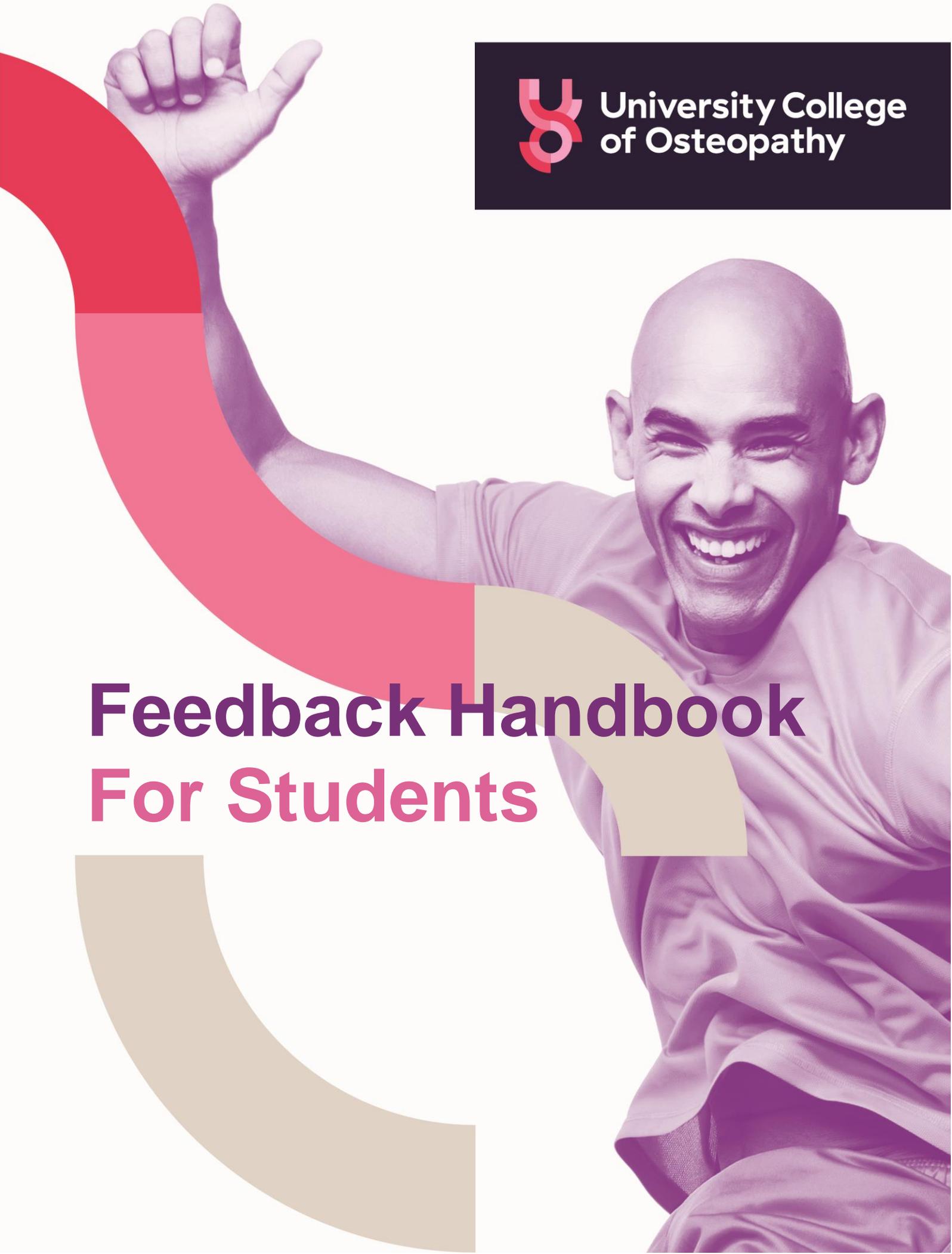




University College
of Osteopathy

Feedback Handbook For Students



Feedback Handbook for Students

Version number	Dates produced and approved (include committee)	Reason for production/ revision	Author	Location(s)	Proposed next review date and approval required
V1.0	Academic Council Sep 2013	To provide informal guidance to assist in the management of cases such as complaints, allegations, appeals, disciplinary issues and fitness to practice regarding students and staff which may require investigation.	M.Ost Course Leader	All master versions will be held in J:\ Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Sep 2016
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Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)					
<p>If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this document, please email your comments to: quality@uco.ac.uk</p>					

