LTC12D075

Title:	**Report from the Academic Director of Taught Programmes (ADTP)**
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Issue

A report from the ADTP summarising recent development within, and proposals from Taught Programmes Policy Group (TPPG)

Recommendation

LTC members are asked to consider the proposals contained in the ADTP's report.

Resource Implications

Any new policy will have implications, for staff, for students and for support services. Where necessary the proposals contained in the ADTP's report have been subject to consultation with academic and support staff, central units (e.g. Planning Office) and Student Union officers.

Risk Implications

It is critical that all schools are compliant with any new policies and regulatory changes set-out in the ADTP's report and subsequently approved by LTC. Failure to do so will result in perceptions or inequality, resulting in appeals and complaints.

Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that any of the recommendations contained in the proposals will impact on groups with protected characteristics.

Timing of decisions

See recommendations in the report.

Further Information

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Background

The ADTP presents a regular report to LTC on the work and issues raised within TPPG. TPPG is the main discussion forum for new policy and regulatory developments relating to the delivery of taught programmes. TPPG is not a decision-making body – it simply scrutinises and comments on initiatives, developments and proposals and presents, via the ADTP, recommendations to be approved or supported by LTC.

Discussion

All of the items presented in the ADTP's report to LTC have been subject to extensive discussion and liaison. The ADTP expects that some of the items included in the report will prompt a robust and detailed discussion within LTC.

Attachments
Report from the Academic Director of Taught Programmes

Report from the Academic Director of Taught Programmes (ADTP) for University Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC)

30 January 2013

This report brings to the attention of LTC recent agenda items and developments considered by the Taught Programmes Policy Group (TPPG).

1) Policy on Exam Feedback.

The ADTP circulated a Memo to all Heads of School and Directors of Teaching & Learning on 10 January 2013. The ADTP has also assembled a reflective report on the Exam Feedback pilot conducted during 2011/12. A copy of this is included in this report (see **Appendix 1**). A copy of this report will be circulated to Assoc Deans for sharing with School Teaching Directors. As a note of clarification the ADTP would like to emphasise that the Exam Feedback policy only applies to UG modules. A policy for PGT modules has yet to be agreed.

2) The New UG Algorithm for Borderline candidates.

The ADTP circulated a Memo to all Heads of School and UG Exam Board Chairs on 10 January 2013 (see **Appendix 2**). The ADTP has received a handful of responses from academic colleagues. These are set out below, with the ADTPs answers/responses.

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1) Should this be "Award mark within 0.5% of the borderline"
Or "Award mark within 0.5% of the classification boundary"?
And is this an inclusive "within" (that includes the interval boundary) or not?
In other words, will students with, for example, a mark equal or greater than 67.5 % be automatically upgraded to a first?
Or only students with a mark equal or greater than 69.5 %?
Or only students with a mark >67.5 %?
Or only students with a mark >69.5 %?
2) Are the 120 credits to be weighted (e.g. 40:60 for 3 year programmes, or 20:30:50 for IM programmes)? And same question about the interval boundary (e.g. greater than or equal 68 %, or greater than 68 %)?

ADTP's response:

1) It is an award mark within 0.5% of the classification boundary.
2) Students with 67.5% will not have their mark 'rounded-up' by SITS to 68%. Only those with an aggregate of 68% or higher will be considered within/and affected by the algorithm used for borderline students.
3) The algorithm only applies to UG programmes. An algorithm for IM programmes is in development.

This means that the threshold aggregate for a particular classification has been decreased by 0.5%, eg it is now 69.5% for a first, not 70%. So it is meaningless to say that the threshold for a first is 70%. Also, these are no longer criteria for borderline cases, as there are no borderline cases now. It would be simpler to say "The criteria for a first class degree is 69.5% aggregate or 120 credits at 68.0% or above."

ADTP's response:

It is not meaningless to state that the threshold for a 1st remains at 70%. This is the threshold that will apply for all marked assignment and exams on UG programmes, as set-out in the revised Senate Marking Scales for UG programmes. The threshold, therefore, for a 1st class mark for all items of assessment does remain at 70%. It's not as simple as suggesting that 120 credits at 68% or above is a 1st. The classification mark still needs to be within 2% of the classification boundary. The wording in the regulations could be expressed as follows.

Criteria for a First class degree are:

1. A classification mark of 70% or above. The classification mark is calculated from level 5 and level 6 marks weighted 40:60. For the purposes of classification, marks within 0.5% of the classification boundary will be rounded up. OR
2. A classification mark of between 68% and 69. 4% where at least 120 credits at level 5 or 6 have a mark of at least 68%.

Agreed, though with a slight amendment: it should be (by my understanding) "The criteria for a first class degree is either: (i) an overall mark of 69.5%, or (ii) an overall mark of 68.0% with at least 120 credits at 68.0% or above."

ADTP's response:

This suggestion is helpful. It, and the wording above, will be taken into account by the ADTP and Head of LTS when drafting the final regulations for the NAM.

That's surely right. But then isn't there a danger of infinite (or, at least, almost infinite) regress here? That is to say, there will, actually, be borderline cases – they're now just those cases where a mark slightly under 69.5% (as opposed to 70%) overall has been achieved.

ADTP's response:

There is no danger here of "infinite regress". Only marks of 68% and above will be adjusted by the algorithm. Exam Boards may use their discretion to adjust the classification threshold for individual students whose ECs merit this.

3) The introduction of a 'Merit' classification on PGT/Masters programmes.

The ADTP presented to TPPG on 17 January 2013 proposals for a 'Merit' classification on PGT/Masters programmes at UEA, for implementation in Sept 2013. (See **Appendix 3**). LTC is asked to consider and approve the ADTP's proposals.

