

Assessment and feedback

This document brings together a summary of the discussion outcomes from the session on Assessment and Feedback, led by Anne Tierney at the event 'Teaching in the Biosciences: an Introduction for Postgraduates and Postdoctoral Teaching Fellows'.

Feedback should:

- Be constructive
- Tell someone how to improve
- Be timely

Assessment and feedback: What? Who? Why? When? How? Which?

When?

- Give feedback ASAP
 - Gives students time to come back to you
 - The work they have done is fresh in their minds
- Feedback could be given in a tutorial
 - Feedback from other students (may be easier to take things on board from other students – "I had the same problem with...")
 - Make it personal
- Feedback during large pieces of work
 - Mark drafts in sections
 - Bite size
 - Improve confidence
- Give marks straight after a test so they've time to come back to you and learn

How?

Verbal feedback

- At the time
- Arranged (meeting or tutorial session)

Written feedback

- Electronic
- Practical worksheets
- Exams (normally 1 way)

What?

Assessment of:

- Exams
- Project reports
- Practicals – lab skills
- Essays
- Tutorials
- Presentations – Poster or Oral

Feedback:

- Marks
- Annotated manuscripts
- One to one oral feedback

- Questionnaire – student>teacher feedback on teaching
- Post it –student to teacher feedback
- Provide the mark scheme – helps students understand where they went wrong

Why?

- Shows you are paying attention to the student and their work
- Shows the student is on the right track
- Or shows them how to get onto the right track

Who?

- Exams and essays to be marked by subject specialists
- If the person marking assessments did not actually write them, they need to feedback to the person who did
- Moderation / multiple marking
- Feedback is necessary and deserved but PG demonstrators time constraints are not always taken into account e.g. 10 mins to mark and give feedback on long assessments
- Student to student feedback
- Feedback from demonstrators

Which?

- Exams – get a % or mark
- Essays – students may get feedback
- Lab reports
- Tutorial – feedback as you go in a discussion

Designing assessment and feedback for different types of course

1. A one-semester first year biology course with 500 students, some of whom have no previous experience of biology
2. A one-semester second year practical microbiology course
3. A third year zoology weekend residential field course
4. A final year biochemistry honours project
5. A final year six week industrial work placement

1. A one-semester first year biology course with 500 students, some of whom have no previous experience of biology

Assessment process

1. Formative exam at start – multiple choice questions
2. Group projects (10 people) give talks / poster – summative with feedback
3. Computer based self assessment – electronic based learning, some questions at the end – easy way to assess large number of student's progress

Feedback

1. For 1, give a mark
2. For 2, give oral feedback
3. For 3, electronic marking

2. A one-semester second year practical microbiology course

Give continuous feedback on lab book

Weekly experiment – assess practical skills and outcomes of practical work

Half way through the course have a "pub quiz" - formative multiple choice question test

End – short answer exam

3. A third year zoology weekend residential field course

- Feed forward – what happened last year (get a student to talk to the)
- Get students to devise a project prior to the course – assess plans
- Write up as a 'lab' project (Intro, materials and methods etc)

During course (BBQ, wine and beer)

- Assess work / progression daily
- 'Fun' presentation on last night of what they've done, pics etc. Student to student feedback
- Feedback on project marks
- Poster presentation competition
- Prize giving

4. A final year biochemistry honours project

- Lab style project
- Get students to do a literature review and give feedback on this at the start, ask for Aims, objective and direction of project in this review
- Supervisor gives verbal feedback throughout the project
- Weekly formative assessment of lab book
- At the end, give a poster or presentation to the department which is assessed

5. A final year six week industrial work placement

Before

- Interview and presentation to assess suitability for the placement – by the host industry
- Before the interview supervisor / tutor gives feedback on how to approach the task, capability i.e. strengths and weaknesses what you're likely to do and get out of it
- Fulfilment of university criteria to show suitability

During

- Lab meetings / weekly progress meetings – more informal assessment together with feedback (both ways between student and host)
- Reflective diary

After

- Write up work as a paper and do a presentation to peers (that have also done placements) and co-ordinators
- Feedback on write-up from markers
- Feedback on presentation from peers and co-ordinators
- Feedback from student on company from reflective diary