FEEDBACK HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
1. Section 1: The Principles of Good Feedback	5
1.1 What is Feedback?	5
1.2 The Importance of Feedback.....	5
1.3 Timely and Specific Feedback.....	5
1.4 Quantity of Feedback.....	6
1.5 Focusing the Feedback	6
2. Section 2: Feedback on Assessments	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Coursework Feedback.....	7
2.3 Written Examinations.....	9
2.4 Practical Assessments.....	9
2.5 Disputing the awarded grade.....	10
3. Section 3: Providing Feedback.....	11
3.1 Introduction	11
References	12
Endnotes.....	13

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this handbook is to support students of the University College of Osteopathy (UCO) in receiving feedback from tutors and providing feedback to your colleagues. Peer-to-peer feedback is integral to many aspects of your course, including study group sessions, technique practice sessions, team based learning, and during time in clinic. Providing constructive feedback to your colleagues is an excellent approach to developing your own theoretical knowledge and technical skills. This provision of feedback to patients, colleagues and employees is part of the General Osteopathic Council's (GOsC) Osteopathic Practice Standards (2012) (B4; 1.2: Keep professional knowledge and skills up to date and D8; 2-6: Support colleagues and cooperate with them to enhance patient care).

This handbook has been published to help you develop these skills and knowledge so that you can deliver high quality feedback. Students are also required to provide feedback to the UCO with regards to the service provided, which is an important part of the quality assurance process and essential to the UCO's development.

This handbook will also support you in receiving feedback from faculty to help you to identify areas for development and will explain what the current practice is at the UCO for providing feedback relating to the different types of assessments used. This will help you utilise the information and ultimately develop your knowledge and skills.

- i. Section 1 of this handbook discusses the principles of good feedback.
- ii. Section 2 outlines the processes at the UCO for giving feedback on assessments. It is important for you to be familiar with, for instance, the differences between timing and content of feedback at Clinical Assessments and on written coursework.
- iii. Section 3 provides you with some ideas on how to give constructive feedback to your colleagues and the UCO.

1. SECTION 1: THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD FEEDBACK

1.1 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 students’ responses to the language of tutors’ comments.” (Higgins et al, 2001)¹.

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 you during technique classes and clinical experience, and it is important that you learn to identify this dialogue as feedback. For example, when a tutor is making a comment about how you could improve a technique that you have just demonstrated, this is feedback. The tutor is observing your technique, making a judgement, and informing you on how you can improve your technique. This is formative feedback. One of the aims of this handbook is to look at types of feedback employed at the UCO, enabling you to recognise them and therefore find them more useful.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

Feedback is essential to enable you to develop your knowledge and skills to the appropriate levels to be successful in achieving your goal of becoming an osteopath. It is apparent from the NUS feedback amnesty (2008) that students are always looking for more feedback and more information to enable them to develop their knowledge and skills. This report listed ten principles of good practice for feedback, one of which was that feedback should be timely and continuous².

In Higher Education, many institutions have focused on the need to improve student satisfaction with feedback. At the UCO, the factors for feedback that students are most concerned with are the timelines of delivery and how to use the information provided to aid development.

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

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

1.3 TIMELY AND SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Feedback is best received when it is given to you as close to the activity as possible. This will enable you to recall the activity and apply the feedback appropriately. If the feedback is given a long time after the activity, your recall of the context and topic might have diminished will therefore be less useful in support of your overall development.

