitored to ensure their effectiveness and continued improvement.

The purposes of this *Code*

2. This *Code of practice on assessment and feedback* is primarily intended to assist academic staff at the University of Surrey and its Accredited and Associated Institutions, its external examiners, and those of its administrators who are concerned with student assessment and its outcomes. Its role is to ensure that:
 - there is demonstrable integrity, fairness and rigour in the application of academic judgement to the assessment of students' work
 - the associated administrative processes are undertaken with demonstrable integrity, fairness and rigour
3. The *Code* should also assist students in understanding how they can best use the various forms of assessment to support their learning and to demonstrate the full extent of their achievements.
4. Academic judgement is exercised within the context of each discipline but the University expects its academics to exercise their judgement rigorously and competently within the framework of this *Code*. Marks or grades resulting from that exercise of academic judgement must be dealt with consistently within the University's standardised procedures set out here.

Applicability

5. The requirements set out in this *Code* took effect from the start of the academic year 2013-14. Guidance on expectations of the extent or amount of assessment that students have to undertake (see paragraphs 30-32 below) are being applied when programmes undergo validation/periodic review.
6. The *Code* covers all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes that lead to an award of the University of Surrey, including University validated programmes at the Associated and Accredited Institutions. It also covers those credit bearing taught elements of integrated PhD programmes.
7. Where the requirements of this *Code* differ from those of an external accrediting body, the requirements of the external accrediting body may take precedence but only with the formal written approval of the Vice-Provost (Education), as Chair of the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC). Such differences would normally be identified at validation and periodic review.

The general principles for assessment

8. The following principles apply to the assessment of students' work in taught programmes:
- (i) all programmes include an assessment strategy that sets out the extent and balance between the different methods of assessment used that, whether formative or summative, are expected to contribute to and validate student learning;
 - (ii) all summative assessment is subject to proportionate internal quality assurance and external examining;¹
 - (iii) each individual unit of assessment is dealt with, in the first instance, independently whether or not the outcomes of units of assessment are subsequently aggregated;
 - (iv) all assessments are based on and aligned with the University grade descriptors (see Appendix 1) and related to the learning outcomes set out in the approved programme specifications and module descriptors;
 - (v) programmes that lead to University of Surrey awards and credit are taught and assessed in English, other than where tuition and assessment in other languages forms a required part of the learning outcomes for a specific programme or module that were considered and approved by the University at validation;
 - (vi) the form(s) and extent of each unit of assessment are expected to be relevant and proportionate to the learning outcomes being evaluated and the contribution to the award that the unit makes;
 - (vii) the allocation of all marks is always supported by explanatory comments provided by the marker whether for the benefit of students, where assessed work is returned to them, and/or to provide evidence for any subsequent calibration, moderation or quality assurance by colleagues internally and external examiners and markers.

The quality control and quality assurance of assessment

9. The University defines quality control in the context of the assessment of students' work as:
- 'the processes followed by both the University's academic and administrative staff to ensure that assessments are appropriate to and valid for the learning outcomes of the relevant module/programme, that the assessments are conducted, and marked as the University requires, which is fairly, by staff qualified to do so, and that results (including feedback, where relevant) are accurately recorded, processed, presented and returned to students in a timely manner.'
10. The University defines quality assurance in the context of the assessment of students' work as:
- 'the steps it takes through its academic and administrative staff, and its external examiners, to enable it to be confident that quality control processes are taking place and that they are fit for purpose; that the outcomes of students' assessment provide a reliable guide to their achievements; that the University's assessment arrangements meet UK expectations and requirements; and that the University identifies and exploits opportunities for the enhancement of its assessment arrangements.'

¹ See [Code of practice for external examining: taught programmes](#).

11. The University is committed to meeting the Expectations and Core and Common practices set out in the [QAA UK Quality Code for higher education](#).²
12. As a principle, all work by students that is assessed and that makes a summative contribution to student progression and/or award will be subject to quality control and quality assurance. The University achieves this through:
 - its internal quality assurance procedures, which are applied to the academic and administrative aspects involved in assessment, and which are set out in this *Code*
 - its external examining system, which provides independent external confirmation that the assessment procedures that have been applied are fair and that the outcomes are sound
13. Strict procedural requirements apply to the:
 - (i) marking of units of assessment and the recording of those primary assessment outcomes (see paragraphs 35-46 below);
 - (ii) correction of marks, which is applied to any mark when there has been a demonstrable failure in the administration of marks, for example the incorrect addition of components leading to a total (see paragraph 53 below);
 - (iii) agreement of assessment outcomes, which is applied where the primary and any other markers(s) initially disagree in the mark they allocate for an individual's unit of assessment that is not part of a cohort of assessed work (eg project or dissertation, individual performance) (see paragraph 57-58 below);
 - (iv) moderation of assessment outcomes, which is applied to the marks of a cohort of students for a unit of assessment (see paragraph 59-62 below);
 - (v) adjustment of cohorts of marks (see paragraphs 63-64 below);
 - (vi) compensation applied to the assessment outcomes of a module in accordance with the relevant *Regulations*.³

Additional Learning Support (ALS) and the Student Personal Learning and Study Hub (SPLASH)

Additional Learning Support

14. [Additional Learning Support](#) is part of the Library. It provides advice for students and for staff on ways to support students with needs that arise from physical or other impairments. ALS can provide students with general advice and can also prepare a written summary of the adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment that have been judged as reasonable for a named student by ALS staff and following consultation with the relevant programme director. Such written statements are referred to as Learning Support Adjustments (LSAs).

Student Personal Learning and Study Hub

15. [SPLASH](#) is based in the Library where students seeking advice to improve their study skills can meet Student Learning Advisers individually and attend workshops on a range of matters including academic writing, data analysis, group work, time management, making presentations, and academic integrity.

² The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is currently undergoing substantial revision; a set of revised Expectations and Practices were published in March 2018. The full Code, including the advice and guidance that underpins the Expectations and Practices, is due to be published in November 2018.

³ See [Regulations for taught programmes](#).

Departments of Higher Education and Technology Enhanced Learning

16. These [Department of Higher Education](#) and the [Department of Technology Enhanced Learning](#) provide advice and guidance for staff in developing practice in teaching and assessment.

The purposes of assessment

17. At the University of Surrey assessment is not solely concerned with marking or grading student's work; it is also an integral support to the learning process, providing:
- feedback to students and staff on how successful the students have been
 - information on how successfully the assessment has tested the students' achievements
 - constructive motivation to students to do better
 - an element within the University's internal and external quality assurance arrangements
18. The design and preparation of all programmes and modules offered by the University requires that detail of their units of assessment includes:
- a rationale for the aims, form(s) and relevance, and the extent of each unit of assessment
 - the essential learning outcomes and any additional ones, including any weighting between elements where appropriate
 - how the units of assessment, and elements within them, are integrated within modules and between modules within programmes
- These details are required for module/programme validation
19. The overall assessment strategy for a programme, and the details of the assessment requirements within each module, are made available to students before or at the start of the programme and each module, and also to the relevant external examiner(s).

Forms of assessment

20. Assessment is categorised as either:
- formative – which contributes to the learning process by the return to students of their submitted work with a commentary on its strengths and areas for improvement; an indicative mark may be included but this does not contribute to any (aggregate) mark used for progression or award purposes
 - summative– which provides a mark that is recorded and will contribute to the overall module mark and in specified cases will contribute to the award
21. Assessments can be conducted through coursework, in-semester tests or examinations. For the purposes of this *Code of practice* the University defines each as follows:
- Coursework – work which is completed in the student's own time and which has to be submitted by a specific time and date. Coursework can include many methods of assessment such as practical write-ups, essays, projects and dissertations. Coursework may be formative or summative. Coursework is organised and overseen within Faculties whether at unit of assessment or module level. Each assessment is provided by the relevant member of academic staff in

discussion with the Module Leader. Student Services and Administration Directorate staff and Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) are responsible for quality control. Coursework normally takes place during teaching weeks and not in the revision and examination periods, except for during the late summer (re)assessment period and in cases where a module is only assessed by coursework, not examinations.

- In-semester tests – these are written assessments designed to provide an evaluation of the student’s achievement at that point in the module. They are held during the semester, normally within weeks 4 to 7, and wherever possible during the hours normally scheduled for that module. Each assessment is provided by the relevant member of academic staff in discussion with the Module Leader. The tests take place under standard formal examination conditions and are organised by the Student Services and Administration Directorate which is responsible for their quality control (See Appendix 2 for the Guidelines for in-semester tests)
 - Examination – an event (other than an in-semester test) that a student has to attend at a particular time and place such as a written examination, a recital, a presentation. All examinations are summative. Each assessment is provided by the relevant member of academic staff in discussion with the Module Leader. Formal written examinations take place in the University appointed examination weeks and are typically organised by the Student Services and Administration Directorate, which is responsible for their quality control
22. Formative assessment is built into programmes as an integral and supportive part of the planned learning process: students are expected to submit a reasonable attempt for all formative assessments identified in the module descriptor/student handbook.
23. Students and their lecturers/tutors may agree on further formative assessments as part of their learning process over and above that included within the module descriptor/student handbook.
24. All modules should include at least one opportunity to provide students with evaluative feedback on their work from which they can judge how they have performed and how they can improve. Where a module is assessed exclusively by written examination(s), or extended coursework representing a single unit of assessment, there is a requirement for formative assessment prior to the examination(s)/coursework submission.

