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Academic Feedback Policy

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3.1	18/01/24	Nicola Harris, Prof. Kate Gilliver, and Andy Lloyd	
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Scope and exclusions

Scope

From 1st August 2024, this Policy outlines the principles that allow Cardiff University to effectively discharge its responsibilities for the oversight and management of Academic Feedback at Cardiff University including:

1. The information about academic feedback that will be provided to our students;
2. What students will need to know about feedback and how to use it;
3. The nature and tone in the feedback that students will receive, and;
4. How students are supported to use their feedback effectively.

Institutional oversight

This Policy has been endorsed by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) in February 2024 and approved by Senate in March 2024. It will be kept under regular review to ensure it continues both to support internal processes that function efficiently and effectively and to fully meet the [external reference points](#) set out in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#).

Associated regulations, policies, and procedures.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- [The Strategic Approach to the Enhancement of Assessment and Feedback for 2023-2027](#)
- [Senate Regulations for Modular Taught Programmes](#)
- [Assessment and Examining Board Regulations](#)

The Learning and Teaching Academy, under delegated authority from ASQC, will review and report on the implementation of the Policy in academic session 2025/26

Exclusions

The Academic Feedback policy does not apply to Research Degrees.

Professional, statutory, and regulatory body requirements.

The University recognises that some programmes have specific requirements set by professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRB). Where specific PSRB requirements impact on the implementation of the principles of this Policy, an exemption will be required from the Chair of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

External Reference Points

The principles within this Policy have been mapped to the against the expectations and core and common practices of the UK Quality code, alongside the supporting advice and guidance on Assessment and Enabling Student Achievement

Expectations for standards	Expectations for quality
The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications' framework.	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector recognised standards.	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Core practices for standards	Core practices for quality
The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks.	The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.
The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.

Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair, and transparent.	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	The provider has sufficient, and appropriately qualified, skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

Common practices for standards	Common practices for quality
The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement	The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.
	The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.
	The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance, and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.

Introduction

Cardiff University is committed to providing constructive feedback to all students on their academic progress and assessments. This feedback will enable students to reflect upon their progress, develop as learners and plan their future learning and skills development. As such it is a key part of their learning experience at Cardiff University.

Feedback in this context encompasses a wide variety of responses to the quality of student work or performance, whether delivered by staff or peers, and may take a wide range of forms.

Effective communications around feedback are essential. In order to enable this, policy, practices and outcomes in relation to feedback will be discussed with students in Student-Staff Panels.

This policy applies to both staff and students on all taught courses within the University. It is essential that feedback is considered at a programme-wide level, recognising disciplinary differences whilst ensuring that appropriate feedback is provided across each student's entire course of studies. As such, key elements of the implementation of this policy will need to be managed and overseen by Boards of Studies.

Boards of Studies will report on the decisions and findings they make in relation to the aspects of feedback under their oversight to the School's Management Group, which will then be able to report through College processes.

1. **What information about academic feedback needs to be provided to our students?**

- **Taught programmes will provide, and students will utilise, clear information on the different ways in which feedback will be provided in their programme of study.**
- **Feedback will be provided to students on all assessed tasks, both formative and summative.**

Boards of Studies will determine and approve a clear strategy for the provision of feedback on all programmes under their supervision and advise students of this.

Boards of Studies will ensure that all students are provided with information on the feedback they will receive on individual assessments at the start of each academic year. This will include information on the different ways in which feedback will be provided and when feedback will be made available for students.

Students should use this information to support their progress and they should be encouraged and guided to recognise feedback in all its forms.

Boards of Studies will review the nature and extent of feedback at a programme-wide level on an annual basis, ensuring that all students are provided with an appropriate level of feedback across all years of study. This must include sufficient individual feedback to allow all students to develop effectively.

Boards of Studies will report on their feedback strategies via the ARE process annually.