4) New PGT/Masters Marking Scales

The ADTP presented to TPPG on 17 January 2013 a new set of PGT/Masters Marking Scales. These reflect the inclusion of a 'Merit' classification for PGT/Masters programmes. A discussion paper is presented to LTC (See **Appendix 4**). Copies of the new PGT marking scales are also attached (See **Appendix 5**). LTC is asked to consider and approve the attached marking scales.

5) A Role Description for the Course Director at UEA

Roles and Responsibilities of Course Directors

The ADTP has been working with TPPG and Assoc Deans to develop a new Role Description for Course Directors in advance of the introduction of the New Academic Model. This is an important step, since the NAM places more emphasis than ever before on the programme-level leadership, coordination and planning. The version presented below constitutes a work in progress. It takes into consideration feedback from 17 Jan meeting of TPPG, and it has subsequently been shared with Assoc Deans for feedback from Faculty LTQCs. A final version will be brought forward for LTC to approve in March 2013.

The New Academic Model (NAM) places a new emphasis on programme/course level coordination, planning and oversight. This role description sets out the roles and responsibilities that the University will have of Course Directors within the New Academic Model. Whilst this descriptor seeks to define the role of Course Director in more precise terms, it should be noted that the precise responsibilities attached to the role may vary in some cases (e.g. in particular professional courses) or may be subject to negotiation with the Head of School concerned. In some schools, for example, the HoS may require the Course Director to oversee the submission of requests for Associate Tutor contracts.

Responsibilities of the Course Director are to:

- Identify themselves to students early on in the course and ensure, thereafter, that they become a familiar 'face' to students as the person responsible for the management of the course.
- Encourage student representation on their programmes on School SSLCs and attend, where possible, if asked to do so by SSLC Officer in the School.
- Ensure that the course conforms to the requirements of the New Academic Model.
- Provide 'academic leadership' of the course in terms of curriculum design & the on-going development of the tutor team.
- Provide 'academic leadership' of the course in terms of the effective delivery of the course concerned, ensuring that the teaching team (and in particular module convenors) are properly briefed, and liaising with DoS, School Director of Teaching and Learning, and Senior Adviser as necessary.
- Ensure effective leadership on Joint Degree courses. Where the course is a joint degree course, run in partnership with another School of Study, there will be a Course Director from the school which owns the course, and a Deputy Course Director from the other school. The Course Director will meet with the Deputy Course Director at least once per semester in order to ensure that:
    a) students on joint courses are being treated consistently by the two Schools concerned.
    b) students on joint degree courses are receiving the same level of support as student on single honours courses.

  In cases where the Course Director and Deputy Director disagree on an issue, the Course Director in the School which owns the joint degree programme shall have the final say.
- Ensure that the assessment strategy is informed by School-level guidance/policy and designed in such a way that it enables students to demonstrate achievement of published course outcomes. The assessment strategy (which includes formative assessments, summative assessments, synoptic assessments, clinical/practical assignments and exams) should be informed by discussions with relevant Module Convenors and Faculty and School priorities with respect to employability.
- Ensure that the feedback strategy is informed by discussions with Module Convenors and by School policy. It should be designed in such a way that it builds student learning, skills and confidence. Course Directors should monitor the quality of feedback provided to students as part of the annual Course Update process.
- Consider the induction needs of returning students (i.e. those progressing to Year 2/3/4).

- Assist module convenors in maintaining an effective Virtual Learning Environment (Blackboard) relating to their course and/or the modules within it.
- Liaise with the Director of Teaching & Learning to update course profiles.
- Liaise with the Faculty Librarian in cases where learning resources are identified which are additional to module requirements.
- Provide information to undergraduate students on aspects of degree structure, options under ‘defined choice’, etc and provide guidance to LTS on concession requests (e.g. intercalations).
- Oversee the annual Course Update process and lead on drafting of the Course Review document.
- Assist the Director of Admissions in the School, as appropriate, in the implementation of an effective recruitment strategy for the course.
- Keep abreast of developments likely to impact on the course they direct (e.g. changes in UEA policy, Professional Body requirements/constraints, QAA audit etc).
- Attend the relevant Exam Board for their course.
- Assist, as appropriate, in the development of papers/evidence for Course Review purposes.
- Assist the Chair of Examiners, as appropriate, in the process of identifying appropriate external examiners for their course.
- Provide relevant information on the course when requested by Head of School or School Director of Teaching & Learning.
- Ensure that when they delegate responsibilities to another colleague that the persons responsible are clearly identified.
- Manage marking and moderation allocations and processes.
- Assist in provision of information for room bookings and management of any amendments in liaison with module leaders

CD Role (Version 3) 21 January 2013

6) Attendance Monitoring, Engagement and the New Academic Model: A Discussion Paper for University LTC

Attendance Monitoring & Technological Solutions

Christina Chan (Hub Manager, E Fry) and Helena Gillespie (Assoc Dean for L & T, SSF) have undertaken important work leading a working group on the use of technology to monitor attendance and also how best to implement attendance monitoring. Helena and Christina have shared their findings with the Heads of LTS, the ADTP, the PVC Academic and the other Faculty Assoc Deans. They have concluded that the University will not be in a position to implement robust attendance monitoring solutions in time for the start of the NAM in Sep 2013. Given the current levels of resource and technical challenges entailed they have recommended that the University should not implement attendance monitoring data as a criteria for establishing whether students have earned the right to a reassessment opportunity (as currently expressed in the NAM). Whilst the necessary technological infrastructure for attendance monitoring will not be sufficiently developed by Sept 2013, the working group have suggested that is worthwhile to continue to progress with technological developments like Cardax systems so that attendance monitoring can be carried out more efficiently and effectively.