The validity of assessment methods

25. The University is committed to ensuring that the types of assessment methods that are used are appropriate and relevant to the learning outcomes for the student that the unit of assessment is intended to evaluate. It does this through:
- the continuing professional development of its staff
 - the attention paid to assessment during programme and module design
 - the internal quality assurance arrangements involved in:
 - its programme validation arrangements
 - its monitoring arrangements, including the evaluation and response to feedback from students, external examiners and other relevant stakeholders
26. Academic staff are required to identify both generic and specific learning outcomes as part of the process of designing their programmes and their modules. The analysis of how these learning outcomes can most effectively and efficiently be assessed results in the design of the overall assessment regime for the programme

and its modules, ensuring the relevance of the methods of assessment, and their focus on the purpose(s) of each unit of assessment. See Appendix 3 for guidance on linking levels, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

27. For each programme, the learning outcomes determine the overall assessment regime for the programme, integrating the learning outcomes of its component modules and including the assessment of a balance between specific and generic learning outcomes. Units of assessment within modules normally focus on the demonstration of specific learning outcomes whilst contributing to the wider generic learning outcomes. It is important that the purposes and requirements of the various units of assessment within a module are correlated, to ensure that the intended learning outcomes of the module are all evaluated, and that there is no unnecessary duplication within and between modules.
28. The design of assessment tasks should be clearly aligned with the University grade descriptors (see Appendix 1) and their discipline-specific marking schemes, and should provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate not only their abilities to meet expectations at threshold level but also, progressively, to the highest levels of ability that would achieve marks at the top of the mark range. Appendix 4 provides guidance on designing out plagiarism and Appendix 5 provides some suggestions for the assessment of group work.
29. Some overlap or even duplication in the assessment of particularly important learning outcome(s) may be advantageous in contributing to the learning process.

The amount of assessment

30. The amount of assessment, whether in a unit of assessment or in a module, and in a programme overall, should be proportionate to the contribution each unit/module makes to determining the award. All University taught programmes are based on a 15 credit tariff, with modules of 15 credits and multiples thereof. The extent of assessment and the type (s) of assessment must be determined primarily by academic judgements of the requirements to assess the learning outcomes. The following should be considered when designing the strategy and extent of summative assessment:
 - (i) the overall assessment strategy for all taught programmes at the University will include a balanced and blended combination of examinations and coursework evaluations. Other than where external accreditation is a factor, the University anticipates that its undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes will normally include no more than 75-80% of summative assessment by written examination;
 - (ii) the assessment strategy for each module is determined by its specific learning outcomes and the contribution it makes to the overall strategy for the programme. Unless justified within the overall assessment strategy at programme level it would be atypical for a module to rely on a single unit of assessment, although extended reports or essays or short dissertations that integrate a student's work throughout a module would be exceptions;
 - (iii) written examinations are typically of up to two hours duration; where they are included within the assessment strategy for a module there might typically be one or two examinations;
 - (iv) where coursework is included within the assessment strategy for a module the proportion of its contribution and its extensiveness is determined by academic expectations. Attention is drawn to the requirements regarding return of assessed work to students (paragraphs 31 and 65-69 below) and the Guiding principles for student feedback at Appendix 6;

- (v) where in-semester tests form part of the assessment strategy for a module, they should not normally be the dominant form of assessment in a module nor account for a weighting of less than 10% of a module. It is possible for an in-semester test unit of assessment worth 20% to be comprised of two in-semester tests each worth 10%. In such cases each individual in-semester test should be separately designated on the module descriptor and in SITS. The maximum duration of an in-semester test should fit within the timetabled slot for the particular session and must allow time for set-up, paper collection and ALS adjustments;
 - (vi) where there are multiple units of assessment within a module, the extent of each unit of assessment should reflect the proportion of module learning outcomes it is assessing. In line with the expectations concerning integration and application of knowledge, skills and understanding in higher education, it would be atypical if an assessment strategy included units assessing learning of less than 20% of the overall module. A module would thus be unlikely to include more than five units of summative assessment. Exceptions would need to be justified at validation and periodic review.
31. Where work is submitted for assessment at intervals throughout the semester, the timing of submission by and return to the students should be sequenced to allow students to benefit from feedback on the earlier submission(s), prior to making the subsequent submission (see paragraphs 65 - 69 below). This is sometimes referred to as 'feed-forward'.
32. The use of formative assessment varies significantly between disciplines but in general it should not exceed the extent of summative assessment.

Submission of coursework

Penalties for late submission of work for assessment

33. The University has clear requirements for the timely submission of work for assessment, including a tariff of penalties for late or incorrect submission. These are to be found in the [Regulations for taught programmes](#). Wherever and however work is submitted for assessment, the rigorous application of penalties for late submission is included within the expectations of this *Code of practice*.

Illegible submissions

34. It is the student's responsibility to present work for assessment that is legible. The [Regulations for taught programmes](#) have clear procedures for how the submission of illegible work is dealt with.

Marking definitions

35. The following terms apply within this *Code of practice*:

Primary marking

36. Primary marking is normally undertaken by the academic(s) involved in teaching the topic being assessed, either personally or via computer-based programmes.⁴ Primary markers undertake primary marking. Primary markers are required to provide with each assessment a clear basis for the allocation of the mark(s) to be awarded against the learning outcomes that is aligned with the University grade descriptors. The primary marker(s) should also include appropriate feedback where assessed work is returned to students, together with an explanation of the marking

⁴ See the [Code of practice for postgraduate researchers who support teaching](#) for guidance on when postgraduate research students can be involved in marking.

where assessed work is to form part of a sample that is to be submitted for scrutiny by the external examiner.

Second marking

37. Second marking involves the work of a second academic (the second marker), typically but not exclusively within the University, who focuses on the marking of work that has been submitted for assessment and that includes the marks, comments, etc of the primary marker(s). Second marking may involve all or a sample of students' work within a cohort depending on the size of cohort. Where a sample of students' work is used for second marking this should be the same sample that is provided for scrutiny by the external examiner ie at least 10% of the total or 20 pieces of work whichever is the lesser across the range of marks provided that such a sample is of sufficient size to be proportionately representative of assessed work across the whole ability range demonstrated by the students.

Double marking

38. Double marking involves the work of a second academic, typically but not exclusively within the University, who marks work that has been submitted for assessment and that may either carry on it the marks, comments, etc of the primary marker, or consist of an evaluation of the original (or an unmarked copy) of the work submitted by the student for assessment. The latter is referred to as 'double blind marking'. Double marking may involve all or a sample of student's work within a cohort depending on the size of cohort. Where a sample of students' work is used for double marking this should be the same sample that is provided for scrutiny by the external examiner ie at least 10% of the total or 20 pieces of work whichever is the lesser across the range of marks provided that such a sample is of sufficient size to be proportionately representative of assessed work across the whole ability range demonstrated by the students.

Audit marking

39. Where assessment is either based on a binary (right/wrong) evaluation and/or entirely based on objective answers (for example, in multiple choice assessments with or without computer-aided marking) an 'audit' of the marking is required, to ensure that the procedures have been completed satisfactorily. Audit marking may involve all or, more typically, a sample of student's work within a cohort. Where a sample of students' work is used for audit marking this should be the same sample that is provided for scrutiny by the external examiner.

Anonymous marking

40. The University operates a policy of anonymous marking for all written examinations. Faculties are encouraged to consider anonymous marking of coursework where this is possible and practicable.

Awarding marks

41. Marks are awarded following the generic framework provided by the University grade descriptors (see Appendix 1) and the extent to which a student has achieved the specified learning outcomes set out in the programme specification and module descriptors at validation and subsequent periodic review. Marks cannot be given for attendance alone nor deducted for non-attendance.
42. Criteria for marking, including penalties linked to failure to observe stated word limits, must be stated clearly in programme handbooks for the benefit of students and internal and external markers. This is particularly important where individual projects or dissertations are concerned since the topics may be diverse. If, for any given

assignment or examination, marks are to be awarded specifically for spelling and grammar, this must be made known to all students in advance of the assessment.

