**CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY**

**TIMELY FEEDBACK POLICY**

The attached paper has been approved by the Academic Board on 11 December 2013. The details of the revised Timely Feedback Policy will be implemented from September 2014.

**FOR THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD: 11 DECEMBER 2013**

**TIMELY FEEDBACK POLICY**

The attached paper has been approved by the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Committee on 16 October 2013 for Academic Board consideration.

Members of the Academic Board are asked to consider:

* in principle the proposals for clarification and management of the Timely Feedback Policy;
* the summary of the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix A) and the proposed actions.

Formal proposals for integration of the Timely Feedback policy into the University Regulation and Credit Framework for the Conferment of Awards and the Assessment Procedures Manual will be submitted to Academic Board after the appropriate review by the Regulations and Conventions Sub-Committee and the Quality and Standards Committee.

Sue Burkinshaw - Director of Learning and Teaching

Cathi Fredricks – Faculty Director of Quality (Arts and Humanities)

**CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY**

Approved at the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee on 16th October 2013

**TIMELY FEEDBACK POLICY**

**PART ONE - BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

**1) The Higher Education sector**

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2012) sets out the following expectation about learning and teaching which higher education providers are required to meet:

“ Higher education providers , working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices , so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking “

Indicators of sound practice include: “every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff”.

This is further supported in Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching which states that “students need to receive timely feedback“(pg5).

The National Union of Students (NUS) Charter on Assessment and Feedback**[[1]](#footnote-1)** resulted in ten principles of feedback of which one was “Feedback should be timely :- Timely feedback is a key concern of students, with the NUS/HSBC Student Experience Report showing that almost a quarter of students have to wait more than five weeks to receive feedback. Students should usually receive personalised feedback within three weeks of the assessment submission deadline. There could also be generalised group feedback on the key learning areas that affect most students within one week of the assessment.”

The Higher education sector has increasingly responded to the demands for “timely feedback” through the adoption of University policies and practices which determine a three week turnaround time on feedback on assessments.

In a Heads of Educational Development group (HEDG) survey (August 2013) over 50% of the Higher Education Institution respondents had a 15 working day turnaround, some of those with a four week turnaround planning to move to three weeks.

There are some clear indicators across the Higher education sector that timeliness of feedback is a key agenda and that the three week turnaround timeframe for assessment feedback is increasingly the norm and expectation across the sector.

**2) Canterbury Christ Church University - Assessment Feedback-Three Week Turnaround**

The University policy “*The Principles of Effective Assessment Feedback*” (September 2009), approved by the Academic Board, established the requirement that formal feedback on summative assessment is to be provided to students within three working weeks of submission of the assessment.

*“The University expects that* ***from September 2010*** *all taught programmes will adopt a benchmark time of* ***three working weeks, within which students should receive formal feedback on summative assessment items they have submitted.*** *If feedback is not available within the three weeks then students must be informed of the reasons for the delay and steps taken to address the causes. Where there are sound academic reasons, exceptions to the benchmark time may be negotiated.”*

The definition adopted for formal feedback on summative assessments is: *“Feedback refers to the oral or written information, advice and grades which describe performance and inform future learning and achievement.”*

*(The Principles of Effective Assessment Feedback*” - September 2009)

**3) Student Surveys on “timeliness of assessment feedback”**

National and local student surveys demonstrate that we should seek to continue to do more in relation to levels of student satisfaction regarding receiving feedback in a timely manner compared to sector benchmarking.

The National Student Survey (NSS) and University Student Survey (USS) asks students directly to respond to ‘Feedback on my work has been prompt.’ (Q7). The sector average for this question in 2012 was 66%. For the NSS, the University average for 2012 for this question was 63%. In 2013 the University response on promptness of feedback was 65% which is still lower than the Sector average of 68%.

Comparative NSS & USS data does show that students’ satisfaction with promptness of feedback has improved over the last three years, since the implementation of the policy, but the University average remains below the sector average.

