ACADEMIC QUALITY

Learning and Teaching Policy

Policy on Feedback on Coursework

Purpose and Summary of Policy

This document provides the policy framework for the University's [Feedback on Coursework Policy](), which has been in place since 2015/16. A revised version was introduced from 2022/23.

This policy should be used by Schools in the provision of feedback on assessed coursework. The policy recognises the benefits of timely return of feedback to support students in their further learning and so stipulates **a maximum of three working weeks for return of feedback on assessed coursework** (*see below for exemptions from this stipulated duration for three methods of coursework*) and that feedback should align with the University's Feedback Principles.

This policy is intended to ensure equity and fairness for all students on taught programmes across all modes and locations.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's [Scheduling and Submission (incl. Late Submission) of Coursework Policy]().

Scope

The policy applies to the provision of feedback on assessed coursework undertaken by all Heriot-Watt University taught students (undergraduate and postgraduate) across all modes and locations from the start of academic year 2015/16; this revised version is applicable from AY 2022/23 (the flexibility of return periods introduced during the pandemic is no longer in place).

The policy applies equally to feedback on both formative (not credit-bearing) and summative (credit-bearing) coursework.

Coursework is defined *'as work carried out by students which constitutes, or contributes towards, their overall grade for a course, but which is assessed separately from written examinations. This includes undergraduate and postgraduate taught dissertations and projects as well as time-limited coursework'.*

Examples of coursework are provided in [Types of Assessment: Policy and Administrative Definitions]().

This policy does not apply to in-person, invigilated examinations for which there is a separate [Feedback on Examination Performance (and Access to Scripts) Policy]().

Policy and Supporting Procedures

The following policy and procedures support the implementation of the above summary of policy statement.

Policy

1) The University is committed to ensuring identical academic standards across its provision and fostering a learning environment in which students receive timely feedback in order to support their learning and development.

2) Consequently, there remains in place a maximum of three-working weeks turnaround for the return of feedback on assessed coursework. The University encourages School-specific approaches on feedback turnaround times which meet the institutional policy of a maximum of three-working weeks turnaround.

3) This 3-working week policy applies equally to feedback on both formative (not credit-bearing) and summative (credit-bearing) assessment.

4) For the purposes of clarity, 3-weeks refers to three working weeks, so that students are not misled into assuming that this duration could include breaks.

5) Feedback should be provided on all coursework submitted up to five working days late. Any coursework submitted after five working days of the set submission date shall be automatically awarded a *0 F*, with no feedback provided. See [Scheduling and Submission (incl. Late Submission) of Coursework Policy](#) for further information.

6) It is the responsibility of the School to document, prior to the start of teaching, the following on the Canvas Course page, and elsewhere as appropriate, for both formative (not credit-rated) and summative (contributes to the final mark/grade) coursework:

Date issued	Assessment submission deadline	Format of Submission	When and how feedback will be returned	Format of feedback

Communication to Students on Feedback

7) Schools should ensure clarity of communication to students on feedback on all types of coursework and should not focus on the narrow 3 working weeks, but rather the breadth of feedback, how it will be provided, how it can be used etc.

8) Students should be made aware of the different forms of feedback they are likely to receive across their courses, including verbal feedback on, for example, practical activities, and on how they can use feedback for development and improving future learning.

9) Students should be made aware that, as part of a professional approach, it is their responsibility to make use of feedback to improve their learning and that feedback is only useful if it is read, reflected upon and acted on.

10) Schools should make clear to students, in communicating the late submission policy, that no feedback will be given for coursework submitted after five working days of the submission date.

Formative Assessment and Formative Feedback on al HWU Courses – Regulatory Requirements

11) As per paragraph 10.7 of Regulation A4: Course, Programmes and Assessment, "each course shall feature formative assessment to enable students to evaluate the extent of their learning". This requirement for formative assessment applies to courses across all modes and locations.

12) Consequently, where a course is assessed for credit-purposes by a single summative assignment (be that coursework or exam), there is a formal requirement for formative assessment (non-credit-bearing) and associated feedback, and the 3-working week turnaround applies equally to formative (non-credit-bearing) assessment as it does to credit-bearing assessment.