43. Marks are awarded on a percentage scale, except where other scales are required as a consequence of programme accreditation by external bodies. In such cases, a scheme to translate the alternative scale into the University's 1-100 scale is required which should be approved as part of the validation of the programme or through the programme and module modification process. The University is committed to use of the full range of the marking scale, and has advised its staff and external examiners accordingly. This is particularly important at the higher and lower ends of the range. Negative marking (ie deducting marks for wrong answers) should not be employed.
44. The principles embodied within the University grade descriptors should be used to create assignment-specific marking schemes. These include:
 - clarity as to what constitutes work that represents the whole range of available marks (0% -100%)
 - the objectivity of the marking schemes, their alignment with the University's grade descriptors, their match to the learning outcomes that are being assessed, and their relevance to the form of assessment selected
45. Students should be made aware of University grade descriptors and how these relate to marking schemes for their assignments. It is essential that the University grade descriptors are developed into marking schemes and that staff are able to explain these marking schemes to students in discussions early in the students' academic careers.
46. The primary marker of student work submitted for assessment is usually the member of staff concerned with teaching or directing the student's work leading up to that unit of assessment apart from in the case of final year project reports and dissertations (see paragraph 47 below).

Marking of final year project reports and dissertations and Masters' dissertations

47. Final year undergraduate project reports and dissertations typically equate to 30 or 45 credits and Masters dissertations to 30, 45, 60 or 90 credits. MRes programmes may have a dissertation of between 90 and 150 credits. All project reports and dissertations are marked by at least two markers who in the first instance act independently and arrive at a mark without reference to each other's comments or conclusions (so called double 'blind' marking). It is at the discretion of the School/Department whether the supervisor marks project reports and dissertations. Where a supervisor is not a marker they may contribute an evaluation of the student's engagement, effort and level of independence in carrying out the project/dissertation. Such a report should be listed on the relevant module descriptor as a unit of assessment and allocated a weighting.

Marking and its quality control and assurance

48. The extent of quality control/assurance should be proportionate to the type of assessment and the contribution it makes to an award. Typically:
 - where a unit of assessment contributes to a 15 credit module a sample of assessed work should be second marked or 'audited' (see paragraphs 37 and 39 above), with the sample being that submitted for external examining
 - where a unit of assessment contributes to more than 15 credits all work submitted for assessment should be marked in accordance with paragraph 38 above

49. Faculties /Departments must be able to demonstrate consistency of marking within units of assessment and comparability between them.
50. The mechanisms used by Faculties, Departments and/or programmes for the agreement, moderation and adjustment of marks must conform with the University requirements as set out in this *Code of practice*.
51. The marking of written examination scripts and coursework must not be left entirely to one person but must be subject to second marking (see paragraph 37 above). For examination answers in the form of calculations, multiple choice, or short notes on a number of separate topics, it is sufficient for a second person to check that all parts have been marked and that the marks have been totalled correctly (see Audit marking, paragraph 39 above).
52. Where feasible, all pages of assessed work that contribute to a student's summative assessment in the penultimate year and final year of programmes should include an indication that the page has been scrutinised as part of the assessment process.

Correction of marks

53. Correction of marks applies when there has been a demonstrable failure in the administration of marking, for example the incorrect addition of components leading to a total. Correction may be applied to an individual mark within a cohort so long as the sample used for quality control purposes includes no further errors. Where additional errors are found within the sample then all of the units within that cohort must be checked for administrative accuracy. The correction of marks is reported to the Board of Examiners.

Agreement and moderation of marks

54. The alteration of the initial mark(s) assigned to work submitted for assessment can only be undertaken through procedures that are applied consistently across the University. Where the quality assurance procedures indicate a difference in mark between those assessing the submitted work a standard University process – agreement or moderation is required. Where there are differences across cohorts or marks, adjustment can be utilised (see paragraphs 63-64 below).
55. Marks awarded cannot be changed by anyone acting alone, including Module Leaders, Programme Leaders, Directors of Learning and Teaching or others, except for corrections.
56. To ensure that any and all alterations take place in a manner that is equitable to all students, a common and shared use of terminology and set of procedures are essential.

Agreement of marks

57. Agreement of marks applies in cases where double marking is used/required. When the two or more markers responsible for marking the assessment, or a component within it, initially disagree, they may seek agreement on the mark they jointly award. Modification of a mark by agreement can only be applied before marks are formally returned and entered into SITS.
58. Agreement of marks should be on the basis of shared and agreed academic judgement, and an explanation must be available to a Board of Examiners should it be required. Where agreement cannot be reached between the markers the Module Leader (or Programme Leader if the Module Leader is involved in the lack of agreement) will discuss and seek to reconcile the assessment differences. On the rare occasions where differences are irreconcilable the matter may be referred to the relevant external examiner to agree how to reconcile the differences. In such a case

the external examiner does not mark but is the final arbiter in deciding how to reach an agreed mark.⁵

Moderation of marks

59. Moderation is to be considered where markers disagree on one or more marks within a cohort of marks for a unit of assessment. This requires that all of the cohort, or all of an appropriate sample of a large cohort, are reconsidered by the markers. For large cohorts the sample is that provided for external examiners (see paragraph 37 above). Modification of an individual student's mark is not allowed. Where the markers reach agreement on how marks should be changed moderation is applied to the complete cohort of marks for that unit of assessment, and before the marks are returned and entered into SITS.
60. The process of moderation is triggered where a comparison of different marker's marks for units of assessment within a cohort identifies variations or differences in the marks awarded in either a consistent or inconsistent pattern.
61. Where there is a consistent pattern in the differences between the marks of the assessors there are two procedural options:
 - on the basis of shared academic judgement the assessors can agree to moderate all of the marks with the cohort to an agreed and common extent
 - if they continue to disagree then the Module Leader or Programme Leader intervenes and if necessary determines the extent of any moderation that will be applied to the whole cohort. Such moderation will be brought to the attention of the external examiner(s)
62. Where there is an inconsistent pattern between the marks of the different markers there are two procedural options, both of which require that all of the cohort of work submitted within that unit of assessment is (re)considered:
 - on the basis of shared academic judgement they can agree all of the individual marks within the cohort of work submitted for the unit of assessment
 - if they continue to disagree then the Module Leader or Programme Leader intervenes and if necessary the latter determines the extent of any further (re)assessment. As a last resort the opinion of the relevant external examiner(s) is sought, although they are not to be used as additional markers

Adjustment of marks

63. It is possible that, despite the thorough safeguards put in place by the University, the teaching and assessment processes may not always be ideally matched or function as perfectly as intended. The outcomes of such a failure of process may be either to disadvantage students or to put the maintenance of academic standards at risk. To remedy such potential outcomes Boards of Examiners can consider the adjustment of cohorts of marks. Adjustment can be used to raise or lower a cohort of marks or alter some marks within a cohort, in both cases the intention being to alter an atypical profile of marks to a typical one taking into account such factors as previous performance and disciplinary norms. These procedures are likely to be applied very rarely and only under precisely controlled circumstances.
64. The case for adjustment must be discussed by the Board of Examiners, including its external examiners, and the conclusions reported to the Student Progression and Awards Board (SPAB), along with an action plan designed to avoid repetition of the cause(s) of the problem(s). In exceptional circumstances SPAB may decide to adjust

⁵ See [Code of practice for external examining: taught programmes](#).

a cohort of marks if it considers that appropriate corrective action has not been taken by a Board of Examiners. The methodology to be used to adjust is given in Appendix 7.

Feedback and feed-forward to students on assessed work

65. Assessed work that is returned to students will be accompanied by feedback and/or commentary. It will be provided:
- on or before a specified date that is within a period of three semester weeks⁶ following the submission deadline, and
 - not less than three days before the submission deadline for assessed work where the student's response to feedback on the first piece of work might reasonably be expected to enable them to improve their performance in the second piece (or pieces) of assessed work.
- Final year projects and dissertations are not required to be returned within the three semester week period following the submission deadline.
66. The assessment of all work requires a commentary explaining the basis of any mark or grade. The nature and extent of feedback will be determined by the needs of the assessment type and student performance(s), but should be sufficient to explain strengths and weaknesses in the performance(s) and explain and justify the mark(s) awarded. Appendix 6 provides some guiding principles for student feedback.
67. Feedback on student work submitted for formative assessment should be directed to supporting the learning process. It should additionally provide an explanation of why any indicative mark was applied and, where appropriate, how the student's performance could be improved.
68. Feedback on work returned to students that had been submitted for summative assessment must explain the grounds for the mark or grade awarded. It should additionally, and where appropriate, indicate how the student's performance could be improved. Feedback should be provided on the University's standard feedback template (see Appendix 8).
69. Feedback should aim to focus the student's attention in ways that are intended to support the learning process and provide a basis for future improved performance. It is in this sense that some have adopted the term 'feed-forward'. Feedback/feed-forward should include comments on what a student has done well and what is incorrect and/or inadequately presented. It should be regarded as essential to provide advice on how the work could have been improved.