There are three key advantages associated with the continued development and extension of attendance monitoring technology. These are:

1) Close (yet automated) monitoring of attendance will enable Schools to implement/apply General Reg 13 in a robust manner. As experience has shown, close monitoring of attendance enables Schools to make early and supportive interventions when students are struggling due to previously unreported extenuating circumstances.
2) It helps meet the requirements of our Highly-trusted sponsor status with UKBA.
3) Very poor levels of attendance at scheduled taught sessions may be indicative of quality issues with regard to module delivery and the standard of teaching. It is important that Heads of Schools are able to identify modules/courses where student attendance is much lower than the 'norm' since modules with low levels of engagement often have poor outcomes – which impact on NSS/SES scores.

Recommendations

During the remainder of the 2012/13 academic year, LTC should:

1) Confirm that the University should postpone the implementation of the NAM regulation that students must have less than 20% unauthorised absence to be eligible for a reassessment opportunity, until such time as there are more robust systems in place.
2) Consult staff and students on the issue of attendance monitoring, and how data collected is used within the University.
3) Explore other indicators of engagement in addition toattendance at teaching events as measures of engagement. Whilst the Students' Union is supportive of attendance monitoring in principle, and a clear link has been established in the research literature between attendance and performance, alternatives to teaching 'event' monitoring should be explored. These might include:
    - Monitoring submission of formative assessments
    - Attendance at adviser meetings (where these have been requested)
    - Attendance at supervision sessions
4) Work with LTS to continue the development and refinement of attendance monitoring infrastructure. The University should work towards a position where all teaching spaces have this technology in place.
5) Consider whether 'engagement' is the crucial issue in determining student progress rather than attendance at teaching events per se.
6) Continue to explore efficient and user-friendly systems that enable students to report their absence from teaching sessions. Regardless of developments of attendance monitoring infrastructure, students should be expected to report their absence from teaching events.

Defining and Rewarding Engagement

There is a risk in dealing with engagement and attendance in a disciplinary manner rather than a supportive manner since failure to engage/attend may be an indicator of the fact that the student is experiencing problems (extenuating circumstances). Failure to attend teaching events may, in some cases, require supportive interventions by staff, rather than being seen as a catalyst or 'trigger' for punitive measures.

Inclusion of engagement marks within the NAM will be problematic in terms of reassessment opportunities and the capacity to effectively assess engagement. If we do allow a proportion of marks for engagement, which would need to be explicitly defined, the impact of doing so will need to be carefully monitored.

There are some advantages of rewarding engagement with marks:

- It ensures that students engaging in a robust manner are rewarded for doing so, which would promote future pro-active engagement in subsequent modules.
- It could help to develop a 'work hard, play hard' culture within the student body – an objective which has been emphasised by the Vice-Chancellor on a number of occasions.
- Staff would feel 'empowered' to reward students who prepare thoroughly for seminars/lab sessions/practicals.
- It places the emphasis on 'awarding' marks, rather than deducting them – it is therefore a 'positive' means of reward.

There are, however, also some disadvantages of rewarding engagement with marks:

- Staff perceptions of students' engagement may be subjective and inaccurate – e.g. a student may have prepared thoroughly by reading seminar papers etc. but choose to say little in the seminar discussion itself.
- Attendance isn't, of itself, evidence of engagement – e.g. a student may be present in a class but not 'engaged' in the content of the session: the 'really here in name only' scenario.
- Giving marks for engagement is unnecessary since a student's level of 'engagement' is reflected in the work which they do submit and which is assessed/marked. An 'engaged' student will therefore normally gain a better mark anyway than one who is un-engaged. Non-engagement will normally be reflected in lower marks on coursework/exams, and should be dealt with as a behavioural issue and using <u>disciplinary</u> means (Gen Reg 13) rather than having marks allocated to it specifically (or deducted).
- Defining engagement is extremely problematic and good engagement is not always 'visible' to academic staff. In a 20 credit module there are often only c.36-44 'contact hours'. The other 160 hours are often allocated to 'independent study'. Staff are not in a position to determine how the student applies themselves or engages with the content of the module during these independent study hours. Awarding or deducting marks for engagement on the basis of a very small minority of the study hours associated with a module is inherently problematic.
- Choosing not to award marks for engagement to students who fail to prepare, for example, by reading set seminar readings in advance of a seminar requires the staff member to determine whether a student has or has not read said papers. Establishing this can be problematic – a student may have read but not understood the paper, and a failure to engage in the seminar discussion may reflect a lack of understanding, not a lack of engagement.

The advantages of rewarding engagement explicitly by allocating marks are outweighed, in our view, by the disadvantages it would bring and the very real difficulties involved in defining and monitoring it. Using the perceived lack of engagement as a means of penalising students by removing their right to reassessment is thus fraught with risks to the Institution and could produce unfair/unsafe outcomes/treatment of students.

Our view is that the NAM should not associate the denial of reassessment with attendance. Non-engagement is a behavioural issue, and one that can and should be dealt with under disciplinary regulations and procedures.

Recommendations:

1) Marks should not be explicitly awarded for engagement under the NAM.
2) Poor attendance and/or engagement is a behavioural issue and should be dealt with via Gen Reg 13.

The 20% First Attempt Reassessment Hurdle

The requirement to achieve the hurdle of 20% in the first attempt at assessment in a module in order to earn the right to reassessment (currently a requirement within the NAM), effectively means that any student failing to achieve 20% is withdrawn from their course. This is problematic in terms of impact on students whose mark has been penalised (e.g. via medium or high level plagiarism or late submission of coursework) rather than being generated wholly on their academic performance. If we exclude the impact of penalties on the mark being considered for possible reassessment this may lead to a sense of unfairness for students who are denied the right of reassessment by virtue of academically underperforming to a level where they achieve less than 20%.

