

BOARD OF STUDIES IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

POLICY ON FEEDBACK ON ASSESSMENT 2011-12 ONWARDS

1 Principles of Feedback

Appropriate feedback should be provided to students on their academic performance in order to facilitate improvement and promote learning. Guidance should be provided on both academic content and formal aspects of their work.

Feedback can be provided following diagnostic, formative and summative types of assessment, where

- Diagnostic assessment provides an indicator of a student's aptitude and preparedness for a task or module and identifies possible learning problems;
- Formative assessment is designed to provide students with feedback on progress and inform development;
- Summative assessment provides a measure of achievement or failure in respect of a student's performance in relation to the intended learning outcomes of assessment task and module.

Feedback should

- (i) be closely related to learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria of a particular assessment task in order to help students identify areas for improvement;
- (ii) be provided in a format which is appropriate to the type of assessment;
- (iii) commend student's achievement and clearly identify areas for improvements;
- (iv) be provided within an appropriate timescale to enable students to review and act on in order to enhance their performance in subsequent assessments.

2 Communication of Assessment Information

2.1 The departmental website provides detailed information on each module offered by the department, including aims, learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategy, syllabus, and assessment.

2.2 In addition, members of staff responsible for a module will provide further information on the assessment of that module. In particular, for each assessment task, information will be provided on

- the task itself and its purpose,
- the criteria to be used in allocating marks,
- the proportion of the marks allocated to different parts of the assessment (if appropriate),
- the proportion of the total marks for the module which the assessment represents (if appropriate),
- whether or not failure in the assessment may be compensated for by higher marks in other components of the module,
- the documents that need to be submitted and their format,
- the mode of submission, and
- the nature, format and extent of feedback that students can expect to receive.

The information should enable students to understand what is expected of them to pass the assessment at the threshold and to obtain higher gradings.

3 Timeliness

- 3.1 Timely feedback is an important and integral part of the teaching and learning experience and providing feedback is essential to enable students to evaluate their progress and improve on their performance.
- 3.2 For each assessment task, arrangements for feedback, including a schedule, should be made known to students through appropriate means. Module co-ordinators should ensure that the availability of feedback, e.g., via the Student Office, is not announced to students prematurely.
- 3.3 The Department (and hence its staff) aims to provide feedback for any assessment task other than exams within 12 working/term days¹, but normally not later than 15 working/term days, after the deadline of submission or the date of the assessment taking place. Work submitted late is not subject to this time frame. Where possible the feedback should also be provided in good time to inform preparation of the next related assessment tasks (if there are any) and the final examination of the module to which the assessment task is related, provided that the time between the submission deadline of the assessment task and the date of the final examination as set by the University allows.
- 3.4 Summative and formative feedback on examination performance will normally be provided about four weeks after the end of the corresponding examination period. In the case of first semester examinations such feedback is provisional. See 4.8 and 4.9 for further information on exam feedback.

4 Content of Feedback

- 4.1 Feedback on assessment should contain enough detail to enable students to evaluate and improve their performance.
- 4.2 A combination of numerical marks, grades, qualitative points and comments may be provided in feedback and feedback can take the form of written feedback, (recorded) oral feedback, peer feedback, or self-assessment.
- 4.3 Where numerical marks and/or grades are provided these should relate to publicised marking descriptors, for example, the generic marking descriptors provided by the Board of Studies in Computer Science.
- 4.4 Where possible students should be provided with written feedback on continuously assessed tasks to provide a future reference for their development. Module teachers are encouraged to use a pro-forma for written feedback, should this be appropriate to the nature of the work.
- 4.5 Written feedback should be legible and students should be given the opportunity to seek further advice if any comments or the mark obtained are not clear.
- 4.6 Written feedback can be supplemented with oral feedback and guidance on how to learn from the feedback can be provided.
- 4.7 Where it is not practical to provide written and/or oral feedback on an individual basis, seminar, tutorial, electronic or other means may be used to provide generic feedback to groups of students.
- 4.8 Examination scripts are not returned to students and requests to access a copy of an examination script need to be made to the University (which will charge a fee of 10.00 for the work involved).

¹A 'working/term day' is working day during term time.

4.9 Individual formative feedback on examination performance will be provided by academic advisors and examiners. In addition, examiners will provide generic group feedback to students on their performance in examinations which should:

- (i) include a general commentary of students' performance including identifying common strengths and weaknesses;
- (ii) highlight those examination questions on which students' performance could be improved and suggest strategies for improving performance in those questions.

This group feedback can be provided by making the relevant part of the exam report available on-line.