

How to make your **feedback** work in three easy steps!



Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange
The Centre for Excellence in Assessment at the Business School



Would you like to help your students gauge how well they are doing?

Are you concerned that your students fail to understand the feedback that you give them?

Would you like to actively engage your students in the assessment process?

If so, why don't you try this three-step exercise?

It takes up very little of your time, and it works...

...here's how you do it

1

Prepare students to receive feedback by:

- aligning their expectations with yours, so that you agree the purpose of the feedback prior to the assessment
- identifying all channels of feedback (eg oral in class; written on assignments)
- modelling the application of feedback using previously-marked assignments by showing students how feedback was used to improve the quality of later assignments
- encouraging the application of feedback by asking students to use their feedback to improve their later assignments
- supporting processes of self-assessment by asking students to submit evaluations of their work along with their assignments.

2

Reduce emphasis on written feedback

- explicit, written feedback is important when correcting errors, explaining technical points, and giving positive encouragement
- written feedback (ie without dialogue) rarely communicates tacit understandings about disciplinary content and academic literacy skills
- student engagement is enhanced if written feedback is supplemented with dialogue - by using in-class discussions of exemplars, peer-review discussions supported by tutors, learning through 'learning sets', for example.

3

Provide timely feedback

- students engage with (and apply) feedback if they can recall the assignment, reflect on feedback comments, and then foresee ways to apply them
- feedback on draft assignments may engage students more effectively than feedback on final work which is returned at the beginning of the next semester
- consider giving generic feedback as soon as a general picture emerges of the quality of all assignments
- new technologies may reduce the time required to prepare feedback - feedback can be dictated to a digital recorder and made available to students electronically, for example.

ASKe (Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange) is a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) based in the Business School at Oxford Brookes University. It was set up in summer 2005 with a £4.5 million award from HEFCE in recognition of good practice based on pedagogic research into aspects of assessment.

The work of ASKe has been organised into three strands of activity

Strand 1: Replicating proven practice through:

- A pre-assessment intervention which the ASKe team has shown to work. A simple intervention such as a marking workshop prior to undertaking an assessed task can significantly increase students' understanding of the assessment criteria and improve their performance of the task. ASKe has supported the development of this kind of intervention on all Business School programmes, as well as in three other Schools (Built Environment, Health and Social Care, and Westminster Institute of Education). This same support is available for the remaining four Schools plus five partner institutions.
- The Academic Conduct Officer (ACO) system which the ASKe team is further developing, in addition to researching effective ways of encouraging and promoting academic integrity.
- The Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programme, long used by the Business School, which ASKe has extended across the School. Support is also offered to help at least three other Schools introduce PAL.

Strand 2: Pioneering evidence-based practice

Appropriate development projects will be funded, both within the Business School and across the whole University. Projects will seek out and support ways to develop and enhance assessment practices.

Strand 3: Cultivating a community of practice

The ASKe team has developed a new, £2 million building on Brookes' Wheatley Campus. This provides a physical environment to support student learning outside structured class time, in which staff and students can meet to develop a shared understanding of academic standards.

But it's more than just a building. The ASKe team argues that only a true community of practice will ensure shared understanding, so ASKe (in conjunction with other parties at Brookes) is also developing the social environment necessary to colonise this physical space.

To find out more about ASKe's work, please contact:

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