

Outline of Student Comments on Feedback (TESTA project 2010-2015)

Students in many programmes complimented the value of the feedback particularly in practical workshops. However, students felt that feedback focused on staff perspectives rather than what student want and often did not help students improve their work. Students also report that feedback is of little value to them because it is not seen as relevant to future assessments and is perceived as a monologue directed at work that is already 'ancient history'. Students also express concern that the marks they receive appear to be a marker's subjective (and perceived unreliable) impression which reflect personal attitudes rather than the standard expected by the School. This leads to students' difficulty in linking grades from markers to the assessment criteria (which may or may not have been made clear). Particular areas of concern to students are:

Feedback as a dialogue: Students highlighted that feedback was rarely experienced as a dialogue, and because of this, feedback was often perceived as of little value.

Quantity/quality: There were consistent concerns that feedback was variable in quality, often not relevant, and not useful to future work. It was seen as highly dependent on the marker involved and perceived as reflecting individual staff perspectives on work rather than reflecting a general standard expected from the School. Students commented on the volume of feedback received, from several typed A4 sides to simple ticks or crosses, with the difference in the value of the feedback in informing students about precise quality of their work or how to improve.

Timeliness, formative feedback: Students frequently commented that feedback was often too late to be helpful, and that formative feedback may or may not be available depending on staff willingness to discuss work, or that feedback was of no use in subsequent assessments.

Staff attitudes: Some staff were seen as not approachable at all (bordering on hostile), while others were helpful. Students may also be told that providing formative feedback is unfair, while some staff are happy to provide assistance and discussion.

Exams: Students feel that feedback on exams would be helpful, particularly for summer resit students. (Note: from June 2015, a pilot of the Exam Feedback Policy will begin).

Highlighted practice: Generic feedback was cited as helpful, along with practice exercises related to summative assessments. Realistic exemplars and practice marking by peer groups is also felt to be helpful.