Delivering specific feedback, using specific examples of good, adequate or poor performance, will enable you to apply that knowledge further as you continue to develop into a proficient practitioner. Although recognising that giving feedback close to the activity is preferable, it is important to remember that you need 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 your tutor, as leaving the feedback too long after the event can affect the outcome. In certain situations feedback can be challenging to decipher. In these situations, talking with your tutor to arrange a separate time is probably the best solution.

Faculty can timetable specific sessions for you to receive verbal, one to one feedback on your coursework and/or assessments. This can be used in conjunction with the UCO’s “open door” policy, enabling you flexibility as to when you are ready to see your tutor.

1.4 QUANTITY OF FEEDBACK

It is important that you do not receive too much information. It will make it difficult for you to retain the relevant information, and it is possible that you might 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 you to reflect on your needs to develop further. Too much information can lead to confusion and be detrimental to your development.

1.5 FOCUSING THE FEEDBACK

Wherever possible, feedback should be clearly linked to relevant learning outcomes for the area of study. The tutor should look at areas that you can readily improve, giving you examples of how this can be achieved. It is important that the tutor supports feedback with direction as to how you can develop your performance, because an action plan or new learning goal is a critical component of the feedback process.

The “Feedback Sandwich”³ is a framework for tutors to prepare your feedback and consists of three elements:

- i. 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.
- ii. What was done wrong: Sometimes, you might be aware of what you have done wrong, and the tutor might start with asking you if you have noticed the problem or what you think went wrong. At this point, the tutor has the opportunity to highlight the areas where you have not performed so well, relating the comments back to the learning outcomes. Remember that the tutor here is focusing critically on the areas of performance that need improvement rather than on you as a person or on your ability as a whole. In short, you should try not to take negative feedback personally, because it is not meant that way.
- iii. What to do next time: Your tutor should outline what you need to do in order to improve your subsequent performance. As you progress through the course, you will take more personal responsibility in reflecting on your weaknesses and identifying areas where you need to focus on. The tutor will give you some direction on how best to approach the areas that have been

raised. Often, when feedback sessions end with a positive comment, you tend to walk away focused on the positive, and perhaps forget the previously noted weaknesses. For this reason, be prepared to end any feedback conversation with discussion of weaknesses and suggested improvements. It is important that you are provided with some guidance as to how you can develop your skills or knowledge, and where you can go for additional advice and support if needed.

It is important to highlight that making mistakes is part of the learning process and that all students make mistakes during their training. You are certainly not alone in receiving critical feedback! Indeed, you should relish the opportunity to receive constructive criticism, as it is an important part of your educational journey.

2. SECTION 2: FEEDBACK ON ASSESSMENTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Assessments contribute to the learning process by providing constructive feedback to you on your achievement of learning outcomes. Assessment feedback enables you 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 you to reflect on your performance and subsequently improve is the qualitative commentary that you receive for each piece of work submitted. A grade alone does not tell you how to improve, but the feedback is tailored specifically for this purpose.

Focusing for a moment on the summative award of grades, the annual process is outlined below. You receive notification of your provisional grades as the year progresses and assessments take place. This grade 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 at the end of the academic year.

A formal Communication of Results is issued after a Board of Examiners meeting providing your agreed grade profile for that academic year. Students who have not been successful with individual assessments will be informed of the Board of Examiners decision regarding resit opportunities including the appropriate member of faculty to contact for support. You are strongly advised to follow this advice and seek support from the tutors, as part of your preparation for the retake assessment.

2.2 COURSEWORK FEEDBACK

A) THE TIMING OF THE RETURN OF COURSEWORK

For the majority of coursework submissions, feedback should be returned to you within 6 weeks. For research units, the feedback might take longer to be published due to internal committee processes such as the Research and Ethics Committee. The date of publication for the feedback is written on the Assessment Brief. Coursework that is returned promptly will be fresh in your 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 you. If, for any reason, the coursework cannot be returned within the specified time, you will be notified by the Registrar and given a new date.

Your course relies heavily on students developing skills across a number of units and years. Developing your skills and knowledge over a period of time is crucial to your success. It is therefore vital that for all assessments, regardless of the format, you are given high quality feedback, allowing you the opportunity to develop to your 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 noted as feedback in the first year if left uncorrected may 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.