**Responses to Question 7 “Feedback on my work has been prompt”**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **NSS**  **%** | **USS**  **%** | **Sector average**  **%** |
| 2013 | 65 | 67 | 68 |
| 2012 | 63 | 68 | 66 |
| 2011 | 57 | 59 | 63 |
| 2010 | 52 | n/a | 61 |

In the NSS 2013, the variation in % most/definitely agree for “Feedback on my work has been prompt” ranges from 5% – 100% at CCCU. This demonstrates an inconsistency and variability of practice across the range of programmes that we offer, in relation to this agenda and demonstrates that in some areas we are doing well with promptness of feedback and in other areas not so well.

As a University, we remain committed in seeking to address the below average scores in the student surveys related to timeliness of feedback on assessments and to ensure a “consistency of practice and experience” for the students. The Timely feedback policy and 15 working day timeframe seeks to support this.

**4) Interim findings of an audit on the implementation of the University policy regarding a deadline of three weeks for formal feedback on summative assessment**

Since the implementation of the policy regarding the deadline of three weeks for formal feedback on summative assessment, an audit and review of the implementation of the policy was undertaken (2012/2013) and reported to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (8th May 2013). Evidence from audits of Faculty activity, indicated that the three week turnaround policy had had some success in improving the timeliness of feedback with more than half of the programmes consistently meeting the policy requirements. It is clear that staff have put considerable effort into meeting the policy requirements. However, the audit also revealed a number of significant challenges in relation to meeting the implementation of the three week turnaround. These challenges relate to assessment administration, logistical management and staff work load issues.

To move the agenda forward the audit advised clarification of:-

* whether the three week turnaround should apply to dissertations for undergraduate and postgraduate students;
* how exemptions from the three week deadline should be sought;
* the processes and responsibilities for monitoring the implementation of the policy.

**5) Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee 8th May 2013**

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment committee (8th May 2013), approved the following:-

The principle of a three week deadline for formal feedback is to be maintained with the following revision:-

* Ensure effective communication and consistency in how students are informed about assessment deadline information at the levels of module/assessment (e.g., date for submission, date for return and feedback of assessed work) and programme (e.g., some form of mapping of assessment and feedback dates/ timeframes across the whole programme);
* Clarify which form/types of assessments the policy applies to;
* Define and clarify the approval clause for “ exemption “ to the policy;
* Clarify the authoritative approval process for seeking exemption;

(Revisions to this clause would bear in mind the need to exercise supportive flexibility where programmes in the University have significantly different patterns for learning, such as Education and Health and Social Care programmes with a substantive practice learning element);

* Make explicit how the policy is monitored.

**6) Conclusion**

Across the Higher education sector the three week turnaround timeframe for assessment feedback appears to be increasingly the norm and expectation, with the adoption of University policies and practices which determine a three week turnaround time on feedback on assessments.

At Canterbury Christ Church University the University policy “*The Principles of Effective Assessment Feedback*” approved by the Academic Board (2009), established the requirement that formal feedback on summative assessment was to be provided to students within three working weeks of submission of the assessment.

Comparative NSS & USS data evidences that students’ satisfaction with promptness of feedback has improved over the last three years, since the implementation of the policy, but the University average remains below the sector average.

The University is committed in seeking to address the below average scores in the student surveys related to timeliness of feedback on assessments. The Timely feedback policy and 15 working day timeframe seeks to support this.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment committee (8th May 2013) approved the principle of a three week deadline for formal feedback to be maintained. The LTAC committee proposed that further clarifications, proposals for an infrastructure and a regulatory framework within which the three week turnaround policy be addressed.

The three week turnaround time for feedback on assessments after assessment submission, is a policy which has its challenges in implementation. These are reported in the audit findings (LTAC 12-16U) which identifies concerns relating to logistical management, Faculty assessment administration processes and academic staff workload issues. These issues may demand further consideration in further enabling the three week turnaround policy to be fully implemented.

This policy seeks to be enabling, acknowledges some of the challenges and seeks to provide further clarity to the “variation process”, to provide some flexibility for local determinants and arrangements.

The three week turnaround policy is one single dimension out of ten of the “Principles for effective assessment feedback “(Academic Board 23rd September 2009) (Appendix B).

In respect of this, it is recommended that consideration be given as to how we can further support programme teams and academic staff in learning and teaching issues relevant to the implementation of this policy and the principles for effective assessment feedback e.g. curriculum design, reviewing assessment load, assessment design and methods, assessment scheduling across the whole programme, differing forms and methods of assessment feedback, engaging with electronic assessment management initiatives etc.