The recording and return to students of provisional marks

70. The University views assessment as an integral part of the learning process. It is committed to the timely conduct of assessments and the timely return of assessed work to students' with marks and feedback on their performance. Marks are however only provisional until they have been agreed by the Board of Examiners and students must be made aware of this to avoid any potential confusion.

⁶ Where there is a very large cohort of students, and/or the volume of work to be assessed is such that the three week deadline is impractical, the Executive Dean may authorize an extension to a total maximum of four semester weeks so long as this is reported to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, which subsequently reports the exception to University Learning and Teaching Committee.

71. Summative assessments that contribute to awards can be returned to students with the indicative mark once that mark has been subject to appropriate quality checks (excluding by external examiners) that could have resulted in its modification or moderation.
72. Marks are entered into SITS by the appropriate SITS experts in the Faculties and the Student Services and Administration Directorate and are available to students wishing to monitor their academic progress through On-line Mark Viewing (OLMV) at prescribed times of the year.
73. Once entered into SITS marks cannot be altered unless there has been an administrative error or following a process of moderation or adjustment.
74. As part of the reports they provide to Boards of Examiners, the University expects Programme Leaders to identify for individual students and/or cohorts where there are patterns in not making reasonable attempts to submit formative assessments.

The release of confirmed marks

75. Marks that have been agreed by the appropriate Board of Examiners are returned to the Student Services and Administration Directorate which releases/publishes agreed mark lists via On-line Mark Viewing or the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). The Directorate also publishes degree lists that have been confirmed by SPAB. Boards of Examiners, Faculty Offices, Schools/Departments, Programme Leaders and/or individual members of staff are not authorised to release provisional pass lists or degree classifications or award grades prior to their publication by the Student Services and Administration Directorate.
76. Students may, if they wish, be shown their marked examination scripts. Scripts may not be returned to candidates on a permanent basis.
77. The University is committed to work closely with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Where a PSRB requires as part of its arrangements to accredit a University programme that there should be special arrangements for the agreement of marks and the conferment of awards for programmes the details of any such special arrangements are formally recorded by the relevant Board of Examiners, set out in the programme handbook, and notified to the Student Services and Administration Directorate.

Classification of University of Surrey taught degrees

78. The procedure for classification of awards is set out in the [Regulations for taught programmes](#).

Appendix 1 - University grade descriptors

University grade descriptors are generic statements that describe student achievement at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level. They are expressed in generic terms so that they are applicable to a broad range of disciplines. The design of a programme is informed by a range of sources, such as the QAA [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications \(FHEQ\)](#) and subject benchmark statements and, where relevant, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements. The grade descriptors are intended to complement these. In particular, they will help to confirm at the assessment stage that the breadth and depth of the learning experience has been undertaken and the standard achieved.

It is not expected that students should be able to demonstrate the entire knowledge and skills sets included within the descriptors at each stage of the learning experience (ie within every module or level). However, it is anticipated that, over the course of studying a programme, students will have had an opportunity to demonstrate that they have gained the knowledge and skills outlined in their programme specifications. By reference to the grade descriptors, students can understand why they have achieved the marks that they have for their assessments in each module or overall in their programme.

The purpose of grade descriptors

- Preparing level and module intended learning outcomes
- Designing assessment beyond 'content' to include skills (discipline-related and professional/scholarly ones)
- Ensuring that marks are awarded for the full range/ breadth, ie 0 - 100, so that students can reach top marks , if deserved
- Shaping marking schemes and criteria appropriate beyond 'content' to include subject specific skills and professional/scholarly ones
- Managing expectations of feedback and guidance to students about their academic work

The importance of grade descriptors

Grade descriptors are important because they inform both the students and external stakeholders about the range and breadth of knowledge and abilities a student is required to achieve at the University of Surrey. Grade descriptors are statements about what it means to be a graduate of Surrey and act as guidance for both staff and students.

Determining what grade descriptors apply at each level of undergraduate study

Grade descriptors can be used to generate assignment-specific marking schemes and marking criteria that specify the breadth and depth of students' capabilities at each level of their undergraduate studies. It is up to the professional judgment of academic staff to decide what is achievable at each level within the framework set by the grade descriptors.

Applying the generic language of the grade descriptors at a discipline level

The generic grade descriptors are there to ensure that assessments are marked across the whole range of available marks (0 – 100%) and that a range of subject specific, scholarly and professional skills are being assessed as well as content. Because of the level of generality within the grade descriptors, they allow for interpretation at departmental and disciplinary level.

Academic staff can apply specific disciplinary meanings to the generic terms used in the grade descriptors, for example, in Mathematics, the term 'originality' could be interpreted as 'elegance' as it is a more appropriate term for that specific disciplinary community. It is important that these discipline specific terms are communicated to students, so that there is

alignment in understanding between staff and students. In this sense, the grade descriptors act as guidance for students and can also be referred to when providing feedback.

Deriving intended learning outcomes from the grade descriptors

Grade descriptors can be used as a guide in writing intended learning outcomes. They can assist in ensuring that intended learning outcomes should be based not only on content knowledge but also around skills and capabilities, both generic and professional.

Notes on using grade descriptors

1. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements will be included within marking schemes appropriate to assignments set. In some discipline areas it will be appropriate to exemplify work of a particular standard by model answers. All marking schemes and model answers will align with the University grade descriptors.
2. The principles embodied within the University grade descriptors should be a feature of assignment—specific marking schemes. These include:
 - clarity as to what constitutes work that represents the whole range of available marks (0% - 100%),
 - the objectivity of the marking schemes, their alignment with the University grade descriptors, their match to the learning outcomes that are being assessed, and their relevance to the form of assessment selected,
3. Students should be made aware of the University grade descriptors and how these relate to marking schemes for their assignments. The former will be communicated via the University website and should be included in programme handbooks. The latter should also be communicated via handbooks and in discussions with students and made clear in assignment briefs.
4. Linked to point 2 above, it will be essential that, however the University grade descriptors are developed into marking schemes, staff are able to explain these marking schemes to students in discussions early in the students' academic careers.
5. The design of challenging assignments (beyond essays and exams that test knowledge recall) must happen alongside the use of the University grade descriptors and clearly aligned discipline-specific marking schemes since, if there is no opportunity within the assignment for a student to demonstrate their higher level ability then this too will limit their ability to access marks at the higher end of the range.

FHEQ Level 4, 5 and 6 grade descriptors

	Command of the subject	Subject specific skills and practices	Scholarly and professional skills and attitudes
90-100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is exceptional and informed by the highest level of scholarship • Excellent integration of the full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Goes beyond the material displaying exceptional flair in tackling issues identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes • Exceptional professional presentation using an appropriate range of resources and reflecting professional norms. 	<p>Work that influences how academics and students think about their discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being original within the discipline on the basis of its excellence; • Achieving the highest level of compelling, coherent and concise argument attainable within the level of study; • Using a full range of high quality sources to inform but not dominate the argument
80-89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is comprehensive, accurate, relevant and informed by advanced scholarship • Excellent integration of a full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Goes beyond the material with excellent conceptualisation which is original, innovative and/or insightful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent and original application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes • Excellent professional presentation using an appropriate range of resources and reflecting professional norms. 	<p>Work that has real potential to influence how academics and students may think about their discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being original on the basis of its excellence in the context of the level of study; • A compelling, coherent and concise argument; • Drawing on a full range of high quality sources.

70-79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed by a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is comprehensive, accurate, relevant with an awareness of advanced scholarship • Very good integration of a full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Goes beyond the material with very good conceptualisation which is often original, innovative and/or insightful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently applies theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes with some originality • Very good professional presentation using an appropriate range of resources and reflecting professional norms. 	<p>Work that has some potential to influence how academics and students may think about their discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some originality on the basis of its excellence in the context of the level of study; • Arguments which are coherent, concise and frequently compelling; • Drawing on a wide range of high quality sources.
60-69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is comprehensive and accurate • Good integration of a range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Some good insight into the material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear evidence of the application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes with few obvious flaws • Professional presentation using a good range of resources and reflecting professional norms. 	<p>Work that critically engages with current thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of sources used; • Arguments which are coherent and concise and offer robust conclusions; • The development of a good analytical model
50-59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an adequate breadth and depth of substantive knowledge but with only a few errors or omissions • Demonstrates an adequate understanding of a range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Shows some ability to critically engage with the material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes although with some obvious flaws • Presentation which adequately reflects relevant professional norms 	<p>Work that accurately reports on current thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The repetition of, rather than critical engagement with, limited sources; • Adequate differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of sources used; • Drawing adequate conclusions which do not always fully reflect the complexity of the subject matter; • An adequate if unsophisticated analytical model.

