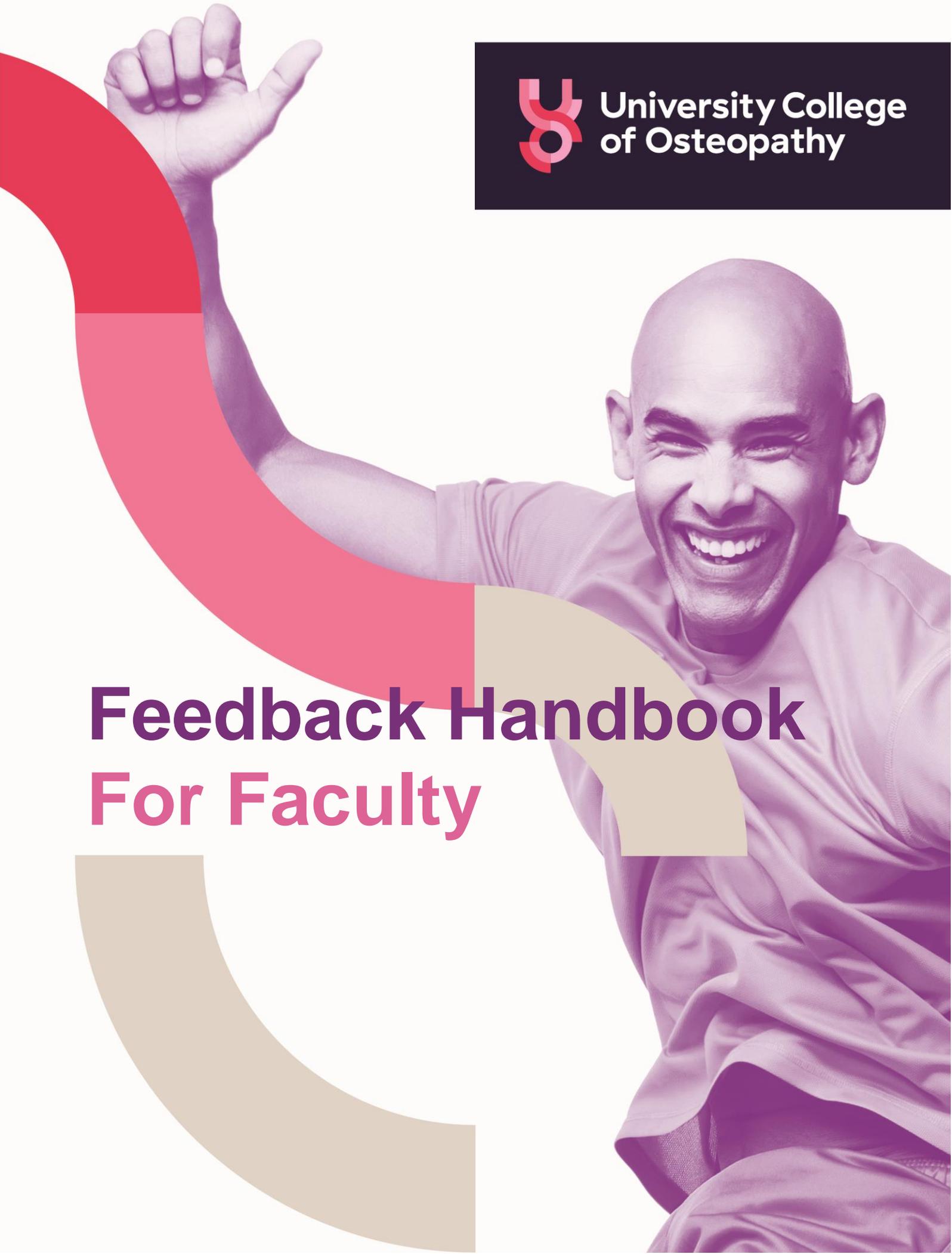




University College
of Osteopathy

Feedback Handbook For Faculty



Core Documentation Cover Page

Feedback Handbook for Faculty

Version number	Dates produced and approved (include committee)	Reason for production/ revision	Author	Location(s)	Proposed next review date and approval required
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Equality Impact

Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)

Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)

Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)

X

If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this handbook, please email your comments to: quality@uco.ac.uk

Feedback Handbook for Faculty

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FACULTY FEEDBACK HANDBOOK

The aim of this handbook is to support faculty to make feedback useful and recognisable to the student body. Feedback is something that is valued at the University College of Osteopathy (UCO) and we know from surveys that students and faculty consider there to be room for improvement. This handbook draws together information about good practice in giving feedback, and explains current UCO policy on feedback for different types of assessments.

