

Assessment and Feedback in Teaching and Learning at Dublin City University

Feedback and assessment are an integral part of teaching and learning. In DCU these elements are articulated in two policies which interweave and contribute to teaching and learning at the university. Assessment and feedback are a critical part of learning for the student. The policies provide structure for assessment and feedback activities which aids both the teacher and the learner. It is recommended that all teachers and students take cognisance of the policies and integrate them into their teaching and learning experience. The policies are as follows:

Assessment Policy

Rationale:

Designing, implementing, and evaluating student assessments are amongst the core teaching activities within this institution. DCU acknowledges that both assessment and feedback play crucial roles in the education process. Assessment and feedback can frame and influence a student's approach to learning and learning goals and his/her motivation to engage in and with learning activities. As a core teaching and learning activity, assessment is an important consideration of the university as it fulfils its teaching mission but also in implementing its statutory function in awarding degrees of learning. Assessment defines how learning outcomes can be demonstrated. Feedback facilitates the development of students' ability to monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning. This policy sets the definition, purpose and principles of assessment in DCU and outlines a series of guidelines to inform and facilitate best practice. The policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant university guidelines and policies such as the Feedback to Support Student Learning (as below), DCU Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy (www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/about/teaching-learning.shtml), Disability Guidelines (<http://dcu.ie/disability/index.shtml>), Examination Guidelines (www.dcu.ie/registry/examinations/index.shtml) and '[Minimum Threshold Standards for the Delivery of Teaching & Learning](#)'.

Definition:

Assessment in DCU is a mechanism used to evaluate student learning and as a means to develop the knowledge, the skills and the competencies of our students. Assessment includes three sequential components: gathering evidence, evaluation of this evidence against criteria or outcomes, and provision of feedback based on this evaluation.

Purpose:

Assessment provides feedback on the performance of students in relation to the demonstration of specific learning outcomes. In DCU learning outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and competencies that learners are expected to demonstrate upon successful completion of a module or programme of learning. Assessment can and should

address formative and/or summative learning. Assessment in DCU is categorised as assessment *of, for* and *as* learning.

Assessment of learning:

Assessment *of* learning is assessment providing evidence of achievement against stated learning outcomes.

Feedback ensures that there is a focus on assessment for and as learning, as outlined in this insight from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education¹

Assessment Principles:

DCU's assessment policy is grounded in principles of:

Academic rigour, where assessment:

- Engages a student to develop, to investigate and to apply knowledge, skills or competencies associated with his/her disciplinary area(s)
- Demonstrates learning outcomes and supports achievement of module/programme learning outcomes aligned to the appropriate level of the National Framework of Qualifications
- Ensures scaffolding and progression of learning
- Encourages creativity as well as accuracy where appropriate
- Endorses the concept of constructive alignment between learning outcomes and assessment(s)
- Incorporates appropriate and relevant feedback mechanisms to students and adheres to DCU's Feedback Policy

Fairness and equity, where assessment is:

- Developed to ensure that a student can demonstrate the appropriate learning outcomes
- Designed with due consideration given to the diversity of learners²
- Graded in accordance with explicit marking criteria, which are made readily available to students when engaging with the assessment.

¹ National Forum . (2017a). Expanding our Understanding of Assessment and Feedback in Irish Higher Education. National Forum Insight. Dublin: Author. <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/publications/>

² Based on current practice of registration with DCU's Student Support Services

Feedback to Support Student Learning Policy

Definition and Purpose:

Feedback is defined as a critical and core teaching activity undertaken to aid learning and provide information to students that can enable them to identify what knowledge, skills and competencies they can and need to demonstrate, and to identify directions and pathways for improvement. Opportunities for feedback arise within organised module activities as well as informally during non-assessed activities. Feedback may occur during and/or after a learning activity.

The purpose of feedback is to:

- support teaching and learning;
- provide structures for both students and academics within which, meaningful communication on teaching and learning can take place
- assist students so that they know what performance standards are expected and what opportunities exist to improve performance in the future;
- assist staff so that their teaching can be tailored to student needs

Principles:

- Module and assessment information must inform students when, where and how feedback is offered on the module/assessment concerned.
- Feedback must make reference to transparent marking criteria.
- Feedback must be provided in a timely manner so that it can be used and reflected upon by the student. Feedback on assessment should be provided no later than fifteen working days after the deadline for submission of each piece of assessed work, excepting work submitted late or submitted as part of the final assessment component of the module. Where feedback cannot be provided within this time frame, the module coordinator must contact students directly, in writing, to inform them when the late feedback will be provided, ensuring that it is in time for students to make use of it prior to summative assessment. This timeframe applies to assessments submitted during the semester; feedback on assessments submitted at the very end of semester or during the examination period come under the arrangements in place for consultation days.
- Feedback must be informative, helpful and relevant.
- Feedback must be clear and accessible.
- Feedback must be honest and realistic and must offer constructive advice to the student.
- Feedback must facilitate the development of the transferable skill of self-reflection in learning.
- Feedback must be effective and efficient and must take into account the resources available to staff and students.
- Feedback must be appropriate to the level of the student, to the learning outcomes and to the nature of the learning activity. The principle of constructive alignment between learning outcome/s and assessment/s will inform and aid this, helping to ensure relevance and appropriateness of feedback.

- Feedback is a joint and shared responsibility; staff have a role to play in supporting students to learn how to receive and apply feedback, while students are expected to engage with the supports provided to them.
 - Students have the responsibility to:
 - make themselves aware of when, where and how feedback is provided;
 - develop their understanding and appreciation of assessment criteria and performance expectations;
 - use the provided feedback to reflect on their learning and to avail of opportunities afforded to them to improve their performance.
 - Staff have the responsibility to:
 - ensure feedback is a design component of modules and programmes inform students when, where and how feedback is provided;
 - provide feedback that is prompt, informative and helpful within the resources available to them.

Note: *Feedback to Support Student Learning Policy* approved by Academic Council: June 2012

Assessment Policy approved by Academic Council: June 2013

Combined Assessment and Feedback in Teaching and Learning Policy approved by Academic Council: December 2013