To support this, an Assessment Literacy framework is to be proposed by the Learning, Teaching Enhancement Unit (Lent 2014) with the development of a dedicated programme of academic development to support colleagues in this agenda.

The Timely Feedback Policy (Part Two) seeks to respond to these issues and the recommendations made at the Learning , Teaching and Assessment Committee providing further clarity; developing a structure and a framework around the three work turnaround timeframe and determining flexibility to the three week turnaround which is valid, robust and transparent.

**PART TWO – Timely Feedback Policy**

Clarification of the policy and procedures regarding the deadline of three weeks for formal feedback on summative assessment (approved at Academic Board September 2009), to be re termed as the “Timely Feedback Policy “.

**1) INTRODUCTION**

This policy development follows on from the recommendation of the University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) on 8 May for clarification and revisions to the policy relating to the deadline of three weeks for formal feedback to students on summative assessment.

Until now, the policy has been embedded in the *Principles for Effective Assessment Feedback*.

In addition to clarifying and making more explicit key details of the policy, the policy statement has been revised and developed with details of implementation. It is intended that this will be integrated into current University regulations and procedures via the Regulation and Credit Framework for the Conferment of Awards and the Assessment Procedures Manual. If the principles are approved below, the details of revision to the University regulations will proceed through the usual committee structure with an intended implementation date of September 2014 for any proposed changes.

**2) CLARIFICATION OF THE POLICY**

**2.1 Three week turnaround definition:-**

The definition of “three week turnaround“ is 15 working days, i.e. Monday to Fridays when the main University functions are open for business (not limited to term times).

**2.2 Assessments included/excluded in the policy**

All students should receive formal feedback (including the grade) as soon possible and within the maximum time of 15 working days post assessment submission, except for the following:

a. Dissertations, extended projects, independent studies (usually work of a word equivalence of 5,000 words or more)

b. Formal examinations supported by Planning & Academic Administration

c. Work submitted for Research Degrees and taught Doctorates

d. Negotiated Learning plans where students have an approved learning agreement in place

e. Work submitted after the deadline

For a, b, c, d and e the deadline dates will be set at the discretion of the programme team, but must be as soon as possible and timely to inform students’ development and must be clearly communicated to students as per the procedures for formal feedback outlined in the Assessment Procedures Manual.

**2.3 Communication with students:-**

The following will be provided to the students at the beginning of the period of study (e.g. usually the beginning of the academic year):

* Details regarding the assessment feedback schedule/timetable;
* A specification of the formal feedback format /methods used.

2.4 Guidelines for managing unusual/one-off delays to feedback

Where the return of feedback to students will be unusually delayed (e.g., a one-off instance because of staff illness), students should be notified in writing of the delay before the original feedback deadline. They should be given a revised date for feedback. Every effort should be made to ensure feedback is given to students in good time for them to utilise feedback in preparing their next programme submission.

2.5 Introduction of a University wide form and process for varying feedback deadlines outside of the 15 working days

Where there are substantive logistical reasons for a revised assessment deadline on an on-going basis beyond the normal maximum times, application for a revised deadline should be made via the 15 Day Deadline Variation Request Form as per the guidelines (please see Appendix C).

**3) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TIMELY FEEDBACK POLICY**

**3.1 Proposed Policy and Regulatory Changes (Appendix D)**

The adoption of the revised University policy statement and the proposed regulatory changes (see Appendix D), will need to proceed through the appropriate approval processes (Regulations and Conventions and Quality and Standards Committee) with final approval by Academic Board including a report to Academic Board of the revised guidance in the Assessment Procedure Manual. If approved, full implementation of the revised policy and procedures, such as meeting the requirements to give students a schedule of assessment and feedback at the beginning of a period study will be fully implemented from September 2014.

The proposed clarity for responsibility of staff and the Faculty Quality Committee is given below (in red type) as amendments and for inclusion in the University Assessment Procedure Manual to ensure that the three week turnaround policy is embedded within the regulatory frameworks.

3.2 Responsibilities of Staff

14.65 The Programme/Pathway Director is responsible for having oversight of the assessment mechanisms/processes for the programme which enable all students to receive formal feedback (including the mark) as soon as possible and within the given deadlines.

14.66 Where the Programme/Pathway Director identifies a significant issue in relation to assessment feedback, this should be referred to the relevant line manager for resolution.