In this handbook, Section 1 discusses the principles of good feedback. Section 2 outlines the processes at the UCO for giving feedback on different assessment types. Section 3 gives some examples of good practice from UCO faculty which you may find helpful to apply to your practice.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO PROVIDING QUALITY FEEDBACK

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

“Feedback describes a dialogue between the teacher or trainer and the learner and is an integral part of the assessment process” (Tummons, 2007, p61)

“Feedback is a unique form of communication and new models of communication are required to understand student’s responses to the language of tutor’s comments.” (Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2001)

At the UCO, due to the one-to-one style of technical and clinical teaching that we employ, feedback occurs on a daily basis. Feedback is therefore more than just part of the assessment process - it is an important teaching and learning tool. Feedback is continually offered to students during technique classes and clinical experience, yet students may not be registering this dialogue as feedback. The aim of this chapter is to look at this type of feedback and make it more obvious to the student body.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

Feedback is essential to enable students to develop their knowledge and skills to the appropriate levels to be successful in becoming an osteopath. Students are always looking for more feedback and more information to enable them to develop into proficient osteopaths. This is evidenced throughout higher education following the NUS feedback amnesty (NUS, 2008), where students listed ten principles of good practice for feedback, specifically asking for the feedback to be timely and continuous. In Higher Education, many institutions have focused on the need to improve student satisfaction with feedback.

There are many formats/types of feedback, but, critically, it is how this feedback is delivered that is vital. It is important that students know that they are receiving feedback. It needs to be specific and focused to that individual student, and delivered at the right moment to be truly valuable. If the student is not ready to receive feedback, he/she will find it hard to take on board the issues that have been raised and therefore will be less able to develop his/her performance effectively.

It is important that students understand that any feedback is an evaluation not of the person, but of the performance in context.

TIMELY AND SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Feedback is best received when it is given to students as close to the activity as possible. This will enable the student to recall the activity and apply the feedback appropriately. If the feedback is given a long period after the activity, the students' recall of the context and topic might have diminished and will therefore be less useful in support of their overall development.. Delivering specific feedback, using specific examples of good, adequate or poor performance will enable the student to apply that knowledge further as they continue to develop into a proficient practitioner. It is important to remember that the student needs to be ready to receive the feedback and "immediately" might not be the most appropriate time. It is advisable to negotiate a convenient time to meet with a student, as leaving the feedback too long can affect the outcome. In certain (busy) situations, the timing of the feedback can be challenging to decipher. In these situations, talking with the student to arrange a separate time is probably the best solution.

Faculty can timetable specific sessions for students to receive verbal, one to one feedback on their work or assessments. This can be used in conjunction with the "open door" policy, enabling the student flexibility as to when they are ready to see their tutor.

QUANTITY OF FEEDBACK

It is important that students do not receive too much information. It will make it difficult for them to retain the relevant information, and it is possible that the students will forget the more crucial areas for development if given too much to consider.

It is important that tutors focus their feedback in digestible sizes, enabling the student to reflect on their need to develop further. Too much information can be detrimental to students' development.

FOCUSING THE FEEDBACK

Wherever possible, feedback should be clearly linked to relevant learning outcomes for the area of study.

When preparing feedback to a student, try to look at areas that they can readily be improved, giving them examples of how this can be achieved. Feedback that is not appropriate to the student, or feedback on aspects that are beyond their control, is pointless and frustrating for the student. It is important that you support all feedback with direction as to how they can develop those aspects of their performance that you have highlighted or raised as needing to be addressed. Giving the student an action plan or new learning goal is a critical component of the feedback process.

THE "FEEDBACK SANDWICH"

The "Feedback Sandwich" is a framework for tutors to prepare their feedback:

What was done right

What was done wrong

What to do next time

Alguire (2008)

What was done right: It is always good practice to begin with an overview of positive performance elements. This sets appropriate context for subsequent feedback that is more critical..

What was done wrong: Sometimes, students might be aware of what they have done wrong, so the feedback session could start with asking the student if they have noticed the problem or what went wrong. As the tutor, this is an opportunity to highlight the areas where the student has not performed so well, relating the comments back to the learning outcomes. Providing specific examples of where the performance has fallen below standard or has room to improve makes the feedback more specific to the individual. Remember that you should be focusing critically on the areas of performance that need improvement rather than on the student as a person or on his/her ability as a whole. In short, make sure that you do not allow students to take negative feedback personally, because it should not be meant that way.