2. What do students need to know about feedback and how to use it?

- **Throughout their time at University, our students will be supported to understand the nature and purpose of feedback and what their responsibilities are in using their feedback.**

Boards of Studies will put in place, and monitor on an annual basis, strategies to build and support student feedback literacy. Activities should be designed by programme teams so that feedback literacy can be developed in such a way that students are enabled to act upon their feedback.

3. What sort of feedback should students receive?

- **Feedback will normally be provided within 20 working days and in any event in time for students to reflect and act upon it in future tasks.**
- **Feedback will be clear, unambiguous and easy to understand.**
- **Feedback will be provided in a format that students can access easily.**
- **To support the provision of high-quality feedback to students, Schools must ensure that all staff involved in providing academic feedback engage with CPD on an annual basis.**

Feedback on marked assessments will normally be returned within 20 working days.

Where students are expected to use feedback from an initial assessment to prepare for a subsequent assessment task **programme teams** should review and set assessment deadlines that enable staff to provide students with feedback in advance of the next assessment. This timeframe must ensure that students have sufficient time to receive and reflect upon the feedback and to use it to prepare for the next assessment. In cases where it is not possible for staff to return comments within this timeframe or where the return of feedback is unavoidably delayed, this must be communicated clearly to all students as far in advance as is practicable. Where such unavoidable delays occur, they must also be notified to the relevant Board of Studies.

Markers must ensure that the feedback they provide:

- i. is clear and concise;
- ii. relates to assessment criteria; and
- iii. is constructive and actionable.

Feedback on summative assessments should consist of:

- i. the mark,
- ii. a concise explanation of marks with reference to assessment criteria, and
- iii. effective feedforward, which should focus on providing clear and concrete guidance to allow students to self-reflect and develop their academic skills.

Feedback on formative assessments should be designed to:

- i. feedforward to future tasks, by providing clear and concrete guidance for students on how to improve,
- ii. assist students to improve their learning and outcomes,
- iii. encourage students to self-assess and reflect on performance and goals, and
- iv. encourage students to engage in dialogue on their work with peers and tutors.

Feedback on formative assessments may also include marks and a concise explanation of these with reference to assessment criteria (where appropriate).

All feedback should be provided in a format that students can access easily.

All feedback provided by staff on marked assessments should be released through Blackboard, save in exceptional circumstances. Any such exceptions must be approved by the School-level Director of Learning and Teaching. **Boards of Studies** must adopt a consistent process to feedback release and must ensure that where practicable all assessments are submitted by students with a cover sheet to allow feedback to be issued via Blackboard, even where the submission is not in a digital format.

Where live oral feedback is used and where this is advised and permitted as a reasonable adjustment, staff should allow students to record these comments so that they can be revisited as needed.

It is for Boards of Studies to decide the most appropriate forms of cpd for staff (including PGR Tutors) who provide academic feedback on students' work, whether formative or summative, e.g.: workshops organised in partnership with the Learning & Teaching Academy; peer reflection on feedback etc. Boards of Studies are required to include reporting on such cpd activities in their ARE report.

4. How are students supported to use their feedback effectively?

- **Feedback will be designed to assist reflection and to feed forward to future tasks.**
- **Boards of Studies will design support for academic feedback that enables students to understand and use their feedback.**
- **Students will reflect upon and use their feedback in future work.**

For feedback to have its desired effect, it has to be put into practice. To assist with this process, feedback must be designed and delivered in such a way that it acts as feed forward, helping students to plan their learning and improve their performance in future tasks.

To further assist in this process of feeding forward into future practice, **Boards of Studies** will ensure that all programmes include appropriate support to enable students to reflect upon their feedback and put it into practice. This may be done in a wide variety of ways, depending on the discipline, the context and the level of study, but should include:

- i) Opportunities for students to seek clarification of feedback, where appropriate, from academic staff teaching on the relevant module or from personal tutors;
- ii) Consideration of ways through which students can come together to plan ways of using their feedback;
- iii) Consideration of mechanisms that would empower students to synthesise and utilise feedback from across their areas of study and across their time in the University.

