Assessment, giving and getting feedback

- Purpose and design of assessment
- The language of feedback
- Action planning

What is the purpose of assessment?

UK QAA for Higher Education (2013)

“First, assessment forms an essential element of the learning process. Students learn both from assessment activities and from their interaction with staff about their performance in those activities. This interaction has two elements: a focus on their learning and the extent to which that has been demonstrated in the assessment, and a focus on furthering their learning, which may itself subsequently be assessed. The latter element is often referred to as ‘feed-forward’.”

UK QAA for Higher Education

“Second, [assessment] is the means by which academic staff form judgements as to what extent students have achieved the intended learning outcomes. These judgements form the basis for the grading of the student through the allocation of marks, grades and classification and (provided the learning outcomes have been met) for the award of the credit or qualification to which the programme leads”.

Draw a mouse
Knowledge and understanding

- **Information** can be communicated (books, articles, internet)
- Information is not **knowledge** until we do something with it e.g. apply it, analyse it, compare and contrast it etc.
- Teaching is helping people to turn information into knowledge
  - By getting them to do things with it (assessments)
  - And giving them feedback about their attempts

**Assessment should be**

- **Valid** – evidence of achievement of ILOs
- **Fair** – will different markers award identical marks for the same piece of work?
- **Honest** – was the assessed work done by the candidate?
- **Transparent** – learner should understand what they are being asked
- **Authentic** – linked to things students may need to do in employment
- **Inclusive** – how well can the assessment be taken by a range of candidates with additional learning needs

**Assessment tasks**

- Identify a range of assessment tasks
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using each type of assessment?
- How do you decide what type of assessment to use?
Feedback

Educator to learner
Learner to Educator

What is feedback?
Feedback is any kind of information, written or otherwise, that someone gives you about something you have done (a piece of work, a lecture)

Your experience of feedback (2 post-its):

• What was the single most important feedback you ever received?
• What was the single most bemusing/unhelpful/damaging feedback you have ever had?

Good feedback should:
• Help learners to make sense of what they have done
• Help learners to clarify and take ownership of the need to learn (e.g. to achieve ILOs, improve performance etc.)
• Enhance learners’ desire to learn by increasing their self-esteem and confidence whenever possible and helping them to believe they can achieve what they need/want to

Good feedback should:
• Motivate learners to move forward to their next episodes of learning by doing and focus their efforts more sharply to make their next work better

i.e. it should also “Feedforward”

Feed-forward

• What to do better next time to improve
• Praise what has been done well so learner continues to do well in future
• Direct suggestions to overcome problems of weaknesses arising in last assignment
• Suggestions of sources to explore
What types of feedback can you use on assessments?

Types of feedback on assessments
- Formative and/or summative
- Individual and/or generic (group)
- Written comments – hand-written, electronic
- Tick box
- Audio feedback (podcasts, mp3 files etc.)
- Face to face feedback – individual/group
- Feedback on self-assessments
- Peer assessment

The problem with marks
- The first thing a student looks at
- If mark is high learners may ignore the feedback (‘smile and file’)
- If mark is low, may be disheartened and too emotional to take in feedback

Try this: return students’ work with feedback but without the mark. Ask them to use the marking criteria to work out what mark they think they should get

Excellent  Theorising  Specific examples  Lacks flair
Engagement  Writing style
The language of feedback
Reasonable  Structure
Abstract  Evidence
Weak  Critical synthesis
Weak
UNBALANCED  PROOF-READ

Assessment and Feedback
NSS 2018
25% of full-time students were not satisfied with assessment fairness, timeliness and quality of feedback

... that’s > 80,000 students

Why is it difficult for students to use feedback?
1. The language can be difficult to understand
2. It can be difficult to know how to use it
3. It can be difficult to feel in control
4. It can be difficult to feel motivated to use feedback

Mike Parker & Georgina Mathlin, University of Surrey
HEA Project GEN1024 to Winstone and Nash
Problematic words – ‘final’ language

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Adequate
- Poor

Indicates the quality of work but does not provide any direction as to what to do about it

i.e. no feed-forward

Words in feedback that students do not understand …

- Abstract
- Critically evaluate/analyse
- Clarity
- Concrete
- Elaborate
- Flair
- Flow
- Originality
- …

“A seventies pair of trousers isn’t it? I just wouldn’t know. I just … I dunno what they mean by flair”

Language

Language in written comments must accord with marking scheme being used

Does your Department/Institution have marking criteria?

What is the purpose of these?

Language

... but students need individual feedback, so must be tailored to their needs

Individualised feedback/forward for particular assignment

Too formulaic, hard for student to apply to their own work

Appropriate language of marking descriptors

Mark

Language

... but students need individual feedback, so must be tailored to their needs

Hard to recognise why the assignment received the grade it did

Individualised feedback/forward for particular assignment

Appropriate language of marking descriptors

Mark
Language

... but students need individual feedback, so must be tailored to their needs

Feedback – tips for tutors

• Get the timing right – sooner is better
• Give back the comments but not the marks
• Make feedback interesting
• Link feedback to the achievement of ILOs
• Use feedback to let learners know what style of work is expected of them
• Take care with important words
• Encourage students to analyse, systematically, all the feedback they get

Feedback needs to be timely

• Ideally feedback should be provided within 24 hours of the student completing the assignment.
• How could you do this?

Use pre-prepared feedback ...

• Explanations to anticipated, frequently-occurring problems
• Illustrations of components of a good answer to the assignment question
• Examples of useful source materials and references
• Model solutions (if applicable)

Feedback – tips for learners

• Regard all feedback from anyone as valuable
• Be proud of positive feedback
• Don’t get defensive when feedback is critical
• Don’t get upset or smug about the mark – work out why you got that mark
• Compare your mark with the marking scheme
• Make an action plan

Feedback flowchart

Loughborough University
Feedback on your teaching

How do you get feedback on your teaching?

How do you get feedback on your teaching?

Formal
• Module evaluations
• Teaching observations
• Assignments?

Less formal
• Watch student reactions
• Talk to students
• Short quizzes to monitor understanding
• Quick questionnaire – 1 good/1 bad thing about module so far
• Peer observation

What do you do with the feedback on your teaching?

What is an Action Plan?

An Action Plan identifies:
• what steps must be taken
• who must take them
• by when they must be taken
... in order to achieve a goal.
Make an appointment to improve on areas which I have been told need improving.

When completing a piece of work similar to a previous one, I used the previous feedback whilst writing up the latest one to help me exclude the mistakes I made last time and include everything I got right before.

If I think the points are useful, positive or negative, I write them on a cue card and keep it for future reference.

I highlight the bits I think will be most helpful and write them on post-it notes ready for further work. I focus on improvements which I can make.

Aspects of an Action Plan

- Goal (SMART*)
- Objectives – steps to achieve overall goal
- Action steps – action to achieve objective
- Dependencies – influences you don’t control
- Resources – influences you can control
- Schedule – deadline for each action step
- Risks

*Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound

Why make an Action Plan?

“It is simply madness to keep doing the same thing, and expect different results”

“If you only do what you can do, you will never be more than you are now.”