40-49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomplete breadth and depth of substantive knowledge with some errors or omissions • Demonstrates an awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Limited and underdeveloped critical engagement with the material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates limited ability to put theory into practice • Demonstrates limited technical ability but lacking theoretical and reflective insights • Presentation with reflects professional practice in a limited manner 	<p>Work that offers a limited understanding of thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited attention paid to the quality, range and appropriateness of sources used; • Poorly informed opinion led work which lacks a clear evidence base; • A limited and underdeveloped structure of argument; • Work that is of limited coherence and clarity.
30-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little relevant knowledge, which is minimal in its breadth and depth with major errors or omissions • Minimal awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Fails to demonstrate sufficient critical engagement with the material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a minimal ability to meet learning outcomes in the grasp of both theory and technical knowledge • Presentation which displays little more than cursory attention to professional norms 	<p>Work that often misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal attention paid to the quality, range and appropriateness of sources used; • Poorly informed opinion led work with a minimal evidence base; • No real underlying structure of argument; • Work that is frequently confused and incoherent.
20-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not demonstrate even a basic understanding of the subject matter • Insufficient awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • Little evidence of critical engagement with the material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks any real application of skills to meet learning outcomes • Fails to demonstrate any substantive meeting of learning outcomes • No real attention to the disciplinary norms of presentation 	<p>Work that fundamentally misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of attention to the quality, range and appropriateness of sources used; • Poorly informed opinion-led work rather than evidence based argument; • No real underlying structure of argument;

<p>10-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates confusion over the subject matter • Little awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques • No evidence of critical engagement with the material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to demonstrate the use of skills to meet learning outcomes • Fails to demonstrate any substantive meeting of learning outcomes • No real attention to the disciplinary norms of presentation 	<p>Work that completely misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequacy of sources used; • Unsubstantiated assertion with no evidence base • Failure to structure the argument being presented;
<p>0-9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates mainly ignorance of the subject matter by presenting information of minimal relevance. • Little or no awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning outcomes not met • No real attention to any norms of presentation. 	<p>Work that completely misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence or misuse of sources; • Work that is confused and incoherent.

FHEQ Level 7 grade descriptors

	Command of the subject	Subject specific skills and practices	Scholarly and professional skills and attitudes
90-100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge which is of publishable quality by having real potential to challenge the forefront of the academic discipline or area of professional practice. • Achieves new insights and exceptional integration through evaluation of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques; • Consistently synthesises from extensive relevant information sources displaying exceptional flair in tackling issues identified; • Adopts a critical, analytical and questioning approach to reach authoritative conclusions that are founded on scholarship which combines individual judgement and evaluation based on rigorous independent thought. 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge to meet learning outcomes which, in terms of its originality, creativity and elegance, goes beyond the usual parameters to consistently offer perceptive interpretations and striking insights.</p>	<p>Work that influences the discipline and its application through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being original, creative and innovative within disciplinary boundaries; • Providing compelling, coherent and concise arguments where the level of rigour is such that an authoritative contribution to understanding can be made; • Critical use and synthesis of an extensive range of appropriately selected sources to inform the argument; • The demonstration of excellent judgement on the basis of evidence in complex and/or unpredictable circumstances.

80-89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge which has the potential to be publishable; • Demonstrates excellent integration of the full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques; • Frequently makes extensive use of relevant information sources displaying flair in tackling issues identified; • Adopts a critical, analytical and questioning approach to reach robust conclusions that are founded on scholarship which combines individual judgement and evaluation based on rigorous independent thought. 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge to meet learning outcomes which, in terms of its originality, creativity and elegance, stretches existing parameters to frequently offer perceptive interpretations and insights.</p>	<p>Work that that shows real potential to influence the discipline and its application through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being original, creative and innovative within masters level study; • Providing compelling, coherent and concise arguments where the level of rigour is such that some contribution to understanding can be made; • Critical use and synthesis of an extensive range of appropriately selected sources to inform the argument; • The demonstration of good judgement on the basis of evidence in complex and/or unpredictable circumstances.
70-79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge which is at, or significantly informed by the academic discipline or area of professional practice. • Demonstrates excellent integration of the full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques; • Makes good use of information sources displaying flair in tackling issues identified; • Adopts a critical, analytical and questioning approach to reach valid conclusions that are informed by scholarship which combines individual judgement and evaluation based on rigorous thought. 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge to meet learning outcomes which, in terms of its originality, creativity and elegance, operates at the boundary of existing parameters to offer some perceptive interpretations and insights.</p>	<p>Work that fully and critically reflects the state of knowledge and its application in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity within disciplinary boundaries; • Providing compelling, coherent and concise arguments where the level of rigour demonstrates an excellent understanding; • Critical use and synthesis of a good range of appropriate sources to inform the argument; • The demonstration of sound judgement on the basis of evidence in complex and/or unpredictable circumstances.

<p>60-69</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a systematic and broad understanding of the subject that is clearly based on current research and scholarship at the forefront of the discipline; • Demonstrates a depth of conceptual understanding that supports critical evaluation of research and scholarship in the discipline; • Shows a clear understanding of how to make connections between different intellectual contexts and how knowledge can be transferred between different contexts in order to identify problems and research questions; • There is critical engagement with current issues and new insights in the discipline and area of study. 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge to meet learning outcomes through the provision of robust and critical arguments based on a selective use of appropriate sources with evidence of creativity.</p>	<p>Work that critically reflects the state of knowledge and its application within the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing concise and coherent arguments which draw on a range of sources from within the discipline to allow substantial analysis to take place; • The potential to act as an independent professional through an understanding of complex and/or unpredictable circumstances.
<p>50-59</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a systematic and broad understanding of the subject much of which is based on current research and scholarship at the forefront of the discipline; • There is sufficient and appropriate depth of subject knowledge; • An understanding of how to make connections between different contexts and how knowledge can be transferred between these; • There is sufficient grounding in theory in 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge which meets learning outcomes and shows evidence of critical engagement and analysis of appropriately selected sources.</p>	<p>Work that draws on current thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately representing and acknowledging the work of others in the discipline; • Adequate differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of sources used; • Drawing adequate conclusions which may not always reflect the complexity of the subject matter; • An adequate, if unsophisticated, level of analysis.

	<p>order to identify problems and research questions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is demonstrated ability to critically engage with current issues and new insights in the discipline and area of study. 		
40-49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomplete breadth and depth of substantive knowledge of the discipline and field of study; • Underdeveloped critical engagement with the material; • There is a lack of a questioning approach to the investigation of the discipline and field of study; • There is limited transfer of knowledge between different intellectual contexts to form an understanding of the discipline and area of study. 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge which meets only some of the learning outcomes through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent application of knowledge; • Limited critical engagement; • Inadequate selection of sources. • Lack of coherence between arguments 	<p>Work that shows a limited understanding with current thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some inaccurate representations of the work of others in the discipline; • Limited differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of sources used; • Overly simple conclusions drawn which do not reflect the complexity of the subject matter; • Limited analysis.
30-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited if any critical engagement with the material; • Weak breadth and depth of substantive knowledge of the discipline and field of study; • There is no real questioning approach to the investigation of the discipline and field of study; • There is no real transfer of knowledge between different intellectual contexts to 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge which meets few learning outcomes through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently poor application of knowledge; • Descriptive work which lacks any real critical engagement; • Poorly constructed arguments. 	<p>Work which shows a familiarity with the discipline but no real understanding through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccurate and superficial representations of the work of others in the discipline; • No real differentiation in terms of the quality and appropriateness of sources used; • Limited conclusions drawn; • Descriptive work which demonstrates no obvious analysis.

	form an understanding the discipline and area of study.		
20-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No critical engagement with the material; • Significant and serious limitations in the breadth and depth of substantive knowledge of the discipline and field of study; • There is no questioning approach to the investigation of the discipline and field of study; • There is no evidence transfer of knowledge between different intellectual contexts to form an understanding of the discipline and area of study. 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge which meets very few learning outcomes through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely limited application of knowledge that is poorly selected and articulated; • No critical or analytical engagement; • Very poorly constructed arguments. 	<p>Work which shows a limited familiarity with the discipline but no real understanding through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccurate and superficial representations of the work of others in the discipline; • No differentiation in terms of the quality and appropriateness of sources used; • No conclusions drawn; • Descriptive work which demonstrates no analysis whatsoever.
10-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No attempt at critical engagement with the material made; • Demonstrates mainly ignorance of the subject matter by presenting unconnected or information of minimal relevance; • No real awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques. 	<p>The application of theoretical and technical knowledge which meets very few if any learning outcomes through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of irrelevant and inappropriate knowledge; • No evidence of argument. 	<p>Work that shows next to no familiarity or understanding of the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The frequent absence or misuse of sources; • Arguments which lack coherence and credibility.
0-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ignorance of the subject matter by presenting information that is irrelevant and unconnected to the argument; • No awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques. 	<p>Failure to meet all learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Work that completely misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence or misuse of sources; • Incoherent and confused arguments; • An inability to recognise what is required for a particular task.