B) THE RETURN OF COURSEWORK

All coursework is submitted, marked and returned electronically. The document returned to you contains the assignment, marking criteria/learning outcome(s), 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.

C) VERBAL FEEDBACK ON COURSEWORK

There is little doubt that good quality, comprehensive and timely feedback on your coursework is an important factor in driving student learning. In addition to written feedback, oral feedback is also valuable. If you would like additional verbal feedback, once you have received written feedback, contact the tutor who delivered, set and marked the assessment. If you are unable or do not feel happy to contact this tutor, contact the relevant Unit Leader or Course Leader.

Feedback is a time-consuming process for tutors, and they will have developed their own feedback strategies appropriate to your group and the nature of the assignments. Nevertheless, there are some general principles that apply. Whilst the majority of coursework completed by you is summative in nature, good feedback will ensure that summative assignments also fulfil a formative function.

Written feedback for all coursework should be prepared electronically. This will enable you to read and understand the feedback without the added complication of deciphering the tutor's handwriting. For practical assessments where the feedback is written during the assessment, assessors try to ensure that their handwriting is legible. If you have difficulties reading the handwriting, please speak to the assessor and ask for clarification.

Feedback should enhance your learning. Feedback should be supportive and should focus on how you can improve your work.

It is suggested to tutors 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 you to the literature, lecture hand-outs, or other resources.

Similarly, it is preferable for tutors to avoid using 'ticks' to indicate work that is correct, as the use of more specific positive comments are perceived to be more effective and motivating

Tutors are advised to adopt a positive tone as this encourages and enables a dialogue with you. Comments wherever possible should encourage you to reflect and discuss, with the tutor, the text in question.

Feedback should be informative and should be a learning experience in itself. For example, the tutor may refer to other sources of information, alternative approaches, errors in logic, organisational difficulties in the work, etc.

You should be able to see from the returned work not only where you went wrong, but also how the work could have been improved in order to gain higher grades. The feedback should help you to focus on what you need to do to develop further.

You are encouraged to engage with the feedback process; you are able to enquire about the comments and the grade given - this will clarify where you lost marks and will help you understand the grade you were given. You are given the opportunity to discuss your work with the tutor privately - even students achieving an A+ grade will learn from their feedback.

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

2.3 WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

Feedback is not normally provided for written examinations. However, in certain circumstances, it may benefit you to understand why you achieved the grade you did. This may be particularly true for failing students who have been given examination re-sits. In such cases, the tutor will go through the script with you highlighting errors, good points, irrelevant parts of the answer, poor examination technique, etc.

If you would like to receive feedback on your exam script, especially if you have been unsuccessful, you should contact the relevant subject tutor or Unit Leader. You will need to provide the tutor with your candidate number, so the tutor can obtain your script from Registry. The tutor will provide you with verbal feedback on your exam and provide you with suggestions on how to improve your performance. You will not be able to keep a copy of your script, as it is the property of the UCO, but you are advised to take notes for future reference.

2.4 PRACTICAL ASSESSMENTS

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

A) WRITTEN FEEDBACK

For Objective Structured Practical Exams (OSPEs), the assessors make notes on the mark sheets whilst you are performing a technique. You will receive your copy of the marking criteria, for each station, including written feedback highlighting strengths and areas for development.

For Clinical Assessments, you may receive a document with typed feedback.

During the clinical assessment, the internal/external assessors and moderators will make notes on your performance during the patient's appointment.

During the moderation meeting, the assessors and moderator gather your notes and write constructive feedback, which is then made available to you.

This feedback is given by your team tutors so that you can develop an action plan to help you prepare for your next clinical assessment, with the aim of enhancing your clinical skills.

For Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs), feedback is available from the Unit Leader upon request. This feedback can be delivered electronically, or by appointment if you would like to speak to the Unit Leader directly.

Remember, it is important that you understand that feedback is an evaluation of the performance in context, not of the person. Learn not to take negative feedback personally.