What to do next time: Outline what the student needs to do in order to improve their subsequent performance. Giving a student some direction on how best to approach the areas that have been raised can be motivating, and it will focus his/her attention on how to improve. Always try to end the discussion focusing on weaknesses and suggested improvements. It is also useful to identify where the student can go for appropriate help and support if issues should arise during the development period or later in the course.

It is important to highlight to students that making mistakes is part of the learning process and that all students make mistakes during their training. All students will receive critical feedback. Indeed, students should relish the opportunity to receive constructive criticism, as it is an important part of their educational journey.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Barrier	Impact	Potential Approach
Worried about upsetting the student with feedback	Feedback is not provided, or infrequently provided	Dismiss these fears; students crave and value feedback and associate it with high quality teaching
Students do not recall getting feedback or remember feedback content	Students are dissatisfied with the learning environment or fail to act on feedback	Label feedback prior to its delivery with, "Let me give you some feedback"
Gender bias	Male and female students receive different amounts of feedback and of different content	Be sensitive to the possibility of gender differences when giving feedback
Feedback "too soft", does not contain needed critical component	Students do not improve skills and persist with undesirable behaviours/activities, eg: continue to fail assessments	Consider planning and rehearsing feedback ahead of delivery or giving written feedback notes
Feedback too general	Students can not improve and become frustrated	Develop a system of recording specific skills that need to improve or behaviours that need to change. Use the notes to provide the student with detailed examples and suggestions for improvement.

Alguire et al (2008)

A CHECKLIST FOR GOOD FEEDBACK

This check list consists of six key principles that relate to feedback in any context – written or oral, vocational or academic (Tummons (2007)). Feedback should be:

- a) Clear and unambiguous – language used should be clear, concise, straightforward and easy to follow.
- b) Specific – explicit to the learning outcomes or assessment criteria (where possible)
- c) Supportive, formative and developmental – allowing students to build on their past successes while also understanding their errors/mistakes
- d) Timely – as quickly as possible, at a time appropriate for the student
- e) Understood – the student should be able to understand exactly how they have performed and what steps they need to take to develop further
- f) Delivered in an appropriate environment – should be appropriate to the feedback being given and suitable to the student.

SECTION 2: FEEDBACK ON ASSESSMENT

Assessments contribute to the learning process by providing constructive feedback to students on their achievement of learning outcomes. Assessment feedback enables students to reflect on how to perform better in the future (formative function), as well as justifying grades awarded (summative function). Both functions are valuable, and while it is tempting to focus exclusively on the grade awarded for an assignment, what enables students to reflect on their performance and subsequently improve is the qualitative commentary that they receive for each piece of work submitted. A grade alone does not tell students how to improve, but feedback is tailored specifically for this purpose.

Students receive notification of their provisional marks as the year progresses. This profile builds up into a Statement of Academic Record (transcript) at the conclusion of the academic year. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the Board of Examiners.

Submitted coursework and written examination scripts are the physical property of the UCO. This section of the Assessment Handbook is concerned with the timing of coursework return, the mechanisms for the return of coursework and the feedback given on students' work, including written examinations.

THE TIMING OF THE RETURN OF COURSEWORK

All coursework should be returned no later than 6 weeks after submission. If work is returned too long after submission, the students tend to have forgotten the assignment and some of the information, as it is likely they have moved onto the next hurdle. This makes any feedback less valuable to the students. Coursework that is returned promptly will still be fresh in the mind and, therefore, the feedback is likely to be more effective. The assessment brief clearly defines the date for coursework to be handed back to the students. If, for any reason, the coursework cannot be returned within the specified time, the students should be given an explanation and a new date set.

Developing the students' skills and knowledge over a period of time is crucial to their success. It is therefore vital that for all assessments, regardless of their format, the students are given high quality feedback, allowing them the opportunity to develop to their full potential. For example, feedback on an essay in a first-year unit may not come into play again until a year or two later. Alternatively, poor referencing that could have been noted as feedback in the first year, if left uncorrected, will lead to poor performance in all subsequent units.

Feedback, under all circumstances, is critical to both short-term and long-term success at the UCO.

THE RETURN OF COURSEWORK

All coursework is submitted, marked and returned electronically. The document returned to the student contains the assignment, marking criteria/learning outcome, written feedback, and provisional grade. In addition to the written feedback on the mark sheet, specific comments and further feedback is usually annotated directly within the assignment.