Recommendations:

1) Poor progression of students is actioned through General Regulation 13, during the academic year, and, formally, as part of the mid-year Progress Board.
2) The principle of no automatic right to reassessment for students who have obtained a mark of less than 20% in any module be implemented in the following manner:
    a. The Board of Examiners shall consider the overall performance of a student who has obtained a mark of less than 20% in one or more modules, taking into account factors including the number of failed modules, the student's attendance and progress to date, and any extenuating circumstances, and may take one of the following actions:
        i. For students whose marks of below 20% were as a result of an application of a penalty, offer a reassessment opportunity in the affected module(s).
        ii. For students whose marks of below 20% were not as a result of an application of a penalty:
            1. Offer a reassessment opportunity in the affected module(s);

2. Permit the student to repeat the year of study with no period of intercalation.
3. Permit the student to repeat the year, or part-year of study, following a period of intercalation.
4. Confirm that the student has no right to reassessment and will be withdrawn from the University.

The 'Pass All Modules' Requirement

It is not in the interests either of the University or its students to see an excessive number of students being forced to withdraw, especially in the first year. The University is keen to reduce 1st year withdrawals and the implementation of the NAM will need to reflect concerns in this area. It is recommended, therefore, that LTC should permit consideration of concessions for students to progress without having passed all of their modules, if there are compelling extenuating circumstances. These concessions would be considered by the ADTP, on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners. In the interests of fairness and equity of treatment for students, LTC should consider extending this to all stages within the programme of study. Students with under-performance noted at Progress Boards should continue to be referred to HoSs as at present.

Recommendations:

1) Allow extenuating circumstances to support concessions to progress, in all stages, without students having to pass all modules.
2) Students with under-performance noted at Progress Boards should continue to be referred to HoSs as at present.

Evaluation of the NAM

It will be essential for the University to ensure that the impact of the NAM is closely monitored and evaluated. It is recommended, therefore, that LTC establish an evaluative framework for assessing NAM both ahead of implementation and in first 3 years of application including a qualitative element referencing academic views and experience. This process of evaluation should include and draw-upon feedback from Course Directors, Heads of Schools, Faculty LTQCs, and School SSLCs for early reactions circa 15 months in to the NAM (i.e. in January 2015) by email enquiry and via SSLC student reps. This feedback should be collated by the Learning and Teaching Service, analysed by the Academic Director of Taught Programmes and the Heads of LTS, and subsequently presented as an interim evaluative report, to LTC at the end of the spring semester 2015 (April 2015). The report should conform to an explicit framework which includes information on:

- appeals,
- complaints,
- drop-out,
- reassessment data,
- NSS scores,

- classification outcomes,
- OIA judgements,
- employability impacts.

This should be followed by a summative evaluation after five years (completed in Sept 2018). Our approach should be intended to capture any unintended consequences as well as the outcomes we would be expecting to assess as part of our evaluation.

Recommendations:

1) Interim evaluative report produced by ADTP/LTS (Jan 2015).

2) Summative evaluation produced after five years (Sep 2018).

Dr Adam Longcroft
Academic Director of Taught Programmes
22 January 2013

Appendix 1

MEMO

To: **Heads of School and Directors of Teaching & Learning**

Re: **Approved University Policy on Feedback on Exams and Course Tests**

From: **Academic Director for Taught Programmes** (Dr Adam Longcroft)

Date: 10 January 2013

Introduction

The Vice-Chancellor has recently emphasised the importance of UEA improving its NSS scores on assessment and feedback. If we can achieve scores in this area like those in other aspects of the student experience we will be 'hard to beat' in terms of NSS rankings within the sector. The introduction of a new policy on feedback on exams (and later on Course Tests) forms an important part of a wider strategy for addressing NSS scores in this area.

University LTC has recently (at its meeting on 24 October 2012) approved the introduction of a University-wide initiative to provide feedback on Exams. This was subsequently endorsed by Senate (at its November 2012 meeting) as an aspect of the strategy for meeting student satisfaction targets within the UEA Corporate Plan. **The challenge is to move forwards quickly to implement this initiative in time for the summer 2013 exam cycle.** In this memo the ADTP sets out some guiding principles, approved by LTC on 5 December 2012, which should underpin the University's approach to implementing Exam Feedback, and provides some examples of good practice within the HE sector which will provide a useful source of ideas and a basis for comparison. At the meeting of LTC on 5 December it was also agreed that the University should, in future, provide cohort-level, generic feedback on Course Tests.

Parameters

A new policy on Feedback on Exams

- This initiative should be rolled-out across all Faculties in time for summer 2013 exams.
- Only **formal University Exams** will be included in the initiative.
- The policy on feedback on **Course Tests** will be delayed until 2013/14.
- Feedback will only be required on Exams conducted in the 1st and 2nd Year of degree programmes. Exams conducted in the 3rd year are <u>exempted</u>, except in circumstances where the 3rd year is followed by another Stage of study.
- Feedback on exams is only required at **cohort level** – there is <u>no</u> expectation that Schools, Module Convenors or Exam Markers will provide individualised feedback to students, though schools wishing to do so are welcome to do this, but the University is unable to support the return of individual scripts to students.
- Schools should be free to explore a number of different options with regard to the form the generic feedback takes, and how it is conveyed to students.
- The Student Union has campaigned for feedback on Exams for many years – the SU has already indicated that it is willing to work in partnership with the University to promote the provision/availability of Exam Feedback to the student body.
- University LTC will review the new policy and associated practices on an annual basis.

Why cohort-level feedback?
The Exam Feedback initiative will focus on cohort level generic feedback. There is no expectation that Schools or module convenors provide individual feedback to students. Schools wishing to do so may provide individualised feedback, but this would be a decision for the School concerned. Whilst some students might value individualised, there is very little reliable research which indicates that this kind of individual feedback (given orally or in writing) is more effective than well-designed generic, cohort-level feedback at HE level.