Exemptions

13) For the following methods of coursework, the 3-working weeks turnaround does not apply:

- Final online assessments for Heriot-Watt Online courses/programmes;
- final summative coursework, including credit-bearing assessment consisting of a single piece of summative coursework;
- large-scale projects and dissertations.

14) These exemptions are made in recognition of the need to ensure that there is sufficient time for due processes of marking, moderation, consideration of results by Course Assessment Boards and ratification by Progression Boards, and then release of results.

15) In the case of all such exclusions, the following must, however, be applied across all modes and locations:

- students should be made aware of the timing (ie return dates), format and use of feedback on all coursework to which the three working weeks policy does not apply;
- generic, timely whole cohort feedback (ie without marks/grades) should be provided in advance of release of results and associated feedback (*see paragraph 8) below*); this is particularly important if there is likely to be a significant period of time between submission of the coursework and results being ratified by a Course Assessment Board and Progression Board and then released to students;

- formative assessment and formative feedback should be provided in advance of all forms of final, summative coursework, including those specified in paragraph 6) above; the three-working week turnaround applies to feedback on all formative assessment, irrespective of the form of final, summative assessment

16) Each School can determine the most appropriate method of providing generic, timely whole cohort feedback for the exempted methods of coursework listed in paragraph 6), depending on the discipline, cohort size, level and mode of study. Each School should inform students (eg handbook, statement on Course VLE site) of the timeframe and methods used to provide feedback on coursework to which the three-working-week turnaround does not apply.

17) Examples include the following:

- Workshops timetabled in the next semester to go through overall cohort performance and overall learning points; this is particularly relevant for core courses;

- Provision of feedback through generic commentary for all students, highlighting learning points, posted on the University's VLE or other University-approved means of communicating with students, or where relevant members of academic staff have an opportunity to provide group feedback.

Feedback Principles

Heriot-Watt University aims to support students in becoming confident, independent learners; feedback is a key part of the student learning experience, as it is designed to help students to learn and improve. The University also aims to support the introduction of a more consistent approach to feedback on assessment across all modes and locations.

The University's **Feedback Principles** were developed in partnership with HWU Student Representative Bodies and apply to feedback on coursework (including practical designs) provided to HWU students across all locations and modes of study. All HWU students can expect their feedback to be:

- **Constructive** – feedback should review your academic performance, making clear what you have done well and what you need to do to improve

- **Supportive of Your Learning** – feedback should be a learning experience, helping you to develop

- **Timely** – assessed coursework (except some final, summative assignments, large-scale projects and dissertations and timed, online coursework) should be returned within 3 teaching weeks

- **Inclusive** – feedback, in a variety of forms, should be available to all HWU students, whether studying on campus, with a partner or by independent distance learning.

- **Accessible** – feedback should be clear, understandable and easy to access

- **Relevant** – feedback should be related to the assessment criteria and expectations provided in advance of your assignment

Implementation

It is the responsibility of each School to:

- Ensure consistent implementation of the institutional policy on feedback across all modes and locations of study;
- Communicate feedback procedures (format, return date, use) to students;
- Monitor the effectiveness of the policy in terms of the timeliness and usefulness of feedback, including responding to comments raised in student surveys and other student voice mechanisms and providing commentary as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review process;
- Offer guidance and support to students in recognising, and making use of, different forms of feedback;
- In collaboration with the Learning and Teaching Academy, offer guidance and support to staff in providing timely feedback which helps students review, reflect and act in order to improve their learning.

It is the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee to:
- Monitor annually the effectiveness of the policy and process by reviewing student surveys, engaging with student representatives and colleagues and to take forward any enhancements to the process;
- Review the policy on a five-yearly basis;
- Submit any changes to the policy for consideration and approval to the University Committee for Learning and Teaching.

Further Information

The Learning and Teaching Academy has produced a series of Feedback Resources, including a Guide for Students on Feedback.

The LTA updates this information each academic year, providing a suite of resources and support for teaching teams in preparation of the start of the session. Check out the LTA SharePoint Hub for current information. Further support and guidance are available from the LTA: LTAcademy@hw.ac.uk