Key to the feedback process is that **students** must themselves reflect upon their feedback and how they can act upon it to improve their own learning and that **staff** must plan how best to support them to do this.

APPENDIX

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

Where the EIA relates to proposals which will be decided by committee, the completed EIA or a summary report should also accompany the papers containing the proposals, for information. Further guidance on EIAs can be found on the staff intranet, and [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) and [Advance HE](#) websites.

Step One – Context and background to the activity

Initiative title:	Academic Feedback Policy
Level of EIA	University
EIA author:	
Date EIA started:	10 January 2024
Background:	

The policy supports the priorities for the University identified in the Way Forward that relate to the enhancement of the student experience.

The policy is essential to the implementation of the Strategic Approach to Assessment & Feedback approved by the ASQC in February 2023, and seeks to address the issue that NSS outcomes show students' perceptions of the quality of feedback remains below benchmark.

The policy, once approved, will come into force on 1 August 2024. Between the approval of the policy and this date guidance, workshops and School level support will be provided by the Rethinking Assessment project (to 31 July 2024), the Education Development Service and the EDS (Education Development Service) Toolkit. A gap analysis will be undertaken by the project in 23/24 to assess the readiness of each School to implement the policy and CPD workshops are being developed to meet identified needs. An agile/continuous improvement approach will be taken to supporting the Schools in their readiness to ensure the provision continues to meet the changing needs of the Schools throughout this period.

Step Two – Evidence, data and engagement

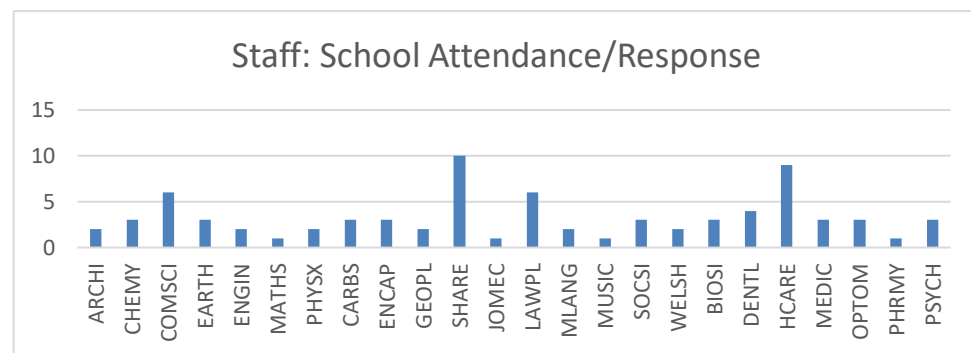
Consultation:

The creation of this policy has been driven by results from the annual NSS survey that show Cardiff University students' perception of the quality of feedback is below the benchmark.

The policy has been developed by taking a research informed approach to feedback, which was used to by the Feedback Working group to agree a set of principles and practices which were subsequently used as the basis for university-wide consultation. Staff (academic and professional services) and students were represented on the working-group and in the consultation exercise.

A series of face-to-face and on-line consultation sessions were held with staff (academic and professional services) and students in November and December 2023. The consultation focussed on the principles and practices, proposed by the Feedback working group, that underpin the new Academic Feedback policy. In addition to the consultation sessions those unable to attend were invited to provide their perspective on the principles via an on-line survey which was available during the period when the session was being run.

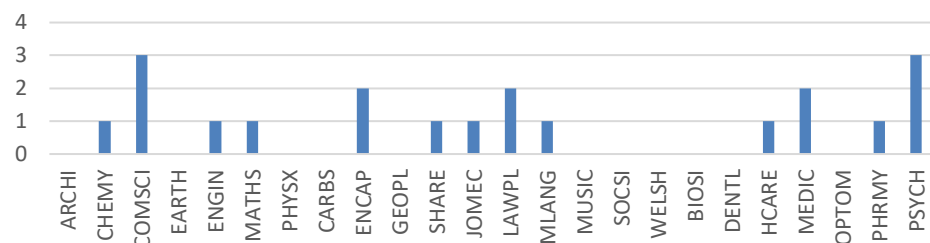
The information below shows the spread of staff and students who both attended the sessions and responded via the survey:



PSE	19
AHSS	33
BLS	26
TOTAL	78

PSE	6
AHSS	7
BLS	7
TOTAL	20

Student: School Attendance/Response



The VP Undergraduate Students (Education & Welfare), Students Union is a member of the Rethinking Assessment Project Board which is responsible for the development of the Academic Feedback policy and Officers of the SU and Student Champions have been consulted on the policy.