The advantages of 'cohort-based' feedback are outlined by Wendy O'Neil on the Nottingham Trent University website:

- *It is quick* – sometimes it can be prepared in advance of exams in the form of sample answers, or notes on "what you should have included".
- *It is efficient* - particularly when delivered electronically (email or [1]NOW) as it can be accessed when students are away from the university.
- *Student access can be tracked* - cohort feedback by electronic means (e.g. Blackboard) can be monitored to ensure that it has been looked at.
- *It can be tailored* - whilst generic, and therefore often focussing on common misunderstandings, it can also be tailored to relate to the strengths and weaknesses of a particular cohort.
- *It complements individualised feedback* - it can precede and therefore complement further individualised feedback, allowing students to focus on their own feedback requirements in one-to-one feedback.

See: http://www.ntu.ac.uk/cadq/quality/res_learn_teach/en-us-106258gp.html

Guiding principles
If the Exam Feedback initiative is to be successful its implementation should be informed by a set of guiding principles:

Principle 1

All module leaders should provide generic feedback for the whole cohort. In Universities that have been routinely providing Exam Feedback for some time, the cohort feedback tends to focus on two things:
1) Basic statistical data on cohort performance in relation to Qs set.
2) Qualitative feedback/comments from markers, identifying areas where students performed well, and less strongly.

Statistical information
In Universities that routinely provide Exam Feedback students are provided with some basic statistical data relating to the paper.

Qualitative feedback
In Universities that routinely provide Exam Feedback students are provided with qualitative (discursive) feedback that identifies areas where the cohort has performed strongly and weakly, and provides some indication of the characteristics of responses that gained high marks and those that gained low marks. E.g.:

- *First class answers demonstrated a good understanding of….*
- *Some students who gained particularly high marks showed originality by …..*
- *Answers received low marks if they only focused on …*

[1] NTU's Student Portal, their equivalent to eVision

- *Some common problems associated with students' responses include ….*
- *Students found certain sections of the Exam (or the curriculum) particularly difficult. These include…..*
- *Certain topics were poorly understood by students. These include ……*
- *In order to enhance their performance in subsequent Exams, the cohort should focus on the following….*

The extent of the feedback provided by module convenors or exam markers should be that which can provide the most useful information for students without compromising the quality of subsequent assessments (e.g. it may not be possible to provide answers for all questions if this would diminish the question bank available for future exam or coursework assessments).

Principle 2

Each school should put in place staff development workshops or guidelines during the academic year (Jan-April). These should help staff with regard to:

- the format of generic feedback it believes will be most efficient and effective,
- the technical medium(s) it wishes to employ (e.g. Blackboard, e mail, podcasts, screencasts?),
- examples of practice already established within the school or within other similar HEIs,
- how best to relay/communicate feedback to students
- how best to effectively monitor the number of students 'accessing' Exam Feedback (Blackboard may be an easy solution)
- how to get feedback on the feedback etc.

Schools are encouraged to seek the views of their students representatives (SSLCs) with regard to:

- the format of generic feedback,
- timing of its provision,
- and the manner in which students would prefer it to be communicated to them.

The ADTP and Associate Deans for L & T are happy to facilitate/support these workshops in schools.

Principle 3

Schools should be free to explore the format that the Exam Feedback takes. In each School/Faculty there will be colleagues who favour different approaches. The University would like, in fact, to encourage Schools to think creatively around the issue and would welcome proposals and initiatives from Schools that demonstrate a clear link between the needs of the cohort and the format of feedback provided. In other HEIs one can find many different Exam Feedback strategies regarding cohort-level (generic) feedback. These include all of the following:

- **Written generic feedback** – a brief report highlighting areas where students performed well and areas where they struggled, characteristics which were present in scripts which gained a 1st class mark and those which gained poor marks.
- **Model answers** - the provision of model answers can be very useful as they allow students to understand marking schemes and how they are applied. However, this approach may be ill-suited to some disciplines.
- **Exam seminars/feedback workshops** - this can be an efficient way for lecturers to provide verbal feedback and enable students to ask questions and discuss solutions with their peers. These might take place just prior to an exam in the following year, early in the semester following the exam, or soon after the exam itself. Many

schools already run exam workshops of this kind and in some schools they are very well attended.

- **Screencast feedback** – module leaders provide a screencast outlining a model answer to some (not all) questions on an Exam they have set.
- **Podcast feedback** – Colleagues provide a taped podcast by themselves or with the other markers of exam scripts and discuss strengths/weaknesses of students responses.
- **Student to student feedback** – Identify 2-3 students who have achieved highest marks on a paper and arrange for them to do a screencast or video where they outline how they approached each question. The students can refer to their scripts to facilitate this. Tutor might act as the interviewer – asking the students set questions etc.

Principle 4

Schools should seek feedback on the feedback! Once a suitable mechanism has been agreed, each School should seek feedback from students to determine whether there are aspects of the Exam Feedback process which might be enhanced in subsequent years.

Examples of Feedback Practice in other HEIs

University of Northumbria

Northumbria has been providing written feedback on feedback sheets (individual) and generic 'cohort' feedback to groups of students since 2008. This policy was introduced whilst Craig Mahoney (now head of HEA) was still VC at Northumbria. They provide examples of feedback formats in their Teaching and Assessment Strategy. See Appendix 5 (pp.23-27) of the University Guide to Good Assessment Practice:
http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/assess/?view=Standard

Newcastle University

Newcastle introduced feedback sessions/workshops on exams some years ago and staff have begun to detect a positive impact on Good Honours statistics:
"It does seem, anecdotally, that the number of students who achieved a first class degree by right has increased since the implementation of the workshops".
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/assets/documents/CaseStudy_PSY_ValTuck.pdf
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/assets/documents/qsh-assmt-assessedwork-policy.pdf

University of Swansea

Swansea emphasizes the role of generic feedback. It provides some very useful examples of written feedback on Exams. In particular, it provides some examples of best practice with regard to 'generic' feedback on written exams.
http://salt.swan.ac.uk/en/feedbacktemplates.htm

University of Nottingham

Nottingham provides generic feedback on all exams. There is an interesting 3 minute screen cast from a member of the School of History in which their experience of providing feedback are discussed at:
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/teaching/assessmentfeedback/exams.aspx

University of Manchester

Manchester routinely provides feedback on exams. Examples of Year 2 Exam feedback (generic) are available at:
http://www.cs.manchester.ac.uk/assessment/feedback/ug-exams/2011/2YrSem1Feedback2010.pdf

I hope this memo clarifies the new policy for colleagues. I would stress, again, that the policy only applies to formal exams in during 2012/13. Feedback on Course Tests will not be required until start of the next academic year (2013/14).

