Understanding and Responding to Feedback [Fact Sheet]

In order to make the most of our studies and achieve our full potential, one of the most valuable aspects of our academic development at university is the ‘feedback’ we receive from those around us – Feedback is based around the assessment criteria of academic study and understanding this is key to meeting expectations and achieving higher grades.

- **What is feedback and why is it so important?**

  Feedback is integral to life at university and refers to the comments and advice that you receive on your work and participation in different aspects your studies. It is designed to offer you insight into your strengths and weaknesses as an academic student and to help give you practical solutions to improving your work and skills.

- **Where and when will I receive feedback?**

  Feedback comes in many forms – this can be advice given in lectures, seminars or tutorials, advice written in e-mails and on assignments, or indeed during informal chats in your free time and this can come from lecturers, tutors, support staff and other students.

- **What responses do students have to feedback and how does this affect their studies?**

  Receiving feedback can be an emotional process because we may not do as well as we had hoped, or we might sometimes do better than we thought. Feedback is meant to be useful in helping us to understand our own strengths and weaknesses but too often we focus on feedback as criticism and we react emotionally rather than practically. Our responses to assignment feedback therefore need to be managed and we need to treat feedback as constructive advice. It is also very important to accept positive feedback along with the negative so that we can develop confidence and continue with the positive aspects of our work. However, it is also important not to become over confident. Sometimes we can become too relaxed when we have done well and it is important to sustain motivation if we want to do well. Another common problem with feedback is that students sometimes have a tendency to only focus on one area of feedback given, but it is important that you pay attention to all comments.

- **How can I use the feedback that I receive to improve my future work?**

  In order to use feedback effectively there are five stages – We need to **identify**, **understand**, and **accept** our strengths and weaknesses and then **reflect** upon why we worked the way we did or organised our work the way we did so that can finally devise **practical action** to improve in future. In order to do this it is very important that we engage with the language of our tutors and key concepts in academic study. Familiarising yourself with your handbook and the university systems therefore are very useful and there is plenty of help available from services such as the **Learning Enhancement Team** and the **Library**.
• What key academic concepts of my work are assessed and analysed in feedback?

Your work will be assessed on the key areas of how well you have

• understood the topic
• researched the topic
• developed and expressed your ideas
• adapted to academic conventions

The following categories are typically used for assessment criteria and feedback on assignments. You will need to check your handbooks for the exact assessment criteria on the different modules of your course, but this task will give you an idea of how you use the should approach criteria and feedback.

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<th>Content:</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence:</th>
<th>Structure and Organisation:</th>
<th>Clarity of Expression:</th>
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Which of these aspects of academic study do you think fall into these categories?

a. Developing ideas  
b. Referencing sources  
c. Reading  
d. Quotations  
e. Flow of ideas  
f. Grammar  
g. Spelling  
h. Paragraphing  
i. Analysis  
j. Argument  
k. Critical thinking