ORAL FEEDBACK ON COURSEWORK

There is little doubt that good quality, comprehensive and timely feedback on students' coursework is an important factor in driving student learning. In addition to written feedback, oral feedback may be given. It is advisable to provide the oral feedback in conjunction with the written feedback and the script. Therefore, it is necessary to arrange oral feedback once the student has the written feedback and script.

Giving feedback can be a time-consuming process, and staff should develop strategies appropriate to the student group and the nature of the assignments. Whilst the majority of coursework completed by students is summative in nature, good feedback will ensure that summative assignments also fulfil a formative function.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Written feedback for all coursework should be prepared electronically. This will enable the student to read and understand the feedback without the added complication of deciphering the handwriting. For practical assessments where the feedback is written during the assessment, please ensure that your handwriting is legible

Feedback must be designed to enhance student learning. It cannot be over-emphasised just how important feedback is in supporting student learning. Too often, marking becomes judgemental and the feedback follows this approach; feedback should be supportive and should focus on what the student should do to improve his/her work.

For this reason, it is suggested that the use of 'crosses' to identify material that is wrong should be used sparingly. A more supportive approach is to use a short comment and possibly direct the student to the literature, lecture hand-outs, or other resources.

Similarly, it is preferable to avoid using 'ticks' all the time to indicate work that is correct; it may take a little longer to add a qualitative phrase, even if merely 'good point' or 'true', but students are more motivated by such an approach.

Adopt a positive tone wherever possible, as this encourages and enables dialogue with the student.

Wherever possible one should try to start off by highlighting something positive about the work; give constructive comments before critical comments, and always end with guidance as to how the student can develop further. Try to find something positive to say about any piece of work no matter how bad.

Feedback should be informative and should be a learning experience in itself. This can be promoted by referring the student to other sources of information, alternative approaches, errors in logic, organisational difficulties in the work, contraventions of accepted conventions, etc.

Wherever possible, provide concrete examples. For example, simply stating, 'you have not evaluated the evidence' is of limited use as a standalone statement without additional context as to what evidence and/or evaluation is missing. It is always better to state clearly something like 'this work would be strengthened if you . . .'

Wherever possible, feedback should be related to the relevant learning outcomes.

A student should be able to see from the returned work not only where he/she went wrong, but also how the work could have been improved in order to gain full marks or the highest grade. The feedback should also give the student some focus as to what they need to do to develop further.

Emotional responses in feedback are not appropriate. If it appears that a student has made minimal effort with a piece of work or has not incorporated key points from the teaching, it is easy to react in a way that shows your disappointment or disapproval. However, there may be legitimate reasons as to why a student has not been able to perform adequately. Comments like 'you have clearly not made any effort' are not as suitable as statements like 'It appears that you have not been able to spend sufficient time on this assignment'.

Feedback should be efficient, and you should endeavour to devise methods to maximise the feedback with minimal work on your part. Some suggestions are:

Use of a feedback sheet to give all members of the class generic feedback - this might be focused around the assessment criteria established for the work. Individual pieces of work can then be annotated using perhaps a numbering system and the student directed to specific points on the sheet. These sheets themselves can become a useful and important learning resource. Generic feedback sheets may contain space for individual comments.

- a) Use of a marking sheet to focus the student's attention on the strengths and weaknesses of their work.
- b) Giving generic feedback to the class as a whole in specially arranged sessions or in normal timetabled slots. This can be a very efficient means of getting over a number of points to a large group.

Students should be encouraged to engage with the feedback process:

Students should be able to discuss the comments and the mark given; they are more likely to accept a poor grade if they are clear how they have lost marks. Students should always be given the opportunity to come and discuss their work with the member of staff privately - even the best students may learn something from such encounters.

Feedback should facilitate and encourage self-assessment. For example students could be invited to identify areas on which they would value feedback.

Use phrases which encourage a response, such as ‘I would welcome your views on...’.

Make sure that any grading system that you use on returned work has been fully explained to the students so that they are well aware of the significance of their mark (and the consequences of any failure).

Further information on good feedback practice is available in Reflections on Assessment (Quality Assurance Agency, 2005).

ORAL FEEDBACK TO A DISAGREEING STUDENT

This might happen with a student who has received a grade they do not agree with. As their tutor/assessor, it is your responsibility to support the student.

In these difficult situations, it is important that you give the student the opportunity to express their concerns and identify where they do not agree with the grade given. When explaining to the student where they have not reached the standard they were expecting, you are reliant on your written feedback and the learning outcome/assessment criteria/marketing criteria. This is the evidence that you will need to show to the student. Using terms such as “in my experience...” does not give the students the information that they are looking for or need in order to develop their skills. As a tutor your experience is an important element to your teaching and assessing of the subject, but students are looking for evidence to support the grade that they have been given.