Best wishes

Adam
Dr Adam Longcroft
Academic Director of Taught Programmes
10 January 2013

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"A common absence of feedback beyond a grade indicates a lack of reinforcement which may foster an attitude of futility of learning, conveying to the students an understanding of learning as something which is merely done for passing exams and obtaining good grades".
Steinar Kvale, 'Contradiction of assessment for learning in higher education institutions',
in D. Boud and N. Falchikov (Eds) (2007) *Rethinking Assessment in Higher Education: Learning for the Longer Term,* Routledge p.65

Reflections on the Exam Feedback Pilot in 2011/12

Introduction

The Exam Feedback Pilot conducted in 2011/12 has helped to identify a number of issues. The pilot was intended to provide a learning experience. It was about finding out how to do it, how to provide it and how to ensure students accessed it and benefited from it. As expected, the pilot has been valuable in flagging some issues.

Take-up - The first is that take-up by students was not as high as we hoped, and disappointingly low in some cases. This is not, in itself, that surprising. The was the first time Exam Feedback had been provided and as with all new initiatives, take-up is often slow to develop and build as a new culture is established. There are other reasons why take-up was lower than hoped for. Some Schools (e.g. in HUM) have recognised and acknowledged that they failed to raise awareness of the availability of Exam Feedback sufficiently. This reflects an important learning lesson – for Exam Feedback to be accessed Schools need to consult early-on with SSLCs to find out what preferences students have regarding the format, accessibility and timing of feedback. The Student Union is committed to working in partnership to raise the profile of Exam Feedback within the student body.

Format of feedback - Allowing staff flexibility in the design of feedback helped to engage staff in the process (HUM). Some examples of different forms of written feedback are attached as appendices (HUM & FMH). However, in some Schools feedback was also offered in face-to-face meetings with individual students (HUM). In others, feedback was provided in specially timetabled 1 hr class sessions.

Impact on learning – In order to ensure maximum engagement amongst staff and students we need to be able to demonstrate that Exam Feedback has an impact on student learning. This is why it is important to get feedback from students on the Exam feedback we provide. This rarely occurred within the pilot. Evaluation will be important in terms of finding out how we can improve both the quality, accessibility and impact of feedback in subsequent years.

Timing of feedback – feedback to students was usually offered immediately after the exam. This is effective in terms of the experience still being fresh in the student's mind. However, it isn't clear how students should USE this kind of feedback – the feed-forwards dimension become problematic since it may be another year until their next exam. There may be an argument, therefore, for experimenting with feedback from the previous year's Exam for the next cohort of students, so one cohort learns from the experience of the previous one.

e-Tools – The use of Rogo (an e-assessment tool specifically designed for university exams and assessments) in FMH allows staff to give students very rapid results. Students can see their individual performance mapped to each of learning outcomes from their course. The role of e-tools of this kind raises exciting possibilities in terms of how we use Exams and provide Exam feedback in future. We will need to invest in some robust CPD to ensure that tools like this can be used more widely, but they could speed-up and enhance the quality of feedback in a very real and tangible way.

The pilot has thus highlighted a number of areas for development, and provides us with an opportunity to enhance Exam Feedback in summer 2013 and beyond.

Adam Longcroft (Academic Director for Taught Programmes) 10 Jan 2013

The experience in HUM

Members of Faculty LTQC agreed that feedback would be made available on all exam modules. It was also agreed that there would be no standardised template or format by which feedback had to be provided. Module organisers were free to decide the method of feedback provision. This was to maximise staff support for this new initiative.

A range of methods was adopted, including written feedback on individual scripts and individual feedback tutorials. Across the faculty feedback was made available on demand. Module organisers did not return feedback via pigeonholes or email individual feedback to all students on a module. However, module organisers emailed all students on a module to let them know that feedback would be made available.

All Schools reported that take-up was very low and feedback from some staff student liaison committees this year suggests that Schools did not always manage to create sufficient awareness among students that feedback was available. Feedback from some staff student liaison committees in the faculty last year suggests that only a small number of our students regularly check their email. Students have also suggested that they prefer individualised, personal emails, rather than group emails sent to all students on a module. Students in one of our Schools, when consulted on the design of a feedback sheet **(see Appendix 1)** suggested that a list of bullet points on how to improve future work was not enough feedback.

HUM remains committed to the principle that exam feedback ought to be made available. However, staff support has suffered as a result of last year's experience. Markers often have only a few days to mark and write feedback on a large number of scripts. In order to increase buy-in from academic staff it is crucial that we find a way of increasing student take-up and providing evidence that exam feedback improves student work. At the same time, however, we need to remain mindful that feedback on exams is time consuming and an additional pressure on staff during a very busy time of year.

This means we need to:

- work with students and staff on identifying effective feedback. This includes conversations about quantity and quality of feedback.
- improve communication with students to assure that students are aware that feedback is available.
- analyse the impact of exam feedback on students' academic performance.