B) VERBAL FEEDBACK

Unless stated in the unit information form, immediate feedback during a summative OSPE, OSCE or summative clinical assessments will not occur. If you perform poorly and you are provided with constructive and appropriate feedback, do not assume you have failed and become disheartened, as this will place you at a disadvantage when you continue onto the next station or patient. Verbal feedback is useful after the exam, when you can ask for more feedback/advice on how to develop your practical skills.

C) VERBAL FEEDBACK FROM MORE THAN ONE TUTOR AT THE SAME TIME

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

2.5 DISPUTING THE AWARDED GRADE

This might happen if you receive a grade that you do not agree with after a piece of coursework, continual assessment, clinic tutor report, clinical assessment, OSCE or OSPE. It is the responsibility of the tutor to support you through this time of dispute.

In these difficult situations, it is important that you are given the opportunity to express your concerns and identify your disagreement with the grade given. When explaining why you may not have reached the standard you were expecting, the tutor will rely on their written feedback measured against the relevant learning outcomes and marking criteria. This evidence is available to you during your feedback sessions.

If, following discussion, you still dispute your grade, you should contact the Academic Registrar, who will follow the UCO's appeal policies as written in the Course Handbook. Legitimate grounds for appeal are:

- a) Exceptional extenuating circumstances
- b) Operational problems impacting on academic outcome

Please note that disagreeing with the professional judgement of the marker is not grounds for appeal.

3. SECTION 3: PROVIDING FEEDBACK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As a student at the UCO and with the teaching and learning used in the delivery of the practical and clinic courses, you are required to provide constructive feedback to your colleagues and peers. Also, the UCO conducts student surveys on the institution (environment and resources) and course content/delivery, where you are asked to give constructive feedback.

This section will give you a brief summary of how to give constructive and high quality feedback. It is focused towards providing feedback to your colleagues/peers, but it is also appropriate in relation to feedback given to the UCO.

A) GIVING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Below are some clear guidelines to providing high quality feedback:

- i. Give feedback only when asked to do so or when your offer is accepted.
- ii. Give feedback as soon after the event as possible.
- iii. Focus wherever possible on the positive impact of your recommendations.
- iv. Be descriptive (of behaviour) not evaluative (of motives).
- v. Talk about specific behaviours and give examples where possible.
- vi. Use “I” and give your experience of the behaviour (“When you said...I thought you were...”).
- vii. When giving negative feedback, suggest alternative behaviours.
- viii. Ask yourself “Why am I giving this feedback? It should be for the benefit of the person concerned, not for your own benefit or satisfaction.
- ix. Remember that feedback says a lot about you as well as about the person to whom it is directed.
- x. When giving negative feedback, focus on the behaviours that can be changed and therefore improved.

B) A CHECKLIST FOR GOOD FEEDBACK

This checklist consists of six key principles that relate to feedback in any context – written or oral, vocational or academic.

Feedback should be:

- i. Clear and unambiguous – language used should be clear, concise, straightforward and easy to follow, so that it is understood.
- ii. Specific – explicit to the learning outcomes or assessment criteria (where possible).

- iii. Supportive, formative and developmental – build on his/her past successes while also understanding errors/mistakes.
- iv. Timely – as quickly as possible, at a time appropriate for you.
- v. Understood – you should deliver feedback so that he/she understands how they have performed and what steps they need to take to develop further.
- vi. Delivered in an appropriate environment – should be appropriate to the feedback being given and suitable to you.

(Tummons (2007)⁴)

When providing feedback to your colleagues or to the UCO, please consider the most appropriate language and terminology to use.

It might be useful to think about how you feel when receiving feedback. Feedback is used to help enhance skills, knowledge and in the case of the UCO, the services that we provide.

As identified at the beginning of this handbook, there is an expectation from the General Osteopathic Council for osteopaths to provide professional, constructive and appropriate feedback to patients and colleagues for the duration of their careers. Hence the importance of becoming proficient and comfortable at both giving and receiving feedback.

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ENDNOTES

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