The Rethinking Assessment Steering Board has been actively involved in the development of the Academic Feedback policy and approved its submission to ASQC. The membership of the board was chosen to ensure engagement with a wide range of key stakeholders:

VP Education, Students' Union	Dean for Education and Students, PSE	Dean of Undergraduate Studies, BLS
Academic Lead for A&F in the Learning & Teaching Academy	Postgraduate Dean, AHSS	College Education Manager, AHSS
Head of Student Operations, Registry Operations	Director of the Learning & Teaching Academy	Head of Education Governance
Head of Education Development	Curriculum Development Manager	BLS College Business Partner, University IT

Steps Three and Four – Impact and mitigation

Protected and hidden characteristics	Step Three - What is the likely impact?	Step Four - What are the mitigating factors?
	<p>Detail positive and/or adverse impact and consider whether this impact is widespread or whether this is significant upon a group. Highlight any substantial impact. Consider impact for all characteristics before considering mitigation.</p>	<p>Consider what actions will be taken to address any adverse impacts (to go into Action Plan where necessary). Or detail on what grounds the risk is accepted.</p>
Age	Positive impact	
Disability	The Policy is designed to ensure transparent and accessible processes and procedures are used to ensure that the quality, the relevant academic level;	
Gender reassignment (gender identity)	and that all students are supported to reflect upon their feedback and put it into practice.	
Race	The policy requires Boards of Studies to include the following in their implementation of this policy:	
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of opportunities, where appropriate, from academic staff teaching on the relevant module or from personal tutors; 	
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considering ways through which students can come together to plan use of their feedback; 	
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mechanisms to empower students to synthesise and utilise feedback from across their areas of study and across their time in the University. 	
Sex (Gender)		
Pregnancy and maternity		
Welsh language	Adverse impact	
Other	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>The Policy is designed to ensure transparent and accessible processes and procedures are used to ensure that the quality, the relevant academic level; and that all students are supported to reflect upon their feedback and put it into practice. The policy requires Boards of Studies to include the following in their approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of opportunities, where appropriate, from academic staff teaching on the relevant module or from personal tutors; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Considering ways through which students can come together to plan use of their feedback;- mechanisms to empower students to synthesise and utilise feedback from across their areas of study and across their time in the University. <p>Adverse impact</p>	
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Step Five – Monitoring arrangements

An agile/continuous improvement approach will be taken to supporting the Schools in their readiness to ensure the provision continues to meet the changing needs of Schools throughout the period up to the implementation date and beyond.

The impact the policy will be evaluated partly through responses to NSS questions 13 and 14 in 2025, and through the ARE system.

The policy will be formally reviewed within 12 months of full implementation

Step Six – Approval, publication and version control

Approval	
Accountable officer/committee	Kate Gilliver
Date presented to accountable officer/committee:	18 January 2024
Date agreed by accountable officer/committee:	24/01/2024
Publication	
The University has a legal duty to publish reports where the assessment shows that there is likely to be a substantial impact on an authority's ability to comply with the general duty. EIAs are public documents and open to scrutiny.	
Once an EIA has been agreed it should be forwarded to ComplianceandRisk@cardiff.ac.uk for publication as appropriate.	
Date forwarded to Compliance and Risk:	
Version control	
Version number:	0.1
Date for review:	18 th January 2024
Notes for review:	Initial draft for consideration by Chair of Rethinking Assessment Project Steering Board