Appendix 2 - Guidelines for in-semester tests

Background

Following issues arising during the implementation of class tests in semester one of the 2015-6 academic year and student concerns expressed through SSLCs, MEQs and the Student Rep Forum, ULTC established a task and finish group to investigate the use of class tests and develop a policy for their more effective operation. From the 2016-17 academic year the following policy guidelines will be implemented.

1. **Formative** in-semester tests can take place either during scheduled class times or through the VLE and do not require central supervision. Where these assessments follow a time constrained format appropriate ALS requirements must be accommodated.
2. **Summative** in-semester tests will normally take place under the following conditions:
 - a. The schedule for the holding of in-semester tests will be published at the start of the module and tests should normally be held within weeks 4-7 of the semester. Once the date has been published it can only be changed in exceptional circumstances.
 - b. In-semester tests will take place wherever possible due to rooming constraints during scheduled class times so as not to disrupt normal teaching.
 - c. The maximum duration of the test should fit within the timetabled slot and must allow time for set up, paper collection and ALS adjustments within that normal scheduled period.
 - d. Tests will always take place under standard formal examination conditions and will be organised and supervised through the central examinations team.
 - e. Each in-semester summative test should be separately designated on the module descriptor and in SITS. In-semester tests should not normally be the dominant form of assessment in a module but a weighting of less than 10% is also unlikely to be suitable.
 - f. External examiners will only need to approve papers for in-semester tests and see samples of work if the test meets or exceeds the 25% weighting rule (see the [Code of practice for external examining: taught programmes](#)).
 - g. In-semester tests must always comply with all ALS requirements
 - h. The timing of feedback must be provided within the guidance of the *Code of practice on assessment and feedback* in order to provide useful feed forward guidance.
 - i. In-semester test answer papers must be returned to students with their feedback.
 - j. Resits for in-semester tests will be held in the next available assessment period.
3. In-semester tests should be designated for KIS and CMA purposes as examinations but designated for internal regulatory purposes as 'in-semester tests'.
4. PSRB requirements may need to be accommodated in the weighting, timing and scheduling of in-semester tests.
5. The University should investigate technological solutions to the organisation of in-semester tests and consider the regulatory and ALS requirements that would then need to be addressed.

Appendix 3 - Linking levels, learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Definitions

Aims

The aims of a module should summarise broad purposes and goals. They may be aspirational and not necessarily easily measurable.

Objectives

Objectives are specific intentions that indicate the steps to be taken to achieve our aims or goals; they should be measurable and indicate the *teaching* intentions.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes describe what the learners will be able to do after a particular teaching intervention and are expressed from the students' perspective. They must be measurable and assessable.

It is important to note that objectives indicate the intentions of the **teacher**, while outcomes are the specific measurable achievements of the successful **student**.

Level descriptors

Level descriptors are generic outcome statements of what a learner is expected to have achieved at the end of a level (eg a year) of learning.

See the [SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education](#)

Assessment criteria

An assessment criterion is a statement that prescribes (with greater precision than a learning outcome) the quality of performance that will show that the student has reached a particular standard.

Moon (2002) has developed a model that provides a rationale for ensuring the existence of a relationship between levels, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment and teaching methods during module development (Figure 1).

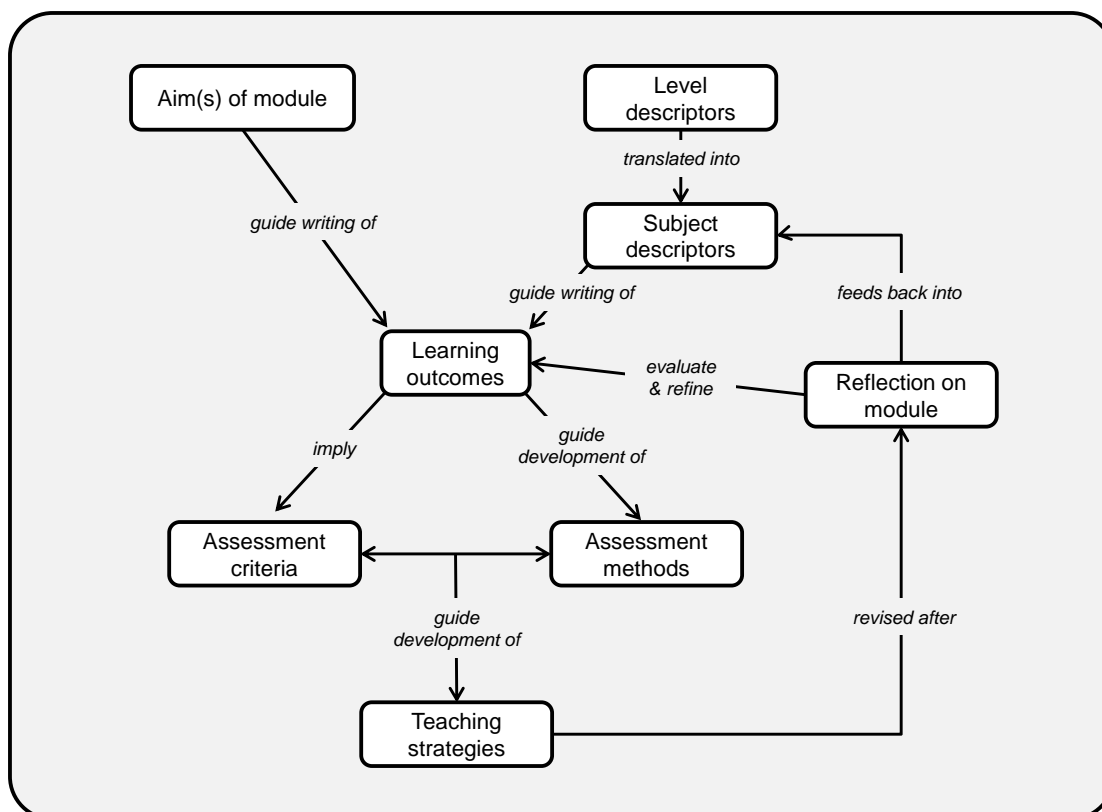


Figure 1: Model of module development (redrawn from Moon, 2002)

The model (Fig 1) depicts the following sequence:

Level descriptors and module aims guide the writing of learning outcomes. A set of level descriptors may act directly as a guide for the writing of learning outcomes or the level descriptors may be translated into descriptors for the discipline or programme. In either case, the level descriptors ensure that the outcome statement is clearly related to a particular level and they provide an indication of agreed achievements. Learning outcomes are derived from consideration of level descriptors and aims. Learners must achieve the learning outcomes to gain credit for the module. Aims provide a rationale or a direction.

Learning outcomes imply the assessment criteria. Assessment criteria may be developed from the learning outcome or from the assessment task – but in either case they should relate to the learning outcome. There are many reasons for developing assessment tasks – such as to provide feedback and these will affect the manner in which an assessment task is designed. However, the purpose of the task with which we are concerned here is to test that the learning outcomes have been achieved. A teaching strategy, on this model, is seen as being designed in relation to assessment processes, providing the support necessary to enable the students to be successful in attaining the threshold indicated in assessment criteria.

It is important to check the coherence of the cycle. This means going through it several times, ensuring that each part that is linked to another part by lines on the diagram, clearly links in terms of the structure of the programme. Any element in the cycle of development can be changed except the agreed level descriptors that are fixed (after Moon, 2002).

Communicating criteria to students

Recent research shows that many students find written descriptions of marking criteria difficult to understand unless they are helped to engage with assignment exemplars. A spectrum of processes have been employed to help students engage with assessment requirements from the explicit publication of written learning outcomes to the more implicit use of dialogue and discussion about written examples of submitted work (figure 2). O'Donovan *et al.* (2004), suggest that processes at the right hand side of the spectrum represent more efficient ways of helping students to understand assessments, with teacher-led marking activities and discussion of exemplars resulting in increased understanding of standards and higher achievement (Hendry *et al.* 2012). However, it is also clear that steps must be taken to avoid plagiarism by students of exemplars (Handley and Williams, (2011), as students become more assessment literate and develop the ability to self-assess and to understand what is being required of them.

