

Richmond, the American International University in London

University Feedback Norms (Approved at LTPC 2 May 2014)

Characteristics of Effective Feedback

Effective feedback is defined by the QAA as a combination of information that “enables students to understand the strengths and limitations of their past performance, and...to recognise how future performance can be improved”. (QAA, QC, B6, 18).

Feedback on assessed work can take many forms. It can range from informal feedback, such as an office-hours discussion of a graded activity, through to formal written comments on a template grading sheet. It is important that students be made to understand the nature of feedback, and its importance in improvement of future academic performance.

Feedback at Richmond should be both stated clearly and related to clear criteria. It should be directly related to learning outcome expectations. It should be concise and focused, legible and clear.

Many instructors are already using feedback sheets for graded activities. The university encourages this good practice – templates that are appropriate to the subject material should be made available by the Academic Schools, so that instructors who wish to adopt them have a model. Feedback forms give faculty a better understanding of what is expected in terms of feedback, and give students a clearer view of the consistency of expectations, as well as a clear view of how these expectations develop across *FHEQ* levels.

Timeliness of Feedback

Timeliness of feedback on assessed work at Richmond is a key element of the student learning experience. Effective feedback must allow sufficient time for students to reflect upon it, consider how to make use of it, and provide opportunities for discussion based upon it.

Although feedback expectations exceed mere grade entry, grading of individual “activities” is obviously an important indicator for students of their performance. Faculty are expected to complete their set-up of graded activities within PowerCAMPUS prior to the start of the semester, so that students have a clear view of the assignments and their relative weightings. Any official activity grades must be entered into PowerCAMPUS within the timeframes outlined below. It is not acceptable to enter all grades into the system at the end of the semester. Effective continuous assessment requires the prompt and on-going logging of any grades given.

Richmond has established that the normal maximum turnaround time for feedback on assessed work will be **ten working days** (excepting final exams – see below). This expectation should be communicated to students in all classes. It will form a section of the updated syllabus template to be released for Sept 2014.

Richmond has additional feedback requirement timings:

- i. Final exams must be assessed in a more compacted timeframe than the ten-day period, normally in 4 working days (96 hours). The Academic Registrar confirms the grading schedule each semester. This is necessary to accommodate the requirements of the US semester structure. Richmond students' grades must be confirmed prior to the start of the following semester so that the registration is acceptable (all pre-reqs completed). Likewise, this is necessary to maintain a graduation ceremony at Richmond where those who participate in the commencement ceremony are those who are confirmed as having fulfilled requirements. Study Abroad students must also have their grades confirmed in this timeframe either for the purposes of registration or graduation.
- ii. Students should be given some indication of their performance in the course by midpoint in the semester. This will normally take the form of a summative assessment point, but can in exceptional cases take the form of a formative assessment or notification to the student of substandard performance (attendance issues, skipping of scheduled supervision, etc.). Standard university mid-semester alerts may be sent out by the Academic Progress Committee to those students performing below C at midterm. This encourages students to seek assistance from their instructor or advisor, or to make use of the writing centre or math assistance workshops to improve their academic performance.
- iii. Students must normally have received an official grade on at least one assessed piece of work prior to the withdrawal deadline, so that they have the option of withdrawing from a class without academic penalty. The withdrawal deadline is set for two weeks prior to final exams in semesters, and one week prior to the end of the summer sessions, so this should normally allow for plenty of time for feedback to students. Standard exceptions to this requirement are the senior seminar and senior project courses, where extensive formative assessment takes place throughout the course.

A balance needs to be achieved between faculty workloads and their ability to meet the defined maximum turnaround time, and the need of the student for effective feedback. In achieving this balance, faculty should consider varied means of assessment. A good resource is: <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsltd/resources/methods.html>

Feedback to students will only be expected on exams awarded an F grade (non-attendance resulting in such a grade will not require feedback).