Sanna Inthorn (Associate Dean for Teaching & Learning, HUM)

The experience in SSF

ECO

We did provide the exam feedback via Blackboard on all of our compulsory modules (under the main course Economics L100). Students were informed via Blackboard that the feedback was posted. The feedback was generic, but varied considerably in length from two pages to eleven pages. Since we were not asked to collect Blackboard hit data, information was collected informally by individual teachers (with one exception). In one module, 16 (out 200) students viewed the feedback, in another module there was only one (out of 150) who wrote confirming his/her visit of the Blackboard for this purpose. On a first year module 17 students accessed the generic feedback that was posted on Blackboard for the first test of ECO-1A05. Approximately 6 students subsequently came to see the teacher to discuss their performance and were provided with support towards the second test.

Another teacher provided the following:
"Feedback was made available on 31st of May, and you can see that usage peaked at 36 views on the 31st May, and then at 58 views on 19th August (a day or two prior to the reassessment exam). However, if you look at views per student, you can see that most students actually did not access the document at all; usage was concentrated in a few students, one student accessing the document 36 times in one month. (There were approx. 235 students on the module.)

Aside from the usage data, we also asked students for their views about the usefulness of the feedback in the 'Discussion Board' section of Blackboard. The students were accustomed to using this Discussion Board because we had used it as a 'Revision Forum', and it had been very lively and popular as such. Nevertheless, nobody responded to our request for their views." Our general impression is that students gained from it.
Bibhas Saha (Teaching Director, ECO)

Just to add a point or two to Bibhas' remarks. The obvious qualification to a positive assessment is that very few students seem to have made an effort to access the feedback. There appears to be a mismatch between the well-known pressure towards more exam feedback and the reality of whether students actually use it once it is available. This is particularly damning in a context, such as ECO-2A07 where the exam feedback was highly detailed and relevant. As actions speak better than words, this does seem to cast a serious doubt, at least in my mind, about the success of the pilot.

I suspect that students may not be seeing in practice any real advantage of exam feedback for modules different than the one they have passed. That the greatest use of ECO-2A07 feedback occurred just before reassessment is indicative of that – the pilot suggests to me that in practice exam feedback would be used as a way to 'prepare-to-the-test' as opposed to as a way of achieving course level learning objectives .
Daniel Zizzo (Head of School, ECO)

DEV

Exam Feedback was piloted on a Year 1 module *Data in Development*. This is core to all UG programmes and delivers key research skills, not least those in quantitative analysis. It was thus seen as the ideal case to test the utility of post-exam feedback. This is a module characterised by variable student performance. The exam includes closed answers, so students could be told where marks were awarded in a straightforward way. It is the Year 1 module most troubling to students. This module and its lecturer are models of student engagement, with intensive workshop sessions, additional tutorials, and a very high level of contact hours.

The module convenors reflections are as follows:

- Students were informed that they would receive feedback via email
- Feedback was provided via a face-to-face session. I gave detailed, step by step, solutions to all the exam questions. This was an exam on basic statistical methods so most questions were fairly closed. There was plenty of opportunity for students to ask questions and for discussion of the more open questions, especially in the final section of the exam.
- Of the 72 students who took the module, only 2 attended the exam feedback session. It took place when there were no clashes with other exams and only a week after the students had taken the exam.
- We did not seek feedback on the feedback and after 18 months I can’t recall how well received the session appeared to be by the two students who attended.
- In my understanding, research shows that feedback is useful to students when it is relevant to another task that the students will soon need to undertake. Of course the situation for most students after summer exams is the diametric opposite of this; they have a break for several months and then start to study a set of different modules.
- I find the arguments of Graham Gibbs about formative feedback rather compelling. However, part of the practical side of this argument is that greater investment in giving feedback on formative assignments can be compensated for by reduced need for feedback on summative assignments. Clearly again, feedback on exams moves in the opposite direction to this.
- It is very discouraging to put effort in to giving feedback that is not going to help students. With exam feedback I personally feel that the demand comes not so much from a feeling that it will help improve future work but rather from a desire by students for justification of the marks they have been given.
- In my view we should redouble efforts to increase the confidence of students in the exam marking process. Any steps we can take in this direction, including encouragement of more appeals or more robust and transparent sampling procedures, may in the end be far less costly in terms of both measurable resource and invisible morale effects, than compelling all staff to give feedback which will serve no useful purpose.

Rob Grant, DEV

There was also a pilot in spring 2012 with an economics module. We are collating information here, but the level of uptake was equally poor.

ALSO, I have similar personal experience from course test feedback. I teach intermediate statistics as a small part within a module for 65 year 2 students. This is assessed by an in-class test. I provide formative coursework and intensive computer tutorials, and give detailed feedback on what I would expect for answers to the formative coursework.

- BB stats show 2/3 of the class downloaded the formative feedback, with some doing so several times.
- Downloading was only in advance of the test. Nobody read cw feedback after the test.

I organised a special feedback session after the (summative) test. This was in the timetable, and in eVision, and announced in class. Of 65 students, only 4 came to my hour long feedback session (and two of these were visiting students from abroad). As in the case above, there was no strong sense that students wanted feedback after the test was completed.

Finally, I would add that barriers to effective feedback in DEV after exams include:

- The high use of essay-style questions in DEV exams. Answers vary enormously here, depending on case studies & examples used, and on the angle an individual student takes. It is not easy to provide useful feedback on many of these, beyond making general points like "good answers showed good analysis, used case studies well, and were well-structured."
- A feature of DEV, and part of our contract is externally-funded work (fieldwork, consultancy, research), often involving international travel. Our modules are all team-taught, and co-ordination among the teaching team for agreeing marks is already a challenge and annually involves a lot of discussion and negotiation. We meet or responsibilities here, but that sometimes means people work to extremely tight deadlines to complete marking, or agree marks. Adding another task is unwelcome, and may come at a cost of the quality of work in other areas.
- The absence of evidence that post-exam feedback is useful or valued is likely to affect the quality of that feedback in the first place. It is hard to see how this could materially contribute to NSS scores.