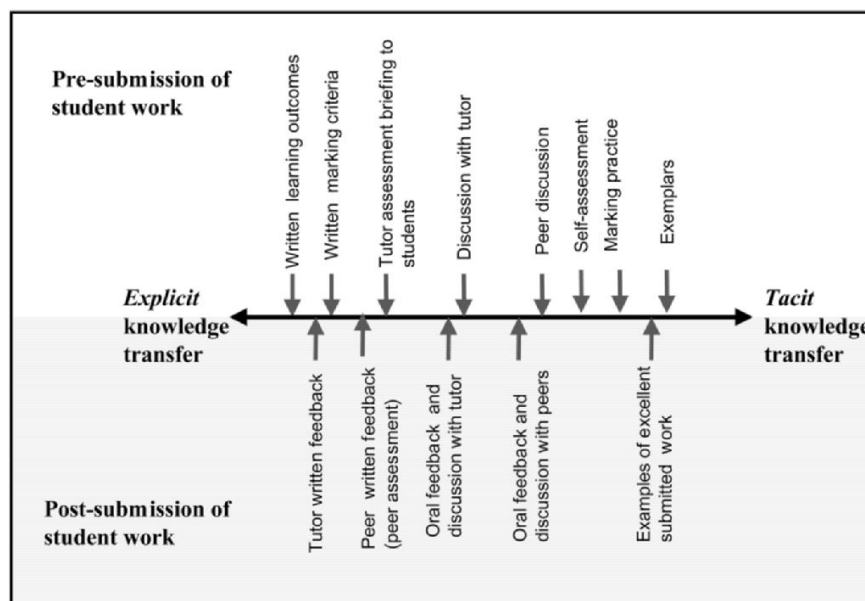


Figure 2: An illustration of a spectrum of processes supporting the transfer or construction of knowledge of assessment requirements standards and criteria (from O'Donovan *et al.*, 2004)

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- Moon, J. (2002) *The module & programme development handbook: A practical guide to linking levels, learning outcomes and assessment*. London, Routledge.
- O'Donovan, B., Price, M. and Rust, C (2004) Know what I mean? Enhancing student understanding of assessment standards and criteria. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 9 (3): 325 - 335.

Appendix 4 - Guidance on designing out plagiarism

Designing out opportunities for plagiarism

Changing assessments

- Rewrite/modify the assessment task each time the course is taught
- Reconsider learning outcomes
- Reconsider the learning outcomes for the course and decrease those that ask for knowledge and understanding, substituting instead those that require analysis, evaluation and synthesis; consider adding information gathering to learning outcomes.

Create individual tasks

- Design in assessment tasks with multiple solutions or set one that creates artefacts to capture individual effort.

Integrate assessment tasks

- Integrate tasks so each builds on the other; design in checks that do not require teacher time but do require student effort. Be careful to only check, not assess the intermediate tasks. Set a variety of assessment tasks, choosing those less likely to already exist.

Inform students about institutional policies and programme expectations

Define collusion and inform students

- Institutions should invest time and energy into reaching consensus on defining breaches of academic regulations then disseminate them widely to academics and students.

Induction or apprenticeship?

- Treat all instances of plagiarism formally with penalties and tariffs adjusted to fit student circumstances; inform students clearly of the policy, how they must comply and how they will be helped to do so.

Teaching academic conventions

- Design in compulsory teaching sessions on academic writing and citation skills where students can apply the skills to discipline-specific content as part of their core assessment tasks.

Active learning methods to teach students

- Ensure that students are taught how to avoid plagiarism with active learning techniques, providing opportunities for discussion, practice and feedback; this instruction works best integrated into discipline-specific contexts.

Create a climate of student involvement and interest

Academic conduct as a model of good practice

- Academic staff need to be seen to be adhering to the behaviours they ask of their students and taking steps to defend them from abuse.

Secure systems for recording and returning coursework

- Create administrative and institutional systems to collect, record and return coursework securely.

Appendix 5 - Guidelines for group assessment

These guidelines have been developed by the Surrey Business School to establish some principles of good practice to govern how group assessment is designed and used. They are provided here as an example which can be utilised by other areas.

Group assessment can have significant benefits for student learning. For example, students can learn from the opinions and experiences of others, undertake more comprehensive assessments, become active learners and develop interpersonal and team-working skills (Johnston and Miles, 2004). Furthermore, group assessments can also help develop skills of critical analysis and creativity (Barfield, 2003). These benefits, however, are only likely to arise if two conditions are met. First, that group assessment is part of a wide and varied diet of assessment forms. Second, that group assessment is done well.

- In any semester, no more than 50% of modules in a programme will have group assessment as part of the modules assessment regime.
- All group assessments must have a clear pedagogical rationale which is communicated to students. In particular, the rationale will explain how the group assessment contributes to the meeting of the module's learning outcomes and why group assessment is the best way of doing this.
- In modules where there is an element of group assessment, group work must be embedded in the module and, therefore, have a significant role in the teaching and learning strategy of the module. In such modules, it is not acceptable that the only element of group work that students undertake is the group assessment.
- Modules with group assessments will have a clearly articulated policy for students who do not fully contribute to the group assessment which will be communicated to all students. The policy will explain how such *free loading* is to be identified (by both academics and students), reported and dealt with. Free loading should be addressed during the process of group assessment and not just at the end of a group assessment exercise.
- Unless there is a compelling pedagogical rationale, all group assessment will assess both the outcome of the group work and process of the group work. Where there is a compelling rationale for not assessing the process of group work, this should be provided by the module leader.
- The level of complexity of the group assessments should be designed so that members of the group must collaborate throughout the whole group assessment process and should minimise the opportunities for groups to separate the assessment into tasks which can be done on an individual basis.
- The marking criteria for group assessments should be designed so that individual contributions to the assessment are fully recognised.
- There must be a clear rationale for how students are put into groups for the purpose of group assessment. Putting students into groups at random may be more appropriate during the early stages of a programme whereas self-selecting groups may be more appropriate during the later stages of a programme.

Appendix 6 - Guiding principles for student feedback

Feedback plays a crucial role in maintaining excellence in student learning at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and is important for the development of the organisation as a whole:

“Feedback is the key element in all healthy systems. The absence of feedback results in a lack of potential to adjust, acclimate and adapt.”

(Siemens, 2006: 126)

This document provides a framework of guiding principles to underpin the effective provision and use of feedback by teachers and students at the University of Surrey.

Feedback is defined by Boud and Molloy (2013) as a “*process whereby learners obtain information about their work in order to appreciate the similarities and differences between appropriate standards for any given work, and the qualities of the work itself, in order to generate improved work*”. The authors describe the value of this definition as it:

1. Centres on learners and what they do, rather than on what teachers do for them
2. Recognises the importance of external standards and the need for learners to understand what these are
3. Is a process extended over time and not a single act of reception of information
4. Positions feedback as leading to action.

Opportunities for feedback arise within timetabled teaching sessions (tutorials, practicals, lectures) as well as more informally within the dialogue of the classroom. Feedback can be provided not only on coursework assignments, tests and exam answers, but also on activities that are not necessarily formally assessed such as class discussions, group exercises, problem-solving, fieldwork and field trips, placements and developing project plans and proposals. This informal feedback is important so that students receive regular feedback within modules as well as terminal feedback after summative examinations.

Feedback is of most value when it focuses on work that is on-going, and where students can readily make use of the feedback to enhance the quality of their learning. Where feedback is provided at the end of a module, it should focus not only on that assessment but also aim to look beyond it, towards students' future academic and professional work – often described as ‘feed-forward’.

Guiding principles

Feedback is a two-way process. It thrives on interaction and dialogue between students and their teachers, and where there is a sense of belonging to a vibrant community of learners.

Therefore, feedback can only work well when it is a joint and shared responsibility.

It is the **responsibility of students** to:

1. Familiarise themselves with where and when feedback is provided.
2. Develop their understanding of assessment expectations, criteria and standards within their programme of study.
3. Collect and reflect on the feedback provided and grasp opportunities to put it to good use.
4. Seek guidance where feedback is not clearly understood.

It is the **responsibility of teachers** to:

1. Ensure feedback is an integral component of module design; enabling students to receive and act on feedback.
2. Inform students when, where and how feedback will be provided.
3. Provide feedback appropriately (as described in this document).
4. Offer guidance where feedback has not been understood.

Feedback varies in a number of ways:

Feedback can achieve a range of purposes, including to correct; to justify a mark or grade; to encourage and commend; to diagnose; to explain why or how; to troubleshoot; to debate; to suggest alternatives; to edit; to clarify; to advise on where and how to improve. It also provides data to teachers to inform the development of practice.

It can come from many sources: from lecturers, supervisors, tutors and demonstrators; from fellow-students; from professional practitioners; from students' own personal reflections; from the audience for a seminar or poster presentation.

It can take many different forms, including pre-assignment guidance; notes in the margins of an essay or report; ratings on a pro forma; verbal comments in a laboratory or clinical environment; emailed comments; "EVS" responses in a lecture; peer review; a practice session in marking and commenting on a sample assignment; 'drop-in' advice; a supervision meeting; a debriefing by a professional practitioner; whole-class or 'generic' feedback on how an exam question had been approached.