14.67 Where the return of feedback is unusually delayed the Programme/Pathway Director should ensure that the appropriate notification and revised deadline has been given in writing to students.

14.68 Where the programme team believes that the standard feedback deadline should be extended for a programme or module for substantive logistical reasons (e.g., nature of programme delivery, etc), the Programme/Pathway Director is responsible for applying in writing to the relevant Faculty Quality Committee for a variation of the deadline date.

Applications should be made on the University template 15 Day Variation Request form and will need to include a clear rationale and duration of the variation in deadline.

3.3. Responsibilities of the Faculty Quality Committee

14.69 It is the responsibility of the Faculty Quality Committee to consider and approve 15 Day Variation Requests.

14.70 Deadline variations will be made for a set period of time as determined by the Faculty Quality Committee through the approval process. After which, if a deadline variation is still required, a new application should be made.

**3.4 University Quality Committee**

It is recommended that the University Quality Committee monitor and have an oversight of the implementation of the Timely Feedback policy through reports from the Faculty Quality Committees.

**4) EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) AND SUPPORT FOR STAFF**

As reported at LTAC in Trinity 2013, the University policy relating to the deadline of three weeks for formal feedback to students on summative assessment underwent Stage 2 of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The findings of that review identified issues with implementation of the initial policy that needed to be addressed. Appendix A presents the EIA Stage 2 summary and the actions proposed to address concerns raised.

**5) CONCLUSION**

Part Two of the Timely Feedback policy document responds to the recommendations from the LTAC committee (May 2013). Part Two provides further clarity in terms of the definition of the three week turnaround, identifies the forms of assessment the policy relates to, clarifies the approval process for seeking an alternative time frame from the three week turnaround and identifies how the policy will be monitored.

**APPENDIX A**

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

The current University “Three week turnaround” policy was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment which was completed June 2013. Stage 2 of the equality impact assessment reviewed the following evidence:

* HR Data regarding the breakdown of academic staff who are full-time, part-time and sessional by gender (May 2013);
* Data from the Equality and Diversity Manager regarding the breakdown of staff by ethnicity, disability, and gender by directorate (Oct 2012);
* Individual submissions from staff members (approximately 50) in response to an invitation to comment on potential differential impact of the policy on particular staff groups.

Based on the evidence gathered, the Equality Impact Assessment concluded that the implementation of the three week turnaround policy in some cases is having a detrimental impact on particular groups of staff in comparison to others. These included disabled staff, part-time staff, and staff with caring responsibilities.

The revised Timely Feedback Policy provides further clarity and outlines processes for the implementation of this 15 day feedback turnaround. These are:

* A clearer definition of three weeks and the scope of the policy
* A clear process for “variations” which could allow for exemptions for logistical / pedagogic reasons where approved.

In response to the EIA, the following steps must be taken:

* The person organising the assessment schedule needs to take account of the availability/workload of staff when planning deadlines for feedback.
* The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate resources in place to fulfil the Timely Feedback policy.

Reasonable steps to plan the management of assessment feedback might include:

* distributing the assessment work load proportionately across the programme team;
* reviewing at programme level how marking is scheduled, resourced, and administratively managed;
* reviewing at department and Faculty, the level of the resourcing and administration management of assessment and addressing issues through business planning processes;
* ensuring appropriate managers are informed about the outcomes of the Equality Impact Assessment;

The revised policy and the responsibilities to meet EIA requirements will be communicated to the University Senior management team and Academic Heads of Department.

**APPENDIX B**

**Principles for effective assessment feedback**

**FOR THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD: 23 SEPTEMBER 2009**

The principles outlined below describe the elements of a strategy aimed at building a culture where assessment feedback works effectively and sustainable for staff and students. The definition adopted for feedback is:

*“Feedback refers to the oral or written information, advice and grades which describe performance and inform future learning and achievement.”*

The rationale for the adoption of the principles is contained in ‘*Developing an institutional policy on turn-around time and feedbac*k’.