If, following a supportive discussion as outlined above, a student still disputes their grade, you should advise them to contact the Registrar.

WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

Feedback is not normally provided for written examinations. However, in certain circumstances, it may benefit a student to understand why he/she achieved a certain grade. This may be particularly true for failing students who have been given examination re-sits. In such cases, the member of staff should go through the script with the student, highlighting errors, good points, irrelevant parts of the answer, poor examination technique, etc. Under no circumstances should the student take the script away or be left alone with the script.

PRACTICAL ASSESSMENTS

The same principles apply to practical assessments as to all forms of assessment; feedback should be constructive and developmental for the student. It should also be individual to that student's needs and relate back to the learning outcomes being assessed.

WRITTEN FEEDBACK

For OSPE's, for example, the assessors make notes on the marking criteria sheets whilst the student is performing a technique. The student then receives his/her copy of the marking criteria, for each station, including written feedback highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and areas for development. It is important that you link feedback to the marking criteria and relevant learning

outcomes. It is also important to ensure that feedback relates to the students' performance at that time

For CCA's / MCE's, students receive a document with the typed feedback from the three assessors.

During the CCA/MCE, the internal/external assessors and moderators will make notes on the patient and on the students' performance.

During the moderation meeting, the assessors and moderator gather their notes and write constructive feedback which is later presented to the student.

For the formative and first summative CCA/MCE, the feedback is presented to the student at the same time as the Termly Tutor Reports. This feedback is given by the students' team tutors. An action plan is developed at this point, to help the student prepare for the developments required to improve their clinical skills.

Remember, it is important to make clear to students that feedback is an evaluation of their performance in context, not of the person. Help them learn not to take negative feedback personally.

ORAL FEEDBACK

Unless stated in the unit information form, immediate feedback during an OSPE or CCA/MCE (formative or summative) should not be provided.

If you provide critical feedback, even if overall they performed well, students will normally assume the worst, and this may influence their performance in subsequent components of the assessment (the next station or patient).

In order for feedback to be truly effective, it needs to be delivered at an appropriate time. During a practical exam is not likely to be the most appropriate time to be delivering constructive feedback when the student is focusing on the next task.

Oral feedback is useful after the exam when the students come to ask for more feedback/advice to reinforce the written feedback provided.

ORAL FEEDBACK FROM MULTIPLE FACULTY

If feedback is being given to one student with more than one faculty member present, it is vital that the feedback session is set in an appropriate room and that it is laid out in such a manner that it is not intimidating for the student.

If there is a need for more than one tutor to deliver the feedback, the tutors involved should prepare what is going to be fed back to the student and how the session will run. This should ensure that both tutors are working together to give shared feedback to the student. The experience should not be confrontational or have a negative impact on the student.

For the feedback session to be appropriate and developmental for the student, the feedback should be delivered in the manner as described above.

SECTION 3: FEEDBACK EXAMPLES

Examples of faculty experience in providing feedback that is considered useful by the student(s)

CCA support sessions begin with a 20 minute timeframe to discuss what the students want to get out of the session. This may be feedback on particular areas of weakness or areas that they have been working on, confidence building etc. The

In clinic we give feedback at the end of term, but then don't see the students again for 10 weeks. So I try to give them feedback by email as a group based on their needs as we go. I emphasise points we've come across as a group and suggestions for upcoming tutorials.

Help students who are resistant to receiving feedback (e.g. confidence issues, don't see the value of it) to engage with it (even if this means explaining the role that exams have and that all examiners are not out to get them!)

More articulate and analytically able students will be able to determine the feedback they need. However, it's up to the teacher to ensure that all students get an appropriate level of feedback regardless of their level of self-awareness. Where the teacher can make a difference is by encouraging questions and never ever making a student who asks or responds to a question look small.

One to one is always more readily accepted by the students that ask for it. Some who do not ask for this often gets very defensive despite the constructive nature of the feedback. Verbal feedback in tutorials seems to promote good discussion amongst students without any names named.

Examples of faculty experience in providing feedback in a timely fashion for the student(s)

Verbal information is much easier than written due to time required. Using dictation software helps a lot.

Use clinic tutorial sessions to give 'group level' feedback and if appropriate individual feedback on participation in the tutorial as a follow up.

I find it can be helpful to give group feedback on themes - for instance how to present a case to a tutor concisely - in tutorials and on First Class. This enables rapid feedback.

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