Standardisation

Whilst recognising the variety of teaching that is undertaken across the campus, there should be parity of practice across all programmes. Towards this aim, the written feedback form used to give feedback to students on their coursework and on examinations for a module should be "*standardised*" such that:

1. Written feedback to students should be based on the relevant assessment criteria as stated in the definitive validation document. The weighting of each should be noted.
2. Comments should highlight students' strengths and provide advice on ways in which aspects of their future or re-submitted work may be improved in relation to each of the assessment criteria.
3. On the feedback form the grade for each of the assessment criteria should be recorded beside the relevant written comments or on the specific section of an assessment criteria grid – as appropriate to disciplinary practice.
4. It should be obvious to students and external examiners from the comments and the grades for individual assessment criteria exactly how the overall grade for any assignment was reached, including evidence or examples to support judgements where appropriate.
5. If oral feedback is given to a group of students, a brief record should be kept and retained in the relevant course file.
6. The 'principles' also refer to comments made directly on assignments/exam papers, and should be referred to on feedback sheets as appropriate.

In practical terms, and from the student perspective, feedback should be:

1. **Understandable:** expressed in a language that students will understand.
2. **Selective:** commenting in reasonable detail on two or three things that the student can do something about.
3. **Specific:** pointing to instances in the student's submission where the feedback applies.
4. **Timely:** Provided in time to improve the next assignment.
5. **Contextualised:** framed with reference to the learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria.
6. **Non-judgemental:** descriptive rather than evaluative, focused on learning goals not just performance goals.
7. **Balanced:** pointing out the positive as well as areas in need of improvement.
8. **Forward looking:** suggesting how students might improve subsequent assignments.
9. **Transferable:** focused on processes, skills and self-regulatory processes not just on knowledge content.
10. **Personal:** referring to what is already known about the student and her/his previous work (where feasible).

(modified from Nicol, 2010)

Ultimately, feedback needs to be fit for purpose. The particular kinds of feedback that are offered within any given module or programme unit will vary, depending on what and how students are expected to learn and the resources available.

Effectiveness

In order to be effective, feedback needs to be prompt, informative, helpful, engaging, motivational and linked to learning beyond the immediate context of the assignment:

1. **prompt** feedback is returned to students within the agreed timescale for the work submitted so that students may act upon advice given.
2. **informative** feedback highlights strengths and weaknesses, giving specific examples or explanations in an understandable format using appropriate language.
3. **helpful** feedback offers suggestions about how to improve.
4. feedback only has an effect when it is **engaged with** and **acted upon** by students to improve their learning. Therefore, thought should be given on how students can engage with feedback (eg Donovan *et al.*, 2004), and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate this engagement.
5. **motivate** students to reflect upon their work and seek to improve performance, in dialogue with their teachers.
6. highlight **links** between the assignment at hand, and development of a wider appreciation of the general concepts being assessed to facilitate transfer of learning to new contexts (eg Nicol, 2013).

Students' engagement with feedback thrives when they experience it in a wide range of forms and settings, while gaining practice in acting upon and giving feedback (eg in peer assessments) as well as receiving it. Active engagement can be encouraged by, for example separating feedback from results/grades (see Buswell and Matthews, 2004)

Feedback is likely to be most effective when staff and students share common expectations, and this may require some 'education' of students in appreciating the value of feedback as a

learning tool (Adcroft, 2011). Students will not learn from feedback if they do not recognise they are receiving it or if they are only interested in the marks received on assessed work.

Challenges: why students and staff find feedback problematic:

Students often find assessment feedback unsatisfactory, for a wide range of reasons, including the following:

1. When feedback is illegible or cryptic (for example, "More", "What's this?", "Link?", or simply ticks and crosses), students can sometimes be unable to gauge whether a response is positive or negative, whether and how the feedback is related to their mark, and what they might do to improve.
2. When feedback consists mainly of grammar and spelling corrections, and provides little or no advice for them to act on, students cannot tell what they have done well, what they need to change and why they have achieved the grade they have.
3. Many assessment tasks are one-offs, intended for students to demonstrate their achievement for a summative grade; students cannot respond to the feedback with a further submission. Such tasks do not encourage risk-taking, experimentation, creativity or practice.
4. Feedback that does not acknowledge the way students' learning has progressed over time does not help them get a sense of how far they have come and what they have yet to achieve.
5. Students can encounter different (and inconsistent) comments from different lecturers on similar pieces of writing.
6. When feedback focuses on justifying the grade given and is aimed at informing external examiners rather than supporting the development of the learner.

Academic staff report a range of concerns about assessment feedback, including the following:

1. Preparing good-quality assessment feedback for students is very time-consuming, in spite of its potential value for improving learning.
2. When evidence suggests that students have not read the feedback or acted on it, teachers see time and effort put into providing feedback as wasted.
3. Giving feedback can be repetitive and unproductive. Academics often find themselves giving the same or very similar feedback to many students, or giving the same feedback to repeated efforts by one student, with no change occurring in that student's performance.
4. Students can focus on negative comments and fail to register positive comments.

Preparing students for feedback

Ensure that students and teachers have a shared understanding of what feedback is, and what it is for.

Students may struggle to understand assessment criteria and the academic language used in feedback, so make sure you communicate clearly. It is important that a team of markers is supported to develop a shared understanding of criteria and standards.

Be explicit about the details of feedback processes and expectations.

Ensure that students understand why they are getting feedback and how their learning can benefit from their reflecting, and acting on feedback.

If students and teachers discuss, and jointly construct, the feedback procedures, a shared understanding will develop. A student guide such as that produced by *Hepplestone *et al.* (2010) is one way of making this understanding explicit.

To develop a shared language about assessment and feedback, you can, for example: annotate and distribute a range of sample student responses on the same task to illustrate different levels of performance, use annotated examples as a basis for class discussion.

Let students undertake their own assessments of un-annotated examples, justifying the kind of feedback and/or grades they would give, and perhaps annotating the examples for use in a future class. Exercises like this can be undertaken in class before, during and after students complete an assessment task.

Staff expertise in feedback grows when new tutors, demonstrators, supervisors and lecturers are well-supported in learning how to give feedback effectively in their subject area, and when good practice and innovation in feedback are shared amongst staff at all levels of experience.

*See: Hepplestone, A., Parkin, H., Irwin, B., Holden, G., Thorpe, L. and Burn, C. (2010). *A student guide to using feedback*. Learning and Teaching Institute, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK. Available online at:
<http://evidencenet.pbworks.com/f/guide+for+students+FINAL.pdf>

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- Siemens, G. (2006) *Knowing Knowledge*. Publisher: Lulu.com

See also:

- Nicol, D.J. and Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006) Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2): 199 – 218.

Appendix 7 - Methodology for adjustment

The following sets out the methodology to be used when adjusting cohorts of marks.

1. Translate individual marks into z-score marks $((\text{mark} - \text{mean mark})/\text{SD})$ (see worked example below and use the [template spreadsheet](#) to perform the calculation)
2. Decide on what the mean should be. This will vary depending on the particular circumstance but as guide the following should be considered:
 - The previous year's mean for that particular module or particular unit of assessment; or
 - The mean of a combination of other modules at the same level in the programme that utilise a similar type of assessment
3. Re-arrange the formula so that marks can be translated back to the new distribution $(\text{mark} = (\text{SD} * z) + \text{desired mean mark})$

Mark adjustment protocol			
Step 1: Enter marks to be adjusted in column B	Marks to be adjusted	Standardised mark	Adjusted mark
	71	1.80	87
Step 2: Calculate the mean and standard deviation for these marks below	53	0.93	74
	43	0.45	67
Step 3: Enter the required mean and standard deviation below	41	0.35	65
	29	-0.23	57
	10	-1.15	43
	8	-1.25	41
	71	1.80	87
	53	0.93	74
	43	0.45	67
	41	0.35	65
	29	-0.23	57
	10	-1.15	43
	8	-1.25	41
	43	0.45	67
	41	0.35	65
	29	-0.23	57
	10	-1.15	43
	8	-1.25	41
Mean	33.74		
Standard deviation	20.66		
Mean required; e.g. average mark of similar modules for the same cohort	60		
Standard deviation required: e.g. same stdev as original or of similar modules as above	15		

Appendix 8 - Feedback template

Student URN

Student's University Registration Number, usually 7

Grade

Module

If possible, please include the module code.

UoA

Section 1

What has been done well (in relation to the assessment criteria)

This would be the section where Departments could insert their own specific rubrics in a format that best suits the discipline: a blank space for text or a table to insert a more itemised perspective.

Section 2

How you may strengthen future work

How students might change their approach; strengthen their understanding by further reading; develop a skill by further practice; employ additional procedures or techniques; engage with other students/academics/professionals.

Section 3

General comments

This would include wider comments about presentation; the wider application of the work covered and how it might be developed in later modules or in professional practice.

Marker's name:

Second marker's comment (only available if work has been double marked):

Any additional perspective that might be of help.