1. **Students have an entitlement to timely and constructive feedback** on work they submit for assessment **and an obligation to engage with the feedback** to use it effectively to improve performance working alongside tutors and peers.
2. **Timely feedback is defined** in terms of its usefulness to inform students’ future learning and production of assessed work. Timely feedback also recognises that an indication of the **level of their achievement** within an assessed element of their studies is important to an understanding of progression within the course.
3. Students should be made aware of the rationale and particular arrangements within each module for feedback and when they are to receive it. **The arrangements for providing feedback within a module must be stated in the Module Handbook**.
4. The University expects that **from September 2010** all taught programmes will adopt a benchmark time of **three working weeks, within which students should receive formal feedback on summative assessment items they have submitted.** If feedback is not available within the three weeks then students must be informed of the reasons for the delay and steps taken to address the causes. Where there are sound academic reasons, exceptions to the benchmark time may be negotiated.
5. **Students in transition (e.g. Level 4) need to receive prompt formative feedback at an early stage in their studies;** with turn-around times for submitted work kept to a minimum and the level of achievement in relation to assessment criteria made as transparent as possible.
6. **Written feedback** should be accessible, constructive, and legible and relate directly to the criteria against which the assessment is conducted.
7. **Feedback on examinations** will initially provide generic guidance, at a group level, on improving performance within this mode of assessment. Students may request individual feedback if required.
8. **Students should be provided with periodic opportunities to engage in a dialogue about their wor**k using feedback provided, e.g. PDP, e-mail, work-return clinics, group discussion with tutor and, where viable, an individual session.
9. **Programme validation documents should indicate the strategic approach** to providing effective formative and summative feedback within the learning, teaching and assessment strategy which **considers how timely feedback will be managed.**
10. **Annual quality reviews will** specifically address staff and students’ reported experience of the effectiveness of feedback, against stated policy as monitored by module leaders, Programme Directors and staff-student forums.

**APPENDIX C – DRAFT DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION**

**CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY**

**Timely Feedback**

**15 Day Variation Request**

The following form should be used to request planned variation on a feedback deadline where it is believed necessary to make an ongoing extension to the deadline for the return of formal feedback on summative assessment beyond the 15 working days specified by University policy. The rationale for any proposed extensions will need to be on the basis of substantive logistical reasons. This form should be completed by the Programme Director and submitted to the relevant Faculty Quality Committee (normally before the period of study).

The form can be used for individual modules or whole programmes. **This form is not required for**:

* Unusual delays which are covered by 14.64 of the Assessment Procedures Manual.
* Exemptions covered by 14.61 of Assessment Procedures Manual including:
  + Dissertations, extended projects, independent studies (usually work of a word equivalence of 5,000 words or more);
  + Work submitted for Research Degrees and taught Doctorates;
  + Negotiated Learning plans:- where students have an approved learning agreement in place;
  + Work submitted after the deadline.

Requests for a deadline variation should be mindful of the following principles:

Formal feedback on assessment is a key aspect for assessment for learning and as such must be timely. Feedback is important for enabling student development and progression. It should be given to students as soon as possible to enable students to review progress and to identify areas for improvement in future work.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Programme :** |  |
| **Programme /Pathway Director:** |  |
| **Module title (s) (only where the requested variation is for a module rather than an entire programme):** |  |
| **Venues:** |  |
| **Collaborative Partner (where relevant):** |  |
| **Proposed revised formal feedback timeframe** |  |
| **Requested period of variation (e.g., 1 academic year, any future runs of the validated programme, etc.)** |  |
| **Rationale for the proposed variation to the timely feedback deadline**.  **(Note: minutes should be available from the Programme team/ appropriate meeting where the discussion and agreement took place)** |  |
| **Identify how the change will be communicated to students** |  |
| **How would you anticipate being able to address and realign to standard feedback deadline requirements over time? (For example are you reviewing assessment scheduling, assessment design, or use of technology) *( if applicable)*** |  |
| **Programme/Pathway Director Signature**  **(electronic signature is acceptable):** |  |
| **Date:** |  |
| **Head of Department Signature**  **(electronic signature is acceptable):** |  |
| **Date:** |  |

-----For office use only----

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Faculty Quality Committee Decision** | | | |
|  | **Approved (If approved, time period for approval):** |  | **Rejected (if rejected, reason for rejection):** |
| **Faculty Director of Quality Signature**  **(electronic signature is acceptable):** | |  | |
| **Date:** | |  | |

1. <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/asset/news/6010/FeedbackCharter-toview.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)