Shawn McGuire, DEV

The experience in FMH

MED
We have two end of year exams, a written paper the ANP and our clinical exams the OSCE.

For the OSCE we mark the students' performance in each of the 'stations' where they have to perform pacific clinical tasks under a number of criteria onto optical readable mark sheets. We then scan these to produce a rich data set that allows us to look as student, assessor and exam item performance. With respect to student feedback the students receive an email giving them the scores they received under each criteria within each station and their station totals. They are also provided with the cohort's performance on each station to judge where they came and the pass mark for each station as this is variable.

For the written paper the students receive their score in each question and the cohorts score in each question by email. We give the cohort performance on each question in a general report that is posted on blackboard the same day as the results, and this also maps each question to one or more of the students learning outcomes so they can see how well they did in each area. For our questions that are not computer marked we have only one marker for each question of they see all of the cohorts performance and provide a summary of what was done well and want could have been improved on. I've attached a copy of the student version of the assessment report (**see Appendix 2**). The one we provide for the exam board and externals contains more detail on item and assessor performance. Each of our questions, and therefore, each of our exams have different pass marks so we always generate the reports fresh each year.

For our assignments we now also use the speedwell data capture system to allow us to provide students with rapid and personal feedback. This year we are also starting to use Rogo an e-assessment tool specifically designed for university exams and assessments. This allows us to give students very rapid results, where they can see their individual performance mapped to each of learning outcomes from their course that were examined within the exam. This is done both numerically and using a traffic light system to highlight strengths and weaknesses.
Sandra Gibson, MED

Appendix 1

HUM Individualised Exam Feedback Sheet

An example of a Feedback Form used in HUM to provide Exam Feedback. This is used to provide individualised, tailored feedback to students on demand. There is <u>no</u> expectation in the newly approved policy on Exam Feedback that schools will provide individual feedback of this kind.

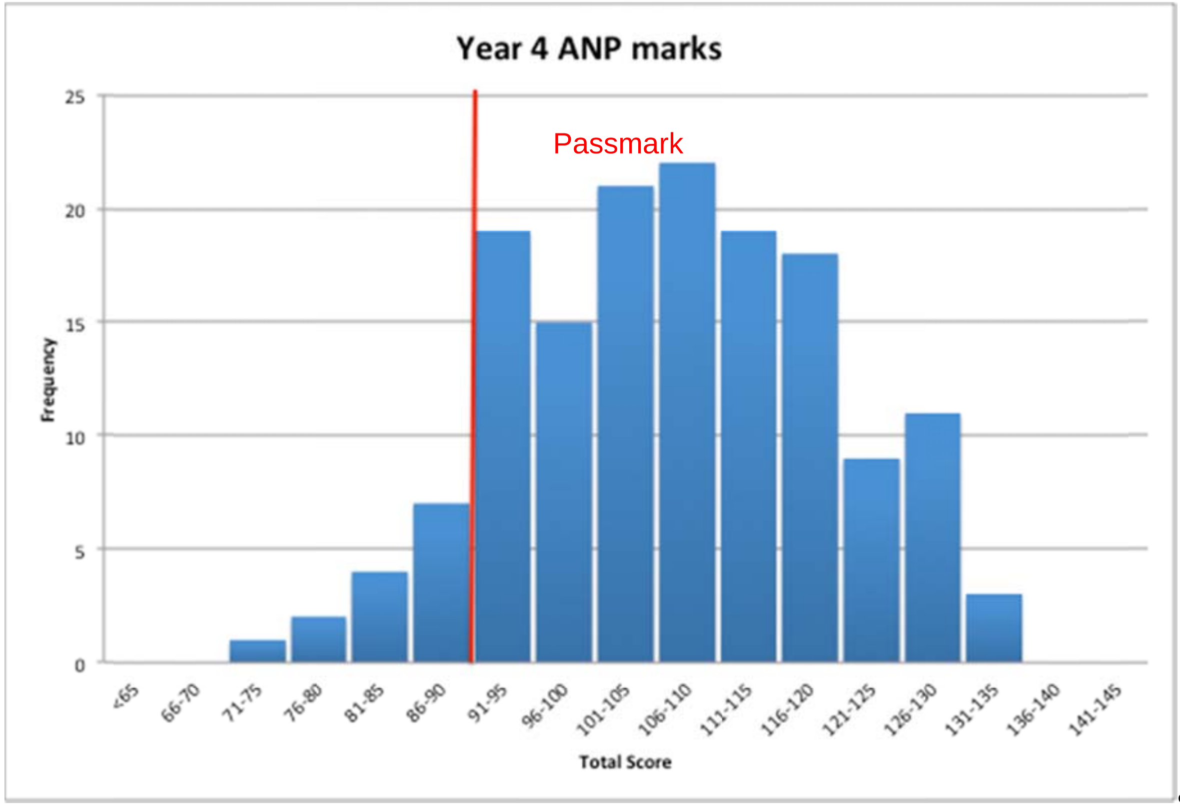
PSI Exam Feedback		
Student Number:		
Module:		
Academic Year:		
Marker:		
	3 things that were good about this answer:	**How this answer could have been improved:**
Mark for Answer 1:		
Mark for Answer 2:		
Mark for Answer 3:		
Overall Mark:		

Appendix 2

Cohort IP Exam Feedback, MED Year 4 2012

- Overall 8% of students gained a distinction for the year.
- Advanced Notice Paper
- For the ANP **91**% of students passed the exam and **5**% of the year gained a distinction.
- **OSCE**
- For the overall year OSCE **98**% of students passed with **32**% gaining a distinction.

Advanced Notice paper


Year 4 ANP marks
Passmark
Frequency
Total Score
25
20
15
10
5
0
<65
66-70
71-75
76-80
81-85
86-90
91-95
96-100
101-105
106-110
111-115
116-120
121-125
126-130
131-135
136-140
141-145
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