Teaching toolkits

Enhancing and giving quicker feedback

Methods to help you provide timely feedback and to get your students to engage with the process.

Giving enhanced and quicker feedback is important for several reasons, as it:

- helps learning: Gibbs & Simpson (2004) suggest that seven of ten conditions under which assessment supports learning are actually about feedback;

- helps teaching: greater alignment of feedback with module outcomes can help you plan your teaching methods and topic coverage;

- fosters a good culture: students must hand in work on time and quicker feedback reciprocates the gesture; and

- saves time: quicker feedback doesn't mean compressing the time taken to write feedback – the suggestions presented here are genuine time-savers.

Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning: Gibbs & Simpson (2004)

1. Sufficient assessed tasks are provided for students to capture sufficient study time.

2. These tasks are engaged with by students, orienting them to allocate appropriate amounts of time and effort to the most important aspects of the course.

3. Tackling the assessed task engages students in productive learning activity of an appropriate kind.

4. Sufficient feedback is provided, both often enough and in enough detail.

5. The feedback focuses on students' performance, on their learning and on actions under the students' control, rather than on the students themselves and on their characteristics.

6. The feedback is timely in that it is received by students while it still matters to them and in time for them to pay attention to further learning or receive further assistance.

7. Feedback is appropriate to the purpose of the assignment and to its criteria for success.

8. Feedback is appropriate, in relation to students' understanding of what they are supposed to be doing.

9. Feedback is received and attended to.

10. Feedback is acted upon by the student.

Steps for enhancing feedback processes and generating quicker feedback

Guided marking can help students see what standards are required, and can help foster responsibility for assessing their own performance, formulating feedback and responding to it.

Proformas can provide consistent and useful feedback.

Bloom's taxonomy can be used to identify dimensions of knowledge and cognitive processes that can be usefully self- and peer-assessed through quizzes, short writing tasks, and other simple activities (Krathwohl 2002).

TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment) is a tool that analyses the students' experience of assessment and feedback on a degree programme. It has been used widely in UCL.

Visit the Teaching and Learning Portal for toolkits on these topics.

Seven suggestions for giving quicker feedback

1. Ask students to mark their own work. Self-assessment can be automated, e.g. using a quiz on Moodle. These are good opportunities to assess outcomes such as recall of factual knowledge or performing basic, but essential, procedures such as references and citations.

2. Ask students to write their own feedback sheets.
See Defeyter and McPartlin 2007: 'Helping students understand essay marking criteria and feedback'.

3. Verbal feedback helps to check understanding. You can be sure a student understands a topic if they can explain it in their own words.

4. Ask students for two areas where they would like feedback which helps check that a student has an adequate conception of the task and ensures that you're spending your time efficiently. (from Gibbs and Simpson 2004).

5. Write less! (and explain why you're doing so). This is invaluable. Brief and timely feedback may well be just what a student needs, with an invitation to discuss further.

6. Give feedback to the whole group, and then individual feedback for more specific points.

7. Use electronic delivery for quicker return of essays (especially over Christmas and Easter breaks) - but note that many students don't check their feedback on Turnitin. They just collect the marks.

Where to find help and support

arena@ucl.ac.uk: contact the UCL Arena Centre

We have a range of assessment and feedback toolkits on the Teaching and Learning Portal, including:

- 6 key steps to develop good feedback
- Assessing group work
- Assessing students multimedia assignments
- Assessment and feedback resources
- Enhancing and giving quicker feedback
- Guided marking
- Helping students understand assessment
- Oral assessment
- Peer assessment
- Preparing students for exams using feedback
- TESTA (Transforming experience of students through assessment)
- Using proformas for feedback

bit.ly/AssessmentFeedbackResources: to access an online guide for assessment and feedback resources.